Enikő Bollobás

They Aren't, Until I Call Them

Performing the Subject in American Literature

PETER LANG
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In the story of the three baseball umpires, two novice umpires compete in boasting how they respect "truth" and the way things "really" are. One says, "I call them the way I see them"; the other, trying to trump this remark, responds, "I call them the way they are". Then enters the third, most seasoned umpire, saying, "They aren't, until I call them".
This book deals with two widely argued issues in literature criticism today, performativity and subjectivity. How do people become who they are? What scripts do they follow when they "do" gender, race, and sexuality? Tying into speech act theories and subjectivity theories, as well as gender, race, and sexuality studies, the author explores – through the close reading of several American texts – the many ways words make "things" in literature.

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To the memory of my parents,
Emmi and Béla Bollobás

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INTRODUCTION

> "Language and the word are almost everything in human life."
> (Mikhail Bakhtin)

This is the way the story of the three baseball umpires goes. Two novice umpires compete in boasting how good they are, how they respect "truth" and the way things "really" are. One says, "I call them the way I see them"; the other, trying to trump this remark, responds, "I call them the way they are." Then enters the third, most seasoned umpire, who has been in the business for decades, saying, "They aren't, until I call them."

This story is loaded with implications, especially from a performative perspective. Even without much theorizing, one can read it as a narrative of how words make things; in this case, the umpire's "call" produces an action: a batter strikes out, a runner is "safe" at first base, a ball is judged foul. Only the young and naive umpires can seriously believe that their job is to "register facts"—strikes and balls. The older umpire knows that these events become meaningful on the field because his words assign significance to them: his "call" determines, for example, if a batter gets on base or not. Ultimately, then, victory is often determined by what the umpire calls.

But there is another issue here, too. He is not a good umpire because—like his younger colleagues—he is determined to call them the way he sees them or the way they "are"; conversely, his call does not "reflect" the "fact" that he is a good umpire, so his being a good umpire does not pre-exist his call. Rather, he calls because he understands the performative power of his rulings. He knows and uses the performative power of his words in bringing about a new reality, if only on the field and as part of the game, while the performative power of his act produces him as a subject, a good umpire who knows his trade. In short, both the game and the umpire are performatively brought about here.

This double, or contiguous, reading ties into two fundamental aspects of the way performativity will be understood in this book. The first is the original Austinian framework (further developed by other analytic philosophers, linguists, and pragmaticists),where the performative is treated within a coherent theory of speech acts, fully equipped with clear dichotomies, definitions, taxonomies, and conditions. The foundational dichotomy is that between the constative and the performative: while constatives are used to describe things or register events "out there," performatives are used to create things and events; as such, they can be considered vehicles of metalepsis, the jump from discourse to "reality," which

Rorty calls our "plain ordinary spatio-temporal existence" (*Consequences* 118). Taking for granted the signifier/signified dichotomy, this theory turns on the assumption that a reality of signifieds exists as the locus of both the speaker (as a presence with a self-aware "I") and the "thing" made by words. The second, the poststructuralist framework, does not operate with such clear-cut distinctions; binary terms show transitions and overlappings, boundaries are blurred, taxonomies destabilized, and definitions turned around. Moreover, the self-presence of the speaking "I" and the reality of the things brought about by speech acts are highly problematic. In this framework, it is not signifieds but other signifiers which are being performed by language, among them, speakers within discourse. Indeed, from this perspective performative acts allow speakers to construct themselves: subjects are created performatively, in the speaking and the doing. Performatives have "ontological" force, I will show, because they create new discourses which allow for new subjectivities. These new subjectivities will take their own metaleptic leap and, while retaining their discursive constructivity, may take their existence in the reality of our spatial-temporal world.

In foregrounding the ways discursivity might channel into and structure this spatial-temporal world, the tongue-in-cheek story about the three umpires seems applicable. But one could cite other, more serious examples, some taken from contemporary cinema. In the box-office hit film *Matrix* (1999, dir. Andy Wachowski, Larry Wachowski) reality has been absorbed by virtual reality, the hyperreal, a hi-tech version of the imagined or the fantastic. In the Spanish movie *Abre los ojos* (Open your eyes, 1997, dir. Alejandro Amenábar), the protagonist's alleged real life is seamlessly channeled into a virtual experience, without any signals of actual death or discontinuity. *eXistenZ* (1999, dir. David Cronenberg) is a film about a virtual reality game, the plugs of which are connected to one's spinal cord with the help of a bioport (which is quite like an umbilical cord); this game offers life-like experiences, wherein virtual reality is not only much more fun and full of life than "real" reality, but actually encompasses this "lived reality" too. What we see and experience as "real" seems to have completely lost its relevance in *Suture* (1993, dir. Scott McGehee and David Siegel), a movie about twin brothers of different races, where the issue of race remains unaddressed throughout the filmic narrative. In *The Truman Show* (1998, dir. Peter Weir), the protagonist lives his life among movie sets: everything around him is literally staged by actors, producers, and directors, who allow him too to perform, albeit unknowingly, his life. In a similar vein, *The Village* (2004, dir. M. Night Shyamalan) depicts the everyday life of a 19th century village, regulated by customs developed over time; this village then turns out to be an enclave carved out by a group of friends in the 1960s. Although the commune's founding generation knows theirs is a world made consciously and artificially, their children and grandchildren take this world for a lived 19th century reality.

The fleeting sense of reality that moves these films is, of course, a chief characteristic of postmodernism, as pinned down by Jean Baudrillard, among others. In this theoretical framework, literature will offer examples for where the "real" has been most spectacularly lost; where unobserved reality has lost its existence; where "facts" can only be approached in mediated forms, textual or otherwise; where the hypothetical and the provisional has taken over; where universes and selves have become plural; where the world cannot be read referentially but only as a series of signs and sign systems, or as interlocking signifiers without corresponding signifieds. As in this framework the literary work hesitates to refer to anything outside itself, literature can no longer be regarded as the "mirror of life," doubling reality through mimesis. Instead, reality becomes a shifting, moving entity, always crossing boundaries, until the difference assumed to exist between reality and imagination or construction will cease to make sense. With the idea of both external reality and its representation in literature destabilized, the very possibility of a pre-existent referent is also questioned. Everything is text and context; signs point only to other signs, not to pre-existent referents or stable signifieds. What we take as reality is fabricated, just as fiction is made, and the subject is created through a series of acts as well. Neither reality nor the subject will be understood as given, waiting to be captured, mirrored, and reflected in literature. Rather, elements of the real, including the self, will be taken as performed, created by acts, acts of language primarily.

Postmodern theories generally agree on the disappearance of reality and the signified. Already the first poststructuralist commentaries of the late 1960s and early 1970s—a transitory period epistemologically—discredited the notion of a system with a central signified. "There is no transcendental or privileged signified," Jacques Derrida proclaimed as early as 1966 ("Structure" 226). This critique of the signified has proved to be, as I have shown elsewhere ("Dangerous Liaisons"), a core component of what one might call the postmodern episteme. Within the world of Derrida's system of floating signifiers and Lacan's incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier, signification becomes an endless horizontal network avoiding any vertical connections between propositions and reality. Following the paradigm set up by Foucault, who defined the Renaissance episteme by its tertiary (word, object, symbol) relation and the classical episteme by its binary (signifier, signified) sign, one might proceed to define the postmodern episteme by having the signifier as its sole component. Both the tertiary and the binary structure of the sign having disappeared, "reality" and "things" give way to "mere" discourse: language and words. Ultimately, in the postmodern age "one remains," as Foucault puts it, "within the dimension of discourse" (*Archeology* 76). It is now impossible to write a history of the referent, for one always ends up engaged in the history of discursive objects—in how history is "fictioned," in the history of objects as they emerge in discourse. The very existence of a reality that precedes discourse—together with an objective view of that reality, what Richard Rorty called a "God's eye view" ("Solidarity" 577)—is being questioned. "An age does not," Gilles Deleuze argues, "pre-exist the statements which express it, nor the visibilities which fill it" (48); "truth," he goes on, "is inseparable from the procedure producing it" (63). Or, as Derrida famously claims, *"Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*" (*Of Grammatology* 158).

Of course, we all know that there is a lot *outside* the text, except we don't quite know what. For it does not seem possible, as we have known since Werner Heisenberg formulated his uncertainty principle, to know the *hors-texte* apart from, or independent of, the *texte*. Even many of those things we thought to have been *hors-texte* have proven to be *texte*—and here performativity can function as a litmus test to signal the difference between *hors-texte* and *texte*, which is really one of my governing theses.

With this theoretical framework, language art (not just contemporary texts but earlier ones too, as I will demonstrate in connection with The Declaration of Independence, Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger*, or Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," for example) can no longer be read as a representation of something outside itself, but as one of the many discourses that produce—performatively, I will show—what we perceive as reality.

This book, then, is about how acts are performed in (literary) texts while making "things," among them, subjects. In this way, it ties not only into theories of the performative but also into current subjectivity theories (poststructuralist, including deconstructionist, postmodern, feminist, queer, post-deconstructionist, and post-colonial), which deny the concept of the subject as essence and understand subjectivities inflected by gender, race, sexuality, class, ethnicity, etc. as constructed, discursively and performatively. I hope to shed light on how these "realities" and subjectivities, which we conceptualize as nominals, have come about through particular processes and should, therefore, be understood in active terms, as verbs rather.

The application of speech act theory to literary texts seems to follow the double trajectory described above in connection with theories of the performative. During the first phase of the history of the concept of the performative—dominated by the constative-performative dichotomy and the tripartite division of locutionary-illocutionary-perlocutionary acts—came the assumption that the performative powerfully tied together such binaries as word and deed, saying and doing, representation and presentation, mind and body, poetic and ordinary language, and speech and writing. It was also assumed that the performative received its validation, in a transcendental manner, from some outside authority, whose pre-existence and co-presence are necessary for conveying intention determining meaning. In the second phase, the performative was adopted by poststructuralist, especially feminist, deconstructionist, and post-deconstructionist theorists, exactly for the way it helped deconstruct the logic of binary thinking. What were formerly seen as either/or binary opposites now became instances of undecidability and aporia, which worked together in the construction of meaning, reality, and the subject. As Sandy Petrey puts it, much of the "excitement of speech act theory is its demonstration that entities often taken as incompatible are instead thoroughly interactive" (6). Indeed, the theory which I call performative constructionism—showing both realities and subjectivities as discursively and catachrestically performed—will formulate its own arguments to discredit binary thinking. If all constructions are performative and the same performative processes can lead to either element of the old binaries, then neither the distinction nor the hierarchy between such binary elements seems to make much sense. Whether one one is female or male, black or white, gay or straight, is—or can be—a matter of choice and performance rather than biology, it seems. Furthermore, subjectivities, together with their identity inflections, will be constructed as discourse: not as signifieds that preexist discourse, but as signifiers structured by difference with relation to other signifiers. As Jeffrey T. Nealon aptly claims in connection with identities,

> any state of sameness actually *requires* difference in order to structure itself. Identity is structured like a language: we can only recognize the so-called plenitude of a particular identity insofar as it differentiates itself from . . . the ostensible non-plenitude of difference. Like Saussure's famous characterization of language, subjective identity knows only "differences *without positive terms.*" (4; emphasis in original)

Performative constructions are, in other words, catachreses, "misapplications," as *The New Princeton Encyclopedia* defines the term (Preminger and Brogan 172), because as discursive constructions they refer to nothing; lacking their signifieds, they are signifiers solely structured by difference with regard to other signifiers.

Radical category extensions will then characterize the binaries under investigation in this book. (i) If the real is as much created as is the imagined world (as in the case of *The Mysterious Stranger*) and the imagined is as real as the reality of here and now (as in the case of "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"), then the boundaries between the real and the imagined will be transgressed, and those categories will overlap. (ii) By the same token, if a man can perform womanhood, then *woman* can mean *man*, too (as in the case of *M. Butterfly*); (iii) if a black person can perform whiteness, then *white* can mean *black* (as in the case of *The Human Stain*); and (iv) if a gay person can perform heterosexuality, then *straight* can mean *gay* equally (as in the case of "In the Cage" or *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*). Therefore, the conclusion to these assumptions is at hand: performative constructionism will offer new arguments toward undoing the binarity of our fundamental logocentric categories and taking performative constructions as catachresis.

I have been interested in a particular set of genres, authors, and texts, whose interest derives not from representation but performance: the construction of realities and subjectivities. They seem to share a particular power that sets them apart from other texts. Some make such strong claims that they create a difference beyond the text itself; in others, words make things in very literal ways; in still others, words make people or types of people in particular ways too.

- The phenomenon commonly called "word magic" can be read as the logocentric instance of the performative. Prominent among these instances, which I call strong performatives, are variations on the originary logocentric moment narrated in the Old and New Testaments. By the same token, declarations and manifestos gain their particularity from belonging to the performative genre *par excellence*. Such strongly performative texts as The Declaration of Independence, the *Dadaist* or the *Surrealist Manifestos* perform political and artistic events as they declare independence or announce the coming of an artistic revolution; moreover, they create (discursively) the subject who issues declarations or manifestos, and is, from now on, a free American, a Dadaist, or a Surrealist.

- Recent controversies about such American canonical texts as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* cannot be understood without taking into account the performative force—in this case the injurious power—of language. Readers have long been offended by the oppressive language of the novel, especially the aggressive use of the pejorative term *nigger*, which has evoked the memories of centuries of oppression and humiliation. Racial stereotyping emerges as a speech act phenomenon.

- Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* celebrates the black woman who found her voice and her self through the wounding power of the word and through being empowered by the word.

- The protagonist's performance in Norman Mailer's "The Time of Her Time" is both perlocutionary and illocutionary: he traumatizes her and puts her into a subordinate class. Denise, however, refuses to be victimized. Empowered by language, she unconstructs herself as a woman subjected to male sexual control, and reconstructs herself as a sexual subject on her own right.

- What the boys experience as real in Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* is created in a logocentric fashion: by word and will. As such, this piece could be read as an instance of strong performativity: Satan makes clay figures, which then come to life. But by making clay figures come to life, Satan constructs himself as creator too, as an extended arm of the Almighty. Moreover, in the final twist to the story, Satan the deconstructor moves the events into mere discourse when admitting to the boys that all this is a dream. Yet here he constructs himself as an even more powerful creator and knower, capable of controlling dreams too.

- Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" could also be read as an instance of strong performativity: Farquhar sets himself free by the power of his will. His self-construction, however, occurs in discourse solely: it is by imagining his return home that he makes of himself a free man. In the final twist added to this story, the events are here moved into the discourse of dream as the dying man imagines his escape.

- Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* showcases the performative understanding of language as action and means of influence, while at the same time it openly deploys rhetorical and pragmatic processes that violate some basic rules and assumptions of communication. A complex marital fight is carried out in speech: words hurt, but also keep the big bad wolf away, while the imaginary son can be made and unmade, as the characters please.

Gender is read as constructed through stylized performances by dressing in texts by Henry James, Kate Chopin, Theodore Dreiser, and Edith Wharton.

- Henry James's *Daisy Miller*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, and *The Wings of the Dove* have women characters fully aware of how society inscribes its norms on the female body through stylized performances. Never being the subject to look, but always the object to be looked at, Daisy Miller accepts her female objecthood brought about by her choice of attire. Probably the first woman protagonist in American literature to recognize that clothes are imposed upon women by society, Isabel Archer insists that certain models of behavior (like the buying and wearing of "things") are prescribed by society, and as such originate in society and not in her self. Milly Theale is one of those Jamesian figures who "have character," which, James insists, pre-exists her socially constructed self.

- The protagonist of Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* ultimately fails in surpassing her objecthood and attaining subjecthood in part because she misunderstands the meaning of clothes. Only at the end does she come to see her self as construction without any substance. She has to learn that representation is "false"; her constructed womanhood is but an empty signifier, a catachresis.

- Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* seems to hesitate between showing woman as having a self to be expressed by her dressing and presenting the construction of the catachrestic self through the call of social norms, especially dressing. Only in the final scene, when she walks into the ocean naked, does she recognize the emptiness of her catachrestic objecthood. The short story entitled "A Pair of Silk Stockings" is predicated entirely on the normative gender assumptions of culture; here Chopin presents womanhood as both process and product, as well as construction and self-construction.

- In Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, Lily Bart knows what duties society prescribes for women. Lily's social ambition shows in her wanting to be as smartly dressed as the rich women. With a passion for *tableaux vivants*, Lily will live moments of feminine objecthood to the full. Her performance will highlight the fact that she owns nothing of herself: body, beauty, even thoughts and ambitions belong to the role she plays.

Certain widely-known codes of conduct can be shown to underlie gender performances. This is especially true of the American South, where the ideal construct of the Southern white woman is predicated on the discourse of white and feminine supremacy, including the widespread acceptance of racialized and gendered social hierarchies and ensuing forms of behavior.

- The cultural perceptions of the South form the discourse underlying the performance of Miss Emily Grierson in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." Expressive citationality is at work in the theatrics performed by both the town and Emily Grierson; these citations of norms of gender and race, womanhood and whiteness, together bring about the icon of the Southern woman.
- Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* is a text whose central topos is construction or constructedness. Gender and race participate in the making of the characters, especially Blanche and Stanley, while the issue of constructedness itself becomes the fundamental conflict of the drama.
- Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" focuses primarily on the grotesque self-construction of the grandmother into a Southern lady, where the ideal she hopes to be approximating in her theatrics is empty and wholly detached from reality. Her performance is manifold, with the citation and iteration of cultural values going on in her speech, dressing, and ways of dealing with people.
- In two misogynistic texts by Jonathan Swift and T. S. Eliot, the authors ironically reverse, in one way or another, the normative constructions of womanhood and trace the process whereby gender is unconstructed.

In some modernist women writers—notably Gertrude Stein, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), Djuna Barnes, Willa Cather, and Carson McCullers—the characters perform acts of identity which invalidate common ground assumptions about gender. While the performative acts revise these assumptions, the women construct themselves into new subjects.

- In Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives*, the characters resist gender norms by revising the love-and-marriage plots. Although they have various relationships, the three servant girls are autonomous beings, subjects who think and desire. Melanctha emerges as the heroine of a female *Bildungsroman* with a character as complex and dynamic as her male predecessors, among them Werther, Julien Sorel, and Raskolnikov.
- Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* subverts the heterosexual love plot. She appears as subject by performing a new kind of womanhood which rests on revised presuppositions, insisting, for example, that women too can be at home in open spaces, can be the subjects of their own life-stories, and their bodies may resist controlling regimes.
- Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* presents one of the most memorable androgynes in modernist fiction: both quester and desired other, autonomous yet produced in sexual relationships, Robin transgresses whatever boundaries she en-

counters. As woman quester, seeker, and wanderer, she is after selfhood and knowledge that lie beyond the bounds of patriarchy.

- *HERmione,* written by H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), portrays a woman's selfhood outside the bounds of both the heterosexual and the homosexual matrix. By the end, Hermione will find autonomy independent of relationships, a selfhood folding, as it were, in itself both subjecthood and objecthood.

- Carson McCullers' *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* presents a complex case of gender performativity: here gender appears as multiple and transgressive, and in each case it is sexually negotiated, thereby dependent on the particular relationship and situation in which in it is performed. Gender is only evoked here, as a relative term, with vague suggestions of femininity and masculinity.

Henry James offers examples of how homosexual identity is being discursively produced as object of attention and desire. Homosexuality is performed in its ontological version in the subtext, while heterosexuality's performance happens in the text. This tension makes for a double narrative, where the text resists homosexual interpretation, but the underwriting, the coded subtext, insists on such a gay reading.

- "The Beast in the Jungle" produces a new discursive subject, the homosexual, in a performative manner. Preceding the conceptualization of gay identity, this performative process cannot refer to any citable model; rather, it performs a new entity, the identity, recently conceptualized, of the gay man. This gay construction seems to go on in the subtext, whereas heterosexuality is evoked on the text level.

- "In the Cage" is an example for mimetic or citational performance going on in the text; it presents subjectivity as discursively produced by hailing ideologies—through the replaying of existing scripts, in this case, the script of "compulsory heterosexuality." Its function is to hide the homosexual planted in the subtext and to have it evoked only by suggestion.

Performativity is involved not only when particular identities are affirmed or stabilized, but also when identities are transgressed, changed, or destabilized. Passing, a way of escaping metaphysical or logocentric binaries, whether between genders, races, sexualities, or classes, is best understood as social performance in Mark Twain, Vladimir Nabokov, David Hwang, James Weldon Johnson, Nella Larsen, and Philip Roth.

Passing can be described either as *full passing*, which is always performance, or *play passing*, which is the interrogation and subversion of the binary system and, as such, is always the performative creation of new ontologies. While full passing will aim to deceive (to be altogether "the same"), play passing will want to reveal its transgression by constantly producing its own slippage. The first is a deadly serious game, where the stakes are high, while playfulness is a key factor in the second.

- Mark Twain's recently published play, *Is He Dead?* problematizes the undecidability of gender identity by emphasizing its theatricality. I discuss three plot elements: the painter Millet's passing as a woman, the foregrounding of "her" constructed body, and the plan to reintroduce Millet as his own imitator.
- Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* foregrounds an instance of gender passing usually not discussed under the heading of passing: in this case it is a pre-adolescent who turns into a "nymphet" or "girleen" in order to pass for a woman. This novel, subverting in other ways too the stability of identity, puts in its center the carnal desire of the grown man for the Dolores/Lolita, who is not a child any more but not a woman yet either.
- The transgressions between dichotomies are further problematized in David Henry Hwang's drama *M. Butterfly*, where discourses of gender, sexuality, race, and colonialism intersect, while imitation and reversal are foregrounded as dominant thematics. This thematic of imitation is exploited in a twofold manner: on the one hand, the French diplomat, René Gallimard plays out a performance of cultural imitation as he reenacts (or thinks he reenacts) the plot of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* (becoming both Pinkerton and Cio-Cio-San, actually), while on the other, a Chinese agent puts on a masquerade of Oriental womanhood as s/he gives the performance of Gallimard's ideal of the "Perfect Woman."

The primary marker of the subject performing race passing is not simply skin color—in many cases skin color is not even the determining factor—but the place the person occupies in the hegemonic system. Thus a particular imbrication of the categories of race and class is clearly observable in the instances where race is being performed, including instances where race passing is performed.

- In James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* race is foregrounded as pure construction, a catachresis lacking its referent. No matter what identity he may claim, the protagonist seems to be full passing—whether for black/woman/homosexual or for white/man/heterosexual—for the sake of some race, gender, or class privilege.
- Nella Larsen also presents a complex case of racial, sexual, and class transgression in her novel *Passing*. Employing not one but two passer protagonists who complement each other in many ways, Larsen is able to create a tension between racial subjects constructed by masking strategies and subjects informed by a catachrestic notion of race.
- In Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*, the protagonist full passes from black to what we could call an ethnically marked version of white, Jewish. What is shared by the various passers in the novel (there are probably four) is that their performances involve uncommon, uninvited, or unreadable transgressions. These passers do not consider their biology or "birthright" as something given; rather, because their subjectivities have a catachrestic constitution, they move easily from one identity inflection to another, taking them on always by association.

I have taken my case studies from texts I greatly value, texts that I have read and taught with much enthusiasm over the past decades. I returned to most in various university lectures and seminars under different titles ("Performed Identities," "Boundary Crossings," "Passing," "Subjectivity Theories"); it was this sustained interest in reading and rereading them—together with an imperative to construct a usable theory, one that might offer a new handle on them—which really provoked this book. I wanted to test my theory on texts showing as wide a variety as possible, horizontally across time, across historical and cultural difference, as well as genre difference. Moreover, I think the way people construct themselves and each other ties into the *comédie humaine* we all enjoy. This is what human beings do: they act and perform, put on masks and toy with masquerade, play and replay, invent and imitate.

Governed by processes whereby things—realities and subjectivities—are made, my case studies have been selected according to how they exhibited different aspects of this performativity. Of course, performativity is demonstrably foregrounded in each; theory "happens" in all. What is common in the texts is that here realities and subjectivities are especially visibly created through performative processes; words make things happen. In the case of subjectivities, they come about either through the performance of existing scripts and norms or through their performative revision. My order of discussion does not follow chronology; instead, the texts are treated in an order that follows my unpacking of the theoretical issues. The diversity of the texts and their non-chronological discussion really reflects another governing thesis of this book, namely that performativity is not a historical category, but one identifiable in all texts and discourses: texts of fiction addressed to fictional readers, texts of fiction addressed to real readers, social and cultural discourses involving fictional audiences, or social and cultural discourses involving real audiences. Performativity, then, seems to be indistinguishable from writing and reading, textuality or discursivity, understood, in a very broad sense, to include literary, social, and cultural discourses alike.

The realities and identities created in these texts problematize such familiar dichotomies as man vs. woman, white vs. black, heterosexual vs. homosexual. Most of them make visible the processes that create the marked and concomitantly marginalized elements of dichotomies, such as the culturally imperialized groups (as opposed to groups in culturally hegemonic positions): women, persons of color, or gay persons. But the pragmatic tools employed in these readings are by no means restricted to how marked configurations are constructed; performative constructionism will reveal that reality and identity constructions rely on the same processes when unmarked configurations, or the privileged terms of the binaries, are being created: the male, the white, the straight. Performative analysis offers ways to understand that none of these terms are innocent or neutral but are the end-products of social-historical processes.

Indeed, they are created through the same processes, whether in privileged or marginal positions, unmarked or marked configurations. The boundaries between them often shift, as those too are constructions. Since it all proves to be a matter of performance—man is as much constructed as woman, black as much as white, straight as much as gay—the boundaries are themselves the reflections of power, and as such they will be crossed, too.

My interest in these texts goes beyond the performative construction of realities and selves, or even the challenges posed by their difficulty. Several of these texts have acquired new critical readings in recent years, and these readings now seem to be taken for granted just as much as contrary readings were before. I am interested, therefore, in the mechanics and background of such interpretive tidal changes. What is it that triggers revisionist readings of the American canon, and what is it that can overwrite or nullify readings previously agreed upon, readings which were considered as obvious at their time as the new readings are today? To answer these questions, I identify the performative processes in texts and their dynamic interactions, or dialogues, with presuppositions and other frame assumptions. These pragmatic processes will be seen to characterize both the literary text and its reception, hence the performative and the presupposition will be helpful tools in both exploring the nature of these difficult texts and understanding the reasons why competing readings have evolved.

Performatives and presuppositions, linguistic and pragmatic concepts I will define early on, are tools for exploring how meanings are produced by the interactions of text and context, as well as the dialogue of writer and reader. Indeed, textual acts brought about by such interaction account for a new readerly involvement, too. Texts will be meaningful for those who participate in the interactional process between reader and text, who respond to the textual acts and citations performed. Obviously, the reader's subject position will play an important role in this interaction, for every reader will have different responses to the acts and the citations. Not only do readers emerge as actively producing meanings (rather than just consuming them), but because they approach the text with different assumptions, different readers will produce different meanings in the same text. And these different responses to the text will create different experiences of the text too. As such, language becomes force and event that happens to the reader.

Some words on the terminology used in this book. Overall, the governing term *performative* is used to refer to the linguistic utterances defined originally by Austin and to the social-discursive processes captured by the same term when it came to be expanded in poststructuralist critical parlance (see my chapters "The performative: early history" and "Performativity in theories of the subject" for definitions). *Speech acts*, or acts performed in, by, and through language, will refer to the larger category within which performatives have come to be explored and classified by *speech act theory*. While near synonyms, I want to point out an important difference between *speech act* and *performative* theory: a systematic account of the performative, *speech act theory* is anchored in Austinian-Searlian theory, while the *performative*, a concept not pulled down by the baggage of totalizing taxonomies, is capable of arching over to poststructuralist thought. *Performativity* will refer to the abstract concept which can be identified behind the various functioning of the performative, whether in the linguistic or the social-discursive sense. The verbal forms—*X performs Y*, *X performing Y*, *performing Y*, or *Y performed*—are used to retain this same basic sense, linguistic and social-discursive, only in this case the process or action aspects are emphasized; *performance*—used in its dictionary meaning as the nominal form of the verb *perform*—will refer to the product of performing. Apart from such standard usage of the terms, I introduce (in the chapter on "Perfor*mance* and perfor*mative* constructions of the subject"), with a synecdochic transference of meaning, two instances where usage is special: perfor*mance* and perfor*mative*, where both narrow down their standard or original meaning. Perfor*mance*—with the last syllable always italicized—will refer to a particular mode of performativity, characterized by a mimetic replaying of norms and the replaying of ruling ideologies when constructing the subject. Perfor*mative*—with the last two syllables always italicized—will refer to another mode of performativity, characterized by a resistance to ruling ideologies and the bringing about of new discursive entities in subject constructions.

Overall, the term *subject* is used in the (1) general sense of the person with a separate body, an 'I,' and a knowledge of this 'I' (the subject as person). Often (2) other elements of the dictionary meaning of the term are emphasized: (i) subject as linguistic or grammatical subject and a sentence position; (ii) subject as speaking-seeing-acting agent; (iii) subject as one who is subjected to another person, as in the phrases "loyal subject" and "subject to the crown." *Subjectivity* as a critical concept will be used to encompass the various interpretations of subjecthood, including those which derive from the above dictionary meanings (subject as person, grammatical subject, subject as agent, subject[ed] to another person), as well as those which specify the relationship between *subjectivity* and *identity*. The concept is understood as an abstract principle connecting multiple identities and multiplicities of the self; *subjectivity* is inflected by *identities*, while it also contains a higher degree of self-awareness about one's personality and its inflections (for definitions and distinctions see the chapter entitled "Performativity in theories of the subject").

Discourse is understood as that domain of statements through which reality is apprehended, setting the limits of knowing, thinking, and speaking. Moreover, discourse is that which systematically produces its objects, "the objects of which they speak," as Foucault puts it (*Archeology* 49). In this book I study a particular kind of discursive practices, the discursive production of realities and subjectivities via performative processes (for the definition of discourse see beginning of Chapter Two).

I will employ the term *poststructuralism* to refer to literary and cultural theory grounded in critical thinking that not only came after structuralism but broke with the structuralist paradigm. I take poststructuralism not only to include the early radical theorists, the movers and shakers of the paradigm break (Derrida, Foucault, Barthes, etc.), but also the more recent schools and trends, which take particular directions—towards post-deconstructionist, feminist, post-colonial, queer thought, for example—without contesting the Derridian-Foucauldian-Barthesian framework, to use a simplifying label. I try to avoid using the term *postmodernism* interchangeably with *poststructuralism* (even though they often are used interchangeably in critical discourse); when I use *postmodern* and its derivatives, I refer either to a particular kind of writing that emerged after World War II, or to the particular Lyotardian-Baudrillardian line *within* the general heading of poststructuralism, or, indeed, to the larger epistemic condition which framed either of these.

In line with contemporary critical usage, my quotation marks—in cases other than around titles of texts—are meant to signal points of defamiliarization or semantic distancing, and not just places where only the near match—but not the *mot juste*—has been found. In these cases the innocent meaning of the word is questioned, together with the assumption that such meanings can be taken for granted. For example, when "realities" are discussed, the innocent meaning questioned by the quotation marks includes assumptions about certain planes of existence preceding discourse. By using quotation marks, the innocence and transparency of the term "race" get questioned, suggesting that in fact it is a misnomer. Or, when I speak of "the 'revelation' of truth," the assumption questioned includes the pre-existence of a truth to be revealed. Or, the phrase "the construction of 'truth'" suggests doubts about whether truth exists and is knowable.

This is the exploration of a critical concept and a study in literary critical analysis. It will use linguistic (performative/speech act) theories, as well as poststructuralist (especially deconstructionist, post-deconstructionist, and feminist) cultural and literary theories from both the U.S. and Europe. Each larger chapter will confine itself to a selected critical topic, will begin with the critical and contextualized elaboration of the topic and continue in subchapters exploring the various aspects of the larger topic. The chapters and subchapters will conclude with representative case studies taken predominantly from American literature (with the exception of one section discussing the Bible, another discussing a major text from American history, and yet another reading a poem by Jonathan Swift). I will use historical chronology as a framework within sections which are not otherwise chronological.

My readings are conducted reciprocally whether anchored in linguistic theories (Chapter One) or in poststructuralist theories (Chapters Three to Five). In other words, I first read the texts through linguistic performative theories, then continue reading them from the poststructuralist perspective, to conclude by reassessing the original framework (Chapter One). Similarly, I trace the expansion of the performative into poststructuralist thinking, then continue by importing some concepts from linguistic theory (for example, the presupposition), which will then allow me to reassess the original poststructuralist framework (Chapters Three to Five). By following these two trajectories of reciprocity, I hope to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the analysis.

CHAPTER ONE

THE STRONG PERFORMATIVE

The belief that the spoken word is charged with magical power—that language can influence reality and words can bring about change—goes back to primitive origins. Incantations, invocations, enchantments, spells, and prayers are all ritual and institutional acts relying on word magic, or, what I will later call strong performativity; they are efforts believed to control natural (and supernatural) forces by words. Since ancient times poets and seers have been known as not only seeing and conveying their vision, but also using language as such magic. This belief in the power of the uttered word underlies the everyday custom of wishing good luck, wishing good health when taking a drink or sneezing. One still hopes that the word can influence the management of the world.

Of course, word magic is not just an element of the imaginative paraphernalia of poetry, religion, or shamanism, but a significant topic—under the name *performative*—in the philosophy of language too. The potential of the word as action came to be seriously theorized in the first decades of the 20th century, some time before J. L. Austin, whose complex elaboration of the performative and the speech act in the 1950s provided the foundation for later pragmaticist as well as poststructuralist theories.

The performative: early history

The first phase of the history of the concept of the performative embraces roughly the period between the 1910s and the 1970s, with its heyday probably from the early 1950s to the mid-1970s. Coinciding with the time of the modern episteme in philosophy, linguistics, and literary theory, this early conceptualization of performativity exhibits several traits of the formalist-structuralist paradigm. Taking for granted the centrality of the binary between the signifier and the signified, or the sign anchored in reality, the period is marked by a search for comparable conceptual binaries underlying social and cultural formations, an interest in universal patterns in everyday language, as well as a pragmatic understanding of meaning, whose stability has not been questioned yet. Exhibiting the "power of the word," the performative was understood in this epistemic framework as a language structure capable of creating something outside language; in my terminology, this is the case of strong performativity, where the signifier brings about a signified. Moreover, the presence of an outside (transcendental) authority—or at least a speaker with a particular intention—was assumed to be necessary to validate the act, to make the words powerful. Speech act theory born between the 1950s and '70s took off from the constative-performative dichotomy, taking for granted, even in the locutionary-illocutionary-perlocutionary triad, the binarity of language processes as foregrounded in reference. All along, the binaries, understood as transformations of the signifier/signified dichotomy—such as word and thing, word and deed, saying and doing—remained uncontested within the presuppositional matrix of the concept of the performative.

Adolf Reinach was probably the first to come up, already in 1913, with a theory of "social acts," defining them as acts "performed in the very act of speaking" ("The Apriori Foundations" 36). Among social acts Reinach included promise and command, as well as requesting, admonishing, questioning, informing, and answering, all rooted in "common consciousness," the *a priori* theory of law, or the universal grammar of human institutions. Marcel Mauss, best known for his theory of the gift, studied "verbal gifts," or the "giving of one's word," from an ethnographic perspective, and decided that such acts as the giving of gifts were "ritual acts," involving agents, actions, social conventions, and common beliefs ("Essai"). Erwin Koschmieder, in writings published in the 1930s and '40s, came up with the most extensive theory of speech acts to date. A Slavic scholar teaching at Breslau, Vilnius, and Munich, Koschmieder postulated a new "case of coincidence" of utterance and action through examples (which Austin will use and make famous) such as "I hereby bless him" and "I hereby open the meeting," in which "action arises" ("Zur Bestimmung" 26–27). Here action is described as not just coincidental with the utterance, but as having no existence apart from the utterance. In 1934, Karl Bühler distinguished between three functions of language: representation, expression or intimation, and appeal or arousal. The last one he also considered the signal function of language: through signals speakers perform actions and make others perform them too (*Theory*). The utterance *"Es regnet,"* for example, has the signal function in that it provokes practical consequences (of taking an umbrella, for example); such "speech actions," in other words, have the goal of steering others to action.

Underlying the ideas of acts performed by speech and acts brought about by words is the relatively novel understanding of meaning as use. Already in the 1920s Alan Gardiner, the main representative of British contextualism, differentiated between language as system and its use, or speech as action ("Definition," "Some Thoughts"). At the same time the anthropologist Branislaw Malinowski described language as having an "essentially pragmatic character" (316), and connected language, context, use, and action in this pragmatic dimension. He claimed that language functions were contextually determined by situation, including both linguistic and cultural context, and considered language to be part of ordinary activities, often the activity itself, or a "mode of action" producing cooperation between people (315). Preceding Wittgenstein by some 30 years, Malinowski insisted that the meaning of a word lay in its use: "A word *means* to a native the proper use of the thing for which it stands" (321). "A word is used when it can produce an action, and not to describe one, still less to translate thoughts" (321). American pragmatism and analytic philosophy, especially English ordinary language philosophy, further developed this idea. In the American tradition, Charles S. Peirce defined semiosis as action and process, involving a relation between sign, object, and interpretant (*Collected Papers*); William James's moral and epistemological pragmatism was rooted in psychology; John Dewey practiced behaviorist pragmatism; while Charles W. Morris emphasized the interactive pattern of human communication, where language use depends on the interpretation as well as production of signs (*Signs*). In England the two schools of analytic philosophy both generated pragmatic ideas: Oxford (Gilbert Ryle, Austin, Peter Strawson, and H. Paul Grice) and Cambridge (Bertrand Russell, George Edward Moore), with Ludwig Wittgenstein contributing to both schools, as well as mediating between the Vienna Circle and ordinary language philosophy. With Austin, Oxford philosophy crossed the Atlantic, to be disseminated by two Berkeley professors, Grice and Austin's student John Searle.

Wittgenstein formulated the claim more publicly than many of his predecessors that the meaning of language resides in its use: "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (*Philosophical* §23); "it is the particular use of a word only which gives the word its meaning" (*Blue* 69). "A meaning of a word is a kind of employment of it. For it is what we learn when the word is incorporated into our language" (*On Certainty* §61). From the idea of meaning as use, Wittgenstein arrived at the idea of he called language games, those "forms of language with which a child begins to make use of words" (*Blue* 17). In this framework children will be able to learn their native language by means of language games, consisting of both "language and the actions into which it is woven" (*Philosophical* §7). The utterances derive their meaning from being part of activities of the language games he lists in *Philosophical Investigations*:

> Giving orders and obeying them—
> Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements—
> Constructing an object from a description (a drawing)—
> Reporting an event—
> Forming and testing a hypothesis—
> Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams—
> Making up a story; and reading it—
> Play-acting—
> Singing catches—
> Guessing riddles—
> Making a joke; telling it—

> Solving a problem in practical arithmetic—
> Translating from one language into another—
> Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, and praying. (§23)

It is not difficult to see the performative nature of these acts, and a "family resemblance," to use another Wittgensteinian term, between language games and performatives; of the language games listed by Wittgenstein, several are performatives (for example, giving orders, reporting events, thanking, cursing, greeting). Wittgenstein was indeed, as Douglas Robinson puts it, "exploding towards the performative" (*Performative* 29).

Austin was developing his theory of speech acts from 1939 on, especially in his conference lecture and article "Other Minds" (1946), his Oxford lectures in the 1940s and 50s on "Words and Deeds," and his William James lectures given at Harvard from 1955, to be published posthumously in 1962 [Austin died in 1960] as *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin was deeply influenced by the contextualism of Gardiner, the theories of Malinowski (whom he never mentions), as well as Morris's distinction between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (even though he never uses the word pragmatics, preferring "linguistic phenomenology" instead ["Plea" 182]). But by establishing a linguistic function other than stating facts, Austin clearly broke with British empiricist thought.

Austin's theory of speech acts hinges on the concept of the performative. He developed first his theory of constatives and performatives, and then his integrated theory of speech acts. In these lectures he discussed those sentences which can be looked at as performing an act or a ritual, or as entering into a contract or commitment. When performing acts, the speakers of utterances used to perform certain acts (to make a promise, to apologize, to pass a sentence, to name, among others) are agents, whose actions are capable of bringing about changes in the world. To take a non-Austinian example, one from American literature, when Captain Ahab performs his baptismal ceremony, deliriously howling, *"Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli"* (Melville 462), he evokes the Christian ceremony while at the same time turns it ironically upside down. As such, since he both baptizes and baptizes with a difference, he acts doubly as an agent, twice making a change in the world. Such utterances whereby agents perform actions are the performatives. Performatives are defined as non-descriptive utterances, as utterances with the force of actions. Much like the rules of chess constitute the game of chess, utterances comply with certain constitutive rules, shared by all participants.

In his grand theory, then, Austin considered language both as a mode of knowledge and action, insisting that language had two functions: description and performance, manifest in the constative and the performative, respectively. Constative utterances are descriptive statements and express a "scientistic" aspect of language: either true or false, their truth value depends on the state of affairs they describe or speak about. For example, we accept the constative utterance "The wall is painted red" as true if it corresponds to certain facts in reality, namely, if the wall is indeed red. The constative is basically informed by the metaphysical assumption that it is possible to perceive the world the way it "really" is, to posit a self-same relationship between reference and phenomena. The performative seems to override this self-same relationship between signifier and signified in the sense that it brings the two levels together: the performative *creates* the thing itself instead of *referring* to it. Austin's examples include ceremonial statements such as "I promise," "I do [take this man to be my lawful wedded husband]" (uttered in the course of a marriage ceremony), and "I name this ship the *Queen Elisabeth*" (uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem of a ship). In performative utterances such as "I promise to return the book to the library tonight," saying the sentence does the promising. To make such statements in appropriate circumstances is not to describe or state, but rather to do something, to perform an act. Performatives reflect the dramatic aspect of speech: they constitute language in terms of action. Performative utterances are not rue or false, but have force, performative force: they make the actions come about, and establish a certain binding responsibility on the part of the speaker for the action performed.

Lacking truth value, the performative can be either felicitous or infelicitous—in other words, can either be powerful or fall flat. For it being felicitous certain conditions must hold, which Austin called felicity conditions. The force of the performative depends on the satisfaction of particular institutional and conventional conditions; these are contextual parameters, including a shared knowledge of pre-existing conventions, assumptions, or codes, a common ground of institutional practices. In other words, performatives have force from the social, institutional, or cultural context they are embedded in. In addition to institutional conditions, certain other conventions must also be satisfied for a performative utterance to be happy: these conditions appear in the form of statements, or presuppositions, which must be true. Austin considers the truth of presuppositions as precondition of felicitous acts primarily in the context of reference.

Austin developed his theory of three speech acts, acts performed in and by language, in the later William James lectures. The three acts he differentiated were the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. He described he locutionary acts as the acts of saying something, "roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense" (*How To Do* 108); illocutionary acts as those performed in saying something, "utterances which have a certain [conventional] force" (*How To Do* 108); and perlocutionary acts as acts having certain consequential effects, "what we bring about or achieve *by* saying something" (*How To Do* 108). This tripartite model assumes that every utterance has an illocutionary force, that is, all speech acts are performative.

Austin suggested that acts that philosophers and linguists considered constatives at the time—such as stating facts, giving information, or giving a description—should rather be viewed as a special class of illocutionary acts. In this framework, the constative is considered just one subset of the performative, where performatives can give rise to constatives and stating, and reference is also being considered performative. With the constative element collapsed into the performative, the illocutionary and the performative emerge as the general terms, while the constative, its primacy cancelled, is reduced into a special case of the performative. Every utterance is primarily an act performed while saying something; therefore, every speech act is always performative.

The performative force is understood as independent of whether it is an explicit performative, with the appropriate performative formula ("I promise") making it clear "how what is said is to be understood" (*How To Do* 70), or an implicit performative, where the conventionally predictable verb is missing ("I will be there tonight"). An underlying performative clause was later posited for every utterance by John R. Ross ("Declarative"), George Lakoff ("Linguistics"), and Jerrold Sadock (*Towards a Linguistic Theory*, "Aspects"), who developed the general theory of the performative hypothesis, claiming that every utterance contained as its higher clause a performative verb, therefore every utterance is performative. All utterances are speech acts, even when they lack the speech act verbs—the so-called "explicit performative preface" (Stampe 2) or "speech act formulae" (Mey, *Pragmatics* 107). With the performative formula of the explicit performative as "neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the recognition of . . . performatives," as Sadock notes (*Towards a Linguistic Theory* 58), the performative's primacy and universality is established.

The performative hypothesis also posits the public, conventional, and institutional as well as interactional nature of all communication, and assumes the performative to be culture-dependent (Marmaridou 186, 194). "Speaking a language," Searle claims, "is performing acts according to rules" (*Speech Acts* 36–7). Speech acts are taken to be social acts in the sense that they do not depend on the beliefs or thoughts of "any one individual that happens to be its agent" (Tsohatzidis, "Paradox" 237). Mary Louise Pratt also emphasized the public character of the speech act, insisting that literary works were public, institutional, speech acts, lacking any personalized addressee, but promoting the playing of generalized social roles ("Ideology"). Mey calls this latter element pragmatic acting, and claims that it is a contextualized, adaptive human behavior (*Pragmatics*). Its context is made up of convention, culture, and social structure, against whose background interlocutors try to influence one another, as well as make changes in the world.

Logos, the originary instance of the strong performative: some Biblical examples

Logocentrism is the term which Jacques Derrida uses for the position that the stability of language—as well as systems of thought in general—rests on external anchors: the authority of the transcendental signified ("God"), or the signified which pre-exists, and has an independent existence from, the signifier. Identifying logocentrism as "the exigent, powerful, systematic, and irrepressible desire for [the] signified" (*Of Grammatology* 49) permeating Western thought, Derrida claims that it posits a "necessity of relationship between . . . signifiers and signified . . . between the order of phonic signifiers and the content of the signifieds" (44). I want to tie my first, "originary" type of performative to this logocentric way of thinking in the sense that here words are believed to indeed make present, by bringing about, the signified evoked by the performative utterance. In this case the performative will indeed be validated from the outside: by its power to bring about "things" external to language—things "out there."

The foundational moment of logocentrism, when God creates by the *logos*, exploits performative power, the "power of the word," in a rather obvious manner. Tying the signifier to the signified, the word brings about presence in the world "out there." Indeed, the narrative of origin related at the very beginning of *Genesis* abounds in instances when words make things, and saying and doing are one: "Let there be light,"[1] "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters," or "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Gen. 1: 3, 6, 26). This "Ur-performative" is evoked emphatically at the beginning of the New Testament: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God" (John 1: 1). Commonly referred to as word magic or the power of words, and variably termed in speech act theory as illocutionary acts (Austin, *How to Do* 108), acts of "originary performativity" (Derrida, *Specters* 36–37), "linguistic magic" (Fotion 51), or "performative sorcery" (Loxley 51), these are cases with a strong performative force, where the word as a vehicle of creation is used to produce some new reality. Man's whole existence rests on the power of God's word: "man lives from every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD" (Deut. 8:3).

God creates the world by virtue of his own agency; as the Almighty, he is the absolute Agent or Subject, whose position in the sentence is fixed by Divine Law. This Law, conveyed in the *Decalogos* or *Decalogue* and reinscribed in subsequent laws, forbids man to refer to Him by the name or give his visual representation. When Moses asks his name, he says, "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex. 3:14) (in other translations, "I AM THAT I AM"). And when Moses rephrases his question, asking really for a nominal form to be used in the object position in a sentence, God replies, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Ex. 3:14). In other words, there is no way to put God in the object position: his name cannot be referred to with a nominal, only by reiterating his subjecthood or self-existence, "I AM." In this text, it is indeed, as Émile Benveniste claims of subjectivity in general, "in and through language that man constitutes himself as a *subject*, because language alone establishes the concept of 'ego' in reality, in *its* reality which is that of the being" ("Subjectivity" 729; emphasis in original). God's subjectivity is truly a property of language: "'[e]go' is he who *says* 'ego'" (729; emphasis in original). In other words: God's ego comes about discursively and performatively: by uttering the performative *ego*: "I AM."

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[1] Quotations are from the *New Geneva Study Bible*.

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain," says the third commandment (Ex. 20:7). By the same token, creating a visual object out of God is also forbidden: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image," the second commandment insists (Ex. 20:4). God will not be reduced to an icon to be looked at or an idol, the Lacanian *objet a* of the gaze (*Four Fundamental* 112–113). If God pleases, he shall reveal Himself, but by not showing his face during his theophanies to Moses, He cannot be the object of the gaze of either Moses or subsequent human imagination.

Speech act theory allows us to make several claims about the logocentric (strong) performative of the Almighty Subject. First, these are performative acts with a tremendous performative force indeed: words make a world. Second, utterance is coincidental with action; action has no existence apart from the utterance. Third, these are acts of self-referentiality: they have, to apply Benveniste's apt characterization of the performative in general, the "peculiar quality" of "referring to a reality that [they themselves] constitute," making, Benveniste claims, "the signified . . . identical to the referent" (*Problems* 236). Indeed, at the time when God's Ur-performative is uttered, there is no "world" yet for which the word could stand: that world is just being made, brought about performatively by the word. God's performative, and its being both act and language, will not allow representation, the *stat pro* of mimicability, to be taken as the universal or standard semiotic idiom. Rather, as an act of self-presence uttered by the ultimate Subject, it conjoins word and world, causing its own truth: creation.

My reading of the story of biblical creation by word up to now was moved basically by the theoretical apparatus developed in linguistics, philosophy of language, and pragmatics during the first, pre-mid-1970s phase of the history of the concept. Since the mid-1970s, however, new approaches have entered the study and application of the concept of the performative, causing "theoretism," as Jacques Derrida points out, "in the particular forms that triumphed at the very beginning of the 1960s, to show their age both within philosophy" (*Negotiations* 78). Derrida is obviously referring to structuralism, which I described elsewhere as the depth model *par excellence* of the modern episteme, characterized, among others, by dichotomies of inside and outside, essence and appearance, latent and manifest ("Dangerous Liaisons"). Derrida sees the reason for a growing interest in pragmatics in its capacity to displace such either/or methodologies geared at "*either* the external conditions *or* the intrinsic content of a text" (78). "[F]astening on the performative dimensions of discourse or writing" (78), poststructuralist theories have managed to conjoin, Derrida insists, "external analysis of the situation" and "internal analysis of content" (79), and turned "to analyze the performativity of writing itself" (79). Moreover, with the poststructuralist approach the constative/performative distinction returns with a difference, as a highly problematic dichotomy. This return with a difference will lead to at least three admissions. First, the constative, informed by the assumption of some stable referential meaning, will no longer be considered a transparent notion. Instead, being posited as one subset of the performative, the performativity of stating and reference will serve as an argument supporting the claim of poststructuralism about meaning being, as Catherine Belsey points out, "differential, not referential" (*Poststructuralism* 10). Second, instead of fixing the relationship between word and thing (as the dichotomy of the signifier and signified was fixed and hierarchical in the way *logos* was understood: once created, it was there as a signified, with primacy over the signifier), the performative came to function within the realm of the signifier only, extending to all kinds of linguistic processes at work in the text, such as the performative construction of the subject and the performativity of writing and reading. Third, constativity and performativity will cease to be easily differentiated conceptual schemes, but such rather which exhibit strong traits of undecidability and aporia.

Viewed from the poststructuralist (especially deconstructivist) perspective, then, God does not only assign a form of ontology to his creations, but also produces himself as Creator Almighty. So his self-positioning as subject does not pre-exist the originary logocentric moment; rather, his subjecthood and agency are the effects of this performative drama. Furthermore, God as transcendental signified uses the *logos* to create the world while the *logos* as transcendental signifier creates God. This is the instance when, as Derrida claims elsewhere, the word as "son" of a "fathering origin" creates the Divine Father ("The Father" 1843).

God's performative, however, contains an inherent contradiction throughout, reflecting on the impossibility of any founding act. His words are acts indeed, whereby the world is created. As acts of authority and primal agency, they are unique and singular—as well as, it would seem, acts of self-presence. This is where, I suggest, the contradiction lies. In this originary moment, God creates the world by fathering the word; his act requires self-presence, the presence of his authorizing ego. This is the very moment when, as Derrida puts it, "living *logos* is alive in that it has a living father . . . that is *present*, standing near it, behind it, within it, sustaining it with his rectitude, attending it in person in his own name" ("The Father" 1841). However, already in this founding act, he as Father, in a gesture of deferral, delegates his power to the son, the word, allowing for the possibility of doing away with self-presence. Moreover, no matter how unprecedented and unrepeatable his founding act is, his words can gain their power and significance only from the tradition they are embedded in: from being conventional and citational. In the absence of the Father to enable his son the *logos*, convention will validate this moment and allow it to be repeated, iterated, in similar future acts, among them, naming, swearing, blessing, cursing, promising, making vows, or performing rites calling for divine intervention. These performative acts gain their power from iteration: from repeating with a difference the originary performative, where God as Father of the *logos* created the world.

Naming is the iterable act *par excellence*, since it must be performed with each object and individual. When God gives names to his creations, he secures his power over them by names that cause their own truth in a particular way: by predicting future events or character traits. God's performative of naming is therefore not arbitrary, but posits and indexical relationship between name and its bearer. The Bible is the compendium of such talking names. For example, he renames Abram for Abraham, making him a "high father," the "father of many nations": "I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make many nations of you, and kings shall come from you" (Gen. 17: 5, 6). Next, he renames Sarai to Sarah, thereby securing her position as a princess to be followed by noble descendants. By receiving their new covenant names, the patriarch and the matriarch are brought under God's rule and are given a sacred mission. However, some names seem to verge between description and performance, capturing, in a constative manner, a particular state of affairs, while at the same time retaining performative force as well. Isaac, for example, bears the name meaning laughter because at his birth the mother laughed for joy at the supernatural work of grace; due to the performative power of the word, however, the choice of his name will act as a forecast of happiness. Esau received his name (meaning hairy) for being "like a hairy garment all over" (Gen. 25:25), while his twin brother was called Jacob because at birth "his hand took hold of Esau's heel" (Gen. 25:26). In addition to such constative function, both names trigger, performatively, future events.

Problematizing the issue of self-presence, other kinds of performatives follow, in an iterative manner, the model set down by God's originary performative. Swearing "to himself" (Gen. 22: 16), for example, God blesses his people, thereby guaranteeing that they multiply in the future: "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore" (Gen. 22: 17). He establishes a binding responsibility for the truth of his actions, and, expecting the same from his people, offers his act for future iteration: "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be a sin to you" (Deut. 23: 21). God performs the originary act of promising, providing a model for his people, those empowered by his word, for future promises. This is an act of promising *par excellence* not only because it is presented as an originary first act, but also because it is the ultimate model for all later vows and promises, the "standard promise," which J. Hillis Miller describes as those made significantly by "an 'I,' ego, or subject, a person, ideally male, in full possession of his senses, speaking in the present with deliberate intention, and uttering 'I promise so and so'" (*Speech Acts* 79). First establishing a hierarchy between vows and promises, the text claims that all promises, and in fact all words, are binding. "That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth" (Deut. 23:23). It seems that here the word is relieved of the necessity of God's presence as a male subject, delegating this presence to a surrogate, a speaker who takes God's place in his absence.

In God's absence, performative force is secured by the codification of convention. The speech act of making vows, for example, is described in the Bible as having a strict order: it has to be uttered loud, freely, without pressure, by the person familiar with the binding consequences. Chapter 30 of Numbers details the specific laws concerning vows, including the specification of who is, to use a Shakespearean word, "oathable" (*Timon of Athens* IV, iii). Within the speech act framework, these are the felicity conditions for the "happy" performative. Accordingly, vows can be made to both God and man: while the latter can, the former cannot be annulled, except by the specific prayers uttered one day of the year, on Yom Kippur. As ritual acts, both the vow and its annulment are tied to certain conventions. The oath or swear, having a stronger performative force than a vow, can never be taken back or broken: even though Joshua was tricked into swearing by the Gibonites, his oath was still binding.

Blessing and curse are overwhelmingly important performative acts, whether God blesses man (Gen. 1:28), God blesses the Sabbath (Gen. 2: 3), God blesses his allies (Gen. 22: 17), or man blesses God, as Moses does in his Song (Ex. 15: 1–18), Deborah in hers (Judg. 5: 2–31), or David in Psalm 30. But not just anyone can make a forceful blessing; this is why, for example, Balak calls Balaam to curse the Jews: "for I know that he whom you bless *is* blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed" (Num. 22: 6). However, a curse cannot have force if it is uttered against God's will: "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?" asks Balaam (Num. 23: 8).

As a performative act, the Biblical or Kohanite blessing proceeds according to its strict constitutive rules too. Similarly, the engagement and wedding blessing must follow an old ritual order. In both cases, the object of the blessing is not man but God, as in the case of the table blessing too: "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which he has given you" (Deut. 8: 10).

Rites calling for direct divine intervention form a particular case of performative-constative interaction: by the performative force of the utterance, they test, as it were, the truthfulness of the person against whom divine judgment is conditionally directed. In the divine judgment of jealousy, for example, the priest utters a curse, which will only take effect if the woman indeed committed adultery: "if you have gone astray *while* under your husband's *authority*, . . . the LORD make you a curse and an oath among your people, when the LORD makes your thigh rot and your belly swell" (Num. 5: 21). Comparable is the case of the mock burial ceremony introduced around the 9th century: the evocation of death serves as a deterrent to those who might have sworn falsely, and who deserve all retribution and curse (Lev. 26: 21–45, Deut. 28: 15–68).

The New Testament is similarly rich in instances of performativity. To take the most conspicuous example, Jesus Christ is considered Word Made Flesh, who came into the world as God's son and emissary. Not only is he healing people with the perlocutionary power of his word ("Your faith has made you well" [Matthew 9:22; Mark 10:52; Luke 8:48, 18:42]), but is ultimately getting resurrected as the Son of God.

In a reading framed by speech act theory, at least three points can be made in connection with Christ's performative powers: these concern (i) paternity (of both the word and Christ), (ii) delegation, absence, and iteration, and (iii) the undecidability between the constative and the performative. One, by declaring Christ to be the Son of God and Word Made Flesh, the fathering origin of the *logos* is evoked in these texts. Christ as the *logos* connects the world of God with the human world, as well as things seen and unseen. This is the reason why Christ speaks in parables: he is the "basis of the correspondence," Hillis Miller observes, "within the realm of language, . . . the correspondence between his realistic narrative of sowing, fishing, or household care and those unseeable things of which the parable 'really' speaks" (*Tropes, Parables* 137). Two, with the insertion of Christ between God and his Word, God's originary self-presence gets to be removed several steps further. Not only will God's power be transferred to Christ, but God's *logos* will be transferred to Christ as the *logos*. Christ will speak in parables, a genre *par excellence* of transference, combining, as Mark Turner claims, the element of story with projection (*Literary Mind* 5). The words of God are represented by the words of Jesus, whose parables project one story to another, contain their meanings in embedded forms. Moreover, Jesus will delegate at least some of his power to the disciples and, after the death of the disciples, when the Church is capable of providing the institutional context for meaningful iteration, to the priests. Three, in the process of building an institution, the early Christian Church starts to emphasize the historical accuracy—or constativity—of the Gospels, thereby launching, as Douglas Robinson observes, a "strong move away from the *power* of words, toward the *truth* of words" (*Performative* 33). While the parables of Jesus are performative rather than constative in the sense that they, Hillis Miller points out, "not so much passively name something as make something happen" (139), the Gospels claim to be accurate records of the words and deeds of Christ.

In all these examples one can observe a rupture between radical presence and radical absence, uniqueness and mimicability, the fulfillment of authority and the satisfaction of convention. The originary performative establishes a relation of future anterior temporality with its repetitions: while the radical act of the founding moment invents its own tradition within which it is meaningful, God's original words are the repetition of an established formula retroactively assigned to the originary moment. As a consequence of this, the originality and firstness of the originary performative will be destabilized, with the successfully iterated performative—which, Derrida insists, adheres to a "general citationality" and "conform[s] with an iterable model" (*Limited* 17, 18)—overruling the distinction between original and derivative, or primary and secondary moment. Indeed, in speech acts, which form but a subset of Derridian "writing," there can be no first or "original" moment motored by a single person's crafting and presence, the "present intention" of a "*consciousness* as the ultimate authority" ("Signature" 181; emphasis in original). There is, Derrida continues,

> no such thing as a code—organon of iterability—which could be structurally secret. The possibility of repeating and thus identifying the marks is implicit in every code, making it into a network [*une grille*] that is communicable, transmittable, decipherable, iterable for a third, and hence for every possible user in general. ("Signature" 180)

The performative force of the succeeding utterances, as well as their readability, therefore, depends on repetition and, concomitantly, absence—or, to use Derrida's familial imagery, an iterative structure "orphaned and separated at birth from this assistance of its father" ("Signature" 181). And the caveat here: this negative description (of the iterative structure orphaned at birth) applies, indirectly, to one moment, when the Father's ultimate presence and absolute authority bring about a code, as yet a "secret cipher" ("Signature" 180), and offer it to his sons for iteration—and, I would add: offers the subsequent repetitions *as* his sons *in* iteration—an iteration always evoking (but never attaining) "the pure singularity of the event" (191). Never again does the speech act posit the logocentric presence of the Father of the *logos*; in later instances, as we have seen, God might be evoked, called upon, as well as represented in some way, through a chain of perpetual deferral. His mark will be endowed with the possibility, as Hillis Miller puts it, "of every mark to be repeated and still to function as a meaningful mark in new contexts that are cut off entirely from the original context, the 'intention to communicate' of the original maker of the mark" (*Speech Acts* 78).

A performative genre *par excellence*: the declaration and the manifesto

In the next section I will discuss declarations and manifestos as further instances of strong performativity, where the word is used to produce a new reality. In terms of the commitment and responsibility involved, declarations and manifestos have the strongest force. These acts satisfy the description of Austin's exercitives ("a decision that something is to be so" [qtd. in McCawley 32]), James D. McCawley's operatives ("in which the speaker makes something the case by saying that it is to be the case" [17]), and, above all, Searle's declarations in that they make the propositional content and reality correspond ("Classification" 37).

In Searle's general theory of speech acts, declarations are different from his other categories, assertives, directives, commissives, and expressives, in that here "saying makes it so" (*Expression* 16) and that here "we bring about changes through our utterances" (29). As such, declarations are paradigm illocutionary acts in that when they are successfully performed, a change in the world occurs. Indeed, by asserting, promising, stating, or ordering, the state of affairs contained in the propositional content of the illocutionary act will not come about. That is why Shakespeare, in *Timon of Athens*, could split the two parts of the illocutionary act of promising friendship into making the promise and being a friend: "Promise me friendship, but perform none," says Timon to Alcibiades (IV, iii). When a government official announces, for example, no matter how very formally, that a painting is an "original Boticelli," this does not make that painting an original Boticelli. Because, to use James Loxley's witty explanation: "saying 'I promise to butter the parsnips' butters no parsnips" (51). Only in declarations will propositional content correspond with reality at the moment when it is uttered. "Declarations are alone," Loxley continues, "in producing the situation they describe, such that if I say you're fired, you're fired; if I say the meeting is adjourned, then the meeting is adjourned" (51). Moreover, a promise connects in time two situations that are otherwise apart from each other: the moment of promising and the moment of fulfilling a promise. This is the "irreducibly temporal aspect [of] the promise: it looks forward to its own felicity" (99). Elie Wiesel's novel *The Oath* exploits this temporal gap between promising and fulfilling that promise when the protagonist's oath, made as a child with all members of the community that whoever would survive the pogrom will forever bury the secret of its story, is overwritten by a more powerful impulse, one he recognizes as an adult: that if by telling he could save a young life, then he must tell the world about it, even if he will thereby break his original oath. (He comes to this recognition after realizing, much like Timon, that he actually promised not keep the promise.) Only in declarations are these two moments coincidental, bringing about a correspondence between propositional content and reality. "Declarations," Searle argues, "bring about some alternation in the status or condition of the referred to object or objects solely by virtue of the fact that the declaration has been successfully performed" ("Classification" 37). They are a special case of illocutionary acts in that they have two illocutionary points: they get the words to match the world and get the world to match the words. Searle calls this consequence of illocutionary point "direction of fit," the difference that "determines how that content is supposed to relate to the world" (29). In declaratives, then, this direction of fit is simultaneously both "words-to-world" and "world-to-words" (38). On the one hand, they successfully manage to get language match the world and, on the other, they get the world match the language.

The Declaration of Independence (1776) is one of the greatest political documents of all times, brilliantly exploiting the strong performativity of this mode of writing. An expression of Enlightenment logic, it argues along the lines of a simple syllogism: people have the right to throw off despotic governments (major premise); the British King has established absolute tyranny over the colonies (minor premise); therefore, the people of these colonies have the right and do now throw off British rule and declare independence from England (conclusion):

> We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. (Jefferson 449)

Addressing both the Americans and the British from a revolutionary speaking position, it applies directness and clarity as a rhetorical mode suited to convey "self-evident" truths and compassionate principle. Implicitly drawing an equation between act and speech act, the text enumerates the grievances in the forms of speech acts primarily (the King has *refuted*, *refused*, *forbidden*, *called together*, *dissolved*, *suspended*, *declared*, *abdicated*, *constrained*), lists the various responses of the colonies in the form of speech acts too (*warned*, *reminded*, *appealed*, *conjured*), following the lead of this argument to pronounce the sentence on the King: that he is "unfit to be the ruler of a free people" (449). Listing the grievances and articulating opinion about the tyrant reflects a very important moment of empowerment by the word in the history of a nation: when the oppressed gives voice to oppression and takes action as a free agent. Placing the act of declaration in the cultural context of the Enlightenment, where injustices and tyranny empower the people to take action, the acts of the colonies are presented as necessary, mandated by the "Laws of Nature" and "Nature's

God" (447), while the ideals of equality and freedom are taken for granted and presumed to be "self-evident" (447).

Indeed, it is a text peppered with performatives; as a declaration, it was produced in order to perform certain political-historical acts. To make such statements in appropriate circumstances is to do something, to perform acts and, not incidentally, to found a political body, the free state of the United States. Among the acts performed are the confirmation of certain basic values (the text very strongly appeals to shared sentiments), the giving of "facts" (accusing England by naming, labeling, and interpreting their actions), and the declaring of separation from England. In terms of its intentional structure, it successfully accomplishes the mission it promises to accomplish. As a strong performative it raises the issue of agency as well: speakers of such utterances emerge as agents, whose actions are capable of bringing about changes in the world. It is quite revealing that by evoking the image of the grown son, agency appears as not only gendered, belonging to men, but also as racialized, since the option of standing up against the tyrannical father—or, indeed, as simply having a father to quarrel with—was available to whites only.

The Declaration of Independence is not only a marvelous example of strong performativity, but also a classroom case for the self-referentiality of the performative: that it indeed refers to a reality that it produces. What is even more important in this particular case, it showcases the way the act constitutes the actor: the "We" of the American people. What Benveniste pointed out in his "Subjectivity in Language," published as early as 1959, in connection with performatives in general—namely that "the verb establishes the act at the same time that it sets up the subject" (732)—holds especially true here: the act brings about the actor. Indeed, the paradox of the speech act lies in the fact that the entity declaring itself "American People" did not yet exist when independence was declared in their name ("in the name and by the Authority of the good people"). The signers, Derrida remarks, do not exist prior to the signing.

> They do *not* exist as an entity, the entity does *not* exist *before* this declaration, not as *such*. If it gives birth to itself, as free and independent subject, as possible signer, this can hold only in the act of signature. The signature invents the signer. (*Negotiations* 49)

Although the signatories claimed to act in their name, the "united States of America," the "General Congress," or the "free and independent states" did not exist either. In this felicitous speech act, the "We" of the "American people," as well as the United States as "free and independent states" were really constituted simultaneously with the issuing of the declaration; independence could be achieved because the entity "the American people" was produced. "It was," Sandy Petrey insists, "through speaking in the name of the American people that the delegates produced a people to name; it was by invoking an authority that they established an authority to invoke" (159).

The power of the document lies in the fact that the delegates produced the "We" of the American people by pledging to each other (as opposed to pledging to the Crown), yet managed to retain their allegiance to God. Actually, the text evokes the authority of God to validate the speech act: it is by His ultimate authority (as Nature's God) that performative language claims entitlement for the people. God, who is (once again) performatively produced by being named and being assigned ultimate authority, now authorizes the claim of entitlement to the signers as representatives of the American people.

As such, The Declaration of Independence vindicates the right to self-empowerment, where the performative act derives, as Péter Dávidházi has convincingly argued in another context, with regards to Jonathan Swift's tombstone inscription, from the etymology of the verb *vindicate*—*vim dicere,* to claim power (*Menj, vándor* 106). Vindication, therefore, is a performative expressely discursive, visibly limited to the realm of language, imitating and iterating the Ur-performative vindication of God, who, by claiming the power to create, called the world into being.

In this reading of the Declaration, then, the signature indeed invents the signer. Because it is a strong performative declaration, the signature is maintained within the founding act itself, fully engaging or producing the signer in the process. If anything, it is this special status of the signer that sets the performative apart from the constative. Because in another sense, to which I will return a little later, the difference between a constative and a performative structure is very difficult to grasp here.

Derrida raises another issue, that of delegated representation. In a triple gesture of deferred authority, the signature stands for the signers—attesting to their absence rather than presence, as Jonathan Culler points out (*On Deconstruction* 125)—who claim to represent the people (the "good people," which, we know from history, did not include women or blacks), behind whom there is the ultimate authority, therefore the ultimate signer and guarantor of the "Laws of Nature." So it is really God as a "last instance" to whom authority is deferred by the people, their representatives, and then their signatures. "God is the name—the best one—for this last instance and this ultimate signature . . . God is the best proper name," Derrida says, adding, however, that in point of fact Thomas Jefferson considered himself to be the sole signatory, replacing God as the founder of the new nation (*Negotiations* 52).

From a common sense perspective, however, it is difficult to accept the claim that the performative process of signing (a declaration of independence) is in itself sufficient to produce the signer (the independent nation). What about unsuccessful revolutions, why couldn't they produce free nations by saying so (or signing so) in comparably worded declarations?

The Seneca Declaration of Women or Seneca Falls Declaration (1848) was modeled on The Declaration of Independence in a way similar to how Olympe de

Gouges's Declaration of the Rights of Woman (1791) was modeled on the new French constitution's Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789). The Seneca document follows the same logic as its revolutionary pretext: it too appealed to "self-evident" truths ("We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal" [Stanton 438]); it too listed the grievances, which this time women have suffered from men. This text also exploits the force of performatives, whereby women claimed agency. Moreover, the iterative structure of the Seneca Falls Declaration seems to accomplish a particular political purpose: it shows some of the fundamental discrepancies of the original document. Rhetorically, the iterative form served to highlight the fact that certain individuals (among them, women and blacks) were excluded from the group called nation, and that the document beautifully crafting the Enlightenment values of a nation does not allow some of the oppressed to rise against the oppressor (on the discrepancies, see Kerber, "Can a Woman"). By virtue of the iterative form, rational thinking was shown to be appropriated by white men, thereby the "rational" drafters were stripped of their prerogative as "rational" thinkers. (Of course, African Americans could follow a similar line of argument, since the document does not speak of or for blacks.)

From a speech act point of view, The Seneca Falls Declaration was infelicitous as a speech act because it was unable either to invent American women as a legal entity or to achieve what they stated in the propositional content of their Declaration: independence from and equality with men. Had they been able to retroactively produce themselves as subjects equal to men, their speech act would have been felicitous, their struggle successful. In their case, the referent failed to produce the sign (of women as a legal entity); therefore, reference ceased to hold.

To return to The Declaration of Independence, the felicity of the performative seems to depend on the existence of the "free people" who sign the document; moreover, history must retroactively validate the performative, the act of declaration by such no small matter as winning the War of Independence. So we have a particular temporalization of the future-anterior kind, here projecting the consequence of a future event (the successful revolution) back into the past as a precondition to the felicity of the speech act (that the signatories are a legal entity entitled to claim independence). The drafters of the Declaration presume the felicitousness of their speech act (of declaration as well as of the Declaration) by taking for granted that which is just being performed: the American people, the American people successfully winning independence. "The felicity of this speech act," Hillis Miller observes, "depends on presuming the priority of that which it posits or creates" (*Speech Acts* 124). There is a strong element of constativity, or constative-performative undecidability, in such speech acts: they often mask themselves as constatives, affirming constatively a state of affairs that is just being brought about performatively.

Indeed, the dilemma here is, in speech act terms, whether the Declaration is a constative or a performative act. Historians are not in agreement; some argue for the former, saying that the American Revolution really confirmed existing social and political realities (see Nelson, "The Revolutionary Character"). This claim seems to be supported by John Adams too, who, in his letter to Jefferson, insisted that "The Revolution was in the Minds of the People, and this was effected, from 1760 to 1775, in the course of fifteen Years before a drop of blood was drawn at Lexington" (Cappon 455). Therefore, what we read as a performative, a declarative, earlier is really a constative. As Derrida puts it,

> One cannot decide . . . whether independence is stated or produced by this utterance. . . . Is it that the good people have already freed themselves in fact and are only stating the fact of this emancipation in [*par*] the Declaration? Or is it rather that they free themselves at the instant of and by [*par*] the signature of this Declaration? (49)

So the text cannot escape the aporia between stating and declaring, the constative or the performative. But it is exactly this undecidability, according to Derrida, "between a performative structure and a constative structure that is *required* to produce the sought-after effect" (49; emphasis in original).

Already Austin accepted the possibility of such undecidability between constative and performative utterances. "Very commonly the *same* sentence is used on different occasions of utterance in *both* ways, performative and constative," he claims, adding, "[t]he thing seems hopeless from the start" (*How to Do* 67). This is especially the case in revolutionary situations and other radical acts, which create—by what Derrida terms as "fabulous retroactivity" (50) and Hillis Miller as a "metaleptic future anterior" (*Speech Acts* 27)—the grounds that retroactively justify them. In such revolutionary or radical instances, the conventions that authorize the performative are actually just being made, and the agency or authority out of which the signatory or utterer acts is just being assigned to this signatory or utterer. This happens in (successful) political declarations or in texts of entitlement, assigning subjectivity to those who were earlier only constructed as objects, for example. Very often these performatives are masked as constatives, giving the illusion of some pre-existing reference which is only being created during the process. This is a technique not unknown in political propaganda and media manipulation, when a purportedly "objective" state of affairs is introduced through a constative, when actually that state of affairs is just being produced performatively.

Manifestos, whether political or artistic, form a subset of declarations, to which all the features listed in connection with declarations apply. Like declarations, they too make a change in reality solely by saying so, produce the situation they describe, and establish a correspondence between propositional content and reality. Also, they manage to get both language to match the world and the world to match the language. Here too, the act produces the actor; the signer is fully engaged—is fully produced—in the act of signing. Similarly to other declarations, the manifesto becomes a felicitous speech act if future-anterior temporalization successfully projects the consequence of a future event back into the past. As such, manifestos exhibit a clear constative-performative undecidability in that they are masked as constatives affirming a state of affairs that is just being brought about. Finally, manifestos are iterable structures that reproduce, always in a radical and provocative manner, the originary performative of word as *logos*.

One of the special features of manifestos, which mark them within the larger set of declarations, corresponds to their iterability. As self-renewing performative acts, not only do they reproduce the originary performative, but also that initial gesture of declaring a position that goes against the accepted or the mainstream. Manifestos will always exhibit a revolutionary and combative nature in that they discursively participate in the struggle fought against power and hegemony. The well-known phrasing of *The Communist Manifesto* will return in the 1909 *Suffragette Manifesto*, the 1912 *Manifesto of the Futurist Woman*, or Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth (Les Damnés de la terre)* as late as 1961. The manifesto proclaims difference, dissent, and a standing up against oppression. It speaks with self-assurance, in a voice of intransigence, as one, probably a mouthpiece of some higher power, in possession of some ultimate truth. As Janet Lyon points out, this is a direct, passionate voice, framing "its declarations with assurances of unobstructed rhetorical clarity" (14) and forcefully enumerating grievances "which cast a group's oppression as a struggle between the empowered and the disempowered" (15). Often these will be radical and innovative texts, written by "revolutionary artisans," who "mark the artistic praxis that will *create* [a] new world" (16).

Here too, the "We" of the manifesto is being performatively created by the declaration and the signing. The signatories either demand to be wholly separate from mainstream (as the "We" of Marinetti's *Manifesto of Futurism* of 1909, Apollinaire's *The Cubist Painters* of 1913, Kandinsky's expressionist manifesto entitled *The Problem of Form* from 1912, the *Manifesto of Vorticism* of 1914, signed by eleven artists), or they call upon their addressees, in a vocative form, to identify with their cause (as, for example, Mina Loy's *Feminist Manifesto* from 1914), or even use the first person singular to show up individual dissent to be followed (as for example Tzara's *Dada Manifesto* of 1918). In either case, the issue of agency is foregrounded, when the disempowered take initiative and act as agents in their history. Some manifestos are overtly performative, demonstrably iterating the words of political declarations. Such is, for example, the "Proclamation" of Eugene Jolas of 1929, issued in the avant-garde magazine *transition (sic.):*

> [W]e hereby declare that
> 1. THE REVOLUTION IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IS AN ACCOMPLISHED FACT.
> 2. THE IMAGINATION IN SEARCH OF A FABULOUS WORLD IS AUTONOMOUS AND UNCONFINED.
>
> . . . .
>
> 6. THE LITERARY CREATOR HAS THE RIGHT TO DISINTEGRATE THE PRIMAL MATTER OF WORDS IMPOSED ON HIM BY TEXT-BOOKS AND DICTIONARIES.
> 7. HE HAS THE RIGHT TO USE WORDS OF HIS OWN FASHIONING AND TO DISREGARD EXISTING GRAMMATICAL AND SYNTACTICAL LAWS. (Kolocotroni 313)

This manifesto clearly reiterates the tone and even demands of political declarations, replacing the idea of revolt against social and political oppression with the idea of rising up against the oppression of academic English, the tyranny of "text-books and dictionaries," and linguistic rules codified by grammarians.

Word power
(Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; Norman Mailer, 'The Time of Her Time')

In this chapter I discuss briefly the wounding power of language, commonly known as hate speech or verbal assault, and its positive counterpart, empowerment through language, through three examples of strong performativity: Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and Norman Mailer's "The Time of Her Time."

Words that hurt have locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary force in the sense that they are uttered, acted out, and have lasting consequential effects. A curse, for example, is not only said (locution) and put on someone (illocution), but will perform an injury upon the person as an object: that person will remain under or in the bind of the curse, left with a lasting wound (perlocution). To use the constative-performative distinction, verbal aggression pretends to be a constative in that it purports to assert the truth of a particular state of affairs, but its purpose is to actually bring about that state of affairs: to make the assertion come true. It is in this sense that, as Judith Butler claims, hate speech does not only "communicate an offensive idea" but also enacts the message it communicates (*Excitable* 72). Much like pornography, hate speech is both representation and enactment: racist labels and stereotypes, for example, convey the message of how members of that race are perceived by the dominant group, while also contribute to the subordination of that group. "It is, in the very speaking of such speech, the performance of injury itself, where the injury is understood as social subordination" (18). This social subordination comes about in a process similar to that captured by Louis Althusser's concept of interpellation: here too the addressee is "called" by some powerful ideology expressed by the offensive words;

therefore, the addressee will be produced as a subordinated and degraded object (*Lenin* 160, 182). Indeed, as performative, linguistic injury is not just language but act too, one that is performed by oppressors in order to constitute their linguistically vulnerable targets as subjected victims. Only by standing up against such injury—as Janie does in *Their Eyes*—can the power of the word be turned around and used as a means of self-empowerment, making a subject out of the formerly subjected victim.

When words hurt: Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

The well-known controversies surrounding *The Adventures of Huckleberry* today result from the way African Americans are discursively constructed in the text, which construction has proved to be offensive to generations of readers. In the memorable dialogue between Huck and Aunt Sally, for example, where Huck invents the story about a steamboat explosion, he tells the woman that nobody got hurt, the accident only "killed a nigger." To which she replies, "Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt" (208). No matter how one might admire Twain's irony, the point here is, of course, that the source of humor is whether blacks are to be taken as human beings or not.

The word *nigger* is always used when Jim's objecthood is emphasiszed: in these instances he is "Miss Watson's big nigger" (35), a "runaway nigger" (76), a "good nigger" ("He was a mighty good nigger, Jim was" [155]) or one who "ain't a bad nigger" (259), or simply "my nigger," "*our* nigger," "your nigger" (204). Moreover, as "nigger Jim" he is placed in a narrative that foregrounds some social and historical aspects of slavery: the African American as property, one belonging to some white person, young or old; the African American whose conduct is evaluated by whites; or the slave whose only hope is to run North, to become fugitive, escaping from slave territories.

In the stereotyping of the figure of the African American, certain features of Jim are overcommunicated in both the verbal narrative and the pictorial narrative of Kemble's famous illustrations (which Twain is known to have agreed to). In both narratives Jim is portrayed as an ignorant, superstitious, childlike person, who has no self-respect and should not be taken very seriously. All through the novel he acts as a plaything to Huck—and seems even to accept the lowest position offered to him: goes along with it, playing the expected role of the dumb Negro. He allows Huck to construct him into the man over whom the boy has full control: he does not stand up against this stereotyping and subordination. For example, for some unexplainable reason he does not question Huck's decision to continue drifting down the Missisippi further and further into slave territories, instead of crossing the river earlier to reach Illinois. But, as Jane Smiley points out, “Jim is never autonomous, never has a vote, always finds his purposes subordinate to Huck’s, and, like every good sidekick, he never minds” (63).

Readers have long been offended by the oppressive language of the book, especially the aggressive use of the pejorative term *nigger*, which has evoked the memories of centuries of oppression and humiliation. Critics such as Peaches Henry argue that the word *nigger* will trigger a Pavlovian reflex for many black readers, since it not only reminds them of slavery but “encapsulates the decades of oppression that followed emancipation” (366). No matter how much things might have changed, no matter how much blacks too know that the word *nigger* was part of another historical era, it will still wound the addressee or reader. As Langston Hughes puts it,

> The word *nigger* to colored people of high and low degree is like a red rag to a bull. Used rightly or wrongly, ironically or seriously, of necessity for the sake of realism, it doesn’t matter. Negroes do not like it in any book or play whatsoever, be the book or play ever so sympathetic in its treatment of the basic problems of the race. Even though the book or play is written by a Negro, they still do not like it. (268–269)

From a speech act perspective it is very hard indeed to dismiss the problematic nature of racial stereotyping in the novel. For references to blacks as subhuman, the stereotypical portrayal of Jim (as a plaything or a sidekick), and the word *nigger* each perform illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in degrading and humiliating African Americans, evoking historical memories of slavery, and perpetuating racial stereotypes. While wounding the object such words are directed against, it is supposedly empowering the utterer in that its speech act force presupposes the speaking position of authority and power. While it is highly debatable whether such verbal aggression really empowers the dominant group (which needs no empowerment, being in the position of power anyway), insult is added to injury only when arguments concerning the historical context—perceptions taken for granted in the 1870s and 1880s, when the novel was written—and Twain’s otherwise well-known decency are cited. Can it excuse Mark Twain that he just went along with what was taken for granted in his time? That his assumptions were left unexamined? Shouldn’t every society be held accountable for the values it takes for granted? The fact that—unlike the word *queer*, for example, which was appropriated by gay activists and theories—the word *nigger* was never stripped of its original context of insult (by African American activists and theorists, for example): it was never put through the process of resignification, repeated differently, in a subversive manner.

When words empower: Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* celebrates the black woman who found her voice and self—through the wounding power of the word and through being empowered by the word. In fact, Janie's triumphant journey to freedom and selfhood is twofold: from being seen to seeing and from being spoken to, to speaking. Actually, this route is even more complex: considering the historical context, the former leads from invisibility through being seen to seeing, while the latter, in Janie's case, takes her from being spoken to speaking to remaining silent again.

On the first pages of the novel Janie appears as a spectacle, a beautiful woman who is the object of everyone's attention—to the degree that "[t]he porch couldn't talk for looking" (2).

> The men noticed her firm buttocks like she had grape fruits in her hip pockets; the great rope of black hair swinging to her waist and unraveling in the wind like a plume; then her pugnacious breasts trying to bore holes in her shirt. . . . nobody moved, nobody spoke, nobody even thought to swallow spit until after the gate slammed behind her. (2)

Although objectified as spectacle, being seen already represents a major step for the African American. Moreover, she is looked at by her fellow African Americans, granting them, at least, some degree of empowerment.

Hurston brings together the verbal and the visual in what can be considered the climax of the novel, the porch scene, where Janie stands up against the man who tries to put her down constantly. Responding to her second husband's verbal abuse targeting her body and supposedly fading womanhood, she says:

> Naw, Ah ain't no young gal no mo' but den Ah ain't no old woman neither. Ah reckon Ah looks mah age too. But Ah'm uh woman every inch of me, and Ah know it. Dat's uh whole lot more'n *you* kin say. You big-bellies round here and put out a lot of brag, but 'tain't nothing to it but yo' big voice. Humph! Talkin' 'bout *me* looki' old! When you pull down yo' britches, you look lak de change uh life. (75)

Janie finds her voice, the cultural tool of mastery for the African American especially (see Frantz Fanon, *Black* 38), thereby constituting her female subjectivity outside the realm of oppression. She responds to Joe's verbal aggression by a comparable, albeit—because from a member of a traditionally abused class—much more powerful, verbal aggression: her words annul his domination, and will ultimately kill the man publicly wounded in his pride and manhood. Janie takes control both verbally and visually here: appropriating the power of the word to herself, she speaks up while at the same time she makes a spectacle out of Joe. Now it is the man to whom everyone's attention is turned:

Joe must submit to being spectacularized. Having “robbed him of his illusion of irresistible maleness that all men cherish . . . she cast down his empty armor before men and they had laughed, would keep on laughing” (75). Voice and vision, hearing and seeing go hand in hand, as are explicitly connected in the sentence of Walter: “You heard her, you ain’t blind.” Not only does Janie the spectacle become the spectator, but also the one in control of the spectacle: her voice directs the gaze of everyone on the porch to Joe, much like a film director controls the movement of the camera. “Responding to the long history of blacks as spectacle,” Deborah Clarke points out, “she offers the possibility of reclaiming the visual as a means of black expression and black power” (600). Janie’s use of the wounding power of language seems, however, to be restricted to situations where she is the colonized object. When she is put down, she will fight back, that is. But now that she is empowered—aware of her verbal power to control the visual scene—Janie will remain silent at crucial points of the novel, such as the final court scene. Having found her self through voice, she can now afford to refuse to speak too. Because she will not abuse the authority presupposed in the felicitous speech act.

When words hurt and empower:
Norman Mailer, “The Time of Her Time”

Norman Mailer’s “The Time of Her Time” offers another example for the wounding power of speech. Written at the time when sexual liberation supposedly included women too, it was interpreted as a breakthrough text for its presentation of female orgasm. Today, however, it is more read (or not read) for giving a record of mid-century male sexual violence. Here the male protagonist, the Irishman Sergius O’Shaughnessy, who teaches bull-fighting in Manhattan and describes himself as “the messiah of the one-night stand” (447), is having sex with Denise, a young Jewish college student, who has not experienced orgasm before. Her orgasm becomes a matter of prestige to him, her sexuality a battle-field where he has to win by exercising his power. As a last resort he penetrates from behind and utters “You dirty little Jew” (464). The physical act and the words have their perlocutionary force: they shock the woman into orgasm. The injurious words of this “messiah”—a “redeemer damned,” to apply Zoltán Abádi-Nagy’s succinct phrase introduced to describe some sixties protagonists (*Válság és komikum* 247ff)—open her sexual floodgates, helping her, as it were, to re-experience the traumas, probably suffered both as a Jew and as a woman, which previously blocked her experience of *jouissance*. “You dirty little Jew” becomes both therapy and trauma: on the one hand she is “cured,” on the other, this hate speech (and the anal penetration it served to amplify) could be a new trauma, only strengthening her social constitution as a woman, a Jewish woman, in a subordinate position both for her ethnicity and gender.

His performance is both perlocutionary and illocutionary: it traumatizes her (perlocution) and puts her into a subordinate class (illocution). Denise's traumatization and constitution into an inferior person follows the lines along which, as Catharine MacKinnon has convincingly demonstrated, pornography works: construed as a proper speech act with both perlocutionary and illocutionary force, it acts on women in injurious ways and constitutes them as a class of inferior beings "objectified and presented dehumanized as sexual objects or things for use" (*Only Words* 22–23). Denise, however, refuses to be victimized: she actually speaks back, jolting him out of his complacency as a "phallic narcissist." Citing a mutual friend, she says to him, "your whole life is a lie, and you do nothing but run away from the homosexual that is you" (465). Empowered by language, she unconstructs herself as a woman subjected to male sexual control, and reconstructs herself as a sexual subject on her own right. Moreover, her calling him a man running away from the homosexual within, she beats him, ultimately, at his own show of male heterosexual supremacy.

Alternative realities as performative creations (Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger*; Ambrose Bierce, 'An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge')

In the following I will discuss another kind of strong performative constructions, where alternative realities are created solely by the power of the word. I will use two texts, Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* and Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," to argue that the real and the made, fictioned, or imagined are intertwined and undistinguishable because both are performative constructs. For this reason, boundaries are crossed and recrossed with similar ease in both texts, allowing for an ontological instability that makes these late 19th century-early 20th century texts very modern.

Performing cultural subjunctivity: Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger*

Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* is a virtuoso performance of boundary crossings; the characters move easily between worlds, events, and people, created or brought about purely by the power of will and word. While the author takes great pains to first construct a world where people, events, purposes, and ideas form Manicheaen pairs of good and bad, natural and supernatural, soon enough it will be impossible to tell good people, causes, or turns of events from bad. Moreover, the natural and the supernatural will melt into each other and strong performativity—here the creative power of the word—will cancel the difference between reality and imagination. At first the real and the fictive are positioned as polar opposites, making the transfer from one to the other through a metalepsis, defined by Gérard Genette as "[t]he transition from one narrative level to another" (234), where the boundary crossed is "the frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells [and] the world of which one tells" (236). Indeed, the story "jumps from one voice-level to another," as *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* defines metalepsis (Preminger and Brogan 760), but this seeming metalepsis will turn out to be intextexuality: the shift between two textual worlds. As a particular case of intertextuality, both worlds prove to be fictional and textual; thus the metaleptic leap which the boys believe they can take will be no more than an intertextual leap from one to another fictional world. Ultimately, reality loses its ontological grounding: it turns out that it is this physical world that does not exist, rather has been swallowed by or collapsed into the constructed-performed world of dream and imagination.

Before proceeding with my reading of the performative aspects of the text, a few words about the manuscript are necessary. We cannot talk about a single authoritative text; the earlier edition brought out posthumously by Albert Bigelow Paine and Frederick A. Duneka in 1916 has been considered an editorial fraud since William M. Gibson located and published in 1969 Twain's three handwritten manuscripts that make up the collection *The Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts*. The first manuscript, entitled "The Chronicle of Young Satan," expounds the story of the encounter of three young boys with Satan, an angel. Although several of the key events take place, the 423 page long text ends mid-chapter, leaving the story unfinished. The second manuscript, "Schoolhouse Hill," also called the Hannibal version, a fragment of some 80 pages, recounts the adventures of the same young man with Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn in St. Petersburg. The third of these manuscripts, entitled "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger," has been considered the most complete version, where the text Twain worked on during the last years of his life was rounded off by the contents of a manuscript that has survived separately under Twain's title, "Conclusion to the Book." It is in this conclusion that the author gives the last twist to his story, whereby, as I will demonstrate, reality gets folded into dream and is shown to be performatively constructed. (For more details on philological history, see William M. Gibson's "Introduction.")

Set in Austria 1702 and narrated by the young boy Theodor Fischer, "The Chronicle of Young Satan" recounts the adventures and miracles, as well as trials, of the mysterious visit of the angel called Satan. Set similarly in Austria, but in 1490, the narrator of "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger" is the sixteen year old printer's apprentice, August Feldner, who is befriended by an enigmatic young man called "Number 44, New Series 864,962." Angelic and satanic, an innocent adolescent and a ruthless vagabond, exponent of social determinism and an inveterate fatalist, showman and trickster, tamer of beasts and manipulator of humans, savor to some but murderer of others, dreamer and creator, the mysterious stranger is a recurring figure in Twain's fiction, found also, as Derek Parker Royal has shown, in *The Innocents Abroad*, *Roughing It*, *Life on the Mississippi*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. The protagonist of *The Mysterious Stranger* exhibits similarities to Hank Morgan of *A Connecticut Yankee* and David Wilson of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* especially in that they are all performers, "revealers of truths that expose societal shams, individual hypocrisy, and illegitimate sources of power," and are all able "to make life-and-death decisions" through possessing "a fatal and even apocalyptic power"(47).

Satan/Forty-four (sometimes referred to as 44) becomes the companion and idol of Theodor/August, provoking in the boy a passionate devotion he had not known earlier. Satan/44 is a magical phenomenon. He seems to "prove" in so many ways that where he comes from is indeed that other world, best understood as a duplicate of this one. He tells about life in heaven in very human terms when, for example, he describes the nursery he grew up in together with the other angels. Satan/Forty-four gives a dramatic performance of his supernatural powers when, in order to convince the boys about the true nature of the human race, he sets up his "theatre" (137) where he shows them—"with a thought" (134)—what has happened since the Garden of Eden. "To kill," he says, "being the chiefest ambition of the human race and the earliest incident in its history, but only the Christian Civilization has scored a triumph to be proud of" (137). He turns lives around, but usually not for what the boys would consider the better. He makes old Wilhelm "happy" by taking his sanity away ("No sane man can be happy, for him life is real, and he sees what a fearful thing it is" [164]), while at another time he changes the "life-scheme" of their friend Fischer, whereby he will live to be ninety—except now he will go to hell, not heaven (131). Most of all, he is a figure of contradictions. On the one hand, he is a Christ like figure—he evokes the youthful Jesus of Apocrypha when making clay birds come alive (see Gibson 16) or when the crowd, which demands that he be killed ("Kill him, kill him!"), is pacified by the argument, "What is the use to kill the boy. . . . whatever power he has, he gets from his master" (295). On the other hand, he conveys the darkest vision possible of the pitiful, limited, trivial human race. He compares the difference between the human being and himself to the "difference between a drop of water and the sea, a rushlight and the sun, the difference between the infinitely trivial and the infinitely sublime!" (319). This difference, he insists, results from the fact that only the race he belongs to is capable of truly creating something out of nothing—out of thought. By the performative power of *logos*, that is.

> With my race it is different; we have no limits of any kind, we comprehend all things. . . . A man *originates* nothing in his head, he merely observes exterior things, and *combines* them in his head—puts several observed things together and draws a conclusion. His mind is merely a machine, that is all. . . . a man's mind cannot

> *create*—a god's can, and my race can. This is the difference. *We* need no contributed materials, we *create* them—out of thought. All things that exist were made out of thought—and out of nothing else. (331–333; emphasis in original)

Forty-four gives ample demonstrations of his creative (performative) powers to August: he reads people's minds, controls their will, performs miracles of all kinds, becomes visible or invisible as he pleases (allows Theodor and his friends as well as August to borrow these powers for some time too), can thin out like a soap bubble and vanish, makes Duplicates to everyone in the town, gives illustrated history, psychology, and theology lessons to his friend. Some of these tricks magnetize Theodor/August, others overpower them with utter gloom. Such is, for example, the Assembly of the Dead, which August watches for hours and hours in black darkness and empty silence, "as if the world was holding its breath" (401). But what Forty-four can make, he can unmake too: "Then, all of a sudden 44 waved his hand and we stood in an empty and soundless world" (403).

Finally, he comes to say goodbye to August.

> "I must go now, and we shall not see each other any more."
> "In this life, 44, but in another? We shall meet in another, surely, 44?"
> Then all tranquilly and soberly he made the strange answer—
> *"There is no other."* (403)
> . . . .
> *"Life itself is only a vision, a dream."*
> *"Nothing* exists; all is a dream. God—man—the world—the sun, the moon, the wilderness of stars—a dream, all a dream; they have no existence. *Nothing exists save empty space—and you!"*
> "And you are not you—you have no body, no blood, no bones, you are but a *thought.* I myself have no existence, I am but a dream—your dream, creature of your imagination. (403–405)

This is the solipsistic "conclusion" to the book, whereby Twain performs the double gesture of withdrawing both the certainty of this world and the promise of the other. Nothing can be taken for granted, even though both worlds were shown to and ascertained by the senses—"no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell" (405). The world built on binaries such as good vs. bad, body vs. soul, human vs. angelic, natural vs. supernatural is destabilized at its foundations, giving the ultimate conclusion that not only is that other world not a duplicate of this one, but that actually this one does not exist either: it is all a dream, made up, performed. It is impossible that God should exist too, given the fact that he so easily admitted evil among his creations:

> a God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who

> gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented hell—mouths mercy and invented hell (404–405)

It is an idea Clemens, stricken by family tragedies, was toying with during his last years. This is what he wrote in a letter to his friend Reverend Joseph H. Twitchell in 1904 about how life had been looking to him:

> as being NON-EXISTENT. That is, that there is *nothing*. That there is no God and no universe; that there is only empty space, and in it a lost and homeless and wandering and companionless and indestructible *Thought*. And that I am that thought. And God, and the Universe, and Time, and Life, and Death, and Joy and Sorrow and Pain only a grotesque and brutal *dream*, evolved from the frantic imagination of that insane Thought. (qtd. in Gibson 30)

Forty-four acts in the spirit of what is known in philosophy as "Moore's paradox," when after making a most credible reality for the boy, he withdraws his own belief in it. After the model of the paradox described by the English philosopher G. E. Moore, "The cat is on the mat but I do not believe it is" (qtd. in Loxley 36), Forty-four could be saying, "I have created a world for you, my friends, using my powers as a supernatural being, but I do not believe I have it, or that it is a world, or indeed that I am a supernatural being." In the game of make-believe he first suspends the "as if" of imagination, only to more shockingly re-impose it in the conclusion of the story. With this gesture of Forty-four, Mark Twain recalls the waving and then breaking of the wand of another grand magician, Shakespeare through Prospero in *The Tempest*, saying:

> Our revels are now ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with sleep. (IV, 1)

The revels are ended for Twain too; his actors were also all spirits, who melted into thin air. Life here too is "rounded with sleep."

Satan/Forty-four is, then, engaged in the "as if" language game of imagining and pretending, a game, to use Victor Turner's phrase, of the "subjunctive mood," concerned with "wish, desire, possibility or hypothesis" (*From Ritual* 83) Indeed, he presents a vision best captured as subjunctive cultural performance that toys with the possibility of alternative worlds created by performative powers. The function of his performance, as is the function of all performances of cultural subjunctivity according to Turner, is to provide the individuals “with passage from one basic human state or status . . . to another” (“Liminality” 21). Forty-four’s liminal game of make-believe does this crossing of thresholds twice, actually: first when the border between natural and supernatural dimensions is crossed (when little people are created, for example) and second, when the reality of the real is being questioned at the end.

According to Mark Twain’s conclusion, then, the two worlds are alike in being equally dreamed, imagined, or, we could say, performatively constructed. Linguistically and philosophically, they show little difference: reference is such that language does not differentiate between the real and the imagined. Rorty’s test concerning the ability of being referred to can be performed on both the real world and the world discursively constructed from thought, language, and clay (*Consequences* 117). Although the world created by a fictional character, by Satan/Forty-four in this instance, is at least two removes away from the reader’s immediate reality, claims about all three levels can be equally “true.” The sceptic’s question posed by Rorty—“how would it be different if everything were a dream? How would it be different if it were all made up? How would it be different if there were nothing there to be represented?” (*Consequences* 129)—Mark Twain gives an answer much like Rorty: it would not be (is not) different. Truth is discursively constructed, constructed in language and by language (“truth cannot be out there” [*Contingency* 5]): “whether a sentence has sense,” Rorty claims, “*may* be dependent upon whether another sentence is true” (*Consequences* 129). In other words, truth is not validated by external reality—for, indeed, there is nothing outside the text. Only the text exists for Twain too: the creative faculty, the dream (“and you the maker of it” [405]). Hence the imperative: “Dream other dreams, and better!” (404).

While the claim that the mind makes the real is wholly familiar in the symbolist tradition, here in *The Mysterious Stranger* it is not a poetic artifact that the mind makes, but reality itself. Indeed, reality as part of the mind, or, as Hillis Miller puts it in connection with Wallace Stevens, “reality is the figment of the mind” (*Poets of Reality* 256).

When the dying man constructs himself as a living man: Ambrose Bierce, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”

Bierce’s most popular piece, the Civil War story written in 1891, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” presents elaborate boundary crossings between the “reality” of the fictional characters and the imagined world of the protagonist, now two removes away from what Rorty calls our “plain ordinary spatio-temporal existence" (*Consequences* 118). Here borders between lived and imagined, outer and inner are repeatedly transgressed, while internal monologue is presented as the narration of external events. I see the piece as a special case of descriptive pause, where the object of description is purely internal. As the portrayal of a dying man's last moments, it is also an early example of psychological realism, offering, unbeknownst to the reader until the very end, a narrative transition between life and death. In addition, it can be considered a critique of gendered and racialized cultural spheres.

An Alabama planter who is a civilian at war-time, Peyton Farquhar lives between the social spheres of of the war and women of the home; but his in-betweenness ends as he becomes feminized when approaching the home through fantasy and imagination. Moreover, his last moments are extended into an elaborate escape narrative reversing the traditional racialized roles of master and slave. Running for his life, Farquhar the Southern white planter is now put into the position of the black slave, going through the same experience as the escaping slaves. First he falls victim to the scheming of the Northern scout, later he is hunted down—if only in his imagination—by the enemy: in both cases he is made into an object, whose body is foregrounded. In between these two series of objectification and corporialization, he makes himself into a subject who takes control—if only, again, in his imagination.

Depicting his last moments while being executed by the Yankees, the narrative follows Farquhar's imaginary escape and return home, to his wife and plantation, with moments of pain and suffering finally leading to a few idyllic moments, which abruptly end in death. The story is a feat of surnaturalism, presenting both the real of the fictional narrative and the level above this fictioned reality in naturalistic detail.

Bierce proves himself a true naturalist in his very matter-of-fact description of the scene of execution, describing the preparations and the whole machinery of war in a detached voice.

> A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below. The man's hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope closely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross-timber above his head and the slack fell to the level of his knees. Some loose boards laid upon the sleepers supporting the metals of the railway supplied a footing for him and his executioners—two private soldiers of the Federal army, directed by a sergeant who in civil life may have been a deputy sheriff. (33)

The man "engaged in being hanged," the corporialized patient suffering these preparations, is the object of narrative as well as visual attention; the narrative voice shows no emotions, only admits that the man did not look like a villain:

> He wore a mustache and pointed beard, but no whiskers; his eyes were large and dark gray, and had a kindly expression which one would hardly have expected in one whose neck was in the hemp. Evidently this was no vulgar assassin. (34)

Interspersed with these matter-of-fact descriptions, Bierce makes matter-of-fact comments:

> Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him. In the code of military etiquette silence and fixity are forms of deference. . . . The liberal military code makes provision for hanging many kinds of persons, and gentlemen are not excluded. (34)

Indeed, "military etiquette" demands that deference be given to death, even when it comes announced—as opposed to, the irony suggests, when it is unannounced, while the military's "liberalism" consists in willing to kill all kinds of people. His conclusion that the military respects death but not the living supports his verdict on the absurdity of the war spirit.

Turning to the man to be executed, the narration ceases to focus on external events but enters the mind of the protagonist. We follow Farquhar's gaze from his seeing position wandering "to the swirling water of the stream," the "piece of dancing driftwood [that] caught his attention," and finally to his thoughts fixed upon his wife and children (34). Indeed, this is where the real story begins, after the sergeant steps aside—and after the last detour giving the reader the background of how Farquhar was tricked by the Northern scout.

In section III we are finally taken inside Farquhar's mind, and death will be portrayed as a spiritual process, a movement in time in several stages. Slowly he will gain control to set himself free and get away from the scene of execution. This construction of the "real" will make him a subject and even an agent, as he constructs himself as a "free man" or "living man." During the first stage, sensation will appear unaccompanied by thought. Next, the power of thought is restored. Farquhar is able to give meaning to what he feels. Perception is becoming inner, registering psychological processes. This is followed by having first his vision restored and then coming into a full possession of his senses. Now, as one of the finest passages indicates, his perception is heightened.

> He felt the ripples upon his face and heard their separate sounds as they struck. He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf—saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant-bodied flies, the grey spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. He noted the prismatic colors in all the dewdrops upon a million blades of grass . . . A fish slid along beneath his eyes and he heard the rush of its body parting the water. (37–38)

He notices the soldiers who, from his perspective, look grotesque. Efforts are multiplied on both sides: he sees and feels everything better as they start shooting at him. Finally, he manages to escape, thrown out of the stream by a vortex. Taking in all the physical sensations around him, and weeping in delight, he feels as if he was born again—probably into another world where a "strange, roseate light" shone through the trees "and the wind made in their branches the music of Æolian harps" (39). Now he springs to his feet, and his last moments before death follow the trajectory of an escape narrative, except here it is the white planter who is being hunted, not the slave. In addition, his desire for the home seems to act as a marker of femininity, appropriated by the man seeking refuge in the feminine sphere. In the final stage of his flight, after crossing all the possible boundaries—social, psychological, historical, as well as those of gender and race—the inner and the outer suddenly coincide as his neck is broken and he dies.

Until the very end, the reader has no idea that the narration has departed from reality and dived into the mind of the man, since the very same techniques are used for depicting the imagined than for the real. In narratological terms, the text pretends to be extradiegetic, but at the very end it turns out to be autodiegetic: we are inside the narrator's mind, who figures as its principal character. What the reader and Farquhar himself perceive as external is only the projected external world of the character. Internal focalization coincides with external focalization, while stream-of-consciousness is presented as the chronicle of external events.

***

In conclusion of this section, I would like to emphasize again the two aspects of these texts highlighted by my two approaches. First, without the surprise twist concluding both stories, both could be read as instances of strong performativity: Satan makes clay figures which then come to life, while Farquhar sets himself free by the power of his will. The poststructuralist, in this case deconstructive reading will first of all identify the subjectivity constructions: by making clay figures come to life, Satan constructs himself as creator, an extended arm of the Almighty, and by imagining his return home, Farquhar makes himself a free man. In the final twist to the Twain piece, when he admits to the boys that all this is a dream, Satan the deconstructor moves the events into mere discourse; at the same time, he constructs himself as an even more powerful creator and knower, who is capable of controlling dreams even. In the final twist added to the Bierce story, as Farquhar dies, the events are here too moved into the discourse of dream as the dying man constructs himself into a living man. Recognition is indeed shocking in both cases, and the main reason for this shock lies in the ways these authors play with performativity.

The language games of irony and make-believe (Edward Albee, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*)

> "When language-games change, then there is a change in concepts,
> and with the concepts the meanings of words change." (Ludwig Wittgenstein)

I continue my exploration of the strong performative with reading a play that showcases the performative understanding of language as action and a means of influence, while at the same time it openly deploys rhetorical and pragmatic processes that violate some basic rules and assumptions of communication. Laying bare the linguistic basis of dramatic acts, Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* fully exploits the speech act potential of the genre, where, as Richard Ohmann puts it, "the action rides on a train of illocutions" (83). Albee is committed to the understanding of language as a way of acting and influencing actions, while at the same time he reverses one of the general ordinary language assumptions about the cooperative basis of language. By subverting the pragmatic axiom about cooperation, the play exhibits an interaction based on un-co-operation or non-cooperation.

All the characters are involved in a complex language game. The two masters of the ceremony, George and Martha, are experienced players, who normally make up or change the rules as they go along, and show a fine ear to their modulations all along. They play different kinds of games, which could be brought under headings like games of revelation and deceit, truth and falsehood, reality and make-believe. The aim of the game in general is twofold: to create a surrogate reality—one that is in a sense "truer" than the one they live in—by hiding the obvious (what is in front of the senses) and revealing the hidden (what would never come to light otherwise). Taken together, the two cases involve the revelation-through-construction of some "truths," with the ultimate aim of facing reality and to correct those Ibsenian "life-lies."

To secure their goals, the players use linguistic techniques that exploit discrepancies between saying and meaning. As rhetoricians have known for centuries, there may be a gap between what is said and what is meant. American pragmatism and English ordinary language philosophy studied language use exactly from this perspective when it identified certain processes that might explain this gap between communicated and intended meaning. H. Paul Grice, for example, formulated specific classes of communicative intentions serving as the basis of his concept of conversational implicature ("Meaning," "Logic and Conversation"). A conversational implicature is what is left implied and implicit in language use. In Grice's example, "Even Ken knows it's unethical," the implicature is that "Ken is the least likely [of a contextually invoked set] to know it's unethical" ("Conversational Implicature"). Part of total communication, implicature acts as a bridge between what is said and what is meant. In fact, there are several other such bridges: performatives, especially the indirect kind, and presuppositions may all be instrumental in making visible either the discrepancies or the connections between what is said and what is implied. In other words, performatives and presuppositions allow speakers to understand how saying and meaning relate to each other—and ultimately to mean what they say.

In the drama, the players have one goal with the exploitation of discrepancies between saying and meaning: to have the language games uncovered. That is why the characters are continually self-reflexive: questioning the transparency of language, they lay bare the mechanisms of this game, deploy the rhetorical and pragmatic devices openly, give high visibility to artifice. The hosts want their guests to disregard what is in front of their senses—in terms of what is transparent in language, what descriptive, constative or representational language might convey to them—but see what otherwise they wouldn't notice. They want them to realize both what they, Martha and George, did right in their lives and what they did wrong. The former is not obvious because the guests have difficulties going beyond appearances; the latter involves some secret that would never come to light had the hosts not brought it up in conversation. Martha and George want their guests to understand them as well as help them come to terms with themselves. Because, on the one hand, the public image seems to go counter with their private acts: in spite of the verbal pyrotechnics (done mostly for the sake of their audience, the other couple), theirs is a marriage based on love, trust, and acceptance; on the other hand, they want a particular private secret revealed: the child, which seems as imaginary as the pain is real.

The play is known for lacking any so-called "action": nothing "happens" besides talking, or, put differently, everything that happens, happens via language. Conversation is the primary context, in which storytelling and dialogue occur. Since sometimes this goes on without the necessary consent of the nonspeaking participants (which consent is a conversational requirement, according to Mary Louise Pratt [*Toward a Speech Act* 105]), conversation often verges on imposition. Having met for the first time that night, the characters—new colleagues and their wives—are becoming intimate. Their through-the-looking-glass introduction has a special axis: their negative traits (such as alcoholism, lack of motivation, marrying for money, faking pregnancies) are revealed before the socially valued positive traits (such as getting an M.A. at nineteen or having been intercollegiate state middleweight champion). Nothing remains a secret; everything, the most intimate or embarrassing detail, will be talked about. It is this special axis that gives the play, to use Sonya Rudikoff's words, "the distinctively cheeky tone of the sixties," where its "domesticated intellectual teasing" makes it emblematic of the decade ("Afraid" 245).

Indeed, the audience participates in a complex language game, based as much on saying as doing. The whole play is rich in references to games and rules, beginning with the subtitle of the first act, "Fun and Games." Others include such lines as “The game is over” (136); “you can make your own rules . . . but somebody else try it . . . no, sir!” (152–153); “Aw, sure you do, Martha . . . original game-girl, and all” (207); “You know the rules, Martha, for Christ’s sake, you know the rules!” (235). The overall rules of the language games derive, on the one hand, from uncooperative behavior, the reversal of Grice’s cooperation principle, and, on the other, from a very cooperative enterprise of creating a world of make-believe, a private world upon which a private language is constructed. At least three different games are played: “Humiliate the Host,” “Hump the Hostess,” and “Get the Guests.” They each introduce new constitutive rules to define the new game: the rules are of non-cooperation when the game is called irony, but are of cooperation when the game is that of make-believe or deceit. These are Wittgensteinian language games in the sense that here too the only way to learn or teach a rule is through use: meaning is use itself. The characters in the drama are engaged in language games also in the sense Jens Allwood defines this interaction: not only do the receivers apprehend and reconstruct the information given by the sender, but show an understanding, take a stand, and behaviorally react to the information; in short, “communicatively relevant behavior is exhibited by both sender and receiver” (217). Martha and George may be said to be unfair to their guests in the sense that these newcomers have no knowledge of either the faculty’s favored genres and rhetorical practices or the particular facts of George and Martha’s life, which would immediately clarify some of their remarks. Yet in another sense the hosts do play a fair game: by their nature, the rules are capable of being worked out. On the basis of our intuitive knowledge described by Martin Steinmann as rule-, speech act-, genre- and rhetorical competences, their use reveals their meaning (“Rule Competences”). In this light, one can be all the more struck at how “meaning blind,” to use Wittgenstein’s fitting metaphor (*The Blue* 18) the guests, especially Honey, are. Assumptions should be presumptive; the rules could be identified.

The most obvious mechanism deployed in the drama is irony, a verbal articulation of linguistic discrepancies such as truth and falsehood, non-communication, and non-cooperation. Irony represents the extreme violation of the Gricean cooperative principle and, in particular, its maxim of quality: “[m]ake your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (“Logic” 45).

Irony in this play is a technique of revelation: because the ironist means exactly the opposite of what he says, intended meaning is revealed as the opposite of expressed meaning. Hypocrisy, for example, is uncovered as the self-construction of the guests as “good people.” In fact, revelation is irony’s illocutionary force: the revelation of truth is achieved as it overwrites the assumption about the cooperative basis of language and overemphasizes the gap between saying and meaning. Irony as a speech act has a well-definable perlocutionary force too: exorcism. It will help its participants face the lies they had lived in and allow them to correct them.

The other game also involves pretense and deceit, but with the intention of keeping it pretense and deceit. Because it is based on the joint effort of George and Martha, they cooperate as partners in this game. The illocutionary purpose of this game of make-believe is to create a surrogate reality, a simulacrum that recreates a moment of tragedy around the memory of the "son." What remains a secret, though, is the mode of existence of this son: he could be as real as imagined, which latter case is also a valid form of existence, "existence-in-fiction," as Rorty puts it (*Consequences* 118). This son could have died either "imaginatively," or the parents decided to "kill" him, again, either by neglect (not bothering to have a child) or through abortion. We have no way of knowing what happened exactly, but the way George and Martha are handling this topic, their dread as well as compulsion to relive the trauma, and their constant desire to discuss what they both know is emotional taboo for them—well, all this suggests that the game of make-believe circles around abortion.

If the creation of an alternative or surrogate reality is the illocutionary purpose of the game of make-believe, its perlocutionary purpose is also exorcism. Indeed, this conjuring of a ghost becomes therapeutic: Martha and George relive the possibility of having a son, and relive his death too. Actually, they carry out a very effective form of exorcism where they exploit the undecidability between the constative and the performative. George conveys the news of his death in a constative manner, as if he was reporting the contents of a telegram to Martha; but in effect he puts him to death, it seems, by performatively declaring him dead. Their game presents a classroom example of effective exorcism, described by Derrida as having elements of both declaring and inflicting death, being both constative and performative:

> [E]ffective exorcism pretends to declare the death only in order to put to death. As a coroner might do, it certifies the death but here it is in order to inflict it. This is a familiar tactic. The constative form tends to reassure. The certification is effective. It wants to be and it must be *in effect*. It is *effectively* a performative. (*Specters* 59)

Martha and George are virtuoso players of the primary speech act game in the play, irony. The situation is ideal for irony. All the required players for irony are present: two ironists and two objects of irony. Of the two ironists, Martha and George, one is always on the stage, with enough objectivity, disengagement, freedom, dispassion, and critical attitude to perfectly fulfill the role of the detached ironist. Yet they are never completely detached, but fundamentally care for the person they are demeaning or ridiculing. Nick and Honey are the two objects of irony; it is to them that ironic speech acts are addressed. Their involvement is constantly changing, but most of the time they are in ironic situations without knowing it. Not being able to question their own social values, they are unable to recognize ironic situations. Not being able to imagine that people would so easily see through them—and see them for what they are: calculating, selfish, and corrupt—they are also unable to recognize how they are victims of intrigue. Because they fail to comprehend the degree to which their characters are easy scripts to others, they are unable to identify the ironic tone of the conversation:

> *Martha:* You think I'm kidding? You think I'm joking? I never joke . . . I don't have a sense of humor. I have a fine sense of the ridiculous, but no sense of humor. I have no sense of humor!
>
> *Honey:* I haven't either.
>
> *Nick:* Yes, you have, Honey . . . a quiet one. (76–77)

Moreover, they are unable to recognize that their words betray them:

> *George:* Things are simpler with you . . . you marry a woman because she's all blown up . . . while I, in my clumsy, old-fashioned way . . .
>
> *Nick:* There was more to it than that!
>
> *George:* Sure! I'll bet she has money too!
>
> *Nick:* Yes.
>
> *George:* Yes? *Yes!* You mean I was right? I hit it?
>
> *Nick:* Well, you see . . .
>
> *George:* My God, what archery! First try, too. How about that! (102–103)

Nick and Honey are easy prey to the ironists, who attack them for their inability to cover up what they would rather not have the world see: their marriage based on lies, the faked pregnancies, the marriage for the money of Honey's father, Nick's ruthless ambition, his shameless drive for power, his agism, and the hard scientist's sense of superiority. With the help of ironic speech acts, George and Martha reveal to the discrepancies between truth and lies.

At the same time, the guests are being attacked for another reason too: for being blind to the values lived by Martha and George. Nick cannot imagine how love and care can be at home in irony.

> *Martha:* . . . There is only one man in his life who has ever . . . made me happy. Do you know that? One!
>
> *Nick:* The . . . that what-do-you-call-it? . . . uh . . . the lawn mower, or something?
>
> *Martha:* [. . .] No; I didn't mean him; I meant George, of course. Uh . . . George; my husband.
>
> *Nick:* You're kidding.
>
> . . . .
>
> *Martha:* Oh . . . you know so little. And you're going to take over the world, hunh? (189–192; 1st ellipsis not in orig.)

Nick and Honey are also being ridiculed for their inability to participate in the language game, for being unable to comprehend the rules. Although Nick does reveal a certain sensitivity to understand concrete ironic situations, he is completely unable to recognize honest remarks in ironic contexts.

> *George:* . . . I asked you how you liked that for a declension: Good; better; best; bested. Hm? Well?
> *Nick:* I really don't know what to say.
> *George:* You really don't know what to *say*?
> *Nick:* All right . . . what do you want me to say? Do you want me to say it's funny, so you can contradict me and say it's sad? or do you want me to say it's sad so you can turn around and say no, it's funny. You can play that play that damn little game any way you want to, you know. (32–33; 1st ellipsis not in orig.)

Irony belongs—together with hints, insinuations, and metaphors—to the class of indirect speech acts first defined by Searle ("Indirect"). Here utterance meaning and sentence meaning come apart; the speaker communicates something different and something more, too, than what is actually said. Or, to use Allwood's terminology: intended communicative content and apprehended content differ (134). The ironist usually intends to communicate the somehow opposite of what is literally expressed. Moreover, the ironist also conveys distance to the situation, detachment as well as a sense of superiority. Common background assumptions play a major role in the interpretation of irony. Thus, as Allwood puts it, "A can communicate something about his relation to a certain situation by concurrently communicating the conventional content of a certain linguistic expression and intending that B, through his familiarity with the situation, [and] the conventional content of the expression, . . . should draw the conclusion that A does not *mean* what he is literally saying" (134). Irony, in other words, is effective if some background knowledge, common sense assumptions, or pragmatic or linguistic discrepancies in utterance alert the participants to irony.

As a form of uncooperative behavior, irony violates the Gricean maxims of quality: it says something but means something else. Moreover, this discrepancy between saying and meaning is being done without warning signals. This is what the original meaning of the word *eironeia* suggests, too: assumed ignorance in questioning. Irony most often leaves the listener in ignorance or in doubt: "successful irony," Allwood claims in a footnote, "does not usually involve completely obvious flouting of the norms [of the maxim of quality], but rather leaves the receiver in some doubt about whether the norms have been flouted or not" (241). Norms are being flouted, then, in a coded or covert manner. That is why Nick and especially Honey, lacking an ear for ironic tone and situation, have such difficulties in getting their hosts' ironic remarks.

The discrepancy between saying and meaning, or intended communicative content and apprehended content basic to irony develops into at least three different mechanisms: (i) the simple negation of literal meaning gives the intended meaning; (ii) the reversal of the illocutionary force of the ironic speech act; (iii) the use of presupposition (and also downgraded predication, entailment, and expectation) logically implying its own negation.

(i) In some cases the opposition of meanings is quite simple: the negation of literal meaning gives the intended meaning of the ironic proposition.

> *Martha:* . . . I never joke . . . I don't have a sense of humor. I have a fine sense of the ridiculous, but no sense of humor. I have no sense of humor! (76; 1st ellipsis not in orig.)
>
> *
>
> *Martha:* Very good, George.
>
> . . . .
>
> *Martha:* It's the most . . . life you've shown a long time.
> *George:* You bring out the best in me, baby. (150–151)
>
> *
>
> *Martha:* *Why* don't you want to kiss me?
> *George:* Well, dear, if I'd kissed you I'd get all excited . . . I'd get beside myself, and I'd take you, by force, right here on the living room rug, and then our little guests would walk in, and . . . well, just think what your father would say about *that.* (15)

In these dialogues, the intended meaning of the ironic utterances is the simple negation of the propositions asserted: "Martha always jokes, and has the finest sense of humor"; "Martha brings out the worst in George"; "Even if George kissed Martha, he would not get excited, would not get beside himself, and would certainly not take her, by force, on the living room rug"; "George does not have a poetic nature."

(ii) Other cases are more complicated. By flouting the maxim of quality, the sincerity condition of the illocutionary act is violated, turning irony into the intentional expression of insincerity. This claim derives from what Robert L. Brown rightly calls the key of the phenomenon, namely that "only with illocutionary acts with sincerity conditions can be ironically performed" (10). Indeed, illocutionary acts lacking sincerity conditions—such as marrying, christening, assessing, appointing, or nominating—cannot be performed ironically. These acts can be unsuccessful, however, if the agent lacks necessary authority; in other words, if the condition termed by B. G. Campbell as the "knowledge that speaker is duly constituted authority" (12) is not satisfied.

Illocutionary acts expressing psychological states—among which Searle collects such categories as belief, intention, desire, pleasure—all have sincerity conditions. If this condition is violated, if the speaker does not believe what he or she says, or does not believe or intend that his or her wish be fulfilled, or does not believe that the addressee can supply the information needed, then the illocutionary act may be ironic, as in the following examples.

> *George:* What made you decide to be a teacher?
> *Nick:* Oh, . . . well, the same things that . . . uh . . . motivated you, I imagine.
> *George:* What were they?
> *Nick:* Pardon?
> *George:* I said, what were they? What were the things that motivated me? (31)

George's question is ironic because the sincerity condition is intentionally and overtly violated: by repeating and completing the original question, George wants it known that he lacks this condition.

> *George:* I'm not trying to tear him down. He's a God, we all know that. (26)

In this ironic metaphor, George again wants it known that the verdictive expressing judgment on his father-in-law lacks sincerity; it is meant not as a praise but as an assault.

There are some more intricate instances of ironic judgment. In the next one George violates the sincerity condition of the speech act, but this sincerity condition does not involve the belief in the validity of the judgment.

> *George:* Martha's tastes in liquor have come down . . . simplified over the years .. crystallized. Back when I was courting Martha—well, I don't know if that's exactly the right word for it—but back when I was courting Martha
>
> . . . .
>
> *George:* But the years have brought to Martha a sense of essential . . . the knowledge that cream is for coffee, lime juice for pies . . . and alcohol pure and simple . . . he you are, angel . . . for the pure and simple. (23–24)

While George's utterances as statements might correspond to facts, his evaluation of these facts is ironic. Similar is the case in the following remark of George:

> *Nick:* Don't try to put me in the same class with you!
> *George:* Oh. No, of course not. Things are simpler with you . . . you marry a woman because she's all blown up . . . while I, in my clumsy, old-fashioned way . . . (102)

Lacking sincerity condition in the validity of his own evaluation, George here, too, is ironic: his ways may be considered old-fashioned to an arrogant young man, but morally he is still superior.

(iii) Examples relating to the dissonance between utterer's meaning and sentence meaning reveal yet another subclass of cases. Consider the following:

> *Martha:* What the hell do you mean screaming up the stairs like that?
> *George:* We got lonely, darling . . . we got lonely for the soft purr of your little voice. (47)

Irony is at least twofold here. The illocutionary force is reversed: flattery becomes assault because there is irony already in saying that Martha's "little voice" has a "soft purr." Yet George does not put this claim into the assertion, but—by taking it for granted that the hearer agrees with this proposition—leaves it in the presupposition. By bringing about some incompatibility between presupposition and suggested meaning, the presuppositional content of the claim is questioned. The dissonance inherent in irony is here embodied in a mechanism making presuppositions logically imply their own negation. Anyone who utters "We got lonely for the soft purr of your little voice" takes it for granted that "She has a little voice with a soft purr." Yet in George's ironic remark the implied meaning affects the presupposition. In this ironic remark attacking his wife from the enemy position, George brings it to understand that Martha does not have a little voice with a soft purr.

In the following example, irony again turns on presupposition.

> *Martha:* Get over here and open the door!
> . . . .
> *George:* All right, love . . . whatever love wants. Isn't it nice the way some people have manners, though, even in this day and age? Isn't it nice that some people won't just come breaking into other people's houses even if they *do* hear some sub-human monster yowling at 'em inside . . .? (19)

Had George only stated that "Some people have manners," his implied meaning would have been ironic already. But irony here turns on a contradiction between presuppositions ("Some people have manners," "Some people won't come breaking into other people's houses") and their logical implications ("Some other people do not have manners," "Some other people do come breaking into other people's houses"). By hiding the ironic opposition into the layer of the embedded (implied) presupposition, George adds another dimension to the complexity of his ironic remarks.

Beside presuppositions, other types of semantic-pragmatic relations such as entailment and expectation may also play a role in irony.

> *George:* Yes, Martha? Can I get you something?
> *Martha:* Well . . . uh . . . sure, you can light my cigarette, if you're of a mind to.
> *George:* No v there are limits. I mean, man can put up with only so much [. . .] I'll hold your hand when it's dark and you're afraid of the bogey-man, and I'll tote your gin bottles out after midnight, so no one'll see . . . but I will not light your cigarette. And that, as they say, is that. (50–51)

Irony here attacks the assumption of the marriage contract entailed, on common sense grounds, by the proposition. It also inverts some of the “normal” scale of values: to light somebody’s cigarette is ordinarily an effort not comparable to comforting her in her nightmares. Yet by refusing to light the cigarette, George shows, ironically, the clearest form of uncooperative behavior. Which ultimately comes down to comforting her, concealing her alcoholism, and probably even lighting her cigarette.

But irony is just one kind, albeit the most important one, of the language games played by George and Martha; others are games of the “subjunctive mood,” to borrow again Victor Turner’s term (“Liminality,” *From Ritual*): lies and games of make-believe or deceit. In their discourse the assumption concerning their belief in what they say is suspended; by the same token, their listeners’ assumption that they can take George and Martha at their word should also be suspended—except Nick and Honey don’t really know this, or at least not for a while.

George and Martha invent a language game exactly for the purpose which Rorty described the double process of self-knowledge and self-creation. It is through the game of lies and deceit, invented for their particular purposes and probably always altered to the particular occasions, that they find a way to trace home the causes of their being: by inventing a story in a new language, or language game (*Contingency* 27–28). Theirs is a subjunctive cultural performance on the account that it toys with the possibility or hypothesis of having a child. The son who emerges is obviously not a person, but a possibility: a rhetorical figure indicating the relation which the inventors of the game imagine to have with reality. Through their acts Martha and George perform liminal games of the subjunctive mood, life-crisis rituals that will help them cross thresholds between one place in their lives and another.

Games of irony and deceit are similar in that semantically, as far as reference is concerned, truth-condition is violated. They state a possibility or hypothesis. But while lies have no implicatures, the game of deceit does imply, among other things, something about the fact that they entered a fictional world now, about the intentions of the speaker to create a world of make-believe, and about initiating a semi-serious game. The important difference, in other words, comes in the extent to which each makes its own rhetoric visible: lies are supposed to go unnoticed, but games of deceit have a high visibility in these dialogues.

Indeed, liars do not want to get caught; the listeners are not supposed to know when they are lying.

> *George:* There is a moon; the moon is up.
> *Martha:* I’m afraid you’re mistaken.
> *George:* No; no.
> . . . .

> *George:* . . . the moon went down, thought about it for a little . . . considered it, you know what I mean? . . . and then, *pop*, came up again. Just like that.
> *Martha:* That is not true! That is such a lie!
> *George:* You must not call everything a lie, must she?
> *Nick:* Hell, I don't know when you people are lying, or what.
> *Martha:* You're damned right!
> *George:* You're not supposed to. (198–200; 1st ellipsis not in orig.)

In lies the listener is not supposed to detect the flouting of the maxim of quality: a person lies for a reason, and does not want to be caught.

On the other hand, the person playing a game of deceit does not want the audience to mistake the game for the real: Martha, in this case, is trying to make sure her listener recognizes and perhaps even understands her game.

> *Martha:* Our son does *not* have blue hair . . . or blue eyes, for that matter. He has green eyes . . . like mine.
> *George:* He has blue eyes, Martha.
> *Martha:* *Green!* He has the loveliest green eyes . . . they aren't all flaked with brown or grey, you know . . . hazel . . . they are real green . . . deep, pure green eyes . . . like mine.
> *Nick:* Your eyes are . . . brown, aren't they?
> *Green:* Green! Well, in some lights they *look* brown, but they're green. Not green like this . . . more hazel. George has watery blue eyes . . . milky blue.
> *George:* Make up your mind, Martha. (74–75)

This conversation can have no relation to reality; everything happens according to how Martha fictions her private world. This is a reality performatively created, where the difference between deceit and lies is really a matter of perspective: according to the pragmatics of her utterances, she is deceptive, while according to the semantics of the sentences, she is lying. What is important, though, is that she wants to be caught in her game.

Similarly, George gives away his game of deceit in the phrase "blond-eyed blue-haired son," which seems not just a slip of the tongue, but a deliberate absurdity.

> *George:* . . . the one thing in this whole sinking world that I am sure of is my partnership, my chromosomological partnership in the . . . creation of our . . . blond-eyed, blue-haired . . . son. (72; 1st ellipsis not in orig.)

Wayne C. Booth calls such a clue "known error proclaimed" (57), one that seems to act as an alert signal to the discourse of make-believe. It is a son whose existence is made-up, discursively (performatively) constructed, created by a language game. And a deadly serious game for that too. The game is serious for at least two reasons: one, it cuts deep into the lives of these two people, two, a fictional character's existence is no less real than if he had "really" existed. In their game of deceit, Martha and George certainly make sure that the audience know that their language game is distinct from what Rorty calls "real world (spatio-temporal) talk" (*Consequences* 118).

The *Sprachspiele* of irony and make-believe require a lot from the newcomers. They require an active verbal and non-verbal interaction, the reconstruction and also the undertaking of the problem which lurks behind the language games of George and Martha: the unborn child. The purpose of their game is multiple, but cleansing and reconciliation are primary among them. The ending certainly shows the speech irony as having a strong perlocutionary function in that, as Paul de Man succinctly puts it, it "consoles and it promises and it excuses" (*Aesthetic* 165). Indeed, both irony and make-believe appear as the modern version of *katharsis*, itself described as performative by Andrew Ford, performing the ritual of "cleansing," "purification of the soul," or "intellectual clarification" of the characters, as well as "a moral refinement of the spectator's soul" ("Katharsis" 110–111). Through their cruel but effective game, the players achieve an additional perlocutionary effect: by the end they will have dumped the hidden problem on the new couple through having them participate in their game of exorcism.

CHAPTER TWO

EXTENDING THE PERFORMATIVE

> "Little by little, they taught me how to be Peter Stillman.
> They said: you are Peter Stillman."
> (Paul Auster)

In the past decade or so, the performative has become a generative concept in poststructuralist critical thinking. Within this framework, the performative has come to be seen as not just contesting the primacy of the signified over the signifier, but also as a case of meaning production not involving reference. Indeed, performativity has been understood as a function of the signifier only, a non-referential discursive operation. The paradigm originally devised for a particular group of verbs, the performative has now been extended to all kinds of discursive processes where signification comes about discursively out of mere signifiers. Most prominent among these processes is the (discursive) construction of the (discursive) subject, where the performative has provided a pragmatic form whereby certain constitutive processes can be conceptualized in non-essentialist thinking. In other words, the performative refutes the essentialist position taken earlier with regard to subjectivities by showcasing the inflections of gender, sexuality, and race as produced by language. Independent of whether the identities in question are stable or unstable, unproblematic or problematic, intelligible or unintelligible, dominant or non-dominant, the performative establishes the ways they all come about as effects of discourse. Moreover, as effects produced by the performative, inflections of gender, race, or sexual identity will be shown to exist only in the symbolic: not as referents but as metaphors or catachreses brought about solely by discourse.

I use the word *discourse* in its poststructuralist, primarily Foucauldian, understanding, as the general domain (or individualizable group) of statements and practices which determines what we think, how we see reality and ourselves (see *Archeology* 49, 80). Discourses set the limits within which our thinking can proceed. As Sara Mills explains, "[i]n the process of apprehending, we categorise and interpret experience and events according to the structures available to us and, in the process of interpretation, we lend these structures a solidity and a normality which it is often difficult to think outside of" (54). As such, discourses can be considered to make up the episteme, defined by Foucault as "the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems" (*Archeology* 191). In other words, the episteme—the configuration which structures thought and knowledge—defines the frameworks of discourse containing all that is knowable, thinkable, and speakable in a particular age.

The performative was picked up by philosophers and theorists in the 1970s and especially 1980s and 1990s. Radical thinkers used speech act theory in support of their critique of metaphysics; among these are Jacques Derrida ("Signature Event Context"; *Limited Inc*; *Specters of Marx*; "Performative Powerlessness"; *Negotiations*), Roland Barthes ("The Death of the Author"), Stanley Fish (*Is There a Text in This Class?*), Shoshana Felman (*The Scandal of the Speaking Body*; *Claims of Literature*), and J. Hillis Miller (*Versions of Pygmalion*; *Tropes, Parables, Performatives*; *Speech Acts in Literature*; *On Literature*; *Literature as Conduct*). At the same time, feminist critics put the performative in the middle of their constructionist work on the subject, especially when exploring gender, sexual, and racial identity; among them are Diana Fuss (*Essentially Speaking*), Judith Butler (*Gender Trouble*; "For a Careful Reading"; *Excitable Speech*; *The Psychic Life of Power*; *Undoing Gender*), and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (*The Epistemology of the Closet*; *Touching Feeling*). A performative perspective on the subject allows one to see subjectivities as "large" and multitudinous in the Whitmanesque way, as something that is constantly made and remade, the product of language processes, therefore multiform, variable, and permeable. The performative in the poststructuralist framework grants a conceptional tool for understanding the subject as a catachrestic discursive construct, a function of the signifier that does not lean on a fixed and independent signified. Moreover, speech act theory allows one to trace the process of the production of both marked and unmarked elements of dichotomies such as woman/man, black/white, homosexual/heterosexual.

As I will elaborate later in this chapter, the performative has helped to explain how both texts and readings can depend on performative processes. Of these two, the former is the more familiar territory. It is in the text where the performative has been known to discursively bring about certain states of affairs: where words make things happen. As opposed to the descriptive (constative) mode, the performative is capable of fulfilling what Henry McDonald calls the "ontological role" of language: the performative "subverts the 'metaphysical' role traditionally given language as a reflection or mimesis of reality, substituting in its place an 'ontological' role of language as an ungrounded mode of being" (58), ungrounded, that is, in reality, or the reality of the referent, and existing instead as catachresis.

Therefore, in addition to considering texts as performative, reading, I will insist, can also be considered performative in the sense that a new reading can bring into existence something in the text that did not exist prior to this particular reading. The performative understanding of reading, together with the performative's interaction with presuppositions, which I will introduce and define subsequently, can help explain the emergence of new interpretations that have emerged in the process of current revisionist readings of the American canon.

In the following, I will argue for performativity as a fundamental category of textuality and discursivity, inherently tied to the signifying structure of language. Performative analysis will show that performative constructions of the subject have a catachrestic nature, that is, they are discursive productions lacking their literal or real referents. As such they too, to adopt Foucault's words, ignore the power of langage "to designate, to name, to show, to reveal, to be the place of meaning or truth"; they too suspend "the point of view of the 'signified'" and are "hollowed by absence" (*Archeology* 111).

Performativity in theories of the subject

Subject, *subjectivity*, *identity*—these terms evoke issues that have defined theories of culture and society of the past decades. As I already claimed in the Introduction, I observe several different meanings of the term *subject*. In its (1) general meaning, the subject basically means person or human being (this is the subject as persona or individual). In its (2) narrower sense, a subject can be (i) the nominal taking the subject position in the sentence (this is the grammatical subject) and (ii) the person who speaks, sees, and acts (this is subject as agent). Moreover, in this narrower sense, the subject has a third meaning which goes somewhat counter to the first two (i-ii) meanings: (iii) the person subjected to some power (as, for example, subject to the crown). In terms of the relationship between *subject* or *subjectivity* and *identity*, I see several differences in spite of the fact that in critical practice they are used as near synonyms, often as interchangeable terms. In my reading, the differences between *subject* or *subjectivity* and *identity* relate to (i) theoretical context, (ii) part/whole relationship, (iii) degree of consciousness, and (iv) degree of fluidity or fixity. First, *identity*—originally referring to some core and stable element of the self—is taken from the discourse of modernity (yet its understanding as process or construction allows it to be used in the poststructuralist context too), while *subject* or *subjectivity*—referring to variable and permeable entities produced in discourse—is part of postmodernist discourse predicated on the postmodern episteme. Second, *identity* refers more to social inflections or markers, or separate segments of the self, ones that can be shown to correspond to various social categories (such as gender, race, class, sexuality) which one's *subjectivity* as a whole is inflected by. Accordingly, *identity* is often defined by only one specific inflection (this is what Anthony Appiah and Amy Guttman call the "imperialism of identity" [*Color Conscious* 103]), while *subject* is used as incorporating—or inflected by—multiple identifications or, as Nick Mansfield points out, as an "abstract or general principle that defies our separation into distinct selves" (3). Third, the difference between the two terms should be searched in the degree of consciousness as well. Subjectivity implies a higher degree of self-awareness, where the subject is constituted as object, the object of study, for himself or herself. This is the sense in which Foucault uses the term as well, when speaking of the "domain of possible knowledge" resulting from observing the ways "in which the subject experiences himself in a game of truth where he relates to himself" (*Aesthetics* 461). Fourth, as opposed to fixed (albeit evolving) identity markers, subjectivity is a shifting-moving process, a set of positions inscribed and reinscribed by discourse.

The poststructuralist understanding of performativity contests the assumption of a subject as signified, one pre-existing the utterance or existing independently of language. Until it got contested in the second part of the 20th century, this autonomous and self-conscious individual—conceptualized during the early modern era and dramatized, for example, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as the self-reflective modern man thinking his way into action and agency—served as an axiom of Western thought. Indeed, the concept goes back to René Descartes' *cogito*, the "I think, therefore I am" maxim of thinking and doubting and struggling to know—of a self, we must add, that exists before it thinks and experiences, and is taken as the basis of being. The Cartesian self conceptualized during the Enlightenment was further developed in the 18th century, with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's insistence on the autonomy of individual experience, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's idea of the uttered word as rooted in thought rooted in turn in action, John Locke's emphasis on rational control, Benjamin Franklin's trust in the (self-)perfectibility of man, and Immanuel Kant's concept of rational agency and unity of the self, among others. In the 19th century such equations between rational thinking and "humanity" will serve as the basis for the spectacular exclusions of blacks and women from the "universal" ideal of the human, giving an impetus, in the United States, to the anti-slavery movement and, in both Europe and the U.S., to suffragette action. Justifications for these latter will include arguments—coming from Frederick Douglass and Margaret Fuller, for example—assigning the faculties of the self to those formerly excluded. The control of the self is newly problematized by Friedrich Nietzsche, allowing the idea of self-construction enter his philosophical system. Critiquing the Cartesian unified consciousness, Sigmund Freud's modern psychology assumes a subjectivity which, though split and therefore not in our full control, relies on self-knowledge and grants a certain degree of agency. Jacques Lacan's approach will take a shift from the ruling Freudian model in acknowledging the separation of the desire for control over selfhood from the illusion of such control, or, in the mirror stage, the child's recognition of the distinction between self and other, as well as between the visual gestalt of the complete external image and the child's sense of its own fragmented self. With Lacan's linguistic turn—insisting that the subject is always the speaking subject, one defined in and by language, and that language is the site where self-identity happens—the idea of the self-existing Cartesian subject suffered a serious blow.

Of course, psychoanalysis was only one discipline that critiqued the modern idea of subjectivity and agency: linguists, philosophers, semioticians, literary and cultural theorists such as Émile Benveniste, Jacques Derrida, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Teresa de Lauretis, Julia Kristeva, and Judith Butler, for example, have shared a similar insistence on how language, ideology, power, knowledge, social technologies, the abject, and the Other construct us, by signification, interpellation, and subjection, into subjects that are never free, never unified, and never an origin. Underlying these various claims, which I will summarize briefly in the next paragraph, is the recognition of the tripartite specific meaning of the word *subject*, referring equally to (i) the process of becoming a subject of a linguistic occasion (the subject *of* the sentence, the one assuming the speaking position), (ii) the process of becoming a speaking-seeing-acting agent, and to (iii) the process of becoming subordinated, subjected, *to* some power, or force, or system. This subjectivation—that is, of being (i-ii) produced and (iii) subjugated at the same time—is captured by Foucault's term *assujettissement*, which denotes both the process of becoming a grammatical subject and agent, on the one hand, and, on the other, the process of becoming subjugated to forces "which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate out behaviors." Here subjects are gradually constituted "through a multiplicity of organisms, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc.," and "subjection in its material instance" is the "constitution of subjects" (*Power/Knowledge* 97).[2] Subjects are, therefore, produced by power. Applying this claim to the inflections of subjectivity which I will examine later (gender, race, and sexuality), one could say that only by being subjected to the juridical norms of manhood or womanhood, whiteness or blackness, or heterosexuality or homosexuality does one have culturally intelligible gender, race, and sexuality. As Foucault puts it in connection with sexuality,

> sexuality owes its very definition to the action of the law: not only will you submit your sexuality to the law, but you will have no sexuality except by subjecting yourself to the law. (*History* 128)

Prominent among theorists dislodging the *cogito* is Benveniste, who emphasized the primacy of language in providing the possibility of subjectivity: it is in the sentence that the 'I' constitutes itself as subject: "the basis of subjectivity is in the exercise of language" ("Subjectivity" 730). For Derrida, one becomes a subject only by being subjected to the signifying practices of language: "the subject (self-identical or even conscious of self-identity, self-conscious) is inscribed in the language, . . . he is a 'function' of the language. He becomes a *speaking* subject only by conforming his speech . . . to the system of linguistic prescriptions taken as the system of differences, or at least to the general law of différance" ("Différance" 396; emphasis in original). For Althusser it is primarily apparatuses (such as literature) and institutions (such as the church, family, and school) that reproduce the values of ideology which will "interpellate" or hail the individual—with the power of force similar to that of the police; it is this hailing by which the interpellated person becomes a socially constituted subject (*Lenin*). For Foucault, too, power acts through institutions, which produce subjects as "objects of knowledge and at the same time objects of domination" ("Beginnings" 213); yet only by being subjected to disciplinary discourses is the subject's self-constitution possible. Power is enhanced by knowledge in bringing about a maximum effect on the individual, the individual being "one of [power's] prime effects" (*Power/Knowledge* 98)—such is the function of the prison, as well as hospitals, schools, or banks: to individualize, normalize, and hierarchize the subject *(Discipline),* or to regulate sexual practices by various technologies of sex *(History).* Foucault examines the various forms of what he calls "techniques or technology of the self," whereby the individuals will carry out "a certain number of operations on their own bodies, . . . souls, . . . thoughts, . . . conduct" in order to "transform themselves, modify themselves" ("Beginnings" 214). Most notable among these technologies of the self are the discursive or linguistic technologies, such as the confession, which is a technique oriented toward "the discovery and the formulation of the truth about oneself" (214). Of course, confession can be understood here to include all autobiographical genres as well as discursive utterances of the ego which, as forms of self-making and "self-understanding," to quote Foucault again (213), allow one "to produce and publish the truth about oneself" (214).

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[2] Both these processes support the claim made by József Szili in connection with literature as process (see „Az irodalom mint folyamat" 175ff).

De Lauretis applied Foucault's idea of complex technologies of the self to gender, and suggested to include such "social technologies" as cinema, institutionalized discourses, as well as practices of daily life, thus defining gender as both the product and process of its representation and self-representation *(Technology).* For Kristeva, the subject is formed from a defensive position, during the process of attempting to establish a dividing line between self and Other by constantly pushing away those forces threatening its borders which she calls abject—such as the maternal body or corporeal waste *(Powers).*

As poststructuralist commentaries deconstructed the distinction between pre-existing and constructed subjectivities, and insisted that the subject was always already constructed as a function or effect of power and its discourses, Butler applied this deconstructive gesture to the sex/gender (or nature/culture) binary, pointing out that "sex" is not a biological given but "is as culturally constructed as gender"; therefore, it is "always already gender" (*Gender Trouble* 7) and the body ("nature") is "always already a cultural sign" (71). Moreover, not only does gender come first, but there is nothing beneath the mask of regulatory behavior effected by society: gender is performative. “That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (136).

Thus predicated on the notions of construction and performative process, the subject in poststructuralist theories is anchored in language and is viewed as a function of the sentence.

Language can be performative without employing performative verbs; indeed, as Butler claims, “it’s most performative when its performativity is least explicit . . . most of all when it isn’t even embodied in actual words” (qtd in Sedgwick, *Touching* 6). Moreover, performativity is really an effect of language, not its cause. Whether we take the subject as created by speech or, for that matter, the author brought about in writing, language can be said to produce its use. As Roland Barthes famously claims in his “The Death of the Author,”

> [l]inguistically, the author is never more than the instance of writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance of saying *I*: language knows a “subject,” not a “person,” and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language “hold together,” suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it. (1467)

Indeed, as poststructuralism calls into question language or the text as a transparent medium “revealing” a reality behind it, the subject or self that pre-exists the text (or can have an existence outside the realm of language) is concomitantly repudiated. Poststructuralist theorists will not insist on a solipsistic existence similar to Forty-four’s in Mark Twain’s *The Mysterious Stranger*; the movement away from the referent does not imply a denial of the referent. What is asserted by poststructuralism, however, is that this referent cannot exist as self-presence: all our experience is mediated by the signifying practices of culture, or, in fact, is constructed through discourse. Of course, people do exist even before they speak, even before they construct themselves *as subjects* in discourse. But their existence as subjects depends on how they speak, how they construct themselves in language; the self as a system of representations evolves out of the text. For example, when in July 1862, Emily Dickinson sends her fourth letter to T. W. Higginson, saying, “I had no portrait, now, but am small, like the Wren, and my Hair is bold, like the Chestnut Bur—and my Eyes, like the Sherry in the Glass, that the Guest leaves” (Letter 268), she is (she constructs herself as)—at least as far as the meaning of her words is concerned—no more than a small wren-like woman, with bold hair and brown eyes. Or, to take another example, she might be all kinds of other things too, but when in 1864 she complains to her sister Lavinia, “I have been sick so long I do not know the sun” (Letter 435), she constitutes herself solely as the subject of the sentence, the figure saying “I,” and illness will emerge as the dominant marker of her subjectivity. Subjected to the meanings produced by the sentence, or subjected to discourse, the speaker's subjectivity is purely textual. As Barthes puts it in the passage quoted earlier, this subject too is "never more than the instance of writing": the figure produced by the subject of the sentence. The subject of Dickinson's sentence takes the subject-position defined solely by what is being narrated in the text. The conclusion is at hand: subjectivity is narrative, something that can be related in a coherent narrative.

Who can then become the subject of the sentence? Who is allowed to take agency by becoming the subject capable of self-construction? This problematics is intricately tied to interlocking and parallel dichotomies, dominant in Western thought for centuries, of subject and object, self and other, mind and body, agent and patient, dominant and subjugated, speaking and being spoken to or of, seeing and being seen, active and passive, desiring and desired, man and woman, white and black, heterosexual and homosexual, etc. Given the hierarchies implicit in binary structures, where the unmarked category is always assumed to be dominant with regards to the marked category, subjectivity can be defined as a property of the unmarked position: as belonging to the self, the mind, the agent, the one who speaks, sees, and desires. (On dominant categories positioned as "unmarked generic," see Peggy Phelan 5.) As Donna Haraway puts it, "[o]nly those occupying the positions of the dominators are self-identical, unmarked, disembodied, unmediated, transcendent, born again" ("Persistence" 289). Given the gendered, racialized, and sexualized nature of these categories, this is, in particular, the white heterosexual male. Conversely, those in the marked positions—who are defined in their otherness, their corporeality, their being the objects of language and vision, patients "suffering" the acts of agents (who they are not), in short, as Gilles Deleuze puts it, as "object beings" (Foucault-Deleuze 206)—are excluded from subjectivity; they are, in particular, women, people of color, homosexuals, and other members of the category of the Other. Not only can we say in general that subjectivity is an effect of power, but that it is an effect of all the individual constituents of power—those constituents that are each affected by power: language, vision, action, positionality, as well as gender, race, sexuality, etc.

Let me take the example of the body. Viewed as a container (of the soul), an instrument or tool (for the expression of some underlying substance, consciousness), as something material—therefore finite, defective, decaying, and mortal—as opposed to the spiritual, infinite, and immortal nature of the soul, the body was conceptualized as the element taking the secondary position in the Cartesian binary. Moreover, as something visible (hiding the invisible), the body as a marked category is the object exposed to the senses—as opposed to the unmarked category of the subject of the seeing mind. Given the all-pervasive gendering of the Cartesian categories, the mind was as clearly associated with maleness, as the body was with femaleness. Woman is assigned the position of the body, "weighed down," as Beauvoir puts it, "by everything peculiar to it," while man molds himself as the "inevitable, like a pure idea, like the One, the All, the Absolute

Spirit" (146). Women have been traditionally assigned a life centered around the body—in both applying regimes of beauty to their own body and reproducing and nurturing the bodies of others.

Modernity begins, Foucault claims, when "the brutal fact" of the body comes to be viewed as the defining element of the self; at this time "the human being begins to exist within his organism, inside the shell of his head, inside the armature of his limbs, and in the whole structure of his physiology" (*The Order of Things* 317, 318). This modern interest in the body was accelerated in the 20th century, contesting, however, the earlier claim of corporeal unity. Poststructuralist theories insist that the human body is not something *a priori* given, but a cultural text brought about by knowledge, power, and discourse. Bodies, therefore, are not born, but are produced by signifying practices. As such, the body ceases to be the opposite of the soul, but becomes instead a surface inscribed by various social discourses, whose aim is to homogenize, normalize and ultimately control the body. Indeed, the body is perhaps the primary, most obvious territory of the exercise of power; it is, as Susan Bordo points out, both "a text of culture" and "a *practical*, direct locus of social control" (*Unbearable* 165). The body comes to be viewed as a construction, a surface, written over by various kinds of inscriptions of power; and just like any other form of writing, these cultural texts are then open to signification. The controlling discourses that inscribe the body are especially obvious in the case of women; these are the oppressive regimes of the "beauty myth," to use Naomi Wolf's term (*The Beauty Myth*): the dress or costume, makeup, jewelry, diet, exercise, prosthetic devices, the surgical knife, and the laser beam, among others. Among the other marks of normativity forming the embodied subjects, Rosi Braidotti lists forms of knowledge and disciplines too: for example, biology, demography, family sociology, psychoanalysis, and anthropology (*Nomadic Subject* 59). As a surface inscribed and re-inscribed by knowledge, power, and discourse, the body—and especially the female body—is clearly positioned as object. "Positioning is," Donna Haraway points out, "the key practice in grounding knowledge organized around the imagery of vision" ("Persistence" 289). In other words, not only is the body subjected to knowledge, power, and discourse, which act upon its inscriptive surface during the process of subjugation, but also to vision. The body's subjection to knowledge, power, and discourse is a process inseparable from its positioning as object: the body becomes the object of the gaze, a spectacle, through being subjected to discourses of power, vision among them. To quote Haraway again, "[v]ision is *always* a question of the power to see" (287–288; emphasis in original).

Taking the position of the subject, whether in the sentence or in social relations, has proved to be especially important for culturally imperialized groups: women, people of color, the poor, the homosexual, the colonized, and the disabled, among others. These are the social groups that were traditionally excluded from the universalized category of the human subject, and were assigned the position of the object—in the sentence, of the gaze, as well as of oppression. Whether for reasons of gender, race, or sexuality, these groups were reified by the gendered, racialized, or sexualized economy of the gaze, speech, desire, and action, and came to be positioned as objects in all these economies. Justified by arguments originating in Enlightenment thinking, they were excluded from the larger category of rationality—rationality, which has been, as Jessica Benjamin pointed out, "contaminated by control," and been responsible for solidifying the hegemonic relationship between "a controlling subject and an objectified world" (*Bonds of Love* 193).

Feminist, postcolonial, queer, and other cultural theorists have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that two opposing tendencies have coexisted in the past decades in discussions about the subject: on the one hand, poststructuralist theories claim that the subject is dead, while on the other hand, identity movements—in politics and literature, for example—have asserted new racial, gendered, sexual, and classed subjectivities, granting them autonomy and agency (without denying their social construction). As Butler puts it in connection with women, "when women are beginning to assume the place of subjects, postmodern positions come along to announce that the subject is dead" ("Contingent" 48).

The social groups that have fallen victim to this thought are the same as those that had earlier fallen victim to modern thought: the colonial subject or "subaltern," to use Gayatri Spivak's term ("Can the Subaltern Speak?"). They have suffered repeated exclusions, from power and language alike, in processes that are intertwined in multiple ways. But in both cases exclusion led to the constitution of subjecthood, political as well as discursive. In the first case, exclusion from the modern notion of the autonomous individual has led these groups to claim agency through political identity movements. Along the way, they have uncovered the survival of certain metanarratives, whose purpose was to help perpetuate, already within the postmodern framework, versions of the Cartesian self. As Patricia Waugh points out, one such surviving myth is the patriarchal metanarrative, "the inheritance of a particular ideal of subjectivity defined in terms of transcendence and pure rationality," which functions "just as effectively within our so-called 'postmodern age' as in any other age" (209). Patriarchal language has been similarly appropriated by men, while women, denied the right to speak, have been excluded from language's subject-producing potential. Postmodern subjecthood (where the subject is proclaimed dead) has come to be viewed by postcolonial theorists as a way of locking them, Nick Mansfield points out, "in an earlier subjectivity of oppression . . . or else they are not recognized at all" (127). Given the intimate ties between power and language, the formerly silenced groups and individuals will reclaim their subjectivities by resisting the ideology that constructed them as objects and by constructing themselves as subjects, speaking as subjects and by appropriating a place as subjects in dominant discourse.

The simultaneous emergence of these contradictory—humanistic or modern and postmodern—ways of thinking cannot be taken as accidental; rather, they seem co-dependent, or at least interrelated. True, there is no disagreement among poststructuralist theoreticians concerning the discursive or social constructedness of the self, yet this same theory will make room for a subjectivation process that is able to resist the social technologies of power: in the form of Foucauldian *assujettissemen* (*Power/Knowledge* 97), Althusserian ideology, "hailing" and thereby subjecting the individual into a "subject" "in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection" (*Lenin* 182), or simply through struggling with Beauvoir's Other (*Second Sex* xxii). Probably this "possibility of transformation" (Belsey, "Constructing" 597) is the closest the postmodern subject can get to the idea of agency. The subject here is conceptualized, like in Kristeva, as a process ("The Subject") capable of surpassing the state of being subjected by resisting the controlling norms. Thus, poststructuralist theories can accept the idea of agency as, to use Butler's definition, "the assumption of a purpose *unintended* by power" (*Psychic Life* 15; emphasis in original). (I will return to the issue of intention later.)

In this line of thinking, the subject's agency is not a prediscursive given, having "some stable existence prior to the cultural field that it negotiates," as Butler puts it (*Gender Trouble* 182), but is produced discursively. It is produced either "originally" by the discourse of power (in the case of dominant groups) or by the subject's resistance to the discourse of power, "originally" constituting her or him as other or object, through his or her new discourse (in the case of non-dominant groups). This second understanding of subjectivity as fully constituted by discursive resistance is of utmost importance because this is where poststructuralist thinking does allow for the possibility of agency. Indeed, as will be amply illustrated later, performative constructionism does not imply either determinism or the death of the agent or author, for performative constructions of subjectivities can come about against accepted norms as well. To take an example from postcolonial theory, strategies of subaltern groups of adopting masks and other forms of mimicry can also be taken, Homi Bhabha insists, as instances of "subaltern agency" or "performative agency" since they disrupt and even parody all notions of "true" identity (*Location* 185).

The issue of agency, however, is intimately tied to the issue of intentionality. A divisive concept in speech act theory already, intentionality has provoked disagreements in poststructuralist theories as well. Austin himself—while emphasizing, in various formulations, the role of convention in constituting the speech act (*How to Do* 127, for example)—connected the felicity of the performative to intentionality (21) and excluded from consideration all "non-serious" utterances as ones "parasitic upon . . . normal use" (22). Post-Austinian speech act theorists went further towards tying meaning and felicity (of the speech act) to speaker's intention without always trying to strike the proper balance between convention and intention. In one article, Grice defined meaning in terms of "utterer's intention" ("Meaning" 59), while in another he insisted that speech acts, just like any other acts, must be explained in terms of the goals or intentions of the agent of the action, in this case the speaker, and emphasized the cooperative principle of communication ("Logic and Conversation"). (I discussed Grice's cooperative principle and his idea of implicature in my chapter on Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf.*) Peter F. Strawson, in line with Austin's exclusion of "non-serious" utterances from illocutions, also defined meaning in terms of communicative intention and rationality ("Intention"). In their intention-centered theory, Kent Bach and Robert M. Harnish proposed that intention is crucial to the successful accomplishment of certain non-ceremonial acts like asking or stating, while admitted that other acts—such as marrying or christening—rely on the primary illocutionary mechanism of convention (*Linguistic Communication*). By introducing the concepts of indirect speech acts (where the implicit or primary performative can be interpreted as belonging to at least two different performative formulae, or where "one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another" [Searle, "Indirect" 60]) and the sincerity condition (the condition that in order for the performative to have force, it must be uttered by someone who sincerely believes in its power), Searle also provided arguments in support of an intention-based theory ("Indirect").

Seeing the issue more problematic, poststructuralist theorists questioned the centrality of authorial control in the creation of a text's meaning, and entered into debate with speech act theorists concerning intentionality. This disagreement culminated in the well-known debate between Derrida and Searle in *Glyph*, where the issues at stake involved not only the "parasitism" or non-parasitism and seriousness or non-seriousness of speech acts, but also the possibility of context "saturated" or "non-saturated" by intention" (see Derrida's "Signature Event Context," Searle's "Reiterating the Differences," and Derrida's "Limited Inc abc." and *Limited Inc.*). In his "Signature Event Context," Derrida critiqued, among others, Austin's insistence on authorial intention and his opposing of serious vs. non-serious speech acts. Derrida questioned intentionality and sincerity as determining factors in the production of meaning by claiming that any piece of "written communication" can only remain "readable" if its meaning does not depend on the presence of intention itself depending on the presence of the writer (179).

> To write is to produce a mark that will constitute a sort of machine which is productive in turn, and which in my future disappearance will not, in principle, hinder in its functioning. . . . I ought to be able to say my disappearance, pure and simple, my non-presence in general, for instance the non-presence of my intention of saying something meaningful. (180–181)

In other words, a text remains meaningful even after the death “pure and simple” of its author because its meaning is not tied to authorial intention. Derrida takes the possibility of this “disengagement” of writing from its author’s intention and presence—“the possibility of its functioning being cut off . . . from its ‘original’ desire-to-say-what-one-means [*vouloir-dire*]”—as belonging “to the structure of every mark, spoken or written” (185). It is not intention, he goes on, but repetition and quotation, or “iterability,” that provides the footing for performative force. Refuting Austin’s notion of both intentionalism and “parasitism,” Derrida makes the claim that all performatives rely on a general citationality or iterability.

How is agency related to intentionality thus problematized? As I see it, agency and intentionality either coincide or do not coincide, depending on the kind of subjectivity construction and on who we take to “own” intention and agency. As I have pointed out earlier, subjects are either constructed by power (in the case of dominant groups) or through *assujettissement*, that is, when they are self-constructed through resisting power that earlier subjected them (in the case of non-dominant groups). In the first case, subjectivity is intended by power, while in the second, it is unintended by it. But one should also add that in the former case, subjectivity is assigned to the dominant subject through the citation and repetition of conventional norms, Derridian iterability, and not through the intention of the subject. In this case, intention is with power and not with the subject to whom agency is assigned; here, conventionalized rules will play a major role. In the case of *assujettissement*, however, agency is appropriated against the intention of power (it is unintended by power); subjectivity is here intended by the subject taking agency. Citationality is also involved, of course, but we cannot talk about the mere replaying of norms; rather, power conventions are cited but at the same time transferred too, from the formerly dominant to the newly dominant subject. (I will further elaborate this differentiation between the two forms of subjectivity in the next subchapter, where I discuss what I term perfor*mance* and perfor*mative* constructions of the subject.)

In addition to the contradiction surrounding agency in postmodern thinking described above, I would like to point to another, equally important contradiction between discursive and “real” existence. Here are from some common sense questions: doesn’t a subject have to pre-exist in order to act and perform? How is it possible for a “discursive construct” to be constructed with a prior existence? If subjects are merely discursive, what is it that exists in reality?

Before producing my argument which will hopefully answer these questions and reconcile this second contradiction, I would like to engage myself with a critical version of social constructionism, where the idea of being socially constructed does not apply to everything that surrounds us. I want to restrict social constructivism to those instances where the object in question—whether it is what people are or what people do—changes because of the way we perceive it. Being a good mother, for example, is shaped by the idea of "good motherhood," much like the act of date rape is shaped by our relatively new perception of it. In these cases, being or doing things is shaped by the perception and categorization of that particular thing in discourse; in this process, not only is the "thing" socially constructed, but the subject too who is or does that. Discourse will then construct the person. Such instances are described by Ian Hacking, one of the severest critics of social construction theories, as acceptable cases of social construction, where what is classified can interact with the classifications. He calls them "interactive kinds" (103) as opposed to "indifferent kinds," where the difference lies in the interaction or non-interaction of object with idea. He brings the example of children and the idea of childhood to the former and plutonium and the idea of plutonium for the latter: while children seem to interact with the idea of childhood in the sense that "children now . . . are different from children at some other time, because the idea of childhood . . . is different now" (102), plutonium "does not interact with the idea of plutonium" (105). In other words, only those objects can be said to be socially constructed which interact with the idea of the object. This understanding leaves room, I believe, for both social construction and an acknowledged reality encompassing discursive *and* pre-discursive entities alike.

Given this framework where social construction and the category of the real can coexist, I return now to my second contradiction to be reconciled. I believe that the following two claims together hold true: (a) the subject is a discursive construct catachrestically lacking its referent and (b) this discursive subject belongs to what we perceive as "reality." First, I describe the performed subject as catachresis, a metaphor lacking its literal referent, in order to emphasize the discursively produced nature of the subject. Performatively produced in discourse, the subject as subject lacks its "original" referent in "reality." The subject is as much of a catachrestic constructs as is the pronoun, which, Benveniste has pointed out, refer to "something very peculiar which is exclusively linguistic"; indeed, the "reality" to which personal pronouns refer is "the reality of the discourse" (see "Subjectivity" 730). Of course, some entity will already exist in order to be able to perform or be constructed; discourses must have a "body" to act upon. But this entity or body cannot be called subject yet, not even the referent of the construct to be produced. For the end-product is purely linguistic or discursive; it has no "original" literal referent with a mode of existence preceding its existence in language. The subject is then a catachresis, constructed as subject solely by language.

Second, it is this subject produced catachrestically by discourse which will metaleptically take its place in "reality" (itself permeated and mediated by discourses, of course). For while the subject does not originate in reality but in discourse, it will, as a discursive construct, exist and operate, metaleptically, in reality. Indeed, as Kaja Silverman puts it, "the speaking subject belongs to . . . the domain of the real, but it can attain subjectivity or self-apprehension only through the intervention of signification" (196). Thus anchored in the "domain of the real," the subject resists turning into Baudrillardian simulacrum, one generated "by models of a real without origin or reality" ("Precession" 343). Instead, the subject, as a discursive construct, becomes a category of the real.

Perfor*mance* and perfor*mative* constructions of the subject

Now I want to follow up on the differentiation between the two forms of subjectivity, which I outlined in my discussion of intentionality and agency. Put simply, subjectivity can be said to performatively come about in two distinct ways: produced in accordance with the dominant (hailing) ideology and out of resistance to this ideology; revealing an existing (discursive) reality and creating a new (discursive) ontology; reflecting or quoting prior texts and processes and bringing about new texts and processes. The first in each pair is always representation, the dramatic or theatrical replaying of some existing social script; the second is the (discursive) ontologization of some newly performed entity. While there may be cases where this distinction is not fully operative, on the whole I think it is important to distinguish between these two modes in which performativity functions. Indeed, some cases are more obviously expressive (evocative, mimetic, representational, theatrical), relying on some dramatic-social-cultural script, others are more self-producing (anti-mimetic, non-representational, anti-theatrical, and self-referential) in the sense that they perform acts and construct identities without following any existing script. In this latter case the performative itself brings about the new script. Of course, while the performative allows the ontologizing aspect of language and literature to emerge, it does not totally do away with the representational or mimetic-quoting aspect. Indeed, some element of representation and self-reflection is always retained, since as a conventional act, the performative depends on evoking existing scripts.

Where relevant, I will distinguish between (i) perfor*mances* and (ii) perfor*matives*. I hope my case studies will testify to the usefulness of this distinction in spite of the fact that it is in no way a totalizing binary, separating all cases. For I certainly believe that clear categories do not exist, and those texts which I introduce as examples for clear categories might be further problematized (shown to exhibit marks of transitionality and transgression).

(i) I introduce the term perfor*mance* (with the last syllable in italics) to designate instances where expressive citationality is dominant in making subjectivities; these processes appeal to existing conventions, and invoke existing traditions. Such instances of subjectivity perfor*mances* indeed express some pre-existing identity conventions; they are directly used by hailing ideologies, while at the same time reproduce ruling ideologies to which society has subjected the subject. This is the case where subjectivity and agency are intended by power, while convention and iteration play a major role. Indeed, this is the theatrical version of performativity, when an existing script is being acted out on the stage, so to speak, and corresponds to Erving Goffman's suggestion that since people played out roles in their ordinary lives, life itself is "a dramatically enacted thing" (*Presentation* 72)

These perfor*mances* are expressive, but what they express is not some ontological essence seated in the body and then given expression by clothes, behavioral styles, or ways of thinking. Instead, perfor*mance* is expressive of the conventions, discourses, that have produced, say, gender, racial, or sexual identities. This is, as Butler puts it in connection with the imitative structure of gender, "an imitation without an origin" (*Gender Trouble* 138). What precedes the perfor*mance* of identity, then, is not some originary essence but the set of norms and traditions that have produced those particular identities and that will be reiterated. Moreover, perfor*mances* are also expressive of the speaker's intention to ground discourse in a particular tradition and convention. As Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels put it, "[c]onventions are indeed important . . . because they often provide convenient ways of signaling what you intend" ("Against Theory 2" 66).

When the subject is produced through perfor*mance*, we may note an adherence to existing scripts that regulate behavior by assigning it to the function called normal. Such perfor*mances* are generated, as I pointed out earlier, in processes much like Althusserian interpellation: when the subject is produced by being "interpellated" by some powerful ideology; somewhat like responding to the "hey, you" call of the policeman, the person's identity of being performatively produced as the addressee, the "you," of the call. In this "reinscription of normative identities," to borrow Jeffrey T. Nealon's apt phrase, the subject becomes the immediate "product of interpellating codes" (79). For example, children's literature is one of the obvious vehicles for the ideology that interpellate women and men in order to produce them. Indeed, such tales as "The Sleeping Beauty," "Cinderella," or "Snow White," offering narratives of domesticity, feminine desirability, passivity, and aesthetic objectification, have participated in subjecting women to traditional gender norms (see, for example, Donald Hall and Edit Zsadányi ["Hamupipőke"] on this topic). All the while the subject holds on to the illusion of freedom, the illusion of "submitting freely" to ideology—quite like John Winthrop insisted, according to Linda K. Kerber, that the colonists follow the model of women in marriage when submitting "freely" to the state ("Can a Woman").

These are perfor*mances* of social scenarios, handed down by conventions, both social and linguistic, regulating the individual to construct himself or herself in conformity to conventions. The force of these scenarios come not from the authority of the speakers but from the institution or convention itself; as Steven

Winspur remarks, in such cases when “forms of language transcend their users” (170), authority lies in “the structures of convention that make up the performative contracts in which we engage” (171). Yet the role of the speaker is significant too, for the force of the utterance depends on the person’s participation in the group of people who accept that particular convention. These groups are Derrida’s “Limited Inc”—“societies which are (more or less) anonymous, with limited responsibility or liability (“Limited Inc abc” 216). Such are, for example, “betting companies” that enable their participants to make bets.

Of course, theatricality—or the repetition of certain formulae and scripts (such as “I pronounce you man and wife,” “We declare independence”)—is very much part of this expressive-replaying performance. But such a dramatic perfor*mance* goes beyond the “inbuilt theatricality” (Winspur 177) of performativity: here, in instances of subjectivity perfor*mances*, for example, it is not just formulae that are being cited, but whole discourses—in the Foucauldian sense, that is, discourses of patriarchy, racism, or homophobia, among others—can act as normative scripts that regulate behavior. The context of perfor*mance* is permeated—or, to use Derrida’s term, saturated (“Signature” 174)—by conventions and ideologies. To apply Hillis Miller’s understanding of the mathematical meaning of the French word *saturé*, it has absorbed to its full certain substances and their properties (*Speech Acts* 100), in this case, conventions and presuppositions of discourses that the perfor*mance* cites in a theatrical manner.

In this sense all such perfor*mances* are versions of the masquerade, or the interaction of mask, costume, and convention described by Joan Rivière as early as 1929 in connection with gender; in this vein, womanliness is nothing more than its playing out, or masquarade (38). These instances of dramatic perfor*mance* as the citing and playing out of scripts are all “parasitic,” in the Derridian sense, leaning on existing norms and taking off from earlier perfor*mances*. The claim about the parasitic nature of all perfor*mances* support the argument made by Barbara Johnson about the role-playing nature of all performative acts having undermined the distinction set up by Austin and Searle between “parasitic” and “real” performatives (*Critical Difference* 60–66). It also supports, of course, Derrida’s original argument articulated in his debate with Searle, where he does not only question the “binding power” of intention, but insists that the general iterability of the performative renders all speech acts “parasitic” and non-serious—a feature presented as anomaly by Austin (“Signature” 191). For Derrida, of course, as Bálint Rozsnyai has rightly claimed, iterability belongs to the nature of language itself, which makes it impossible to even distinguish between “parasitic” and “non-parasitic” utterances (173). Given the cohesion of traditions and norms generating perfor*mances*, the iterable character of the subjectivities performed will confine them to single identities:

one rather than multiple inflections will dominate perfor*mances*, and these inflections will be fixed and stable, rather than mobile and moving.

(ii) My ontological or radical perfo*rmative* is quite different. Here new discursive entities come about against or in the absence of existing ideologies, discourses, or conventions; the assigned subjectivity is unintended by power. The subjectivities performed will be multiple, unfixed, unstable, mobile, and mutable—much like the "new *mestiza* consciousness" described by Gloria Anzaldúa (99–113)—allowing for a new possibility of agency. If perfor*mance* was described as expressive, one that reproduces the ruling ideology, the perfor*mative*, indeed, challenges the ruling ideology. When subjectivities are being perfor*matively* constructed, for example, figurations of new subjectivity will come about which typically involve transgressions and extensions of categories. For example, the formerly disempowered will assume agency by resisting normativity and undermining the individualizing-normalizing-hierarchizing effects of power. In such cases, the subject does not come about via being interpellated by ideology, but instead by resisting this interpellation and resisting the normative codes of thought and behavior—by enacting a rupture from convention. Indeed, the difference lies, as Butler points out, in being acted upon by ideology as opposed being, in the case of the ontological performative, enacted by and into: "[p]ower not only *acts on* a subject but, in a transitive sense, *enacts* the subject into being" (*Psychic* 13; emphasis in original). This new discursive entity corresponds to Derrida's new kind of performative: "the originary performativity that does not conform to *pre-exist*ing conventions, unlike all the performatives analyzed by the theoreticians of speech acts, but whose force of *rupture* produces the institution or the constitution, the law itself, which is to say also the meaning that appears to, that ought to, or that appears to have to guarantee it in return" (*Specters* 36–37; emphasis in original). For example, The Declaration of Independence is such an originary performative in that the signatories broke existing laws and created instead the law by which they enacted and created themselves and those on whose behalf they acted (the American people). Such a radical performative has a radically inaugural quality because, Hillis Miller explains, here "each performative utterance to some degree creates its own conditions and laws. It transforms the context into which it enters" (*Speech Acts* 96).

As all performatives, this narrower category of the perfor*mative* also relies on repetition, quotation, or citation, only this is a special case of repetition, quotation, or citation: this is quoting with a difference, discarding the previously coded script, ignoring the pre-established formulae, and replacing the earlier context with a new one. Subjectivity (in the narrow sense of grammatical subject and agent) happens when the person is capable of quoting with a difference, when the speaker is allowed self-construction without or in spite of existing conventions. This is the moment in which, as Butler puts it, "a subject—a person, a collective—asserts a right or entitlement to a livable life when no such prior authorization exists, when no clearly enabling convention is in place" (*Undoing* 224). This is the possibility of agency acceptable for poststructuralist theories as well, captured by Butler's phrase quoted earlier, "the assumption of a purpose *unintended* by power" (*Psychic Life* 15; emphasis in original). This radical perfor*mative* grows out of a context that is "never absolutely determinable" (Derrida, "Signature" 174) but indeterminable because it is, to use another Derridian word, "non-saturated" ("Signature" 174); in fact, it is born as a response to the perfor*mance* engendered by a fully saturated context.

Given the contradiction I pointed out earlier within the specific meaning of the word *subject* as (i) grammatical subject and agent acting on his/her own right and (ii) someone subjected to power, subjectivation will have two meanings as well: (i) the making of a subject as subject in terms of grammar and agency and (ii) the making of the subject as one subjected to and then resisting this power. Performativity brings these two aspects together when allowing the speaker to act as grammatical subject and agent and by allowing the speaker to resist subjection conveyed by language. There is only one thing the speaker is not allowed: to not be produced by language. For while it is customary to compare linguistic rules to the rules of chess or football, Loxley is right in insisting that in language "we could never actually step off the football field" (39). Indeed, the speaking subject does not have the power to step off, metaleptically, the football field of language.

Performativity of reading and writing

Literature, I want to suggest, is the privileged site of discursive practices because here the performative—whether its expressive or replaying form, perfor*mance* or its ontological form, perfor*mative*—establishes itself both in the act of writing and in the act of reading. In the first case the speech act is being performed by the text, accounting for certain acts or deeds that go beyond the textual, while in the latter it is the reader who brings about meanings.

Writing can be considered performative because here certain states of affairs come about, having an existence in the text yet affecting our emotions outside or beyond the text, in the real (spatial-temporal) world. Autobiography, where a person creates herself or himself as subject or agent, is a typical performative genre of subject creation. The fictional comes to life in the sense that the reader starts to think about fictional events and characters as if they were all real. Indeed, fictional characters can become real, at least to the degree that we as readers indeed start to think and feel about them as if they were real. Literature can cross that line which William James draws between "imagining a thing and believing in its existence, between supposing a proposition and acquiescing its truth" (*Principles* 283). In the latter case, James continues, the object is not only apprehended by the mind, but is "held to have reality": these are "our *living* realities" (283; emphasis in original). Literature can transcend the fictional context, allowing the reader to contemplate fictional events as if they were real because they awaken real feelings and real emotions in the readers.

Reading and interpretation can also be understood as performative. In this case it is the reader or interpreter who performs the speech act whereby a new reading is created. Or, put differently, the speech act is being performed by the act of reading. During this speech act performed by the reader, knowledge or cognition is being created, where meaning is not deciphered, but followed, or rather allowed to emerge. New meanings can emerge because the text is not a smooth homogenous surface, but one full of gaps and ruptures: it has, to use Barbara Johnson's term, "way[s] of differing from itself" (*Critical Difference* 4). The reader is to respond to these differences within "by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself" (5). The reader ceases to be an object on which the text acts, but emerges as a subject who enters into dialogue with the text. This is, Derrida claims, "performative interpretation," "an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets [*qui transforme cela même qu'elle interprète*]" (*Specters* 51).

In this framework the reader emerges as the "Author" of the text, where through the performative production of reading, reading becomes "writing." As Barthes insists in "The Death of the Author,"

> [t]he fact is (or, it follows) that *writing* can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, 'depiction' (as the Classics would say); rather, it designates what linguists, referring to Oxford philosophy, call performative, a rare verbal form . . . in which the enunciation has no other content (contains no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered. . . . (1468)

Reading is, then, performative also in the sense that here it is the text that acts on us as readers, and the very difference, or space, between the two functions of the performative, the citing and the self-production, is what actually seems to perform us as writers.

In the past two or three decades, American literary studies have produced a whole range of revisionary readings of well-known canonical texts. In this process, certain literary pieces, especially prose, which previously had received interpretations now gained new readings, and these new readings have since become widely accepted too. What is most fascinating here is that these new readings seem to be taken for granted as much as contrary, or at least very different, readings were before. What is it that triggers revisionist readings of a literary canon, and what is it that can overwrite or nullify previously current readings, which were considered as obvious at their time as the new readings are today?

For example, Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle" and "In the Cage" make perfect sense to us today as gay narratives, even though for decades they made perfect sense as narratives with heterosexual plots. Indeed, the James text, it seems, as Mihály Szegedy-Maszák aptly puts it, is incessantly rewriting itself („Önértelmezés" 19). What has changed, among other things, during this rewriting process is the legitimization of homosexual desire. A related reason is that today we tend more easily to cross boundaries between the homosocial and the homosexual, a distinction introduced by Sedgwick as referring to male bonding as a social force, on the one hand, and same-sex desire as sexual force, on the other (*Between Men*). This ease in crossing boundaries allows such canonical American texts as *Leaves of Grass*, *Huck Finn*, *Moby Dick*, *Walden*, *Billy Budd*, or "Rip Van Winkle" to be read as having gay subtexts today. Also, readers have developed a refined hearing towards gay topics: homosexuality has perhaps become the most obvious kind of secret we identify in texts that supposedly refuse to reveal their secrets.

Could James have foreseen this? If iteration indeed means, as Hillis Miller insists, that "you can never be sure that you mean what you intend to mean or mean to say" (*Speech Acts* 68), then did James not bring this possibility, of a gay reading, on himself by employing certain conventions that were just being constructed at the time he wrote these pieces? Was he a cooperative communicator? Did he want us to "get" his story even in the radical absence of the sender? Indeed, is this *the* way to get it? Is the performative force, influenced by traces of later cultural contexts, identical with his intention? Do such examples support the premise of contemporary theory: that indeed texts do not know themselves? Are we faced with the aporias, fissures, and gaps—the unsaid—of a text, or are we reading works along meanings which were not intended at all? Are these cases of "intentionless meanings"—or are Stephen Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels right when they so strongly insist that this is not even a possibility (see their "Against Theory," "Pragmatism," "Against Theory 2")? Would James have written another story had he been able to anticipate this late 20th century blooming of gay readerly sensibility? Could he have excluded this possibility even if he had wanted to? In other words, did the dialogue of his anticipation extend to over a hundred years? Or did it simply take a hundred years until the perlocutionary act of convincing took force?

To answer these questions, I would like to make a detour now to the concept of the presupposition in order to be able to ground my further discussion of literary interpretation, and especially revisionary readings, in the dynamic interaction between performative processes and the presupposition.

Presupposition

Presuppositions make up a large part of communicative context, the context that shapes or even determines the meaning of verbal signs (see Sebeok 10ff). They reside in the background, so to speak, forming that body of knowledge which the ideal or idealized reader is expected to have. Moreover, their truth is also taken for granted in order for the utterance to have truth-value. Within speech act framework, the context can be defined as those constitutive and regulatory rules and those presuppositional statements whose satisfaction (of the rules) and truth (of the presuppositions) allow certain utterances count as particular speech acts. Presuppositions, Searle insists, must be defined contextually: "an expression *a* presupposes an expression *b* if an only if in order for *a* to be true or false of an object *X*, *b* must be true of *X*" (*Speech Acts* 126). Put another way, an utterance is the felicitous performance of a speech act only in the context where its presuppositions hold true.

Originally introduced by Gottlob Frege in 1892 (although traced by some theoretician back to the tracts entitled *Summulae Logicales* of the medieval philosopher, later to become pope, Petrus Hispanus [see Beaver 3]), the presupposition was first located around proper names. Assertions using proper names, Frege insisted, must rely on the presupposition that proper names have a reference ("On Sense"). Frege's famous example, used by Bertrand Russell too (in "On Denoting"), for this existential presupposition, or more precisely, when a sentence lacks its presuppositional referent, is the sentence "The King of France is bald." Uttered at a time when France has no king, the sentence lacks its presuppositional referent, therefore this statement can be neither true nor false. For Frege, the fact that denotation is conditional upon the satisfaction of presuppositions constitutes an unfortunate imperfection of natural language (on this topic see Beaver 7).

Austin adopted this Fregean understanding of the presupposition, suggesting that presuppositions are parts of the felicity conditions of references. The assertion "John's children are all bald" is infelicitous if it is devoid of reference, that is, if John has no children (*How To Do* 50). In other words, the statement presupposes "the existence of that which it refers to" (*How To Do* 136).

Another element of the definition of presupposition is that it remains constant under negation. In other words, the presupposition is unaffected by whether its higher statement (which it is the presupposition of) is in the form of an assertion, a negation, or question. In one of Frege's original examples, whether we take the assertion, "After the separation of Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark, Prussia and Austria quarreled," or its negation, "After the separation of Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark, Prussia and Austria did not quarrel," the presupposition—"Schleswig-Holstein was once separated from Denmark"—remains constant ("On Sense").

The concept gained wider currency through the writings of Peter F. Strawson, who linked the presupposition to statements (not sentences), and emphasized the truth of the presupposition as precondition for the truth or falsity of the statement (*Introduction*). Strawson defined the presupposition as the precondition of the truth or falsity of a statement; as a background assumption that is taken for granted in order for the foregrounded assertion to make sense ("On Referring"). Another philosopher, Wilfrid Sellars understood the presuppositional statement as being part of the assertion made, a part equal to the assertion itself. Giving the example of the sentence "Harry has stopped beating his grandmother," Sellars insisted that two equally important assertions are being made here simultaneously: one in the presupposition ("Harry once beat his grandmother") and the other in the assertive sentence itself ("He no longer does so") ("Presupposing").

Charles Fillmore has claimed that the meaning of a sentence is made up of what the sentence poses, on the one hand, and what it presupposes, on the other ("Frames"). These are (i) the meaning proper of words and (ii) the meaning that the uses of the words presuppose. Giving the example of the word *bachelor*, "having never been married" is part of the meaning proper, he suggests, while "being human, male, and adult" is contained in the presupposition ("Types"). He insists that the explicit, or illocutionary, level of communication constantly interacts with the implicit, or presuppositional, level ("Verbs of Judging"). Elsewhere Fillmore claims that presuppositions are conditions which must be satisfied before the speech act is made: a question is asked, a command is given, a feeling is expressed ("Types"). Among the conditions to be satisfied before uttering the sentence "Please open the door," for example, he lists questions of good faith in speech communication (such as understanding English, being awake and not totally paralyzed), having a specific door around, and having this door closed. Fillmore posits that presuppositions act as conditions necessary for the performance of illocutionary acts, thereby linking them to the felicity conditions of speech acts. In this framework, presuppositions are conditions of felicitous performances.

Presupposition and the (performative) production of meaning

Performatives are fundamentally linked to presuppositions in that they rely on presuppositions when quoting and evoking structures of conventions, cultural narratives, and other pre-texts forming the context of performative processes. Their interaction resides in the fact that presuppositions are revisable, rewritable, or modifiable (unlike the performative, which is ultimately act). As pre-texts, then, presuppositions set the boundaries of interpretation or misinterpretation of texts. They form the basis of dialogue between author/text and reader; moreover, they are what might change as a consequence of the dialogic encounter.

Presuppositions, I want to insist, play a role in allowing the experience of the reader to enter the text: through the different assumptions, cultural narratives, pre-texts, and pre-scripts each reader brings to the reading experience; they are manifest in how texts interact with other texts the reader read earlier. Presuppositions help explain how the reader understands or misunderstands a text, as for example Henry James's, by being manipulated by context early on. I think Annette Kolodny has presuppositions in mind when she speaks about the paradigms readers activate while reading, claiming, "[i]nsofar as we are taught how to read, what we engage are not texts but paradigms." "We appropriate meaning from a text," Kolodny goes on, "according to what we need (or desire) or, in other words, according to the critical assumptions or predispositions (conscious or not) that we bring to it. And we appropriate different meanings, or report different gleanings, at different times—even from the same text—according to our changed assumptions, circumstances, and requirements" ("Dancing" 153).

Presuppositions provoke important questions about the possibility of understanding: to what degree is perception and understanding possible? To what degree can we understand each other or literary texts? What are the cultural barriers in understanding? Is Henry Adams right in claiming, in "The Dynamo and the Virgin," that "[o]ne sees what one brings" (*Education* 387)?

I would like to suggest that presuppositions are helpful in identifying the relationship between what "one brings" and what "one sees," on the one hand, and, on the other, in tracing how what "one brings" gets revised or shattered by the dialogue between text and reader. For reading powerful literary texts will very often result in a change of the reader's original frames and assumptions (what "one brings"), ultimately resulting in changing what "one sees" too.

Interpretive decisions, however, are not arbitrary: they depend exactly on what "one brings" to the text: on our presuppositions. In a significant way, presuppositions decide our interpretive decisions about texts with an aporia, texts with contradictory yet equally valid interpretations. Henry James is, of course, a master of aporia resulting from the reader's entertaining of competing interpretations. As is known, *The Turn of the Screw* can be read both as a ghost story and as a story about a woman's hallucination; by the same token, it is equally valid to read "The Beast in the Jungle" as the story of heterosexual and homosexual desire. James resists grounding his discourse in one particular direction or evoking one particular reading in these texts. The presuppositions we bring to texts determine how we perform interpretation. These presuppositions are as much personal (dependent on our particular cognitive abilities [perceiving discourse markers, for example], mental skills, life experiences, reading experiences, education, individual disposition) as they are cultural (dependent on the social and cultural context whose products we each are; depending on the degree we are, knowingly or unknowingly, embedded in the culture and society surrounding us). In an extreme case, when the interaction of context with text is disregarded, this means that our presuppositions pre-determine our readings: already before we engage in reading a text, our assumptions that exist independent of the text will set the direction that our interpretation might take.

Presuppositions seem to play a significant role indeed in how meanings are produced by both writer and reader. This production of meaning is ultimately dialogic in at least three senses. First, as I pointed out in the previous paragraphs, the reader's assumptions brought to the text determine reading and interpretation. In this sense every critical-interpretive response is dialogic. Second, writing itself is already dialogic. For any writing assumes the possibility of dialogue: writers want to make a difference, to make a statement, to change minds, or at least to leave a mark in the world of texts. So even before a real readerly or critical response is given, the act of writing engages in a dialogue when anticipating a response. According to Bakhtin, given language's addressivity, the utterance is prestructured by the orientation of the writer or speaker toward the listener's response: the composition and the style of the utterance "depend on those to whom the utterance is addressed, how the speaker (or writer) senses and imagines his addressees, and the force of their effect on the utterance" (*Speech Genres* 95). It is also based on previous dialogue, the "already spoken," where the knowledge of this previous exchange allows the speaker to project the expectation of what the listener may reply:

> The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation in any living dialogue. ("Discourse" 280)

Bakhtinian addressivity is related to the issue termed by Jacob L. Mey as the ownership of language: "my utterance, in its final analysis, receives its meaning not only from what I put into it, but to an equally high degree from what the others get out of it" (*When Voices* 236). Words uttered in the absence of another person are meaningless; language that does not address an actual addressee is empty of meaning. Language is dialogic not only because it serves as the medium of interpersonal dialogue, but also because meaning and understanding depend on reciprocity. Once uttered, the words become "public domain," and as such are owned equally by speakers and addressees. "The word cannot be assigned to a single speaker," Mey cites Bakhtin.

> The author (speaker) has his own inalienable right to the word, but the listener also has his rights, and those whose voices are heard in the word before the author comes upon it have their rights (after all, there are no words that belong to no one). (Bakhtin, *Speech Genres* 21–22)

The word is, therefore, to use another Bakhtinian term, "interindividual" (*Speech Genres* 21): it is not owned by any one individual but is shared jointly among individuals.

Third, the force of the performative derives from its "*conforming* with an iterable model," to quote Derrida ("Signature" 191). "We may make the speech act come alive," Mey suggests, "by continually varying the context and expanding it to suit our communicative purposes" (*Pragmatics* 111). Iterability, when speech acts are being reused or redeployed in different contexts, is also a form of dialogism: here speech acts enact an interplay with earlier speech situations, allowing the text to carry the traces of earlier contexts. Citationality and iterability characterize language in general, of course, but in the case of the performative they seem to ride piggy-back on convention and conventional discourse.

* * *

In the rest of this book I will focus on how subjectivities are produced in the literary text along the multiple and intersecting axes of gender, race, and sexuality—whether through expressive-replaying perfor*mance* or the radical-ontological perfor*mative*. I will investigate texts that present (i) theatrical perfor*mance* processes to construct, via obeying ruling ideologies, persons either as objects—as powerless Others (these are perfor*mances* of women, persons of color, and gay persons)—or subjects, as members of the hegemonic social groups (men, white, and straight persons), covered by the dominant elements of the dichotomies, and those that present (ii) perfor*mative* processes to reconstruct, via resisting the ruling ideologies, the identity of those powerless and marginalized Others into speaking subjects and empowered agents. I will establish links, that is, between (i) object or subject positions on the one hand and (ii) the performance or non-performance of normative scripts on the other. Moreover, I will make connections between the respective social scripts of perfor*mance* and perfor*mative* processes and the readerly presuppositions, and show how their interaction might account for new performative readings.

CHAPTER THREE

PERFORMING GENDER

In this chapter I will explore the discursive constructions of gender: its normative perfor*mance* and its subversive perfor*mative* constructions. The institutional rules of gender, I will show, include woman positioned as Other (especially woman as object of speech, vision, and act), woman as body inscribed by various controlling discourses (including costume and the general stylization of the body), and woman as body to be surveyed. Applying Searle's basic formula concerning the constitutive rules of institutions, "X counts as Y in context C" (*Speech Acts* 52), to the construction of the gendered subject, one can say that when positioned as the Other, an object, whose inscriptive body is foregrounded and put forth as spectacle, the person is constructed as a woman.

Indeed, womanhood came to be naturalized in the position of the marked Other (of the dichotomy of man/woman), which society has declared as "natural" and "normal" for her. This means that woman has typically been the object seen (while she herself did not see), the person spoken to or spoken of (while she herself did not speak), and the one acted upon (while she herself did not act). Only around the turn of the 20th century did the new female character appear in the subject position: empowered now to see, speak, and act, the modern woman appropriates for herself the possibility of self-construction as subject and agent (a possibility to be called into question by postmodernism later). Both are discursive processes producing social-cultural constructs; but while the first scenario—illustrated here by pre-modernist texts, where woman is produced, through perfor*mance*, as an object—is the replaying of existing social scripts, the second—illustrated here by texts taken from modernist women writers—ignores, resists, and subverts normative expectations when, by applying radical-ontological perfor*mative* processes, it produces woman as a speaking and seeing subject, as well as acting agent.

Moreover, woman's construction in the object position runs parallel with the similar naturalization of colored and gay persons as cultural Others. As members of culturally imperialized groups, they have followed similar trajectories of disempowerment (excluded from the category of the human, the "rights of man," and deprived of subjecthood and agency) and empowerment (claiming inclusion into the human and appropriating subjecthood and agency). Indeed, the persons constructed into objects along axes gender, race, and sexuality have, in a homologous manner, challenged this normative perfor*mance*, and applied radical perfor*mative* processes in pursuing their entitlement to a speaking-seeing-acting subjecthood.

Simone de Beauvoir was probably the first to take an uncompromisingly constructionist approach, already in 1949, to female subjectivity when in her Introduction to *The Second Sex* she insists that woman "is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other" (xix). Of course, constructing woman into the Other has served as the prerequisite of the construction of the male self: only vis-à-vis the otherized woman is the centered male self the man. Not only is it more typical for men, Luce Irigaray insists, to say "I" to designate themselves (*I Love* 65), but it is safe to say that the female identity "originates in man" (*I Love* 64). Moreover, given the binarity implicit in Western thinking, the category of woman as other must be constructed in order to complement the category of the man. "The woman's position as Other to the male subject," Jessica Benjamin argues, goes hand in hand with "the binary logic that produces the complementarity of male subject-female object" (*Shadow of the Other* 37).

Womanhood is constructed, therefore, by a sense of its own definition from the outside: the subject that constructs her into an otherized object, offering her an image that originates in society. She is dependent on the approval of others for recognizing her own self-worth. Defined by others, she is, indeed constructed through discourse owned by the other. Moreover, woman's objecthood extends to being an exchange object, a prize, in the homosocial world of men, as Gayle Rubin ("The Traffic of Women") and later Sedgwick demonstrated (*Between Men*). Her desire that her subjectivity be affirmed is never satisfied; woman remains an object, an empty receptacle without substance (or subjectivity), who is, moreover, interchangeable with other women.

The construction of woman as object can be understood in linguistic terms as nominalization, the grammatical form condensing verb into noun, or process into end-result. This is a simplifying and, as cognitive linguists claim, mystifying technique; "a process is expressed as a *noun*, as if it were an entity" (O'Halloran 115). By uncovering the discursive processes that produced them, the performative analysis of the constructions of man, woman, black, white, gay, or straight will conclude that they are exactly such nominalizations whose coming about has been overshadowed by the taking of the nominal form instead of the verbal. For example, in the texts meticulously detailing the dressing or undressing ceremonies "essential" to womanhood, woman is constructed in the process of its becoming. James, Chopin, Dreiser, Wharton, Eliot, and Swift all look behind the nominalized form of woman and—as if applying the methods of critical discourse analysis—present her not as a mystified entity but as a process, unveiling, as it were, the stages of her self-construction.

When women are constructed as objects, they become icons in a process of "iconizing," to borrow from Rachel Blau DuPlessis, which is "a peculiar form of erasure" (*Pink Guitar* 43). Neither does woman as icon write her story, nor is she the main actor of her story. In cognitive science terms one could say that women's stories are primarily spatial stories and event-stories, but not action-stories (see Mark Turner, *Literary Mind* 26). In spatial and event-stories the events only happen to people in a particular space, while action-stories figure agents who perform various actions causing objects to move in a spatial direction (104). In narratives of patriarchy, women typically do not figure as central characters in action-stories; they fail to become agents in their own stories. For example, in the spatial image schema of birth as an object coming out of the container (which will be a premier image schema projected onto many other stories and concepts in our culture [*Literary Mind* 52]), the mother remains a passive body. In my reading, the fact that such exclusively gendered acts in women's lives as childbirth have been paradigmatically conceptualized as events and not actions is fundamentally linked with the woman=object equation. For while childbirth is undoubtedly initiated by biological processes like contractions, the woman is perhaps no more at the mercy of "nature" than are the "protagonists" of *Moby Dick*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, or "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," to mention only three text dramatizing the clash of man-agent and "nature." I see no (biological) reason why childbirth could not be presented as a similar battle between "natural forces" and the woman striving to retain some form of agency. The fact that childbirth is not conceptualized as the clash of two opposing yet in some way equal forces (where the human has the ambition at least to take on nature) speaks of the all-pervasive influence of the woman=object equation.

The construction of the self as other is intimately tied to the foregrounding of the body; both including the intense workings of power. Indeed, an all-pervasive movement of power against the body can be observed in the modern era. This is how Foucault describes power's subjection of the body:

> The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A "political anatomy," which was also a "mechanics of power," was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "docile" bodies. (*Discipline* 138)

Women's bodies have been preeminently the sites where such techniques of the machinery of power have operated, making them into subjected and practiced "docile" bodies.

Woman's body will be the site of multiple social inscriptions, the always already gendered, racialized, and sexualized material. As Braidotti puts it, "[t]he body is then an interface, a threshold, a field of intersecting material and symbolic forces; it is a surface where multiple codes (race, sex, class, age, etc.) are inscribed" ("Identity, Subjectivity" 169). Woman's body will be, moreover, the site where power is exercised incessantly; the manipulation of the female body emerges, Bordo has pointed out, "as an absolutely central strategy in the maintenance of power relations between the sexes" (*Unbearable* 143). These strategies include the stylization of her body, or regulatory practices whose function is the normalization or standardization of the body. Woman's acts will follow regulative rules that allow her performance to be meaningful within a particular set of conventions. In other words, its performative force depends on what Derrida calls a "context of legitimate, legitimizing, or legitimized convention" ("Performative Powerlessness" 467). These various stylized and repeatable acts, then, produce her as woman (woman produced by institutions and discourses) with a self gendered normatively.

Costume is the most obvious form of gender stylization. Whether the clothes adhere to masculine or feminine normativity, are expressions of transgendered identities, or are just vehicles of playful experimentation or fantasy (as is cross-dressing and drag), the performative power of the dress cannot be overestimated. Virginia Woolf was probably the first to come to the conclusion that costume plays a large part in gendering us into men and women. Here is the relevant passage from *Orlando* exploring the ways clothes make people, changing their views, and actually wearing them.

> Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us. . . . Thus, there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them; we may make them take the mould of arm or breast, but they mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking. (170–171)

When changed into a woman wearing dresses, "Orlando curtseyed; she complied; she flattered the good man's humours as she would not have done had his neat breeches been a woman's skirts, and his braided coat a woman's satin bodice" (170). Moreover, changes could be detected even in her face; but certainly the most important difference between a man and a woman lies in the possibilities available to them:

> If we compare the picture of Orlando as a man with that of Orlando as a woman we shall see that though both are undoubtedly one and the same person, there are certain changes. The man has his hand free to seize his sword, the woman must use hers to keep the satins from slipping from her shoulders. The man looks the world full in the face, as if it were made for his uses and fashioned to his liking. The woman takes a sidelong glance at it, full of subtlety, even of suspicion. Had they both worn the same clothes, it is possible that their outlook might have been the same. (171)

Moreover, Orlando must come to realize that to be a woman, which includes being "obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled by nature," is "tedious discipline."

> She remembered how, as a young man, she had insisted that women must be obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled. 'Now I shall have to pay in my own person for those desires,' she reflected; 'for women are not (judging by my own short experience of the sex) obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled by nature. They can only attain these graces, without which they may enjoy none of the delights of life, by the most tedious discipline. (143)

When recognizing that women are not women "by nature" but made through the daily regimes of "hairdressing," "looking in the looking–glass," "staying and lacing," "washing and powdering," "changing from silk to lace and from lace to paduasoy," and "being chaste year in year out" (43), Orlando actually argues for constructionism as against essentialism.

The construction of woman as having a decorative corporeality is tied to one of the defining qualifiers of Western epistemology, the one that privileges the eye among the senses. In this epistemology, woman has been turned into visual object, the object of the gaze, where the economy of the gaze is always gendered and is always rooted in power. Indeed, woman has been subjected to the gaze of men, where the gaze is understood as the extension of power. Here power is located in the seeing subject (in the subject position) always remaining unperceived, as Lacan emphasizes (*Four Fundamental* 77), whereas subjugation is enforced on the person seen (in the object position). The gaze, therefore, as Ann E. Kaplan has argued, reinforces the dominance-submission patterns of our culture, and creates an interlocking relationship between power and desire. Moreover, constituted by voyeurism and fetishism, the gaze "carries with it the power of action and of possession" (311), and only men can own desire (317). This is the gaze, as Donna Haraway puts it, which "mythically inscribes all the marked bodies, [and] makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation" ("Persistence" 283). Through this process, woman has been turned into icon, "displayed," as Laura Mulvey claims, "for the gaze and enjoyment of men" (21). Although this presentation of woman as spectacle, as a body attracting the gaze of visual enjoyment is pervasive in our culture, the construction of woman as the iconic object of the gaze is especially obvious in narrative cinema, as has been demonstrated by Mulvey (*Visual*), Kaplan ("Is the Gaze"), de Lauretis (*Alice*, *Technology*), Jeremy Hawthorn ("Theories"), and Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (*Practices*), among others.

Much like the inmates in Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon as described by Foucault, women are on permanent display in society, displaying the ornamented surface of their bodies prepared by disciplinary practices according to the accepted norms of gender. This state of being constantly under the commanding gaze and control of authority, will assure, Foucault insists, "the automatic functioning of power" (*Discipline* 201). Women are constantly surveyed by the "panoptical male connoisseur," to use Sandra Lee Bartky's phrase, who, by embodying "an anonymous patriarchal Other," will grant woman an outside perspective and will allow her to "live . . . her body as seen by another" ("Foucault" 72). In other words, she will internalize the gaze and will take over the scrutinizing and disciplining of her body even in the absence of the onlooker. Surveyor and surveyed at the same time, she will produce herself—out of an obedience to patriarchy—as a self-surveying and self-policing subject who treats herself as a sight, a spectacle, an object. The body image, defined by Elizabeth Grosz as a "map or representation of the degree of narcissistic investment of the subject in its own body and body parts" (*Volatile Bodies* 83), will serve as the site of such self-policing for women, who will internalize the image of themselves, created by the policing spectator of woman as object, and be able to put themselves into the subject position only when experiencing their own bodies. Such continual self-observation, involving their bodies as both subject and object, will result in self-production. Moreover, woman is expected to continually make and remake herself; where the assumption behind this imperative is, as Kristeva has demonstrated in her essay "The Subject in Process," that without such disciplinary practices woman's body, as everything connected with femininity, is deficient.

The gaze has served as a gendering technique setting apart women from men in a particular way. Coinciding with the binary position of subject and object, it has become part part of the subject position of masculinity to look and size up the woman, and part of the object position of femininity to be surveyed, put on display, sized up by men. As John Berger famously puts it, "men act and women appear" (*Ways* 47). Only other culturally imperialized groups had to get used to being constantly looked at, especially blacks and Latinos, as Susan Bordo pointed out (*Male Body* 173). Nudity seems to carry very different connotations when applied to men and women; as John Ashbery remarked, "[n]ude women seem to be in their natural state; men, for some reason, merely look undressed . . . When is a nude not a nude? When it is male" (qtd. in *Male Body* 179). Indeed, when men are looked at, they will be feminized in a manner similar to how blacks and Latinos are feminized under the gaze. This is what happens in gay photography, for example. Or, to take a mainstream example, this is where the movie *Full Monty* gets its twisted humor from: the "absurdity" of heterosexual men exposing themselves (not in a pathological manner)—and thereby putting themselves in the feminizing object position.

Recipes for men and women: gender as (hetero)sexualized performance

A few years ago I did a survey about gender and sexuality in literary texts of relative canonicity in Europe, Hungary in particular. My aim was to find the criteria according to which we read gender identities, identities sometimes left unmarked or open by the writer. I was mostly interested in what role sexuality played in the identification, or presumed identification, of gender. My findings correspond to Butler's observation: "we live, more or less implicitly, with received notions of reality, implicit accounts of ontology, which determine what kinds of bodies and sexualities will be considered real and true, and which kind will not" (*Undoing* 214).

In this survey conducted in 2002, I asked my respondents, over one hundred Hungarian university students, to identify the gender of the character presented. Passages were taken from texts they have probably read, since half of them were on their high school compulsory reading lists (poetry, prose, drama). But these excerpts were not really easy to locate, and I took out all references that would give away gender specificities. The characters I asked them to identify were Jean Valjean (Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*), Vronsky (Lev Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*), Billy Budd (Herman Melville, *Billy Budd)*, Rodolpho (Arthur Miller, *A View from the Bridge*), M. Boulanger (Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*), Tom Jones (Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones)*, Melanctha (Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives*), Dorian Gray (Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray)*, Miklós Toldi (János Arany, *Toldi*), Mme Récamier (Ignotus, "Madame Récamier"), an unnamed woman who enters (Sándor Márai, "Belépő" ["Entering"]), Medve [Bear] (Géza Ottlik, *Iskola a határon* [School at the frontier]), Krisztián (Péter Nádas, *Emlékiratok könyve* [Book of Memoirs], three women in the pharmacy (Géza Szőcs, "Találkozás a József téren" ["Meeting in József square"]).

I asked four questions:

1. Does the presented character see the events or is this character seen rather?
2. Can you identify the gender of the character?
3. Is the sexuality of the presented character marked or unmarked? If marked, is it marked heterosexual or homosexual?
4. Is this a "real man" or not? Is this a "real woman" or not?

It turned out, that

(i) if the presented character is the one who sees (subject position), then "normally" he is presumed to be a man (Jean Valjean, Tom Jones, Boulanger, Vronsky). He will be read as a "real man" if he is shown as heterosexual (or at least "not homosexual"). That is, sex and gender coincide, making him a "manly man."

(ii) If the presented character is the one who sees (subject position) yet is identified as a woman, then she is presented as an anomaly. Her biological sex does not coincide with gender. Yet in the culture of compulsory heterosexuality, to use the well-known term introduced by Adrienne Rich ("Compulsory"), it is her gender that is assumed to act as the marker of her heterosexuality. But when taken as a "masculine woman," she will not be read as a "real woman," but as a homosexual.

(iii) A woman who is seen (object position) is presumed to be "normal"; occupying the position declared unmarked ("natural") for her. Being seen involves the foregrounding of her body and clothes, which will adhere to standards of correctness (she will be wearing feminine clothes). She will be perceived as a "real woman," one whose gender and sex coincide. Obviously, she is heterosexual.

(iv) If the person seen (object position) is a man, then his biological and social gender markers will not be understood to coincide. He is not perceived as a "real man," but a "feminine" man. His feminization results from the discrepancy of the markers.

My two general conclusions can be summed up as follows.

First, while gender identity might not always be immediately obvious (Hungarian does not have gender in personal pronouns, for example), the reader, relying on explicit or implicit features, seems to decide, or want to decide, gender by filling in the textual blanks the writer might have left.

Second, the reader assigns a particular sexuality, sexual orientation, to the gendered character. I called this somewhat mechanical procedure—of marking both gender and sexuality—presuppositional (or biased, prejudiced) reading, since the basis of the decisions came not from the text but from cultural assumptions pre-existing the reading of these texts. In this reading identity is always already gendered, and gender is always already sexualized in such a way that the "feminine or womanly woman" and the "masculine or manly man" are taken as heterosexual, while the "feminine man" and the "masculine woman" are presumed to be gay. Heterosexuality naturalizes itself by appropriating originality and normativity. This mechanics of reception is indeed based on a binary understanding of both gender and sexuality, and relies on a supposedly "natural" relationship between the binary categories: the "natural" configuration assumes intelligibility, or a homogeneity of markers (manly man, womanly woman), while the contrary or heterogeneous markers (feminine man, masculine woman) suggest unintelligibility, confusion, deviance, ill-matching, or Foucault's heterotopia. The markers can be understood as citations through which characters, phenomena, and events are read according to certain cultural presuppositions. Reception will depend on the degree to which the reader will be familiar with what these citational repetitions refer to, and is able to make predictions accordingly.

I found a particular marker especially significant among the identity markers of gender and sexuality: the direction of presentation or the gaze. In other words: it makes a difference in the perception of both gender and sexuality whether the character in question is the one who sees or the one who is seen, whether the character is in the subject or the object position. This presupposing of the woman as "naturally" occupying the object position seems to support de Lauretis's claim that woman is primarily a position rather than a set of objective attributes ("The Essence" 10). Moreover, the person in the object position is necessarily described in terms of body and clothing, conventional markers of gender. Seeing, or the gaze, is really an extension of power relations: a form of social control, which puts the woman into the object position. In literature—as in film—woman appears as the object of sight or spectacle, while man is in control of diegesis, with whom the viewer or the reader identifies during reception.

The embodiments of the ideal woman and ideal man seem to be determined by the culture of compulsory heterosexuality. What is interesting here, though not unexpected, is that compulsory heterosexuality is at work on gender and not biological sex. For compulsory heterosexuality is a matter of power and oppression, and is, as Monique Wittig has shown, the extended arm of power and social control: "it is oppression that creates sex [meaning gender] and not the contrary" ("Category" 64). The term *invert*, applied to the "feminine man," who embodies a discrepancy between sex and gender, means *homosexual* because this "feminine man" is self-gendered female. In the culture of compulsory heterosexuality a man's gayness means that he, as is commonly claimed, is a "woman trapped in the body of a man." By the same token, the lesbian woman, a "man trapped in the body of a woman," likes women in the culture of compulsory heterosexuality. "I am a woman to the extent that I have never loved one," Butler claims (*Psychic Life* 162). And this is how Matthew O'Connor, one of the most famous cross-dressers in American literature, in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*, refers to himself: "the girl God forgot" (73) or "the bearded lady" (100). So in this respect there is a reciprocity of sorts between the genders.

However, there is one basic discrepancy between the two genders as to the degree to which they are heterosexualized. All kinds of men can be "real men": Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables* is totally asexual, Miklós Toldi, a staple and much loved figure in an early 19th century Hungarian epic poem, *Toldi*, by the romantic poet János Arany, also lacks interest in women (he only loves his mother, is a fighter, a knight in the court of King Louis, and only feels comfortable in the company of his male friends), while Vronsky of *Anna Karenina* and Boulanger of *Mme Bovary* are famous womanizers even though they lack any sexual markers whatsoever. For women, on the other hand, only one path leads to being "real women": explicitly and outwardly marked heterosexuality (Mme Récamier as opposed to Melanctha).

Gender as a binary construct, then, is clearly the product of heterosexuality. But while heterosexuality is not compulsory for men (they can be "real men" without women, as for example in the male quest genre), womanhood and femininity are only meaningful in the matrix of heterosexuality. A "real woman" is the heterosexual partner of the man; but the "real man" can be a solitary quester even within the heterosexual matrix. He can even be a misogynist, while presenting himself as a "real man." Thus gender indeed emerges, as Catharine MacKinnon points out, "as the congealed form of the sexualization of inequality between men and women" (*Feminism Unmodified* 7).

To conclude, the reception and interpretation of canonical literary texts embodying our culture's gender constitution rely on assumptions that fail to differentiate between gender and sexuality. More precisely, sexuality works as the determining element of the textual construction of gender. Sexuality determines and overrides gender.

Gender identification is overwhelmingly controlled by compulsory heterosexuality in literature, treating as the unmarked norm the coincidence of the biological and social markers of gender ("manly man," "womanly woman") and heterosexuality. Everything that falls outside this norm, any multiplication of genders is considered "unnatural" and causing disturbance; all alternatives to the binary system—opposing the order controlled by regulatory discourse and its citational repetitions—are seen as dangerous, therefore they must be marginalized or silenced. This is the restrictive discourse on gender, the exclusive way, as Butler points out, in which "the gender field performs a *regulatory* operation of power that naturalizes the hegemonic instance forecloses the thinkability of its disruption" (*Undoing* 43; emphasis in original). Indeed, my findings support the claim made by Butler about the tandem emergence of heterosexuality and gender: "the assumption of femininity and the assumption of masculinity proceed through the accomplishment of an always tenuous heterosexuality" (*Psychic Life* 135). And, as Butler concludes, in these texts too, gender is most visibly "achieved and stabilized through heterosexual positioning" (135).

Gender perfo*rmances* and perfor*mative* genders

The institutional rules of gender normativity, which I presented at the beginning of Chapter 3 and rearticulated in my survey, will serve as the presuppositional foundation against which each perfor*mance* or perfor*mative* process will be measured and interpreted. These are the rules that will provide, to apply Butler's terminology, "a scene of constraint" within which gender's "practice of improvisation" (*Undoing* 1) can be acted out. These assumptions will determine—as I have demonstrated in the previous short chapter—the reading of gender in texts without specific gender markers. These assumptions will figure in texts presenting expressive-replaying gender performances as well as those which turn on radical-ontological performativity. In the next chapters I will discuss texts where woman is constituted as object, other, and body; these are normative gender constructions because they tie subjectivities to normative gender formations, given a certain compliance between the perfor*mance* and the presuppositional foundation.

First I read perfor*mance* texts, which foreground gender compliance ("Perfor*mances* of gender compliance"; "The perfor*mance* of cultural codes"; "Some misogynist reversals"). Here I discuss four pre-modernist writers (Henry James, Kate Chopin, Theodore Dreiser, and Edith Wharton), then read three modern writers (William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, and Flannery O'Connor), and finally take two short sections from the poetry of Jonathan Swift and T.S. Eliot. These perfor*mances* are iterative, that is, they follow existing models and replay social routines. The woman is shown as a process, a becoming, who constructs her gender through what Butler calls "regulatory fictions that consolidate and naturalize the convergent power regimes of masculine and heterosexist oppression" (*Gender Trouble* 33). Next comes my discussion of perfor*mative* subjectivity ("Performative genders"); here I read five women writers (Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, H.D., Willa Cather, and Carson McCullers) who have initiated new discursive processes for the realization of female agency. These instances are characterized by a non-compliance between performative and presuppositional processes, resulting in non-traditional gender constructions, where the performed gender subjectivation will not match the norms of heterosexuality. Here we have transgressions, usually of both gender and sexuality; we cannot talk about iterative perfor*mances*, since ties to existing routines or signifieds have been weakened. In the perfor*mance* cases, gender is shown as stable and unproblematic; in this "framework of sexual difference" (Butler, *Undoing* 213), gender is tied to normative heterosexuality (woman is portrayed as "feminine" when she is part of a love-and-marriage plot) and is a culturally intelligible form here because it is predetermined by heterosexuality. In the perfor*mative* cases, however, gender is portrayed as unstable, changing, problematic, and unintelligible, because it is dissociated from normative heterosexuality; this is Butler's gender trouble framework. Here we have "queer" versions of gender, the term *queer* meaning, until the mid-20th century inversion of gender status; double lives, multiple identities (see George Chauncey). Or, as I found in a rather unlikely place, in Bret Harte's "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" from 1869: queer is that which changes. "Luck is a mighty queer thing. All you know about it for certain is that it's bound to change" (275).

I would like to make two observations in connection with the selected texts: first, on authorial gender categories; second, on the contingency of the selection. As to the first, while I picked more male writers than women in my discussion of expressive-replaying gender perfor*mance* and only female authors in my discussion of radical-ontological perfor*mativity*, I did this not because I tie these two narrative options to any kind of gender "essence." It is not out of some essence, but from narrative position rather that male writers construct women more easily as objects and female writers produce women as subjects. Moreover, it is a matter of whether the author intends to comply with or challenge patriarchal expectations: from my selection, it would seem that men are not quite as keen to transgress normative categories as women (although I will not make this claim). But certainly, the woman produced as subject from the woman writer's narrative position is no longer part of the dominant discourse; she will appear as a subject capable of self-constitution and self-representation, capable, in short, of agency. (I am sure t cross-examples exist too, but for the purposes of the argument put forth in this book, these texts should suffice.) As to the second observation, the one concerning the random and contingent selection of the texts: I hope that the heterogeneity of the case studies as well as the authors will supply its own argument in support of my claims set forth in this chapter.

Perfor*mances* of gender compliance (Henry James, *Daisy Miller*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*; Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*; Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*, 'A Pair of Silk Stockings'; Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*)

In the following I will treat cases of perfor*mances* when existing social scripts are being replayed: when, in compliance with the hailing ideology, the woman applies regimes of stylization to her body or acts according to other social norms in order to perform traditional womanhood.

Daisy Miller, Isabel Archer, Edna Pontelier, Carrie Meeber, and Milly Theale—these are staple names in American literature, protagonists of major canonical novels born during the thirty years between 1878 and 1905 (Henry James, *Daisy Miller* [1878]; Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* [1881]; Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* [1899]; Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* [1900]; Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove* [1902]; Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* [1905]). I would like to add to this list the lesser-known name of Mrs. Sommers (Kate Chopin, "A Pair of Silk Stockings" [1897]), who all but perfects the art of constructing herself through dressing. They all seem to measure themselves to some ideal of true womanhood conveyed via clothes, while at the same time they also become, in one way or another, the victims of these pressing norms.

In the first part of this chapter I will explore the different aspects of their perfor*mances* of womanhood, and show that each of them is hailed by some social discourse, even where they seem to resist it. Dressing appears as a code of etiquette here, tying the novels to the English tradition of the novel of manners, which Tamás Bényei aptly translates into Hungarian as *etikettregény*, or novel of etiquette (*Az ártatlan ország* 59ff*)*. I will identify two significantly different forms of authorial attitude to their discursive construction. According to the first, women use their dressing to express, or not to express, what they (or their authors) imagine as the "inner self"; these are predominantly the women in the James novels, who, independent of whether they agree on the possibility of matching the dress to the self or not, take the pre-existence of the self for granted. (This claim applies to *The Wings of the Dove* to a lesser degree, for here I found arguments for the catachrestic self too.) According to the second authorial attitude, however, women construct their selves by dressing up; these are predominantly the women in my Dreiser, Chopin, and Wharton examples. (This claim applies to a lesser degree to Chopin, for in *The Awakening* I found arguments for the pre-existing self too.) It is in these latter cases where women, knowingly or unknowingly, construct themselves into catachresis—metaphor without referent—by applying the norms of gender to their bodies primarily, in terms of dressing, make-up, and body-movement, and thereby construct their selves too. These are women who are spectacularly not born but made: who know the rules, live by them (more or less), make themselves into women through these rules, and then must realize the consequences of their following of the rules.

The difference between these two approaches to the relationship of clothing and self—clothing as expressive of the self and clothing as constructing the self—corresponds to the two ways in which, according to Sandra M. Gilbert, English and American modernist men and women see the relationship of costume to self. While male modernists, Gilbert insists, see costumes as either true or false, depending on whether they hide or express "a heart's truth" ("Costumes of the Mind" 193), women modernists believe that "costume creates identity" (193), and is "closely connected with the pressures and oppressions of gender" (195). Accordingly, Yeats, Lawrence, and Eliot always differentiate between mask and self, but Woolf, for example, sees costume and self as identical, Gilbert concludes (196). While I do not see this distinction to always hold according to the gender of the authors, I consider the distinction itself operative, as I will show, in my perfor*mance* cases too. Of course, my first examples come from writers who were not modernists *per se*, and the question of modernism is not the point here either. James, Wharton, Chopin, and Dreiser were pre-modernist rather, preceding and preparing in various ways the modernist movement. In terms of applying or problematizing the inside/outside model of the modern episteme, which will later culminate in high modernism, either of them could pass as a modernist. While James will translate the high modernist dualisms into the self/mask or self/dress dichotomy, conceptualizing the invisible self as made visible by clothing, Dreiser, Chopin, and Wharton will problematize the inside/outside dichotomy of the modern episteme, insisting that the self is created by the inscriptions of social norms on the body, with clothing as prominent among these inscriptions.

Whether dressing is considered expressive of the self (as in the James texts) or the self is taken to be produced through dressing (as in the Dreiser, Chopin, and Wharton texts), the performative process is citational and theatrical, evoking and replaying existing scripts of womanhood. In short, both cases are perfor*mances*.

"Clothes that wear us," or the perfor*mance* of dressing: Henry James, *Daisy Miller*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*

Henry James's *Daisy Miller*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, and *The Wings of the Dove* have several women characters fully aware of how society inscribes its norms on the female body through stylized perfor*mances*. James is known for tracing the subjectivation of his characters as a process of development, with subjectivities evolving gradually. In the following, I interrogate texts where personalities evolve by way of social norms, dressing in particular.

Daisy Miller seems to accept and enjoy her female objecthood brought about by her choice of attire. When she first appears, her taste for fine clothing is emphasized.

> The young lady meanwhile had drawn near. She was dressed in white muslin, with a hundred frills and flounces, and knots of pale-colored ribbon. She was bareheaded, but she balanced in her hand a large parasol, with a deep border of embroidery; and she was strikingly, admirably pretty. (5)

Her dressing is the expression of her taste and her innocence: her "hundred frills and flounces, and knots of pale-colored ribbon" both extend her self and stand for the values she is known for. As the innocent girl is introduced into society, however, her virginal nature will give way to flirtatiousness and the knowledge that her "extreme elegance" (23) can attract all eyes. Her becoming a flirt is best conveyed by her self-construction as object, the object of the gaze of men and women alike. For example, she knows exactly how to provoke men or make a grand impression on Winterbourne by descending the stairs of her hotel:

> He waited for her in the large hall of the hotel. . . . She came tripping downstairs, buttoning her long gloves, squeezing her folded parasol against her pretty figure, dressed in the perfection of a soberly elegant traveling costume. . . . Daisy Miller was extremely animated, she was in charming spirits; but she was apparently not at all excited; she was not fluttered; she avoided neither his eyes nor those of anyone else; she blushed neither when she looked at him nor when she felt that people were looking at her. People continued to look at her a great deal. . . . (29–30)

Never being the subject to look, but always the object to be looked at, Daisy has now become conscious of her body as her greatest asset in society.

In *The Portrait of a Lady* the issue of womanhood as perfor*mance* is repeatedly articulated. Its representation of the self is, moreover, problematized in a conversation between Madame Merle and Isabel, where the older woman defines a woman's clothes and "things" as "expressive" of her self:

> What shall we call our 'self'? Where does it begin? Where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us—and then it flows back again. I know that a large

> part of myself is in the dresses I choose to wear. I have a great respect for *things*! One’s self—for other people—is one’s expression of one’s self; and one’s house, one’s furniture, one’s garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps—these things are all expressive. (187)

In other words, Madame Merle takes the position that clothes and things put the self on display for others; for her, they are the visible extensions and legible expressions of what is otherwise hidden from society. Moreover, clothes and things give body and material to what is otherwise incorporeal and immaterial: the self.

Isabel, however, strongly disagrees.

> “I don't agree with you,” she said. “I think just the other way. I don’t know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know that nothing else expresses me. Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; on the contrary, it’s a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one. Certainly, the clothes which, as you say, I choose to wear, don’t express me; and heaven forbid they should!”
> “You dress very well,” interposed Madame Merle, skillfully.
> “Possibly; but I don’t care to be judged by that. My clothes may express the dressmaker, but they don’t express me. To begin with it’s not my own choice that I wear them; they're imposed upon me by society.” (187)

Probably the first woman protagonist in American literature to recognize that clothes are imposed upon women by society, Isabel basically argues that certain models of behavior, among these the buying and wearing of “things,” are prescribed by society, and as such originate in society and not in her self. She sees clothes as barriers to the manifestations of the self rather than its expression: for her, clothes are the extensions of “society”—or power, or ideology, we would say today—which will make uniform objects out of women. The argument seems to be locked in the modern episteme: it centers around the possibility of the visible expressing the invisible, without questioning the existence of the invisible. Of course, and here James is at his most progressive, it also about the issue of female agency, as he raises the dilemma of whether woman is subject by choosing her clothes or is object because her clothes are really chosen by her dress-maker, or society.

Described not just as having a “splendid decorative character,” but also an “authentic” personality of “uncatalogued values” (339), Isabel, however, performs womanhood with a difference. Unlike other high-class women—like the Countess Gemini, for example, who travels “with her trunks, her dresses, her chatter, her little fibs, her frivolity, the strange memory of her lovers” (457)—Isabel resists the pressures of society, at least in terms of clothes, never wearing “anything less than a black brocade” (525), and her sometimes sharp tongue. Indeed, Isabel comes as close to becoming a rebel as it is possible in her social position, “her cleverness [being] . . . a dangerous variation of impertinence” (196).

> She made up her mind that their manner of life was superficial, and incurred some disfavour by expressing this view on bright Sunday afternoons, when the American absentees were engaged in calling on each other. . . .
> "You all live here this way, but what does it lead to?" she was pleased to ask. "It doesn't seem to lead to anything, and I should think you would get very tired of it." (196)

The Wings of the Dove presents several other women who express their differences by dressing differently. The first of these is Kate Croy, "a woman whose value would be in her differences" (42), right at the beginning of the novel. "[H]andsome, but the degree of it was not sustained by items and aids" (10), Kate has appropriated a particular form of fashion:

> She had stature without height, grace without motion, presence without mass. Slender and simple, frequently soundless, she was somehow always in the line of the eye—she counted singularly for its pleasure. More "dressed," often, with fewer accessories, than other women, or less dressed, should occasion require, with more, she probably couldn't have given the key to these felicities. . . . She didn't hold herself cheap, she didn't make for misery. Personally, no, she wasn't chalk-marked for auction. (10–11)

So she seems to have attained more—with less. But soon Kate's "character" cannot hold against the pressures of social codes: she grows into a woman of material interests only, who must see "as she had never seen before how material things spoke to her. . . life now affected her as a dress successfully 'done up'" (27). Kate will take great pains at dressing—in a theatrical way. Now she uses her looks, her attire, simply to play her part: "to dress the part, to walk, to look, to speak, in every way to express, the part, so all this was what Kate was to do for the character she had undertaken, under her aunt's roof, to represent" (241)

> It was made up, the character, of definite elements and touche—things all perfectly ponderable to criticism; and the way for her to meet criticism was evidently at the start to be sure her make-up had had the last touch and that she looked at least no worse than usual. Aunt Maud's appreciation of that to-night was indeed managerial, and the performer's own contribution fairly that of the faultless soldier on parade. (241)

It is in Kate's character that James abandons the idea of dressing as expressive of the self, allowing Kate to experience self-construction. Indeed, Kate is not only good at performing the norms of gender, but will actually construct herself catachrestically, into a woman with little "substance." "Wanting in lustre" (367) in comparison to Milly Theale, the protagonist of the novel, Kate is "practically superceded" by the "striking young presence" (367) of Milly, whom James refuses to present as one having merely a socially constructed self. It was a self, James insists, which pre-existed her self-construction through dressing, allowing her a "sort of noble inelegance" (92):

> She couldn't dress it away, nor walk it away, nor read it away, nor think it away; she could neither smile it away in any dreamy absence nor blow it away in any softened sigh. She couldn't have lost it if she had tried. . . . (92)

Milly's "noble inelegance" seems to stick out when she is with people who are "only people" (365): in her wonderful white dress she becomes indistinguishable from the noble Venetian surroundings, "the golden grace of the high rooms, chambers of art in themselves" (365). Milly is one of those Jamesian figures who have character—and this character may "break out" (366) and show in her dressing and her palace in Venice. The only problem with this supposedly pre-existing self is that it was her wealth which had actually shaped it: "that was what it was to be really rich. It had to be *the* thing you were" (92; emphasis in original). So what gave Milly her authenticity—her "noble inelegance" (92)—was in fact money. Indeed, money and the power that went with it had already interpellated her in the Althusserian sense before she could think about how to dress.

The empty signifier of the "world of fashion": Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

I will turn to those texts now which more easily assume that woman's self, including gender, is constructed. Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* narrates the construction and self-construction of its protagonist Carrie Meeber from the simple country girl to the elegant Chicago actress. As we learn from the first sentence already, Carrie was a modest girl, whose "total outfit," when leaving her home at eighteen, "consisted of a small trunk" only (3). "[A]mbitious to gain in material things," she set out for Chicago with dreams of becoming the "prey and subject" of the "mysterious city" (4). Most of all, she wanted to become a well-dressed woman—one to match the gentleman she first met on the train.

Carrie, the girl who judges people by their looks and whose ultimate dream centers on becoming an elegant woman, is utterly pleased by meeting Drouet. The man is described as a "masher": one who is both a womanizer and an effeminate man—because he dresses in order to attract women and does this with the meticulousness of a woman.

> His suit was of a striped and crossed pattern of brown wool, new at that time, but since become familiar as a business suit. The low crotch of the vest revealed a stiff shirt bosom of white and pink stripes. From his coat sleeves protruded a pair of linen cuffs of the same pattern, fastened with large, gold plate buttons, set with the common yellow agates known as "cat's-eyes." His fingers bore several rings—one,

> the ever-enduring heavy seal—and from his vest dangled a neat gold watch chain, from which was suspended the secret insignia of the Order of Elks. The whole suit was rather tight-fitting, and was finished off with heavy-soled tan shoes, highly polished, and the grey fedora hat. He was, for the order of intellect represented, attractive, and whatever he had to recommend him, you may be sure was not lost upon Carrie, in this, her first glance. (5)

As it turns out, Drouet's "philosophy of clothes" is much like Carrie's: he believes that "[g]ood clothes . . . were the first essential, the things without which he was nothing" (6). "A strong physical nature, actuated by a keen desire for the feminine, was the next," the narrator continues (6). The description of his "desire for the feminine" is, of course, quite ambiguous, emphasizing again the two aspects of the "masher": both his heterosexual attraction for women and his desire to be somewhat feminized, in the sense of actually wanting to appear better-dressed than most women. By being described as not just wanting to attract women through his elegance—"his suave manners, his fine clothes" (184)—but also to construct a body through dressing it up properly, Drouet is presented as a man who has appropriated the "feminine" style of "dressiness" (102).

As Carrie's mentor, Drouet ushers her into the world of clothes: he helps her pick them out, buy them, and wear them—from shoes and jacket to skirt and stockings (69–60). Snapping Carrie up, as Janet Beer accurately claims, "as surely as if he had spotted her at a warehouse," the woman is turned into "a doll, a mannequin for him to dress up" (169). Once this modern Pygmalion transforms her and passes her on to another man, Hurstwood, Carrie's commodification and objectification is final.

Carrie's becoming a fashionable city woman is accentuated by her accumulating knowledge of appropriate dressing style: wearing "a light grey woolen dress with a jaunty double-breasted jacket" when going for a walk (115), among others. *Sister Carrie* is a female *Bildungsroman*, where Carrie's road to knowledge or experience is paved by her improvement in dressing:

> In a material way, she was considerably improved. Her awkwardness had all but passed, leaving, if anything, a quaint residue which was as pleasing as perfect grace. Her little shoes now fitted her smartly and had high heels. She had learned much about laces and those little neckpieces which add so much to a woman's appearance. Her form had filled out until it was admirably plump and well-rounded. (134)

> She knew that she had improved in appearance. Her manner had vastly changed. Her clothes were becoming, and men—well-dressed men, some of the kind who before had gazed at her indifferently from behind their polished railings and imposing office partitions—now gazed into her face with a soft light in their eyes. In a way, she felt the power and satisfaction of the thing. . . . (222)

With this “improvement,” she gained a particular comfort in being looked at; she will be at ease when objectified by male gaze during her perfor*mance* of gender, her being constructed by the dress-codes especially. No matter how much she had “improved,” though, Carrie must from time to time face the fact that—based on her dressing—she is not taken as one belonging to high-society. The more she improves, the more she becomes aware of the distance between herself and her ideal ladies. This is the point where her enjoyment of being looked at goes sour: when she realizes that she cannot compete with the really rich and elegant women, and those who size her up will recognize her inferior position.

> Carrie found herself stared at and ogled. . . . With a start she awoke to find that she was in fashion’s crowd, on parade in a show place—and such a show place! . . . The whole street bore the flavour of riches and show, and Carrie felt that she was not of it. She could not, for the life of her, assume the attitude and smartness of Mrs. Vance, who, in her beauty, was all assurance. She could only imagine that it must be evident to many that she was the less handsomely dressed of the two. It cut her to the quick, and she resolved that she would not come here again until she looked better. At the same time she longed to feel the delight of parading here as an equal. Ah, then she would be happy! (280–281)

Her unhappiness comes from the bitter recognition of her second-rate elegance: she is determined to further improve, and dreams about the day when she can display herself as an equal. She expects to attain this further improvement through theater, the theatrics of dressing. This improvement of looks is the sole meaning of theater for her; this is why she does not quite understand, for example, why she is not considered a better actress, when “[h]er dresses had been all that art could suggest” (283).

She is her own art work, crafted by herself (and some friends) into a beautifully dressed body: the desired object.

> Ah, what a prize! he thought. How beautiful, how elegant, how famous! In her theatrical and Waldorf setting, Carrie was to him the all desirable. (432)

Now Carrie has attained her dreams, has become the object of the desire of the man she had desired so much, but is—in spite of “her gowns and carriage, her furniture and bank account” (452)—painfully lonely and sad. Fully embodying “specularity,” as Janet Beer aptly puts it, Carrie is no more than a “reflection,” giving back “to the male onlooker the answer he is always looking for, the picture of his own desire, not hers” (171); as such, she is the “mediated woman,” described throughout “in terms of her appeal to other people and always uncertain of her own authenticity” (172).

Carrie ultimately fails in surpassing her objecthood and attaining subjecthood in part because she misunderstands the meaning of clothes. Until, in a moment of illumination, she recognizes the emptiness of her dreams.

> Chicago, New York; Drouet, Hurstwood; the world of fashion and the world of stage—these were but incidents. Not them, but that which they represented, she longed for. Time proved the representation false. (452)

Carrie's recognition is graver than one might think: she comes to see her self-construction as only construction without any substance. Indeed, earlier she responded faithfully to the call of ideology, in this case the discourse of gender, when she made herself into a beautiful and well-dressed woman, an applauded and sought-after actress. But she did this with the hope that "the world of fashion and the world of stage" were the representations of something graver, something more substantial. She has to learn, however, that representation is "false": her constructed womanhood is but an empty signifier, a catachresis.

The social mask of clothes:
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*, "A Pair of Silk Stockings"

Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* seems to hesitate between showing woman as having a self which will be expressed by her dressing and presenting the construction of the catachrestic self through the call of social norms, dressing being prominent among these norms.

Edna Pontelier is a high-class woman, a rich Creole wife, whose looks are significant both before and after her spiritual and emotional awakening. She makes a grand entrance during one of her first appearances, when walking along the shore with her friend Madame Ratignolle:

> She wore a cool muslin that morning—white, with a waving vertical line of brown running through it; also a white linen collar and the big straw hat which she had taken from the peg outside the door. The hat rested any way on her yellow-brown hair that waved a little, was heavy, and clung close to her head.
> Madame Ratignolle, more careful of her complexion, had twined a gauze veil about her head. She wore dogskin gloves, with gauntlets that protected her wrists. She was dressed in pure white, with a fluffiness of ruffles that became her. The draperies and fluttering things which she wore suited her rich, luxuriant beauty as a greater severity of line could not have done. (58)

The two women dress extremely carefully, not only as the occasion demands but also to create their own style. Especially Edna's dressing is depicted as the extension of her self: her changes of mood must be expressed by the choice of her dress, dress being "the question" which "too often assumes the nature of a problem" (120). Dress stands between herself and the world; in a sense it is a protective social mask for her, without which her self will show, allowing her to become too vulnerable. This is why, for example, her hesitation about rejoining the company after she already went to her bedroom is expressed by her hesitation about whether to "go to the trouble of dressing again" (92).

Dressing up gains a very different meaning in the climax scene of the novel. Having prepared her body through elaborate and ceremonial forms which Butler calls the "embodied rituals of everydayness" (*Excitable* 152), she constructs her femininity through the perfor*mance* of various effects required for the masquerade of the woman who aims to impress the privileged invitees of her dinner party. She becomes the "fetishized woman," to use Linda Williams' term (372), made up of individual female fetishes such as smooth and scented skin, shiny curls, good breath, round nails. As a consequence of her preparation, she reigns, because she is garbed, like a queen.

> The golden shimmer of Edna's satin gown spread in rich folds on either side of her. There was a soft fall of lace encircling her shoulders. It was the color of her skin, without the glow, the myriad living tints that one may sometimes discover in vibrant flesh. There was something in her attitude, in her whole appearance when she leaned her head against the high-backed chair and spread her arms, which suggested the regal woman, the one who rules, who looks on, who stands alone. (145)

Edna experiences something rather strange: she becomes one with her dress. The stain glows with the shimmer of her "vibrant flesh"; the lace matches exactly the color of her skin. Here very obviously it is the dress that makes the woman; having no self to be expressed by her dress now, the catachrestic nature of her gendered self is foregrounded. Her sensations limited to the "extraneous," Edna's ennui comes with the realization of discords coming from an empty cavern: "a chill breath that seemed to issue from some vast cavern wherein discords wailed" (145). Ultimately, Edna Pontelier falls because she cannot reconcile the discrepancy between her self-construction as object and her self-perception as subject (or desire to be taken as a subject). She longs for the affirmation of her subjectivity but is instead reduced, as all women are in the Lacanian framework, to desired object, "a sexual receptacle, property," as Elizabeth Grosz puts it, "object, lacking, wanting what men have" (*Jacques Lacan* 134). Edna senses the contradiction between the woman who prepares herself as an object to be surveyed and admired and the one who would claim agency through her art. This contradiction is rooted in the co-dependence between patriarchal context and the woman as other-object-spectacle-body: her self-construction as a woman presupposes the context, which will not make any other scripts available for women. In other words, the transgression of these contexts—to be a woman and to be taken as a subject—is not permitted. Only in the final scene does she recognize the emptiness of her catachrestic objecthood, when she walks into the ocean naked: "for the first time in her life she stood naked in the open air, at the mercy of the sun, the breeze that beat upon her, and the waves that invited her" (175). Only in the ocean can she, stripped of the social mask of clothes, become a "new-born creature" (175). "She dresses down to the raw," as Janet Beer points out, "she takes off her clothes in order to recodify herself in the eyes of the world" (177). But it is too late.

A short story predicated entirely on the normative gender assumptions of culture, Chopin's "A Pair of Silk Stockings" presents womanhood as both process and product, construction and self-construction. It narrates how "little Mrs. Sommers" goes shopping and dresses herself completely in the department store, lured by the various products that she touches. Although first she wants to spend her unexpected fifteen dollars on her children, once in the department store, she changes her mind, until she ends up treating herself only with the luxury items of silk stockings, point-tipped boots, and gloves fitted to her hands. Not only does she buy them, but starts to wear them right away, surprised at the sudden change they bring onto her.

> Her stockings and boots and well fitting gloves had worked marvels in her bearing—had given her a feeling of assurance, a sense of belonging to the well-dressed multitude. (265)

Her transformation is performatively brought about by her change of dress, having exchanged "her cotton stockings for the new silk ones which she had just bought" (264), wearing the "excellent and stylish fit" (264) of the new pair of boots, and enjoying her "little symmetrical gloved hand" (265) after her new gloves were fitted, smoothed, and buttoned. This change takes place step by step, from foot to toe, so to speak—to such a degree that her feet in her new stockings and boots do not even feel to be hers: "Her foot and ankle looked very pretty. She could not realize that they belonged to her and were a part of herself" (264). Probably she herself would agree with Woolf's comment I mentioned earlier, it is "clothes that wear us and not we them" (*Orlando* 171).

After giving herself the additional treats of a good lunch in a most agreeable restaurant and a matinée theater performance, she gets on a cable car to return to her own life, but with a "poignant wish, a powerful longing that the cable car would never stop anywhere, but go on and on with her forever" (266). If for one day only, she could reconstruct herself into a "lady" which she, having seen "better days" (262), once was probably.

In this short story womanhood is clearly a construction (as well as self-construction and reconstruction): it is the end-product of the process of wearing womanly things and being engaged in "ladylike" preoccupations. Mrs. Sommers, however, is not simply self-constructed by following certain ideals of high-class dressing: in fact she is mostly prepared by others. It is the young girl behind the stockings counter, the clerk in the show department, the "pleasant young creature" fitting her gloves, the waiter in the restaurant, the usher in the theater and even her guests who contribute to this performance by carrying out the "disciplinary practices" (Bartky 435) which will feminize her in a particular way. Mrs. Sommers does not perform these acts herself; instead, she will let others serve her, wait on her, or usher her: others will perform the perfor*mance* acts on the otherized object of her body. Therefore, not only is she not a subject, but actually she is just the patient "suffering" from the regimes of power inflected on her body by others. In the meantime, she will be indeed transformed: she will become the costume; her masquerade will be all-pervasive: with nothing behind or beneath the mask, her womanliness will be nothing more than catachresis.

"Well-dressed till we drop": Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*

In Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, Lily Bart knows what duty society prescribes for her: "We are expected to be pretty and well-dressed till we drop," she tells Selden (12). She takes great pleasure in the "luxury" of her pretty things:

> As she entered her bedroom, with its softly-shaded lights, her lace dressing-gown lying across the silken bedspread, her little embroidered slippers before the fire, a vase of carnations filling the air with perfume, and the last novels and magazines lying uncut on a table beside the reading-lamp. . . . Her whole being dilated in an atmosphere of luxury; it was the background she required, the only climate she could breathe in. (25)

Lily longs for a life filled with this atmosphere of luxury: this is what she wants to breathe in, what she would like to have control her life. Wharton captures Lily's social ambition in her love of dresses and her wanting to be "as smartly dressed as the [rich] women" (83). She admires her rich aunt, Mrs. Peniston, who "belonged to the class of old New Yorkers who have always lived well, dressed expensively, and done little else" (37). This being her "inherited obligation" (37), she could remain an outsider to the world, neither subject nor object, neither acting nor being acted upon, merely "a looker-on at life" (37).

With a passion for *tableaux vivants*, Lily will live moments of feminine objecthood to the full.

> Lily was in her element on such occasions. . . . her vivid plastic sense . . . found eager expression in the disposal of draperies, the study of attitudes, the shifting of lights and shadows. Her dramatic instinct was roused by the choice of subjects, and the gorgeous reproductions of historic dress stirred an imagination which only visual impressions could reach. (131)

> under Morpeth's organizing hand the pictures succeeded each other with the rhythmic march of some splendid frieze, in which the fugitive curves of living flesh and the wandering light of young eyes have been subdued to plastic harmony without losing the charm of life. (133)

In *tableaux vivants*, Lily can step into the shoes of any historical character or reconstruct any historical situation; in these perfor*mances* she is not required to have her own self in any way, rather, the more catachrestically she plays her role, the better performer she will be. While "displaying her own beauty" (131), she will give up her own self, or admit the fact that the self is lacking beneath the role. Her perfor*mance* will highlight the fact that she owns nothing of herself: her body and beauty, even her thoughts and ambitions belong to the role she plays. But she only recognizes this when looking back, when, in preparation for her suicide, she tries to "set her possessions in order" (317). It is here that she recognizes to have been an object displayed for the gaze of men: "like some rare flower grown for exhibition, a flower from which every bud had been nipped except the crowning blossom of her beauty" (317). But again, this recognition comes too late.

In the cases of Carrie, Edna, Mrs. Sommers, Lily, and to some extent Kate Croy, the authors seem to claim at least two things: first, that woman is she who plays the role of the woman; second, this is an existing role, women just need to take the script and perform it. Gender is a matter of perfor*mance* here, constructing the woman through a series of citational performative acts; her perfor*mance* will have performative force in bringing about her womanhood. These performative acts of gender create indeed, as Butler claims, "the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all" (*Gender Trouble* 140); for gender is presented as "tenuously constituted . . . through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (140; emphasis in original). All these acts, furthermore, target the body, inscribing a variety of social signs onto it. Ultimately, gender evolves as the consequence of the perfor*mance* of dressing as social scripting.

The perfor*mance* of cultural codes: the Southern woman (William Faulkner, 'A Rose for Emily'; Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Flannery O'Connor, 'A Good Man Is Hard to Find')

Of course, not all discourses that construct women control the stylization of the body only; certain widely-known codes of conduct can be shown to underlie gender perfor*mances*. This is especially true of the American South, where—as I will show in my discussion of William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, and Flannery O'Connor—the ideal construct known as the Southern lady or the Southern *belle* is predicated on the discourse of white/female supremacy, including the widespread acceptance of racialized and gendered social hierarchies and ensuing forms of behavior.

A joint perfor*mance* by actor and audience: William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily"

The cultural perceptions of the South form the discourse underlying the perfor*mance* of Miss Emily Grierson in Faulkner's masterpiece short story of 1930, "A Rose for Emily." It is this discourse which allows the narrator to speak in the first person plural voice of the community and to insist that "Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town" (431), passing "from generation to generation—dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse" (437). The making of Emily Grierson into "Miss Emily" is a perfor*mance* because a set of cultural codes forms its presuppositions, which the performance complies with. Expressive citationality is at work in the theatrics performed by both the town and Emily Grierson; these citations of norms of gender and race, womanhood and whiteness, together bring about the icon of Southern womanhood.

Faulkner narrates both the construction and the self-construction of "Miss Emily." She was originally made into the Southern lady by her father, who probably used his horsewhip not just on his horses. The town also took its share in the making of "Miss Emily": objectified under their constant social gaze, the woman whose taxes had been waved by Colonel Sartoris himself, grew into legend. As Judith Fetterley observes, "[b]ecause she is Miss Emily Grierson, the town invests her with that communal significance which makes her the object of their obsession and the subject of their incessant scrutiny" (38). "Because she is a lady," Fetterley continues, "the town is able to impose a particular code of behavior on her" (38). And although she resists this construction first, when she starts an affair with a Northerner and when she makes preparations of killing the man who wanted to abandon her, the community will reconstruct her womanhood. In both attempts she transgresses the social codes, and her transgressions are successful, even if she could not break out of her social construction. In speech act terms, we could say that her acts are "felicitous" as illocutions (the affair and the preparations both came about) but unsuccessful as perlocutions (she did not break out of the Southern code of female behavior). Ultimately she will give in to the community and allow the town to reconstruct her womanhood.

Faulkner presents at least two incidents that highlight this reconstruction. One clusters around the issue of her taxes. The theatrics of her not paying taxes has several acts. First Colonel Sartoris—being of a generation who would make such chivalric gestures—"invented an involved tale to the effect that Miss Emily's father had loaned money to the town" (431); next Emily Grierson pretended to believe it; then they send her a tax notice which she leaves unresponded; then the town sends her a formal letter to which she responds, declining it as if it had been a social invitation. Finally, they go to see her; she pretends to read their visit as a social occasion, and terminates it by telling the Negro servant to "see these gentlemen out" (433). It is indeed a theatrical perfor*mance*, where not only do both parties allow the issue of the taxes be repeatedly missed, but town and Miss Emily join in avoiding the graver issue of her poverty. Through the whole process, Miss Emily's reconstruction as a Southern lady is reiterated by both parties; Emily "is a man-made object," as Fetterley puts it, "a cultural artifact, and what she is reflects and defines the culture that has produced her" (35). However, her being a "lady" will prove to be an empty signifier, a metaphor without referent, a catachresis, which exists only in legend and lore, but not in reality.

The other series of incidents highlighting her discursive reconstruction circles around the issue of the smell. In a matter probably even more sensitive than that of her taxes, the town cannot find a way to confront her with the fact of the awful smell that developed after Homer Barron disappeared. For the cavalier Mayor Judge Stevens it is impossible to "accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad" (433). Indeed, trapped by their own acts, making the Griersons into "the high and mighty" (433) icons, the town has no way of confronting Miss Emily with such a vulgar issue—and, indeed, the smell went away in a few weeks. It is because of the woman's construction into a lady that she can get away with the murder of Homer Barron. And only the young narrator—stripping "Miss Emily" of her stature and humanizing her as mere "Emily"—is able to reveal her crime, speak about the true reason of both the smell and her not paying taxes, and admit the fictional-discursive nature of their perfor*mance*.

Perfor*mance* as mere theatrics: Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) is a text whose central topos is construction or constructedness itself. Gender and race participate in the construction of the characters, especially Blanche, while the issue of constructedness itself becomes the fundamental conflict of the drama.

Blanche is the master performer, not once allowing herself to be forced out of her role as a Southern white woman. Her perfor*mance* includes an adherence to codes of dressing, language, and manners, as well as the citation and confirmation of such codes. She arrives "daintily dressed in a white suit in a fluffy bodice" (367), and remains all through the play "incongruous in this setting" (367) of Elysian Fields, where the Kowalski's live. Shocked at imagining that her sister must live in such a "horrible place" (369), which she describes as a locale taken from a gothic piece of Poe's, she will learn not only that Stella and Stanley live in just two rooms, but also that the place is owned by a "white trash" American, Eunice, while the DuBois plantation house, itself only a sad reminder of splendor gone, had fallen out of the hands of the family. Moreover, they have a "colored" neighbor who they are friends with, and in general live in close proximity with African Americans.

Blanche's style of speaking is a version of mock-sophistication and pathos, aggrandizing and self-centered. She likes to take every incident to a symbolic level, at once placing it into a particular cultural discourse—of heroism, chivalry, and pathos—and interpreting it from that angle. "I stayed and fought for [Belle Reve], bled for it, almost died for it," she tries to explain the ordeal of her losing of their property (371); "I understand there's to be a little card party to which ladies are cordially not invited," she says, articulating the simple fact that the two women must be out during poker time (374); "Clothes are my passion," she tries to justify her indulgence in clothes; "I hereby endow you with them," she says as she hands over the legal documents to Stanley (376); "Possess your soul in patience," she calls out to her brother-in-law, who would need the bathroom urgently (395); "I take hot baths for my nerves. Hydro-therapy, they call it," she explains her passion for bathing (394); she blames Mitch for his "uncavalier" behavior, and calls his work-clothes "uncouth apparel," an "unforgivable insult to a lady" (399). Refusing to see herself outside of this cultural discourse, she cannot accept the passing of time: that her social status has changed and that she too is aging. She is indeed, as "a repository of White genteel culture" (72).

Always in need of being in the center of attention, she makes herself into an object, an actor in her own perfor*mance*. She insists on being looked at only in dim light or after she made herself up and "done in" (378); with Stella acting as her sidekick assisting in her construction, she repeatedly provokes compliments. Never wanting to share the limelight with anyone else, she prefers her sister to be quiet around her and to willingly serve her. Disdainfully proud of her aristocratic background, she takes every chance to put down others, including the "boy" who was her husband and all other "unrefined types" (373), who do not go "for jasmine perfume" (377). Her prime target is Stanley the "Polack," who "insults" her love-letters just by the touch of his hands (376). Nostalgic of her past conquests, she continually reconstructs herself as the object of attention and desire of the finest gentlemen, as a woman who had excited admiration in the form of "tributes" from her "admirers" (375). She even flirts with Stanley and tries to make Shep Huntley into the cavalier suitor she fantasizes about. Not letting herself to be distracted from her show by what is in front of her senses, she repeatedly makes Stanley's friends into the gentlemen which they are not, telling them, for example, not to get up when she passes through the room.

Affected by the myths of the South through the "phony" "Barnum and Bailey world" (394–395) of the songs she sings during her endless bathing rituals, she proves to be ideal target of hailing social discourses. Indeed, the discourse of gendered and racialized superiority addresses her via popular songs, translating the cultural myths of the South into easily digestible genres.

> "Say, it's only a paper moon,
> Sailing over a cardboard sea—
> But it wouldn't be make-believe
> If you believed in me!" (394)

It is through these lyrics that she connects to the world: they form the grid of her reading of the world, while they also convey, in a simplified discourse, the ideology that underpins her theatrical perfor*mance* of white Southern womanhood. With the usual aggrandizing pathos, she presents her way of making up things as just benevolent magic:

> I don't want realism. I want magic. Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell the truth, I tell what *ought* to be truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it! (400; emphasis in original)

It is Mitch, the only eligible bachelor among Stanley's friends, to whom she gives her full routine, complete with citing her French Huguenot ancestry, having him put the colored paper lantern on the "naked light bulb," telling of her repulsion by "a rude remark or a vulgar action," constructing the tale that she came down to help Stella, complimenting Mitch for his "gallantry" (380) and for being a "natural gentleman" (391), making herself into the younger of the two sisters, or claiming the ability to create "*joie de vivre*" (390). Even her seeming honesty is part of a scheming self-construction; for example, when she says, "I want to *deceive* him enough to make him—want me" (388; emphasis in original), she only has her lying about her age in mind and not the whole show.

Blanche never allows her perfor*mance* to stop, not even after Mitch actually dumps her, saying into her face that he has no intention of marrying her, or after it becomes clear that she must leave. It is her adherence to the role that prevents her from understanding Stella's love for Stanley, or from believing Mitch when he says, "[t]hey're crazy about each other" (382). Having become one with the mask, she has no chance of comprehending the significance of their making up after the fight, or reading as the sign of true love their coming "together with low animal moans [as] [h]e falls to his knees . . . and presses his face to her belly" (381). Refusing to recognize their mutual adoration, she tries to talk Stella into leaving the "madman" she is married to (383).

Blanche makes every effort to construct herself into the hypersensitive object on whom the vulgarities of living take their toll. The victim of a corrupt world, she finds remedy in quieting her nerves by taking marathon baths and expects to constantly receive kindness from people. Her nerves will be used in her justifying the loss of Belle Reve, the family mansion too. Here her self-construction serves the manipulative Blanche: giving no specifics, she will speak in vague metaphors only when asked by her sister about the loss of their house.

Her tricks work once again on Stella: her well-rehearsed pathos does indeed gain Stella's sympathy and lets the performer get away with performing the victim.

But while Stella is willing to join her sister in her perfor*mance* of Southern womanhood, falling back to playing the sidekick to Blanche's show, Stanley seems to immediately see through his sister-in-law. He uncovers her theatrics as he opens her wardrobe trunk and finds feathers and furs, "genuine fox fur-pieces," pearls and gold bracelets, and even a tiara, a "crown for an empress," as Stanley ironically puts it (374), surprised that "[s]ome men are took in by this Hollywood glamor stuff" (375). "After all, a woman's charm is fifty percent illusion," she explains (376). All the items proving to be worthless, their participation in Blanche's construction of the Southern *belle* as catachresis is all the more prevalent. The perfor*mance* is all illusion without substance; it all takes place in the realm of the signifier only, with no connection to any signified "out there." Only Stanley is not taken by the perfor*mance*, and unlike Stella, he refuses to assist her. He will corner her about the issue of the lost estate, will uncover the truth about her life in Laurel, and buy her return ticket. But Blanche is unmovable; her mask has become herself, there is no self behind the role. This is why Stanley fails to make her face the fact that it was Mitch who dumped her (and not she him) or that there was no telegram from Shep Huntley. Not even by raping her can he shock her back into the reality he believes to live in. In fact, the man's insistence only exacerbates her determination: she refuses to even acknowledge that she has been raped. Nothing, not even violence, can push Blanche into unconstructing herself. She rather chooses "lobotomy," "desolation and spiritual death," as a critic puts it (Brewer 77) than abandoning her self-staging.

Not that Stanley is a true hero, an "original." His constructedness is no less apparent: his uncouth "natural" appearance, talk, and behavior are as much part of his perfor*mance* of the rugged, virile, sensuous male as jasmine perfume and talk about tributes from admirers belong to the woman's. The central conflict of the play does not stem from one character standing for reality and the other for illusion, as many critics of Williams suggest. The conflict between Stanley and Blanche is not between "realism and theatricalism," as Mary A. Corrigan claims (392); or between a symbolic and a realistic understanding of the world—"the fictive skills of Blanche" and "the hard-edged realism of Stanley"—as Christopher Bigsby indicates (12). "[H]er desperate flight from reality toward an illusory refuge," to quote Felicia Hardison André's words (50–51), is not really in contrast with Stanley's firm standing in reality. Rather, it is two catachrestic constructions that clash, where both are perfor*mances* of well-known, easily identifiable scripts. He too performs in spite of the fact that while Blanche dresses up in the process of self-construction, he undresses; while she is comfortable when "all freshly bathed and scented" (374), he makes himself comfortable by removing his shirt or walking around in his pajamas. It would only seem that Stanley's rugged realism, his seeing things "as they are," stands in sharp contrast to Blanche's elaborate mystification; for example, where for Stanley the bathroom is the place to relieve himself, for Blanche it is her haven where the ritual of cleansing will take place. But in both cases, discourse keeps interfering with the "thing itself" to such a degree that finally it becomes clear that the "thing" does not exist outside discourse. Talking openly of the necessity to pee is part of a perfor*mance* whose other elements are drinking beer and playing poker with his male friends, giving orders to women, beating his wife and then using it as sexual foreplay, or raping his sister-in-law. Both are performers; only the scripts of their perfor*mances* differ.

Critics have suggested that Stanley's construction into the brute realist evokes strong Africanist associations—to the degree that, as Mary F. Brewer points out, "a number of productions have cast the role with a Black actor" (74). Indeed, one cannot miss the discourse of white supremacy that controls Blanche's outburst against Stanley's "animal habits," his being "subhuman," and even "ape-like" (385). It is this "racialized discourse spoken by Stella and Blanche," as George W. Crandell points out, which "serves to define Stanley as the Other, a sexual, cultural, and by implication, racial alien" (342). Or, as Rachel van Duyvenbode observes, by assigning the "dark task of rape" to Stanley, Williams also assigns him the "dastardly role of the 'dark' male" and "superimposes [his] dramatic identity upon that of the contemporary racially marginalized" (204). In my opinion Stanley's racialization holds to the point of his being made into the virile male with its associations of black sexuality, where blackness is further emphasized by the whiteness of his adversary, Blanche. Indeed, his black racial position becomes visible together with the making of the woman's whiteness visible. I think the "blackness" of Stanley must be read together with the whiteness of Blanche, where this latter, the foregrounding of what was always invisible and unmarked, is indeed a major accomplishment of Williams. Both blackness and whiteness presented as catachresis, they become meaningful not in terms of their signifier-signified relationships (which catachreses lack), but in terms of signifier-signifier relationship: of whiteness to blackness.

Ultimately it is Stella who, without confronting her with the lies and the theatrics, makes arrangements for Blanche's departure; while institutionalizing her sister, she and Eunice smooth her way by participating in her perfor*mance.* They compliment her on her looks and enter into a conversation with her about the particular Della Robbia blue of her jacket; in order to keep the show going, they do not question her claim that Shep Huntley sent a telegram, and are even willing to suggest that the man who came for her was "the gentleman [she] was expecting from Dallas" (407). The two women are joined by the empathic doctor in saving her face, allowing Blanche to exit as a lady taking the arms of a gentleman and uttering her memorable final words, "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers" (408).

Popular culture mediating the perfor*mance*: Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"

Written in 1955, Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" focuses primarily on the grotesque self-construction of the grandmother into a Southern lady, where the ideal she hopes to be approximating in her theatrics is empty and wholly detached from reality. Her perfor*mance* is manifold, with the citation and iteration of cultural values going on in her speech, dressing, and ways of dealing with people. The perfor*mance* constructs her as a lady: she is a lady because even in the most unforeseen situations she knows what rules, of etiquette mostly, to follow. Ultimately, it is this perfor*mance* which brings about the brutal slaughtering of the whole family.

The old woman is the central consciousness of the short story: her words, which we hear both in the dialogues and the free indirect discourse used amply in the story, attest to her self-perception, while at she same time they are the instruments with which she will move the events. She uses a vocabulary which is clearly dated: for example, when expressing her wish to visit "her connections" (1122), naming her cat Pitty Sing after a character in an 1885 Gilbert and Sullivan opera, or calling the black boy "the cute little pickaninny" (1124). She is prim and proper, dressing as a lady should, wearing white cotton gloves, a navy blue straw sailor hat, and white organdy collars and cuffs trimmed with lace, pinning a scented "purple spray of cloth violets" (1124) to her neckline. Her conversation topics are lady-like—and fittingly commonplace—too, expressing her desire to look like a lady in case someone might see her dead after an accident, judging that it's a "good day for driving," cautioning her son about the speed limit, pointing out "interesting details of the scenery" such as the "brilliant red clay banks slightly streaked with purple" and the "silver-white sunlight" (1124), and insisting that "Europe was entirely to blame for the way things were now" (1127).

Disappointed at how patriotism is missing from the children, she teaches them Southern values, among these, the imperative that they should be "more respectful of their native states and their parents and everything else" (1124). She will also teach them to view the black child as a spectacle, "a picture" (1124), that the plantation, together with the South's grandeur, is "Gone With the Wind" (1125), and that "[p]eople are certainly not nice like they used to be" (1126). Nostalgic of "better times" (1127) as well as her own past grandeur, she tells the children the story of what it was like when she was "courted" by the planter "Mr. Edgar Atkins Teagarden," who was property conscious to the degree that he had his initials carved into the watermelon that grew on his land (1125). Inventing a whole legend around an old plantation house, she clearly makes up the secret panel and manipulates the children into making a scene so that their parents would turn off the road. Perceiving herself as not just having a "sunny disposition"

(1126) but possessing some natural goodness too, the grandmother keeps telling nice things to people about how good and trustworthy they are.

I see O'Connor following in the footsteps of Faulkner and Williams in constructing the grandmother's subjectivity strictly according to the Southern code of behavior. Moreover, she foregrounds the discursivity of the grandmother's subjectivity by emphatically evoking one well-known "discourse" of Southern culture to produce her as a lady: Margaret Mitchell's popular novel and the film made out of it, *Gone With the Wind*, which she likes referring to. "[M]anipulated," as Thomas Hill Schaub points out, by the kitsch of democratic-liberal culture" (128), she allows herself to be hailed and thereby constructed by popular discourses which, I want to add, are themselves, as the novel and its film adaptation (as well as the Gilbert and Sullivan opera) at second or third remove away from the "original" myth of the South.

Much like Miss Emily in the Faulkner piece and Blanche in the Williams drama, O'Connor's grandmother character is also a man-made object, a cultural artifact, created by the self-serving myths of the South; as a catachrestic cultural construct devoid of referent, she is as vulnerable and fragile as the others were. Moreover, much like in the case of Miss Emily and Blanche again, the myth that produced her will now, in an encounter where myths lose their significance, turn against her and bring about her fall. First the accident seems to have affected only her properly selected outfit: "the grandmother limped out of the car, her hat still pinned to her head but the broken front brim standing up at a jaunty angle and the violet spray hanging off the side" (1129). Next, her irrational urge to make acquaintance with supposedly nice people actually throws the family into the arms of the convicts. Failing to see the consequences of her words, she admits having recognized the Misfit—and goes on blabbering, as if it was a social occasion. She is trying to construct the Misfit into a white gentleman, a "good man" (1131), one "not a bit common" (1131), who has "good blood" (1134), and who "wouldn't shoot a lady' (1131). But she becomes the victim of her own perfor*mance* as she refuses to hear what the Misfit is telling her—his life story and that they have already killed quite a few people. Refusing to admit that she knows Bailey was taken to be shot, that she recognized his shirt on the Misfit, or that the shots she heard killed the rest of the family, the grandmother cannot not perform or step out of her role of the Southern lady. Only in the very last moments—when confronted with the harsh reality of his gun—does she get a chance to rid herself of her role and establish an honest rapport with the Misfit, now taking him for "one of [her] babies" (1135). Falling finally from the pedestal of her own (and her culture's) making, she is humanized in her death, half sitting and half laying "in a puddle of blood with her legs crossed under her like a child's and her face smiling up at the cloudless sky" (1135). But once again, it is too late.

Some misogynist reversals (Jonathan Swift, ‘A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed,’ T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*)

Lastly, I would like to support my thesis concerning gender perfor*mance* with two well-known misogynistic texts, where the authors reverse, in one way or another, the normative construction of womanhood and trace the process whereby gender is unconstructed, or undone. The first text I have in mind is Jonathan Swift’s “A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed” (1734), which describes the undressing ceremony of Corinna, “a batter’d, strolling Toast.” The poem seems to carry to the extreme the claim that womanhood is but catachrestic masquerade, where the body and clothing are meant to cover (up) the void. Describing gender as perfor*mance*, Swift offers elaborate images of corporeal womanhood available for construction and reconstruction. Defined by the “horror of the female body” permeating *Gulliver’s Travels* too, this constructedness carries blatantly negative connotations and is synonymous with lack of substance. The underlying assumption here could be formulated as follows: women are objects, objects of the fascinated and horrified masculine gaze, fake objects, without substance or wholeness, constantly disassembled and reassembled from their artificial parts.

> Then, seated on a three-legg’d Chair,
> Takes off her artificial Hair:
> Now, picking out a Crystal Eye,
> She wipes it clean, and lays it by.
> Her Eye-Brows from a Mouse’s Hyde,
> Stuck on with Art on either Side,
> Pulls off with Care, and first displays ‘em,
> Then in a Play-Book smoothly lays ‘em.
> . . . .
>
> But how shall I describe her Arts
> To recollect the scatter’d Parts?
> Or shew the Anguish, Toil, and Pain,
> Of gath’ring up herself again? (600–601)

When the text is controlled by a misogynist, the woman becomes a monster indeed. She is without substance; her gendered self is that which is being constructed again and again through the ritual of assembling of its vulgar artificial parts. The reader gets a full view of the underside of what Butler calls the “theatricality of gender” (*Bodies* 232): the woman wears a wig, her eyes are removable, her eyebrows are mouse hair, her round cheeks are stuffed, her teeth are false, her breasts are raised by rags, her figure is the work of a corset, her skin is smoothed by grease—her whole feminine body is created daily by much “Anguish, Toil, and Pain.” Femininity is here portrayed as the result of an elaborate negative perfor*mance*, when femininity is being de-created into absence, void, and nothingness. Indeed, that there is nothing beneath the de-created image but repulsive vulgarity is what Swift's distancing and alienating irony suggests (and what he didactically explicates in the last line).

Probably the most famous example of modernist male misogyny is T. S. Eliot. The women in his texts have become typical figures of modernity, whose alienation and ennui are only strengthened by the fact that they are affected by this alienation and ennui indirectly, through the men that are supposed to define them. As passive extras in male quest plots, these women play second fiddle in the grand orchestra of male supremacy. At best, Eliot's woman character is a lifeless, ghostlike figure, one of those who "come and go/Talking of Michelangelo" ("The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"), or spends her life "serving tea to friends," mourning her lost youth, neurotically twisting lilacs "in her fingers while she talks" ("Portrait of a Lady"). At worst, as throughout *The Waste Land*, she is female hysteria personified, famous for her bad nerves; or she is the thirty-one year old yet "antique" looking Lil, whose abortion pills made her lose her teeth but who now will disappoint "poor Albert" for not being able to look good and give him "a good time"; she is the bored typist making monotonous love with the repulsive "young man carbuncular." The perfor*mance* of women characters in *The Waste Land* complies with normative womanhood, especially in its misogynist versions. These social norms are framed by such underlying presuppositions as 'women are different from men, they are emotional (hysterical), objects, sexual objects, of male desire, they are bodies primarily, and as such are repulsive.' This set of presuppositions is inscribed (reinscribed?) in the text through the perfor*mance*.

The desperate scene of the typist's life includes her stale things left from the morning and the previous day: her kitchen stuff and her feminine "notions":

> The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, light
> Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
> Out of the window perilously spread
> Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
> On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
> Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays. (44)

The last line seems to give away the misogynist: the items that touch the body he is repulsed by, "[s]tockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays," become repulsive themselves. These are items that supposedly participate in the material construction of femininity, that is, they make the person wearing a wig, an underbodice, a corset, stockings, and lady-like slippers clearly desirable and desiring in the heterosexual context. Therefore, portraying these feminine notions as graceless and unbecoming parts of a repulsive love scene will evoke disgust not just in their love-making, but the womanliness of this woman too. Woman appears as having a monstrous body that repulses the man. Heterosexual hegemony denies the woman a self outside the heterosexual context, yet the self constructed within this context is clearly hideous and ugly. Her place inside the male script is confining and repelling, yet she has no place outside.

***

In spite of the differences in terms of the social scripts evoked, the texts discussed in this chapter are similar in one important respect: they all portray women through their iterative perfor*mances* of womanhood. Women appear as others, objects, bodies, to whom and on whom certain conventional regimes are applied in the course of these perfor*mances*. The presuppositional context out of which the iterated scripts are taken are defined by the norms of patriarchy, which makes them into objects of the gaze, icons in social *tableaux*, lifeless mannequins whose sole desire is to look good, vehicles of etiquette and other forms of societal conduct, or passive extras in male quest plots. As such, these women cannot overstep the boundaries of objecthood. Relegated into mere decoration at best and into objects evoking male repulsion at worst, they are unable to construct themselves as subjects.

Perfor*mative* genders: non-compliance with social norms (Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives*; Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*; Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*; H.D., *HERmione*; Carson McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*)

When could it become possible for women to claim agency and construct themselves as subjects in texts? When was womanhood performed outside the heterosexual matrix, as revising or blatantly challenging the scripts behind the earlier perfor*mances*? In American literature I see this moment around the turn of the 19th century, somewhere between 1890 and 1910. This is the time when the female *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman* became widespread and ideas of the new came to be implemented by literary modernism across the whole spectrum. This is the moment when especially women writers drew attention to the fact that the subject in Western thought, or the human being, was gendered male. Moreover, other binary oppositions such as heterosexual/homosexual and white /black came to be added to the binary of gender, with each identity category slowly being understood as process, as something coming about. The women writers of the late 19th and early-mid 20th century—Kate Chopin, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, Willa Cather, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), Nella Larsen, Jesse Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, Carson McCullers among them—all wrote about women who asserted themselves in the subject position. They gave entitlement to their women characters to subjecthood: to speak, see, act, and desire. Indeed, at the beginning of the 20th century women writers re-appropriated speech, vision, action, and desire from men, and assigned feminine gender to each. Concomitantly, while the object woman's identity was shown as fixed and monolithic (the performed social script being fixed and unchanging), the subject woman came to have multiple selves, depending on the nature of each performative. This performative process involved an undermining of normative scripts of genders and resulted in ways of thinking never thought before, as new constitutive rules were introduced that created new forms of behavior.

Radical instances of performative identity reveal a non-compliance between the performative and its presupposed context. Because the binary logic of patriarchy is being undone in these texts, gender formations are not intelligible within the heterosexual matrix. Such gender constructions are often playful and imaginative, departing from familiar intelligible constructions. They belong to the realm of fantasy in the sense Butler describes fantasy as the "constitutive outside" of the real.

> Fantasy is not the opposite of reality; it is what reality forecloses and, as a result, it defines the limits of reality, constituting it as its constitutive outside. Fantasy is what allows us to imagine ourselves and others otherwise; it establishes the possible in excess of the real; it points elsewhere, and when it is embodied, it brings the elsewhere home. (*Undoing* 29)

Viewed from another perspective, such new gender formations, unintelligible in the heterosexual matrix, show new ways of loving, of being gendered, of being a man or a woman, as well as being human. Such new textual constructions go parallel with the political struggles, mentioned by Butler, of culturally marginalized groups "struggling *to be conceived as persons*" (*Undoing* 32; italics in original).

As I mentioned earlier, this non-compliance is most characteristic of modernist women writers, who seem to resist both biological and social determinism in revising the passive female subject produced by both (see Diana Fuss, *Essentially* 6). Aware of their performative constitution, women decide to adopt an agency for renewing the discourse that constituted women. And the only way for woman to claim agency is, as Butler has emphatically claimed, by putting woman in the subject position ("Contingent" 46), thereby realizing variations on the repetitions (*Gender Trouble* 145). Agency, though a contested term in poststructuralist theories, will appear in texts of culturally imperialized groups, who now demand the speaking-seeing-acting position. They will conform to both requirements of agency as defined by Kieran O'Halloran in that they will adopt causality (will do something that will result in a change in the patient) and will become their own energy sources (122). As agents and authors of their own life-scripts now, they will revise the presuppositions that previously shaped their perfor*mances*. By revising the presuppositions, new identities can be fantasized and then performed in ways other than the presuppositions would suggest. Indeed, with the subject reworking the "very discursive processes by which it is worked," as Butler puts it, "'agency' is to be found in the possibilities of resignification opened up by discourse" ("Careful" 135).

Predictable as it may be to cite women writers as examples of perfor*mative* subjectivity constructions, I think there are good reasons for this. The construction of woman as subject or object depends on the narrative position. With some rare exceptions (such as Hester Prynne in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, for example), women characters did not take center stage in (American) literature until the late 19th century in works of either male or female authors. Moreover, once (self-)constructed as subjects, the postmodern contention that subjective agency is dead did not work for women: the female subject, as Nancy K. Miller has demonstrated, has a structurally different relationship to power, authority, desire, and textuality, based on their different historical relation to identity.

> Because women have not had the same historical relation of identity to origin, institution, production, that men have had, women have not . . . felt burdened by too much Self, Ego, Cogito, etc. Because the female subject has juridically been excluded from the polis, and hence decentered, "disoriginated," deinstitutionalized, etc., her relation to integrity and textuality, desire and authority, is structurally different. ("Changing" 106).

Women seem to have first-hand knowledge of "the condition of dispersal and fragmentation that Barthes valorizes," Miller insists (109), and may have a different relationship to the fantasies of wholeness than men. Also, as Butler has shown, women, ever forced into the discursive situation of the other, may never have experienced the self as a coherent and unitary subject ("Contingent" 47). Therefore, women writers may legitimately want to revise this discourse through, among others, the revision of cultural presuppositions. But women writers have resisted presuppositions in other ways too, for example by refusing or revising categories, or the general categorization, aggressively donned on them by social norms constructing them predominantly in love-and-marriage plots.

Of course, some male writers have also successfully undermined the love-and-marriage plot: Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick locate the climax of the sexual plot of the Victorian novel in the moment when the failure and hypocrisy of the patriarchal marriage are revealed, and when this revelation becomes the secret bond between women (or a man and a woman).

> [W]hen the fact of a marriage's unhappiness ceases to be a pseudosecret or an open secret, and becomes a bond of mutuality with someone outside the marriage; when a woman says or intimates something about 'her marriage' to a friend or lover that she

> would not say to her husband. These tend to be the most wracking and epistemologically the "biggest" moments of the marriage novel. Such a text, then, also constitutes an exploration of the possible grounds and performative potential of refusals, fractures, warping of the proscenium of marital witness. ("Introduction" 12)

Resisting controlling ideologies, subjectivities are performed against the background of presuppositions of biological and social determinism, the rigid binarism of gender and sexuality and the concurrent oppression of women. The expectations, of which presuppositions are parts, are flouted; the presupposition itself is destabilized, while identities are shown as fluid, unstable, transgressive. The readers are forced to give up their frame assumptions, or assumptions that pre-exist the texts.

Non-patriarchal narrative:
Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives*

The originality of *Three Lives* seems to derive from what and how the characters perceive. "Nothing changes from generation to generation except the thing seen and that makes a composition," runs Stein's well-known slogan in "Composition as Explanation" (513). Owing much to William James's idea of getting into people's consciousness, she performed, in Mina Loy's words, the "aesthetic analysis of the habits of consciousness" (243). In fact, Stein does not only create the verbal replica of her characters' consciousness but also of the process of composition. The "fine new kind of realism" that William James praised in *Three Lives* (qtd in Gallup 50) results, as Stein put it in her 1946 "Transatlantic Interview," "not solely [from] the realism of characters but the realism of the composition" (*Primer* 16). The principle of this composition, then, boils down to experiencing without constantly "making sense"; allowing for some experience of Keats's negative capability, or life's way of happening, without selection, emphasis, hierarchies, or privileging—in other words, experiencing experience itself. Stein was, as she put it, "obsessed" with this principle of composition that she had learned from Cézanne: that "in composition one thing was as important as another thing" (*Primer* 15).

While the one-point perspective of realistic writing is rejected, elaborate attempts are made, through variation and repetition, to look at objects from several angles at once—just as if one's consciousness might be imagined to hold these several shifting perspectives simultaneously. This is what Stein emphasizes in her essay on Picasso:

> Really most of the time one sees only a feature of a person with whom one really is, the other features are covered by a hat, by the light, by clothes for sport and everybody is accustomed to complete the whole entirely from their knowledge, but Picasso when he saw an eye the other one did not exist for him and only the one he saw did exist for him. (*Picasso* 15)

Although rejecting the notion of mimesis in the traditional realistic sense, Stein achieves what Stephen Fredman calls “the impossible goal of total mimesis” (101), “the creation of artistic experience analogous to the rigors of living,” where the writer “endeavors to present an artistic experience that corresponds to the multiphasic, incomplete, discontinuous experience of life” (101).

Stein saw the story of Melanctha as the “quintessence” of this new kind of “anti-patriarchal” composition (*Primer* 15). Indeed, the second story of *Three Lives* goes probably the furthest in getting into a character’s consciousness and presenting a non-selective attention in a non-selective way. Melanctha’s story is one of the first manifestations of a woman’s text both in terms of the what and the how of its composition.

All the chapters of *Three Lives* are unusual in the sense that they do not portray women as participants in institutionalized heterosexuality, in love-and-marriage plots naturalized by romantic and realist fiction. The love-and-marriage plot does seem to be operative here, though, embedded in the context as a pre-narrative, a narrative preceding the characters. In *Three Lives* however, the characters revise and re-write these scripts. Although they have various relationships, these three servant girls—the German Anna, the black Melanctha, and the German Lena—are autonomous beings, who do not need men to give meanings to their lives. Their stories do not inform a heterosexual love plot, but are about women subjects who think and desire. Desire is indeed an important element of subjectivity, having taken over, Braidotti suggests, the thought-based cogito: the “old cogito,” she claims, has been replaced by the slogan *desidero ergo sum*, encompassing a number of other faculties such as “affectivity, desire and the imagination” (“Identity, Subjectivity” 160). Especially Melanctha emerges as a desirer and a quester (the text uses the word “seeker”), a role in literature previously reserved for men only. Melanctha is, then, the heroine of a female *Bildung*, and has a character as complex and changing as her male predecessors, among them Werther, Julien Sorel, or Raskolnikov.

“Melanctha Herbert was a graceful, pale yellow, intelligent, attractive negress” (82), Stein writes early on, contrasting Melanctha to her more “feminine” friend, Rose, whose laughter “was just ordinary, any sort of woman laughter” (82), and who “had lately married Sam Johnson a decent honest kindly fellow” (82). The life of the autonomous quester is by definition more difficult and complicated than that of a more traditionally “feminine” woman.

> Melanctha Herbert had not made her life all simple like Rose Johnson. Melanctha had not found it easy with herself to make her wants and what she had, agree.
>
> Melanctha Herbert was always losing what she had in wanting all the things she saw. Melanctha was always being left when she was not leaving others.
>
> Melanctha Herbert always loved too hard and much too often. She was always full with mystery and subtle movements and denials and vague distrusts and complicated disillusions. Then Melanctha would be sudden and impulsive and unbounded in some faith, and then she would suffer and be strong in her repression. (86)

The reader knows next to nothing about Melanctha's physical appearance; her identity is in no sense determined by the preparation of her body for heterosexual romance. In short, she is not constituted by man's desire. Stein describes her in a way in which mostly only men are described: as a wanderer and as a person having desires and pursuits. As such, Melanctha's character is contrary to the standards of "true womanhood" still current at the turn of the century: she has various dangerous "longings," while at the same time she likes to occupy open spaces as opposed to the "separate sphere" of interior, bounded spaces (on true womanhood, see Barbara Welter; on separate spheres, see Linda K. Kerber). Had we not been informed of Melanctha's gender, we would probably assume that a man was being portrayed here. The less important but more obvious reason for this probable misperception is that her character traits are such as are traditionally used to represent some male "essence": that she is bold and intelligent, "complex" and "desiring" (83), that she "had not loved herself in childhood" (87), that she "had always had a break neck courage" (87), that "it was only men that for Melanctha held anything there was of knowledge and power" (93), or that she would "do . . . things that had much danger" (99). More significantly, our assumption about the person here described being a man would be based on our reading experience gained in a patriarchal, heterocentrist, and often misogynist culture: it is this experience—prompting the knowledge that such characteristics are emphasized in connection with men only—that creates our expectation about the character as gendered male in this text. Stein deflates our expectations by denaturalizing the social constructions of male and female identity, by taking away its "naturalness" as produced in patriarchy.

This composition can be considered non-patriarchal for several reasons. First, on the level of representation, the unfolding life stories do not comply with the rules of patriarchy. Stein unlocks her characters from the context of love-and-marriage plots: the women are not portrayed as participating in the masculine/feminine binary. Second, with the absence of plot linearity, a single storyteller, well-motivated characters, and closure, as well as its playful destabilizing of the signifier/signified relationship and "deliberately undermining certitude," as Peter Quartermain puts it (24), Stein's narrative technique can be considered non-patriarchal (about women experimentalists challenging elements of patriarchal writing, see Friedman and Fuchs). Third, influenced, as Lisa Ruddick has convincingly argued (12 ff), by William James's distinction between "selected attention" and "wandering attention," the non-patriarchal "wandering" way of knowing is elevated in this woman's text. Indeed, Stein casts a particular part to the only man in "Melanctha," Jeff Campbell, who has his understanding blocked by thinking:

> And Jeff tried to begin again with his thinking, and he could not make it come clear to himself, with all his thinking, and he felt everything all thick and heavy and bad, now inside him, everything that he could not understand right, with all the hard work he made, with his thinking. (169)

Jeff is constantly feeling in words, or thinking before feeling, therefore he is unable to perceive his own feelings. "You always wanting to have it all clear out in words always, what everybody is always feeling," Melanctha tells him (170). Jeff's language pre-selects what he will experience; for him, cognition precedes and limits perception, and his language habits control his experience of the world. Melanctha, on the other hand, gives up any desire to dominate what comes to her; instead, always in pursuit of the unfamiliar as unfamiliar, she is the non-patriarchal quester without any real object. (Actually, I do not see a significant difference between the women in quest of an indefinite object and the male quester after an intangible, abstract object such as the grail, the epitome of the quested object, which is really a catachresis, a metaphor without a referent.) "[S]he did not really know what it was that really held her" (92–93). "Melanctha did not know what it was that she so badly desired" (93). Her desire is not to master her experience, but to be immersed wandering in its darkness and excitement. Language is no mediator in this quest; rather, Stein shows ways of "unmastering" language and experience. As Charles Bernstein puts it, "[t]o be immersed in a language without the obsession to dominate it, conquer, take personal (even 'subjective') possession of it, as if it were property: perhaps this is virtualizing space of the modernist composition" (146–147). "Unmastering," then, seems to be an appropriate term in this context since it captures both Stein's relationship to language and her non-patriarchal representation of female subjectivity: that which, through an insistence of uncontrolled and unselected attention, playfully destabilizes the binarisms of gender and sexuality. This text is a major milestone of Stein's search for a new language through which, Luce Irigaray claims in another context, the feminine, being several, can speak to itself (*This Sex*).

Melanctha's identity is performatively constructed against a background of contrary expectations. The original presupposition concerns the identity of the "true woman" (identity presupposed): 'women are parts of love-and-marriage plots; such »feminine« women marry »decent honest kindly fellows« like Sam

Johnson; heterosexuality makes woman.' Stein performatively revises these frame assumptions, unlocking gender from sexuality. Her revised frame assumption goes as: 'not all women are parts of love-and-marriage plots; it is not necessary that heterosexuality make a woman and the category of heterosexuality ovverride gender.'

Stein is at her most innovative here: dislodging her character from a patriarchal context, she creates her new woman *without* recourse to any iterable model of gender. She only evokes the narrative pre-text of the love-and-marriage plot so that she can disregard it and overwrite it. She creates a woman whose sole reference is she herself in the act of referring. The force of her perfor*mative* destabilizes the presupposition, proving it to be mutable and revisable.

Androgyny as *démeublé*: Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*

Willa Cather provides a different example for constructing woman as subject. Almost all of her novels are unusual with respect to the absence of the love-and-marriage plot (the only exception being the little known first novel *Alexander's Bridge*). In two of her novels especially, Cather provides clear alternatives to the familiar drama of heterosexual love, *The Song of the Lark* (1915) and *My Ántonia* (1918). In the first Cather's job was easier: the genre of the *Künstlerroman* needed to be re-gendered for Thea Kronborg, the passionate and determined opera singer; here the writer's job was to have her subordinate her heterosexual desire to music. In addition, Cather introduced several non-sexualized friendships for Thea, thereby creating situations where Thea and the men instrumental in various ways in building her career—a role previously reserved for the female helpmeet or Muse in the male *Künstlerroman*—could figure in reciprocal relationships. Indeed, the physician Dr. Archie, the piano teacher Professor Wunsch, the railroad man Ray Kennedy, the pianist Andor Harsanyi, and even the Chicago voice teacher Madison Bowers seem to spark a balance in giving and receiving: ultimately, they manage to make the others' lives more meaningful.

No such obvious replacements would have been sufficient in *My Ántonia.* Here the male narrator and the female protagonist are representatives of some shared androgynous ideal. Jim and Ántonia are childhood friends on the Nebraska frontier; here, away from a society that constructs gender, they can afford to be neither, but have an androgynous self that precedes, as it were, this gendering. The frontier provides the setting for Cather's "*démeublé*" ideal, to use her word from her 1936 essay, "The Novel Démeublé," in which she discusses leaving "the scene bare for the play of emotions, great and little" (287). This is the "underfurnished" world *par excellence*, which gives rooms to androgyny, unspecified or "underfurnished" gender. Here "[t]here was nothing but land: not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made" (*My Ántonia* 7).

Unlike in traditional texts relating the myth of origin of the frontier, here the prairie obliterates the men rather than the women: Ántonia's father commits suicide, while Jim first feels "erased, blotted out" (8), "dissolved into something complete and great" (*My Ántonia*.14), and then leaves for the city. Although it is Jim's text, Ántonia does not get to be erased from it, but, against this background of bare material substance, and through the "process of simplification" described in the essay (286), she is given elemental presence. It is the androgynous woman who gets to be inscribed upon the blank page of the frontier. Her work, her passion for wide spaces, her tirelessness in "serving generous emotions" (*My Ántonia* 227), and her commitment to survival: these are the components of her androgynous identity that make her one with the land—help her feel at home as well as leave her mark here. Because her androgynous identity is "unfurnished" by the stylizations of gender, her premature aging, for example, seems unimportant to Jim.

> I was thinking, as I watched her, how little it mattered—about her teeth, for instance. I know so many women who have kept all the things she has lost, but whose inner glow has faded. Whatever else was gone, Ántonia had not lost the fire of life. Her skin, so brown and hardened, had not that look of flabbiness, as if the sap beneath it had been secretly drawn away. (216)

For Jim, returning after several decades, Ántonia emerges as the most solid and elemental thing in life.

> Ántonia had always been one to leave images in the mind that did not fade—that grew stronger with time. . . . She lent herself to immemorial human attitudes which we recognize by instinct as universal and true. I had not been mistaken. She was a battered woman now, not a lovely girl; but she still had that something which fires the imagination, could still stop one's breath for a moment by a look or gesture that somehow revealed the meaning in common things. (226–227)

Always remaining outside the heterosexual love plot, Cather celebrates the deep attachment of Jim and Ántonia, "the precious, the incommunicable past" (238), without nostalgia and sentimentalism because this Eden has not been lost, but rather inscribed upon the land as Ántonia: she appears for Jim as subject leaving images in the mind and firing the imagination by performing a new kind of womanhood which rests on revised presuppositions. Indeed, while the original frame assumption might be said to read as 'the proper place for women is the home (in closed spaces); women are parts of love-and-marriage-plots; women are ornamental objects,' the assumption revised by Cather's performative will say, 'women are at home in open spaces; they are subjects in their own life-stories, which they control; women are human beings too, whose bodies are thus allowed to resist the controlling regimes of beautification.'

Gender and sexual transgressions: Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*

Djuna Barnes still remains one of the enigmatic figures of female modernism. In Barnes's most important novel, *Nightwood* (1936), critics have praised the "fantastical quality of her imagination" (Frank 26), its "quality of horror and doom very nearly related to that of Elizabethan tragedy" (Eliot, xvi), its "radical narrative achievement" (Gerstenberger 129), and her "private and highly peculiar writing" in "eccentric, almost inverted forms" (Benstock 242). The protagonist Robin Vote has remained a mesmerizing mystery. She is one of those people "who must get permission to live" (117); at the same time, she is "beast turning human" (37), with "mysterious and shocking blue" eyes (37), having an "iris of the wild beasts who have not tamed the focus down to meet the human eye" (37). A "tall girl with the body of a boy" (46), she is one of the memorable androgynes in modernist fiction: both quester and desired other, autonomous yet produced in sexual relationships, she transgresses whatever boundaries she encounters. As woman quester, seeker, and wanderer, she is after selfhood and knowledge that lie beyond the bounds of patriarchy; as the desired other, however, she fulfills the role cast for women in patriarchy.

All the characters of the novel transgress, in one way or another, familiar social categories and boundaries, and resist the homogenizing imperative of society. Felix, the son of the Italian Jewish Guido and the Viennese Hedvig, left with the legacy of a "remorseless homage to nobility" (2), the "wandering Jew" (7), who is always "tailored in part for the evening and in part for the day" (8) and develops an attraction for the "emotional spiral of the circus" (12), "knowing well that skill is never so amazing as when it seems inappropriate" (11). Dr. Matthew O'Connor, the Irish gynecologist, is the novel's other androgyne, who likes to dress up in women's clothes in order "to lie beside himself" (80); it is him that Felix comes to ask about Robin, the night, pain, and passion. Nora Flood, the "early Christian" (50), seems a transgressor in her dreams only, when she likes to visit the "chamber" of her Grandmother, who used to "dress as a man, wearing a billycock and a corked mustache" (63). Finally, there is Jenny Petherbridge, the "looter" (98) and "'squatter' by instinct," who "appropriated the most passionate love that she knew, Nora's for Robin" (68).

The narrative of this "non-temporal novel" (Martin 105) seems also to resist forms of realistic fiction, especially plot linearity. Rather, the eight chapters are, as Joseph Frank aptly puts it, "like searchlights probing the darkness each from a different direction, yet ultimately illuminating the same entanglement of the human spirit" (31–32). Other critics compare the structure to an "elegantly constructed maze" and identify the text as the "verbal facsimile of an androgyne" (Stephen-Paul Martin 106). The reader's first encounter with Robin happens during a doctor's visit: "in white flannel trousers" and "in a moment of threatened consciousness . . . lay the young woman, heavy and disheveled" (34).

> The perfume that her body exhaled was of the quality of that earth-flesh, fungi, which smells of captured dampness and yet is so dry, overcast with the odour of oil of amber, which is an inner malady of the sea, making her seem as if she had invaded a sleep incautious and entire. Her flesh was the texture of plant life, and beneath it one sensed a frame, broad, porous, and sleep-worn, as if sleep were a decay fishing her beneath the visible surface. About her head there was an effluence as of phosphorous glowing about the circumference of a body of water—as if her life lay through her in ungainly luminous deteriorations—the troubling structure of the born somnambule, who lives in two worlds—meet of child and desperado. (34–35)

She is indeed an unusual being: neither human nor beast really, she exhibits a plant-like existence and occupies a very peculiar dimension of consciousness. Being and not being at the same time, conscious and unconscious, in the elements of light, water, and earth, in the room as well as the jungle, predator as well as victim, Robin appears in all her contradictions. Not one cell of her body can be labeled as "feminine," yet Felix, who accompanies the doctor, immediately falls in love with her because he recognizes her as a complete and sovereign being. Although Robin's gender identity is incidental—or, one could say, her androgyny just happens to be masqueraded feminine—the desire of Felix is heterosexualized in such a way that its object is not a person with a socially produced gender but a part of plant, animal, and androgynous-human nature.

> She closed her eyes, and Felix, who had been looking into them intently because of their mysterious and shocking blue, found himself seeing them still faintly clear and timeless behind the lids—the long unqualified range in the iris of the wild beasts who have not tamed the focus down to meet the human eye.
>
> The woman who presents herself to the spectator as a "picture" forever arranged is, for the contemplative mind, the chiefest danger. Sometimes one meets a woman who is a beast turning human. Such a person's every moment will reduce to an image of a forgotten experience; a mirage of an eternal wedding cast on the racial memory. (37)

Robin is a radically subversive creature, who refuses to re-perform existing scripts, but experiments instead with new identities that do not even echo old ones. Her subjectivity is not constructed by a heterosexual romance plot, rather by the author's revision of our culture's presuppositions concerning the stability of identity. The old presupposition, 'women are feminine; they are objects of men's desire; their femininity and desirability result from having unambiguous biological and social gender markers,' is performatively revised by the new presupposition, 'women can be both subjects and objects, desire by both men and women; female subjecthood does not correspond to unambiguous biological and social markers.' While treated as a subject, she is being desired by just about all characters in the novel, thereby, she actually transcends all binarisms of gender and sexuality, subjecthood and objecthood. What Barnes seems to suggest is that gender identity has nothing to do with desire or eroticism; desire, indeed, transcends the categories of sex and gender. This thesis is supported by several stories of the doctor, among them the one about the sailor falling in love with the French girl without legs—only because of the way the sun was shining over her back.

> . . . which reminds me of Mademoiselle Basquette, who was damned from the waist down, a girl without legs, built like a medieval abuse. She used to wheel herself through the Pyrenees on a board. What there was of her was beautiful in a cheap traditional sort of way, the face that one sees on people who come to a racial, not a personal, amazement. . . . a sailor saw her one day and fell in love with her. She was going uphill and the sun was shining all over her back. . . . So he snatched her up, board and all, and took her away and had his will. . . . (26)

In the memorable final scene of the novel Robin, "in her boy's trousers" (169), tames Nora's dog by going down "on all fours, dragging her knees" and starting to bark. She appears again as the ultimate transgressor, who cuts through genders and even species, deconstructing a whole epistemology based on the rigid binarisms of human/animal, presence/absence, day/night, or life/death.

Ungendered and multisexual selfhood: H.D., *HERmione*

H.D.'s *HERmione*, written in 1927 but not published until 1981, is an intriguing novel, where the author probably went furthest among the experimentalist—the "sapphic expatriate set" (Jay 76)—in portraying a woman's selfhood outside the bounds of both the heterosexual and the homosexual matrix. The story is highly autobiographical, presenting the two failed relationships of the young Hermione (Her) Gart of Pennsylvania: both the romance with the bohemian poet George Lowndes and the "sister-love" between Her and Fayne Rabb end in betrayals. Centered on the dichotomy of "Heterosexual love vs. Quest," as DuPlessis pointedly claims in *The Pink Guitar* (33), the novel presents a protagonist who struggles, yet is unable to reconcile the two plots and proposes, as DuPlessis puts it elsewhere, a "bisexual love plot in place of the normative nineteenth-century pattern" (*Writing* 71). DuPlessis points out another revision of the traditional love plot: its "open ending in which the quest takes precedence" (71). This open-ended narrative allows for the continuation of the love between the two women. By the end, Her will find her autonomous self independent of either of these two relationships, and her selfhood will become scripted on the virginal snow.

As a young girl Hermione sees herself—in a recognition described as "dementia"—as an alien body within.

> Her Gart went round in circles. "I am Her," she said to herself; she repeated, "Her, Her, Her." Her Gart tried to hold on to something; drowning she grasped, she caught at a smooth surface, her fingers slipped, she cried in her dementia, "I am Her, Her, Her." (3)

Here at the beginning, however, she does not read her difference as self and knowledge yet, but as failure: "Hermione Gart could not then know that her precise reflection, her entire failure to conform to expectations was perhaps some subtle form of courage" (4).

Her "failure to conform" and to be regular is played out in the pun H.D. exploits all through, but especially in the first half of the novel. "Her" is at once grammatical subject and object: as homonym (or short version) of a subject's proper name (HERmione) and the accusative/dative declension form of the third person personal pronoun, her name folds, as it were, in itself selfhood as both subject and object. However, with the pronoun constantly distanced and alienated into proper name, the identity of the accusative/dative and subjective forms defamiliarizes reference. Hermione experiences herself, as Shari Benstock puts it, as a "grammatical error," recognizing in herself "a multiplicity of selves that language cannot simultaneously name" (337).

Neither of Hermione's selves seems ever to conform to the norms of gender. She is never really "feminine" for George: "You never manage to look decently like other people. You look like a Greek goddess or a coal scuttle," he tells her (64). In this heterosexual relationship, described as childishness and immaturity—"She wanted George as a child wants a doll, whose other dolls are broken. She wanted George as a little girl wants to put her hair up or to wear long skirts" (63)—her self is being obliterated:

> Kisses forced her into soft moss. Her head lay marble weight in cushion of forest moss. Kisses obliterated trees, smudged out circles and concentric circle and the half-circle that was the arch . . . of a beach branch sweeping downward. The kisses of George smudged out her clear geometric thought. (73)

Her subjectivity emerges out of her identification with the trees of her home state, Pennsylvania, and its whole landscape. But this identification is based primarily on her self-perception as trace, map, or script—as readable as the landscape.

> The woods parted to show a space of lawn, running level with branches that, in early summer, were white with flower. Dogwood blossom. Pennsylvania. Names are in people, people are in names. Sylvania. I was born here. People ought to think before they call a place Sylvania.
> Pennsylvania. I am part of Sylvania. Trees. Trees. Trees. Dogwood, liriodendron with its green-yellow tulip blossoms. Trees are in people. People are in trees. Pennsylvania. (5)

George, however, does not prove to be the right man for a tree-woman (even though, incidentally, Pound memorialized this tree-woman in a major poem, "A Tree"). He "would never make a pear tree burst into blossom" (171), since he only desires a selfless Hermione, a kind of a generically gendered "Her" rather than this particular person: "He wanted Her, but he wanted a Her that he called decorative" (172). In this relationship conforming to the norms of "romantic thralldom" (see DuPlessis 66), the man fails to see the multiplicity and fluidity of Hermione's selfhood, or understand that the indeterminacy and instability of her gendering does in no way go counter to her own desire to assert her selfhood.

However appealing at first, the "concentric intimacy" (164) of Her Gart and Fayne Rabb also proves to be a threat to Her's selfhood. At the end she frees herself from this bond too, only to find that she can now start to write her own text: "Her feet were pencils tracing a path through a forest" (223). Folding now, both in language and in her script on the snow, subject and object in an act of creativity, she starts to write her own text: "Now the creator was Her's feet, narrow black crayon across the winter whiteness" (223).

The healed Hermione becomes the swift Hermes: "Feet pulsed forward, drove Her homeward, her feet were winged with the winged god's sandal. Everything will be right" (234). Hermione attains autonomous selfhood in the form of Hermes, the winged and bisexual youth who always suggests, as Michel Foucault puts it, "hermaphrodism of the soul" (43). Hermaphroditos contains, we know from Carl Kerényi, "Hermes and Aphrodite rolled into one" (54), and exists "still in a completely undifferentiated state" (55). The nymph-like Hermione in H.D.'s narrative is similar to Hermaphroditos in both respects. For one, she contains multiple selves that can interact (auto)erotically: she will, as she decides at the end of the novel, marry herself, using her trousseau money, the money her grandmother had left for her marriage, for herself, saying, "this will be my marriage" (234). She will perform what as a strong performative her name (Hermione as Her + Me = One[3]) forecasts: that "Her" and "Me" become "One." Two, she remains "undifferentiated" in her androgyny and multiple sexuality—only to script her autosocial self onto the snow. In other words, only when she comes out of herself as the winged hermaphrodite Hermes, that is, when she is ungendered and sexually undifferentiated, does she become text.

H.D.'s innovative perfor*mative* targets the issue of the self's multiplicity. Her performs acts of writing herself into being as she becomes both writer and text, of the page and of the snow. H.D. attacks the old presupposition that 'women have single and stable selves; female sexuality is single; women without male partners are alone and incomplete,' and revises it into 'women have multiple and changing selves; female sexuality is multiple; single women are also complete beings.' In presenting Her as a person with a wholeness onto herself, H.D. subverts the meaning of singleness, bringing it closer to the idea of creative celibacy.

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[3] I owe this insight to my student, Eszter Urbányi.

The situational relativity of gender: Carson McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*

Carson McCullers' *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* (1943) presents a complex case of gender performativity: here gender appears as fluid and mutable, multiple and transgressive, and in each case it is sexually negotiated, thereby dependent on the particular relationship and situation in which it is performed. Gender is only evoked here, as a relative term, as only one construction interlocking with, and dependent upon, projections of sexuality and power. This piece of short fiction serves as a laboratory for the hierarchical structure of heterosexuality where, as Catharine McKinnon observes, "[g]ender emerges as the congealed form of the sexualization of inequality between men and women" (*Feminism Unmodified* 7). Formed, in each case, intersectionally out of a space of ambivalence which opens up differently in the three nexus relationships, gender has only vague suggestions of femininity and masculinity. Assigning feminine traits to the desired object and masculine traits to the desiring subject is really just an easy translation of the object-subject dynamics and of the perception of relationships between unequal partners. With the three main players taking different gender and sexual positions in each of the three combinations, both gender and sexuality emerge as relative terms, critiquing gender and sexual essentialisms.

The story centers on Miss Amelia Evans, a peculiar woman in her thirties, who—by her mere presence and then later by running a cafe in the small Southern town—brings life to the dreary place. She is a "manly" woman, brought up as a boy by her father, inheriting his wealth too. She is a hard worker, skilled in farming, carpentering, and other jobs fit for men; she operates a still in the swamp and serves liquor from her own house to men (the only people she associates with) in the evenings. Defying all biological and social norms of womanhood, she is built like a man, "somewhat queer of face" (206), with a height "not natural for a woman," and is dressed in overalls and gum boots.

> She was a dark, tall woman, with bones and muscles like a man. Her hair was cult short and brushed back from the forehead, and there was about her sunburned face a tense, haggard quality. She might have been a handsome woman is, even then, she was not slightly cross-eyed. (198)

Not only does she not have a woman's looks in terms of her body and way of dressing, but even when she puts on a dress, as she does on Sundays, "that hung on her in a most peculiar fashion" (214). In other words, hers is not a "docile body," in the Foucauldian sense (*Discipline* 138), which the techniques of gender stylization could convert; in her case, Virginia Woolf's contention about dresses wearing us (*Orlando* 171) seems to be refuted. (Unlike another "manly woman," March in D. H. Lawrence's *The Fox*, a comparable story of shifting gender and sexual identities, who at one point starts wearing a green silk dress, and shocks her lover Henry by her newly performed femininity.) Amelia has habits that are "manly" too, like tightening her first every now and then, especially after meals, to feel her muscles; or sitting with both elbows on the table and knees spread wide apart. Her manliness shows especially in the lack of interest in men: she "cared nothing for the love men" (198). A lonesome person, she lives by herself most of her life, except for the time of her "queer marriage" at the age of nineteen to the dandy of the town, Marvin Macy. But this too only lasted for ten days and, as we learn later, does not get consummated. Her life changes drastically, however, with the arrival of Lymon Willis, her second cousin: Cousin Lymon, a hunchback only half Miss Amelia's height, is taken in by her, to be treated with fostering devotion by the woman. Their attachment seems complete already the first night: walking up the staircase, the odd couple throw "one great, twisted shadow" on the wall behind them (204).

This is the first relationship that gets heterosexualized in the story. More and more, the woman takes the place of the wooing (male) lover: in her eyes "fastened lonesomely on the hunchback," there is a mixture of "pain, perplexity, and uncertain joy" in her expression, while her hands are often sweating (213). Their respective masculinization and feminization affect even their supposedly gendered manners of speech: while Amelia likes to talk about interminable, abstract subjects like "the stars, the reason why Negroes are black, the best treatment for cancer," Lyman is a "great chatterer," who likes to "interrupt her suddenly to pick up, magpie fashion," some concrete, unimportant detail (224). Soon enough, he becomes an accomplished performer of (Southern) womanhood. Not only is he feminized in the position of the kept woman, but gets spoilt "to a point beyond reason" (214) by being presented with a piano, a car, and all kinds of other treats. In order to satisfy his "passionate delight in spectacles" (215), she takes him to picture-shows, fairs, and cockfights—wherever his whim demands. To top it all, he comes to perfect a staple instance of Southern womanhood, the art of descending the staircase; each night he "came down the stairs with the air of one who has a grand opinion of himself" (214). Having feminized himself into a spectacle, an object of the gaze, he will perform the role of the Southern belle, who graciously grants his (her?) presence to the townspeople.

Yet the heterosexualization of their relationship does not come about through simple gender reversal. Indeed, Amelia will be the lover subject doing the pursuing and Cousin Lyman will be the beloved object being pursued. Lyman's feminization and Amelia's masculinization seem to go counter to their respective empowerment and disempowerment: it is Lyman the beloved who controls this relationship. Of course, given the fact that gender reversal is necessary in both cases for this "heterosexual" game, heterosexuality is portrayed as an attachment of two "inverts." This operation, as Clare Whatling has demonstrated, is not devoid of its homosexual associations (246–247); here homosexuality is evoked by the suggestion of a butch-femme performance, itself a heterosexual conceptualization of gay relationships, on the part of Amelia and Lyman, respectively.

The truth is that gender is wholly irrelevant in the attachments evolving throughout McCullers' story. "Let it be added here," the narrator contends in the middle of a somewhat abstract discussion of love, "that this lover about whom we speak need not necessarily be a young man saving for a wedding ring—this lover can be man, woman, child, or indeed any human creature on this earth" (216). Indeed, while Amelia is positioned as the male lover in her relationship with Lyman, in her other relationship, the one with Marvin Macy, she takes the woman's object position: here she is the one desired and pursued by the man, who sees her as "[t]hat solitary, gangling, queer-eyed girl" (217) from whom he wants nothing but love. Here it is Macy who showers her with presents, "the whole of his worldly goods" (221) finally, but there is no way of winning her love. Unaware of the heterosexual contract of patriarchy demanding that the woman give in to pursuing man who has paid her, Amelia accepts his property. Refusing the object position, Miss Amelia throws him out. Macy returns years later to the house finding the hunchback cousin there too, with whom they really hit it off. Now Cousin Lyman becomes the wooing male lover, showering Macy with all kinds of favors. But Lyman's subjectivity comes primarily from his exercise of language: he talks himself into being, first into being noticed and loved, later into being the lover himself. Threatened by getting marginalized by both Lyman and Macy, Amelia will stand up to the exploitative Macy (who has now moved in with them) and decides to have a boxing fight with Macy—"man to man"—so that she could finally take him on equal terms and beat him at a manly game. A practiced fighter, boxing with her punching bag every morning in her yard, Amelia is sure to win the fight. Lyman however, who feels now he must support Macy from the impassioned lover's position, intervenes by jumping on Amelia's back and clutching her neck. Having victory over the woman, the two men disappear forever, leaving behind an utterly lonely, desolate, half-crazy Amelia.

McCullers seems to wholly ignore the presuppositions underlying our culture that there are two genders, two sexes, and two sexualities, and that these are all fixed and unchanging. New presuppositions are introduced, which will emphasize that genders, sexes, and sexualities are created differently in individual relationships, independent of biology or of earlier positions and markers.

All the three main characters are depicted as if they were not living in a world where sexual and gender roles were dramatically polarized. Gender relativity allows new entities to come about against or in the absence of existing conventions: all three subjectivities are unfixed and mutable, they all challenge the ruling ideology, producing new figurations and involving transgressions and category extensions. Subjectivity is indeed a shifting-moving process, where gender positions vary in terms of what is being inscribed by discourse; they change roles and positions over and over, as if identities were wholly fluid, protean, and relative. They could go any way in the individual combinations.

Obviously, both agency and adherence to existing scripts are complex issues. Agency gets to be reproduced each time, as gender follows different norms in each interaction, leaving different a measure of control and initiative to the performer. As genders are performed against existing conventions, the subject positions that go with agency change. Moreover, as no one single script is being reiterated, genders will become multiple, unpredictable and, most of all, unintelligible. Indeed, the gender of Miss Amelia as the wooing male lover, of Cousin Lyman as the Southern belle, or of Marvin Macy as the beloved of Cousin Lyman—these are constructions illegible from the perspective of sex/gender and male/female binaries. Such genders will be unfixed, changing, and relative because the norms themselves will be created for each instance (instead of being ideologically given). Neither character will appear as having a once and single subjectivity; rather, subjectivity markers will be shown as relative, depending on particular interactions and relationships.

* * *

In conclusion to these two chapters on gender perfor*mances* and perfor*mative* genders, I would like to reiterate the following points.

First, neither of them seems to argue in support of the essentialist position. Nowhere do these texts refer to any kind of female essence or principle; even those authors who present gender as performance pursue processes in which womanhood is created. Gender is shown as construct, social and linguistic.

Second, in spite of these similarities, the processes of naturalization are very different in the two types of texts. These processes involve presuppositions and other cultural assumptions, all parts of the social scripts replayed in perfor*mances* and challenged in perfor*mative* processes. Thus, the "natural" position for a woman is to be the other, the object, the body. This claim can be supported by reversing the gender assignment in the examples discussed. How would we "know" M. Pontellier, for example, if he was portrayed through a similarly detailed attention to dressing? Or, in what way would the author uncover the underside of masculinity if an old satire was portrayed through his undressing ceremony while taking out his glass eye and false teeth, or taking off his corset, garters, and wig? Since most probably M. Pontellier had his own morning dressing ritual, and men wear artificial body parts too, our surprise would not stem from the signified but from the signifier. Therefore, the conclusion is at hand. While the texts of James, Dreiser, Chopin, Wharton, as well as Faulkner, Williams, and O'Connor, Swift and Eliot naturalize the woman in the object position as fixed by ideology, the texts written by Stein, Barnes, H.D., Cather, and McCullers de-naturalize womanhood by putting her it into the subject position and stripping her of her being interpellated by the normative ideologies of patriarchy.

Third, gender is presented in a very different way in the perfor*mance* texts written from the male narrative position and the perfor*mative* texts written from the position of woman narrators. (As I tried to elaborate earlier, this gender distinction between the authors of perfor*mance* and perfor*mative* texts is somewhat incidental, more expressive of narrative position than anything else, and certainly not tied to anything given or determined in authorial vision.)

In the perfor*mance* texts woman is being repeatedly constituted according to existing norms. While giving an impeccable perfor*mance* of scripted norms, her position will be fixed in that of the otherized object, the complex of object-other-body. She will be the Other with relation to the man with selfhood and subjectivity; she will be constructed while experiencing the subjugation or subjection to norms otherwise producing male subjectivity. Moreover, she is constructed mostly by others, who will participate in the complex ritual and help her replay existing social scripts.

The new constructions of womanhood, on the other hand, will be perfor*mative* creations based on very different assumptions. These texts, typically written from the narratorial position of the woman, will allow subjectivity and agency for the woman speaking and acting from the subject position. This new womanhood will follow different norms each time—in fact, the norms themselves will be created for each instance—and woman will not appear as having a once and single subjectivity. The deviation from and challenging of norms will break the uniformity that came about through the iterative replaying of the scripts in perfor*mances*.

To apply Tolstoy's apt distinction between happy and unhappy families to gender perfor*mances* and perfor*mativities*, one could say that all "happy perfor*mances*" of gender—those "felicitous" perfor*mances* which replay the existing scripts, fixing gender constructions in the realm of the intelligible—are all alike. The "unhappy" versions of gender construction, on the other hand—where "new" genders are performed beyond the fixed binaries, and where performativity challenges the normative rules of gender in an "infelicitous" way—are each different: they differ in their infelicities.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERFORMING SEXUALITY

Now I would like to turn to texts where I depict, by extending the binary logic of metaphysical thinking, the naturalization of the homosexual in the position of the cultural Other. Born around the turn of the 20th century; these texts foreground homosexuality in a radical way by making the homosexual visible.

Although it is possible, as I have already pointed out, to detect a certain parallelism between the texts performing gender on the one hand and those performing sexuality on the other, there is one fundamental difference, which concerns the normative presuppositions informing gender and sexual perfor*mance* and perfor*mativity*. As I argued in the earlier chapters, the social script replayed in the perfor*mance* of womanhood was the construction of woman as object-other-body, while new subjectivities were being constructed by way of radical perfor*mative* processes. But the construction of the gay person into object-other-body was a little different: this in itself already represented a form of resistance—one against the all pervasive invisibility of the homosexual that characterized earlier texts. The trajectory of gender performativity spans from perfor*mances* of gender compliance (replaying the heterocentric patriarchal scripts) to radical perfor*mative* revisions of gender normativity. But the model made up of these two stages—normative perfor*mance* of object-other-body, perfor*mative* construction of woman as subject-agent—cannot be applied exactly to sexuality: in these latter cases invisibility constitutes the script of normative perfor*mance*, and visibility constitutes the background making possible new perfor*mative* constructions (even if, indeed, the gay person is objectified and otherized into spectacle). Ultimately, this second stage is to be followed by a third, where the gay person is constructed as subject and agent, one who sees, speaks, and acts.

An additional point must be emphasized in connection with the objectification and otherization of the subordinated elements of metaphysical binaries of man/woman and homosexual/heterosexual: a comparable disenfranchisement lies at the bottom of woman's construction as object-other-body and the naturalization of gay persons as otherized objects. Given the fact that the "Cartesian gesture," as Shoshana Felman rightly claims, is symptomatic of oppressive order (*Claims* 54), these metaphysical binaries are indeed expressive of power relations. Although the visibility attained by both (after centuries of invisibility) in the 19th century can be considered a major step away from disempowerment, their construction into the objectified other can by no means be taken as a mode of empowerment. But visibility is a precondition to the subsequent inclusion of the homosexual into the category of the human, one endowed with subjecthood and agency. This too will happen, in the 20th century, as the homosexual claims entitlement to a speaking-seeing-acting subjecthood and realizes it through radical perfor*mative* processes.

Given the similar disenfranchisement that lies beneath the construction of these oppressed groups, it would seem to make sense to discuss the construction of black and gay persons as otherized objects in terms of how social scripts are performed or not performed. While I consider the joint treatment of constructions of the gendered, raced, and sexualized subject theoretically justified, in this book I focus primarily on the constructions of gendered and sexualized subjects, leaving the issues of race, itself the topic of extensive scholarship, for later work. I do discuss, however, all three inflections in my last chapter, where I write about the simultaneous negotiation of these three categories in instances of passing.

Already Beauvoir extended the notion of the culturally Other from women to blacks (and Jews), insisting that similar processes stabilized woman and "the Negro" as object, and similar processes halted their aspirations to subjecthood (xxix, xxxv).[4] Feminist critics have detected similar tendencies in the oppression of groups defined as Others, marked, objectified, and seen to be, as Iris Marion Young puts it, "locked in their bodies" (148). In a like manner, queer theorists have insisted on the intersection of the multiple axes of gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and regionality in producing discursive identities which will resist the hierarchies and binaries of the earlier models (see *Gender Trouble* 3). Recently postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, have joined feminist and queer critics in applying the concept of radical othering to all culturally imperialized and subaltern groups; during this process of othering, the Western white heterosexual male deprives those he considers Others of the possibility of selfhood, and turns them into abject, in the Kristevian sense. Indeed, women, homosexuals, and blacks satisfy the criteria of abjecthood in threatening borders, in exhibiting a strong corporeality, and in being expunged from the symbolic order (*Powers*). In a paradoxical way, this abjecthood is a necessary requirement of both the self-construction of the hegemonic groups as having power and the reconstruction of the otherized groups as subjects. For on the one hand, the members of hegemonic groups can only construct themselves as autonomous subjects against those deprived of subjecthood, and, on the other hand, the individual must abject itself from the maternal in order to claim selfhood. Abjecthood is, furthermore, necessary for the subaltern groups to claim agency: for here too it is only through subjection and subjectivation that subjectivity can come about.

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[4] A comparable objectivization of woman as other has been observed by Péter Dávidházi in Hungarian literature („Az idegen nő"). Writing about the 19th century poet János Arany, Dávidházi makes the startling claim that this otherwise very restrained and shy poet allows himself to see women as erotic objects in one case only: when they are "foreign," when woman is the racial other, primarily Gypsy or Jewish.

The new kid on the block of binary thinking: conceptualizing the homosexual

It was at the end of the 19th century that the issue of homosexuality, the passion that dared not speak its name, came to be discussed, if only in the most cautious and coded language: around the 1890s gay characters started to figure in American and European fiction, if in the most covert and subtle ways only. In these decades, as Foucault points out, "homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy and 'naturality' be acknowledged" (*History* 101). Indeed, homosexuality was being conceptualized when "the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized" (43). Of course, the claim that homosexuality was conceptualized at the end of the 19th century does not exclude the earlier existence of homosexuality. Indeed, we know that the Greeks practiced homosexuality, but still did not think of themselves in terms of difference. Before the 19th century people did not see themselves as defined by their sexual habits (see Belsey, *Poststructuralism* 55). We could even say that homosexuality came about through a performative process: the act of naming homosexuality was exactly what brought it into being; the speech act of categorizing created and constituted that which it referred to. As such, homosexuality serves an important example of how discourses are not just "signifying elements that refer to contents or representations," as Foucault puts it, but "practices that systematically form the object of which they speak" (*Archeology* 49).

The conceptualization of homosexuality coincides, as Sedgwick has demonstrated (*Epistemology* 48ff), with the appearance of some major works, among them, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* (*Death in Venice*, 1911), Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*, 1922–31), and Herman Melville's "Billy Budd" (1924), which together lay the foundations of what we know as the homosexual canon today. It is perhaps not incidental that this new concept, attempting to bring about visibility for the homosexual, constructs the gay person, primarily man as yet, in the object position, the position occupied by the woman until just about that moment.

Several reasons could be cited for this objectification of the homosexual. One, it did not seem possible to imagine love and desire outside the heterosexual context. This is why the asymmetry and hierarchization of heterosexual relationships gets embedded in the perception of homosexual relationships too: any bond defined by desire is imaginable only to the degree it reproduces the heterosexual relationship. As such, one of the two persons involved had to be feminized, or perceived as feminine, in relationships between men (this was the fairy), just like somebody had to be masculinized in relationships between women (this would be the butch in butch-femme relationships). So, independent of the genders of those involved, the person desired was to be the "woman" in the object position, while the desiring person was to be the "man" in the subject position. In this framework of compulsory heterosexuality, the object position has a necessarily feminizing effect, while the subject position a maculinizing effect. Two, the dichotomizing of relationships of desire into heterosexuality and homosexuality, extended along the logic of binary thinking to sexuality, will not only establish a hierarchy between them by naturalizing one and pathologizing the other, but will put one in the unmarked position and the other into the marked. In this way, then, homosexuality will inherit some of the conceptual markers of the female gender—such as the one objectivized, otherized, spectacularized, and corporealized—taking over the place of the woman as object-other-spectacle-body. Even the label *gay*, originally used to refer to the female prostitute, the sexual object *par excellence*, was now adopted as a euphemistic code to the homosexual (man) (see George Chauncey 14). Three, sexuality and gender were ultimately understood as codependent, allowing for the direct adoption of gender binaries in the conceptualization of homosexuality. For example, queerness was not a sexual marker originally, but meant a preference for female gender conventions by men (see Chauncey 13).

Herman Melville's "Billy Budd," the American work of the four foundational texts which came out in the 1890s, complies with just about all the marks of the objectification detailed above. Billy is described as the "signal object" of the sailors' attention, drawing a "sort of honest homage" from his associates (9). He is the "Handsome Sailor," who "seemed to accept the spontaneous homage of his shipmates" "with the off-hand unaffectedness of natural regality" (8). The other sailors are attracted to him, calling him "Baby Budd" (9), and shower him with their loving attention:

> they all love him. Some of 'em do his washing, darn his old trousers for him; the carpenter is at odd times making a pretty little chest of drawers for him. Anybody will do anything for Billy Budd; and it's the happy family here. (12)

Billy Budd is presented in terms of both masculine and feminine features: "happily endowed with the gayety of high health, youth, and a free heart" (14) and blessed with both "strength and beauty," not only did he have a "superb figure," "he was also more or less of a mighty boxer or wrestler," and "tales of his prowess were recited" (9). Billy is corporealized to the extreme: inspired to be imagined not just naked but as a nude—a state with implicit feminization as well as Hellenization: “a fine specimen of the genus homo, who in the nude might have posed for a statue of young Adam before the Fall” (54). Indeed, with his similarity to a Greek statue evoked, Billy’s homosexualization seems complete: “he showed in face that humane look of reposeful good nature which the Greek sculptor in some instances gave to his heroic strong man, Hercules” (15). Of “significant personal beauty” (39), “the rose-tan in his cheek” (39), “the dimple in his dyed cheek,” his supple joints, and his dancing yellow curls (40) all seem to make this man a sexual object desired by everyone, including Claggart, the master-at-arms. It is Claggart whose gaze is most sexual and who wants to own Billy. Claggart’s jealousy “but intensifie[s] his passion,” which now assumes “various secret forms within him” (40). Being unable, as a stutterer, to defend himself of Claggart’s accusation, Billy strikes Claggart dead, for which act he must be punished: “Struck dead by an angel of God! Yet the angel must hang!” (60). Billy, therefore, unites all the significant elements of the concept of homosexuality: he is the object of attention and desire, the beautiful object of the gaze, the body offering pleasure to the viewer, as well as the site of an unrevealable secret and a punishable crime, in this case, treason, murder, and execution. However, as Sedgwick has pointed out, there is another homosexual in the text, the closeted one, in the form of Claggart (*Epistemology*). Both homosexual and homophobic, informed by passion as well as fear, Claggart assigns another position to Billy, who is now not just an object but also a subject, the agent provoking the homophobia of Claggart. Desire and phobia, as well as repression and knowledge (the recognition of homosexual desire) will be hopelessly intertwined in the new concept of homosexuality here. So Billy’s homosexualization is all but complete. For it is really a particular kind of undecidability (between the object and subject positions) that lies at the core of Melville’s conceptualization of homosexuality, coming about, not in the least, from the interaction between markers of gender and sexuality I described earlier. Probably not even the objectivized-spectacularized-corporealized Billy could fully give up his gender and its concomitant subjecthood.

Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, to cite a near-contemporary piece, albeit from England, constructs the concept along similar lines, except here Dorian Gray is ultimately deprived of his selfhood (see Jeffrey Nunokawa). Already at the beginning of the novel Dorian is shown as a model and a sitter, having little control over his self and becoming an object gazed at and acted upon by another person. The (art) objectifying power of the gaze developed for the woman—the successive yoking of woman with beauty, beauty with gaze, gaze with art object—is now transferred to a beautiful man, who will be feminized and thereby homosexualized. Step by step Dorian recognizes this objectification, of first being looked at, then slowly being absorbed by another man’s attention and turned into an art object, only to lose mastery. Indeed, Dorian is threatened by the enormity of Basil Hallward's attraction: as object of his passion, he is afraid of losing himself. He too is constructed as a beautiful person, feminized in the object position:

> he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. There was something in his face that made one trust him at once. All the candour of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity. (23)

While Hallward paints his portrait, Lord Henry turns Dorian into the object of his conversations with the painter, mentioning the "rebellious curls," "the "finely-chiselled nostrils," and "scarlet lips" of this "wonderful creation" (28). Dorian uses words women use; he is jealous, makes scenes, and becomes manipulative ("he tore his hand away, and, flinging himself on the divan, he buried his face in the cushions"), but always has his way. His feminization is rounded off by his construction into the "Hellenic ideal" (25), which reference is joined by those that make him into a feminized object. Moreover, Dorian will become a concrete object: a picture, in his case, the spectacularized object *par excellence*, reified and exhibitable. In short, his feminization and objectification will successfully perform his homosexualization.

The resisting narrative: homosexual subtext beneath the heterosexual text (Henry James, 'The Beast in the Jungle,' 'In the Cage')

Henry James offers some of the most convincing examples for how homosexual identity is being discursively produced as object of attention and desire. In James, this production happens in the subtext, one that is in tension with the text. Homosexuality is perfor*matively* brought about in the subtext, while heterosexuality's perfor*mance* happens in the text. This tension makes for a double narrative, where the text resists homosexual interpretation, but the underwriting, the coded subtext, insists on such a gay reading. Ultimately, the narrative will resist either interpretation as "true" or "proper"; the reader will have to carry out a performative as well as—for lack of a better term—presuppositional interpretation, by taking into account the separate directions into which the text and the subtext will point.

I would like to discuss such performative and presuppositional aspects of two texts here, "The Beast in the Jungle" and "In the Cage," as examples of the two kinds of performativity—homosexuality produced by radical perfor*mative* process in the subtext and the perfor*mance* of heterosexuality (against the gay subtext) that goes on in the text—which account for this resisting narrative, to appropriate Judith Fetterley's apt term (*Resisting Reader*).

Perfor*mative* (homo)sexuality:
Henry James, "The Beast in the Jungle"

The accepted reading of "The Beast in the Jungle" claims that the unusual tie between John Marcher and May Bartram is one engineered by heterosexuality. The attraction between them does not flower into a relationship; they let the years pass without "doing" anything. Indeed, nothing "happens" through the twenty years spanned by the plot but talking. The favorite pastime of the man and the woman is to discuss the secret the two of them share, which is really the man's secret.

> You said you had had from your earliest time, as the deepest thing within you, the sense of being kept for something rare and strange, possibly prodigious and terrible, that was sooner or later to happen to you, that you had in your bones the foreboding and the conviction of, and that would perhaps overwhelm you. (490)

A typical James hero, Marcher is haunted by the feeling that life will just pass by; that the thing he so dreaded, had the foreboding of, will not happen. Finally, after the woman's death, he admits to himself that his life has been unlived. But it is already too late, the woman is dead, and the possibility of realizing their passion is now locked in her grave.

This is the heterosexual reading. But the homosexual interpretation of "The Beast" is, I think, more exciting theory-wise. It was Sedgwick who first drew attention to "The Beast" as an example for "queer performativity" (*Epistemology* 195–212). Detecting the all-pervasive presence of homosexual panic, Sedgwick identified the last scene, the one in the cemetery, as offering the key to the gay plot. In Sedgwick's reading, Marcher's epiphany is triggered by seeing another man's face and detecting in his pain the privilege of having loved someone. But Marcher's pain is not necessarily the result of recognizing in the man a person who was himself a lover, but one who Marcher himself might have loved. In other words, his shock might have come from recognizing the missed opportunity of his own homosexual passion.

In the following I will offer a related yet different angle when approaching the text from a performative perspective, and connect its recent revisionary readings with the performative and the presupposition.

Let me go back to the plot again to see how and where the narrative resists heterosexual interpretation. This is, indeed, the story of the peculiar relationship between Marcher and May, built solely around a strange feeling the man has had about himself and which he then shares with the woman. It is a secret that is not only not ever revealed, but not even clearly described. Called "the deepest thing" within him, it is described as a "sense of being kept for something rare and strange, possibly prodigious and terrible, that was sooner or later to happen" to him (490), something he is "merely to suffer" (491). It is "a monstrous" thing

(517) that he has in his "bones the foreboding and conviction of," something would perhaps "overwhelm" him (490). Their friendship is anchored in their incessant conversations, going on for some twenty years, about "it": "the real truth" (498), "the secret of his life" (499), something never defined, never revealed, only in terms of how it becomes the object of discussion and the "substance" of a friendship (much like the woman's subjectivity is reified as illness and as such becomes the topic of the conversations in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*).[5] James, whose "antipatriarchal significance," to use Donatella Izzo's phrase, otherwise rests on centering his works on women (13), now puts sexuality, a man's secret in the center, making a comparable spectacle of it. Marcher knows no more about himself than the woman: the two are allies in "intimate community" (503) as they watch together, and with much interest, the spectacle of this void substance, Marcher's secret. It is really their conversations that keep the secret alive; without their continuous inspection and self-inspection, the man would have "lived away from it" (488) and the secret would have "unaccountably faded from him" (489). It was something deeply confidential (489), making the man "embarrassed" (489), something hard to understand and something that "hasn't yet come" (491). It is something to "wait for," it is "dangerous" and might make him "merely to suffer," "strange" yet "familiar"—like falling in love (491); when it comes, it will be "natural" and "unmistakable": "*the* thing" (492; emphasis in original).

All along the woman is his only audience: a person without her own story, the embodiment of feminine submissiveness, a listener but never a talker. Interestingly, this feminine silence seems to be operative whether the story is given a straight or a gay reading: whether the woman's story is suppressed because Marcher failed to recognize his heterosexual love for the woman or whether it was his obsession with his closeted gay desire that annulled her story. In either case, while man confirms his own subjectivity, the woman is ignored and sidestepped. Yet, as Izzo argues, this is not the end of the story: May turns her silence, including the silence over John's secret, into a form of power—an authority "derived from a knowledge that is not shared" (233).

A "passion that *might* have been": this is how James discusses the subject of the piece when he was but contemplating it in his notebooks in 1895 ("Passages" 537). It is made clear in the story that the relationship between May and John was not tinted by heterosexual desire: neither was she "making any claim on him" (488), nor could he ever traverse the "thick cold mist" (524) between them. In fact, it is the (false) impression they give as a heterosexual couple that, she says, "covers [his] tracks more than anything" (501). This "appearance" (500) "saves" him because it makes him "indistinguishable from other men" (501). Never seriously interested in women—"marrying was out of the question" (497)—the man welcomes May as a "mask" (499) he can wear in society. "You help me," he comes to realize, "to pass for a man like another" (507). "That's it," she answers, "[i]t's all that concerns me—to help you to pass for a man like another" (507).

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[5] A comparable objectification of a young man can be found in another James story, "The Author of *Beltraffio*," where the son of the protagonist Mark Ambient (who was actually modeled on a famous contemporary gay artist, John Addington Symonds [see Hugh Stevens, "Introduction" 4]), Dolcino, is presented as a person of angelic beauty: "He's so beautiful—so fascinating. He's like a little work of art" (42). Dolcino's elegant attire, consisting of a velvet suit with knee breeches and colorful silk stockings reminiscent of Oscar Wilde, is given detailed description too. On the transformation of the beautiful young man into an aesthetic object, see Leland Monk's essay, "A Terrible Beauty of Born."

To us, readers in the late 20th and early 21st century, all this seems to make perfect sense. The secrecy, the ongoing hesitancy, the insistent uncertainty and caution—it is all very revealing, revealing of a man who is constructing himself into the homosexual for just about the first time, or one of the first times. It is the gay subject that is being performatively produced here by relying on certain conventions, or, more precisely, by evoking the absence of certain conventions. For what James suggests is that in the context of heterosexual norms, the lack of desire, as well as the preoccupation of the man with his secret, counts as homosexuality—in a way similar to baseball, where, as Searle points out, "certain movements by certain men constitute the Dodgers' beating the Giants 3 to 2 in eleven innings" (*Speech Acts* 51). In the text the performative works to produce the subject.

Any instructor who has assigned "The Beast in the Jungle" for class knows the problems students have in putting together all these hints. It is a very difficult text, of course, but what they keep asking is: where in the text, where exactly does James say Marcher's secret is his latent homosexuality? This is where the concept of the performative comes handy. For what suggests a gay reading is not a particular set of references to homosexuality (although there are several of those too, as I tried to point out above), rather, it is the way gay identity is being performatively constructed: out of omission, silence, evasion, or the various forms of the secret that cannot be revealed (where the possibility is lacking, not the will). What James does here, putting metaphysical absence for where there used to be metaphysical center, is a technique usually ascribed to postmodern fiction. But James, unlike his postmodern successors, creates this absence himself, carving out, as it were, the space around the secret, purposely making its content absence, blank, and turning it into an empty signifier, the ultimate catachresis. Much like the empty signifier in Poe's "The Purloined Letter," here too the signifier is devoid of its signified, thereby problematizing the process of reference, or, to use Izzo's phrase, making the story revolve around "the *impossibility of denotation*" (239; emphasis in original).

Since no model for the discussion of homosexuality existed that might have served as the basis of performative iteration, James's figure of omission becomes the empty signifier of homosexuality. The framing power of silence will link it with the discourse of homosexuality. During their discussions, Bartram and Marcher recall their previous meetings, always discussing their shared secret, the man's sense of some unknown power approaching. During subsequent encounters this recalling immediately reestablishes the frame of the unknowable secret. In other words, both the past event and the frame are being recalled. They are always back to where they started, so to speak.

During this process, the obsession with the secret grows, performatively, into the secret. In a different context, William James describes this process as follows:

> *we need only in cold blood* ACT *as if the thing in question were real, and keep acting as if it were real, and it will infallibly end by growing into such a connection with our life that it will become real.* It will become so knit with habit and emotion that our interests in it will be those which characterize belief. (*Principles* 321; emphasis in original)

Indeed, "The Beast" seems to illustrate this very process: the process of acting as if the secret were real, have this secret "knit with habit and emotion" until all the characters involved start believing in it. And the secret has been performatively, discursively constructed.

"The Beast," then, was born in a situation when homosexuality was just becoming part of the discourse, of all that was knowable, thinkable, and speakable—in other words, the episteme. In fact, James participated in creating an epistemic situation that allowed homosexuality to be talked about. James chose to speak about homosexuality in coded narratives, making, thereby, the secrecy and the necessary codedness part of the meaning of this new concept. Homosexuality, one could say, is mediated in his texts by its being wrapped in secrecy, by finding a formula that both hides (coding) and reveals (breaking the code). James's ambivalence between secrecy and revelation corresponds, as Eric Savoy convincingly argues, to the simultaneous "affiliation with and cautious distancing from" gay writers like Walt Whitman and homosexuals he knew personally, such as Oscar Wilde and John Addington Symonds (8). James's own homosexual panic subsided, however, over the years, just at the time when emerging gay discourse made homosexuality as well as homophobia visible. His early dismissive response to Whitman, for example, changed to admiration right at the time when, as Sedgwick points out, references to *Leaves of Grass* "functioned as badges of homosexual recognition, were the currency of a new community" (*Between Men* 206). So James's embracing of Whitman as the greatest of American poets, as testified by Edith Wharton (*Backward* 186), coincided with the contemporary conceptualization of gay identity.

The cultural presupposition that resides in the context of this enigmatic text can be formulated as follows: 'homosexuality cannot/is not to be talked about; it is sinful, it is shameful, it is a stigma to be kept in secret.' All this in the larger cultural frame of homophobia. The performative both complies with and defies the presupposition, creating a tension between message posed and message presupposed. Indeed, homosexuality is a secret, and it will not be revealed, yet at the same time, of course, it is being revealed—revealed by its own hiding: the meaning of the secret is its unrevealabilty. As Sedgwick has pointed out, James's fascination with the unsaid and the unsayable was elevated to an aesthetic principle (*Epistemology* 201–212). In one of her later books Sedgwick discusses the affect of shame and the related fact of stigma in James's queer performativity (*Touching* 61). The note of shame and stigma is quite apparent in "The Beast" as well in the sense that James makes it part of the context, or presupposition, allowing both to become parts of performative identity.

The revisionary interpretation of "The Beast" as the dramatization of the secret of homosexuality (as opposed to the dramatization of the story of the man unable to assert his love for a woman) has not come about because of changes in James's text (like the discovery of new manuscript pages, for example), but because our common ground assumptions have changed. New interpretations have indeed been provoked by our changed perspective—the radically altered context of reception with relation to the context into which the text was originally written. This instance corresponds to Wittgenstein's deepest kind of certainty resulting from the impossibility of doubting—until our grounds are challenged (*On Certainty* § 420); this might go together with the experiencing of a kind of conversion (§578). This is exactly what happened with regards to homosexuality, I think: the concept has gained a general currency to the degree that in our epistemic situation gayness has become part of our discourse. Therefore, we tend to read the code of James's "The Beast" as performing homosexuality.

James's text is unusual in the respect that there seems to be a discrepancy, an aporia, between the explicitly narrated heterosexual story and the hidden story, the subtext, present only in James's unconscious perhaps, but one which overwrites the explicit narrative. Employing two narrative positions he presents two subject positions for Marcher. The (heterosexual) "cover story" is not the same as the narrated story, the gay subtext; James's narrative voice indeed subverts the narrated story. The aporia consists not only in undecidability, but also in the fact that it is impossible to tell apart what is said and what is implied; furthermore, what is implied seems to come about without authorial intention. This untying of intention from meaning is extremely important, for here we have a case of meaning unintended by the author, which seems to refute the position of intention-based semantics and speech act theory. Not only does James violate the various maxims of Grice's "Cooperative Principle"—such as the maxim of manner ("Avoid obscurity of expression," "Avoid ambiguity" ["Logic and Conversation" 46]) and "BLATANTLY fail to fulfill" the maxims (49), but offers of conversational implicature which is not "capable of being worked out" (50). Furthermore, his ambiguities and obscurities might not even be "deliberate" (55).

Without markers of intentionality, the meaning is retroactively revised in a direction most probably unintended by James himself. The dialogue between text and context, the given and the created, the posed and the presupposed seems to legitimately produce a gay interpretation today.

The perfor*mance* of (hetero)sexuality: Henry James, "In the Cage"

The other text from James, "In the Cage" presents a telegraphist whose main preoccupation is to put together the details of the lives of the people whose telegraphs she is sending off. She is constructing her own [William] Jamesian "*living* reality" (*Principles* 297; emphasis in original) out of the details she reads in the telegraphs. She can do this because she possesses what [William] James requires from the person constructing his or her own living reality: passion and will to do so. "*[A]s thinkers with emotional reaction, we give what seems to us a still higher degree of reality to whatever things we select and emphasize and turn to it* WITH A WILL" (297; emphasis in original). Such a passionately and emotionally constructed reality is by necessity "*the ultimate of ultimates for our belief*" (297; emphasis in original). In such cases, as [William] James repeatedly emphasizes, the mind—which "looks at the object and consents to its existence"—"*makes* the objects real" (320; emphasis in original). The telegraphist is "certain" that her reading is correct in the sense Wittgenstein describes a deeper sense of certainty one has about propositions that one has not even thought of doubting (*On Certainty* §§ 159, 398). Her belief is then characterized by an absence of doubt; she has not learned to question either her assumptions or activities.

While as a telegraphist she is ciphering the texts, as a person tuned to the rich and famous, she is also trying to decipher them. This deciphering proves to be a fictioning rather: the narrative again resists heterosexual interpretation by proving the telegraphist wrong about every detail. The relationship she assumes to be a secret heterosexual romance is presented to the reader as a cover-up rather, and the pain on the Captain's face is not from love but from anxiety over being found out and blackmailed. The woman's fictioning of the telegraphs is then prompted by misperception and assumptions pre-existing the texts; her reading is based on her presuppositions concerning the compulsory heterosexuality of love and the assumption that any secret has to somehow relate to illicit heterosexual romance. Her perspective determines what she sees; as such, the text convincingly demonstrates the thesis of Mihály Szegedy-Maszák concerning the fact that point of view is not part of the narrated world, but provides its border or limit rather (see *„A regény, amint írja önmagát”* 19). As in many other James pieces, for some time at least the reader only knows as much as the protagonist; only later in the text are certain clues planted. These cautious clues involve, as Hugh Stevens points out, references to London's gay subculture, the Wilde trials, the Cleveland Street Scandal of 1889–90, involving liaisons between members of the aristocracy and telegraph boys, and stories of blackmail attending the criminalization of homosexual acts ("Queer Henry" 131). By planting these clues, a very different set of frame assumptions emerges, as James seems to be manipulating his readers to construct a gay reading of the plot. The act of sending off telegraphs is put into the context of the telegraph boys catering to the sexual needs of rich Londoners: by virtue of its iterability, one sign takes on characteristics of the same sign occurring in an earlier context, radically determining the meaning of the later sign.

Indeed, what is inexpressible in James's "In the Cage" is part of the subtext in the form of presuppositions, of common knowledge shared by contemporary readers. These presuppositions planted in the context could be formulated as: 'a secret and a criminal act, punished when revealed, homosexuality is all around.' Therefore, homosexuality is to remain a secret—which it does for the telegraphist (who does not approach the text with these presuppositions)—but for the reader, who is alerted by James's references to contemporary gay subculture, homosexuality is being revealed. In this text too we can detect the performative's compliance with the presupposition as well as its defiance of the presupposition: homosexuality is presented as a secret, not be revealed, yet James makes every effort that the dialogue between text and context reveal the secret.

Similar to the two general forms of performative constructions described earlier in this chapter, the performative-discursive construction of sexual identity in the two James pieces can be understood as either expressive perfor*mance* or ontological perfor*mative*. In other words, here too sexual identity either conforms to an iterable and citational model—where a configuration pre-existing the text is being repeated—or is purely self-referential and self-producing, with a subjectivity created while the referent is produced in the discursive perfor*mative* act. The two texts by James seem to successfully illustrate the two ways discourse partakes in constructing sexualized subjectivity.

The elaborate performance of the protagonists in "In the Cage," creating the illusion of an illicit heterosexual romance, falls into the category of theatrical performance. In his perfor*mance* of heterosexuality that goes on in the text, the captain stages himself as heterosexual while delivering the cultural presentation of passing, passing as heterosexual, that is. What is being evoked in this dramatic perfor*mance* is not some "essence" of heterosexuality, but its narrative script, equally familiar to the main characters, their audience (the telegraphist), and their readers. Indeed, all three parties of this perfor*mance* seem to willingly participate in the evocation of the citational model of heterosexuality, thereby contribute to sustaining it as a cultural norm. Fictional character and fictional audience, as well as actual reader will be accomplices in sustaining heterosexuality by ironically reproducing in repetition the norms that socially regulate it.

The other piece, "The Beast in the Jungle," presents a new form of sexuality, of the gay man, performed while discursively producing the subject itself. The discursive construction of this sexuality does not follow a normative script (as it did in the case of the telegraphist); neither is it being performed by a subject that pre-exists the act. Rather, the speaker is produced in and by discourse, during the perfor*mative* process of the purely self-referential speech act, which, in a *mise en abyme* fashion, brings about a new referent that had no previous existence. The perfor*mative* here enacts homosexuality and subsequently produces it as the secret which cannot be named. Such a discursive construction of identity does not recall, or read, prior scripts and norms of identity, but subverts them by disregarding the scripts that sustain the hegemonic norms of heterosexuality. The self-producing speech act involves agency and intentionality to a greater degree: the subject produces itself by confronting and breaking down existing norms. The subject's authority shows itself in this confrontation: in the extent of the difference between this perfor*mative* and the prior perfor*mances* of social norms.

The revisionary readings of these pieces depend on the readers' ability to identify the perfor*mance* and perfor*mative* processes in the texts. Writer and reader of "In the Cage" must share certain assumptions, presuppositions, concerning an existing reality and its evocation through the cited model of heterosexuality. Such a common cultural ground will allow the reader to identify the discrepancies between this model and its ironic perfor*mance*. In the case of "The Beast" the writer specifically demands that the reader read the text, not paradigms, and suspend normative expectations (of reading the plot in terms of heterosexual desire). Instead, a perfor*mative* reading will discursively create the homosexual subject around the empty signifier, devoid of reference.

Both readings are creative; both demand a shared knowledge of cultural models to be used in the perfor*mance* and an understanding of self-producing and self-creating perfor*mative* processes. Both readings involve readerly perfor*mance* as well as perfor*mativity*.

* * *

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the following points.

One, not only does the performative help explain discursive processes of subjectivity in literary texts, but also processes of reading and interpretation. Extended to the reading process, the performative will shed light on how new interpretations of literary texts can come about. Most conspicuously, it can be a helpful tool in understanding the upsurge of revisionist interpretations of the literary canon, American in particular, over the past decades.

Two, James's "In the Cage" is an example for mimetic or citational performance going on in the text; it presents subjectivity as discursively produced by hailing ideologies—through the replaying of existing scripts, in this case the script of "compulsory heterosexuality." Its function is to hide the homosexual planted in the subtext and evoked only by suggestion. "The Beast" on the other hand, produces a new discursive subject, the homosexual, in a performative manner. Preceding the conceptualization of gay identity, this performative process cannot refer to any citable model; rather, it performs a new entity, the identity, recently conceptualized, of the gay man. This construction seems to go on in the subtext too, but here the text evoking heterosexuality is weakened by James's insistence on keeping the heterosexual plot only on the level of evocation too.

Three, the difference between perfor*mance* and perfor*mativity* parallels the different ways presuppositions provoke a dialogue with the performative in general. Multiple and revisionary readings of texts can also be explained by this interaction between presuppositions and performative processes, or by the different presuppositions readers bring to texts in different reading situations.

Four, both are resisting narratives in that both stories show forth a subtext that overwrites the interpretation triggered by the text.

CHAPTER FIVE

PERFORMING PASSING

Although the logic of the paradigm I have established and followed would prompt the discussion of race next—and for a while I did indeed contemplate writing about how black becomes black and white becomes white—I have decided after all not to continue with a chapter titled “Performing Race.” My abandoning this plan has been necessitated in part by the enormity of the topic and in part by my own resistance to totalizing structures. So, rather than just scratching the surface of the problematics of race performativity, I turn now to a particular aspect of performative subjectivities, passing, where I demonstrate the subversion of the inflections of gender, sexuality, and race alike.

Passing is a term originally used in the context of race, but has been recently extended to cover other forms of boundary crossings. As a general term, it involves various—often multiple—transgressions between such binary oppositions as man/woman, white/black, or heterosexual/homosexual. A dramatic or theatrical replaying of existing social scripts, passing is predominantly perfor*mance*. Gender and race passing, for example, are perfor*mances* which uncover the purely imitative and constructed nature of gender and race by ignoring, transforming, or literally re-dressing the “biological”: gender performance overwrites “true” sex, while race perfor*mance* goes counter to skin color defined by law or lineage. In other words, these are perfor*mances* where the binaries of feminine/masculine and black/white leave the body marked as their “natural” site and become staged or acted out. In such instances of passing, gender and race are visibly constructed in a catachrestic manner, lacking both a literal referent where ontologies might be located and an “original” which might be copied and cited.

Dislodged from the body, race and gender will be seen as constructed through institutions and discourses; foregrounded as both product and process, passing will reveal itself as series of perfor*mance* acts of oscillation and transgression between boundaries, categories, and subjectivities. As an instance of transgression, passing often appears as a threat: it threatens the order believed to have been solid; it threatens identity categories thought to have been securely planted in our bodies; threatens positions of domination and hegemony, with all their rights and privileges, which are now “usurped,” as Lynn Friedli puts it (qtd. in Ginsberg 13), by the passer.

Gender passing
(Mark Twain, *Is He Dead?*; Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*; David Hwang, *M. Butterfly*)

As much as I might agree with Juda Bennett in seeing the term *passing* "inelegant" (36), its original meaning—coming from the slip of paper that, preventing slaves from being taken for fugitives, granted free movement to them (36)—can be transferred to the realm of gender too. As such, by gender passing I will mean that elaborate perfor*mance* through which the "passing figure" will be allowed free movement *as* the person produced in this perfor*mance*. By opposing power relations, the passer will violate the norms of subjection and critique discursive boundaries; by what Gayatri Spivak calls "enabling violation" in the post-colonial context (*Spivak Reader* 19), the passer will be self-constructed as a subject with agency.

The term *gender passing*, just like its constituent term *gender*, exhibits a strong asymmetry: instead of referring equally to passing in either direction, it highlights the marked elements—"gender" as an attribute of woman—as its target configuration. In other words, in the transparent meaning of *gender passing* womanhood—as the marked element of the man/woman binary—will be the predominant identity inflection targeted. This is so in spite of the fact that asymmetrical power relations would privilege the reverse—as they do in the case of race passing, where the predominant direction of passing is from the disempowered black position to the more powerful white position. In my reading there is a very important reason for this gender asymmetry: while man's is the obvious, unmarked/unseen, and transparent position, woman's is palpable, marked/seen, and opaque (to continue the transparency/opacity metaphor). She is the one who "has" gender, whose gender is more obviously "made," its constructedness visible and legible, therefore the technologies available for its imitative construction in passing are more prevalent.

Moreover, the transgression of the woman who passes as a man is more serious: she will be a usurper of male privilege indeed, a female Prometheus who steals the fire—this time not from Zeus but man in general. The woman transgressor seems to commit a grave crime when she dissociates masculinity—which, as Judith Halberstam explains, is still the property of the white male heterosexual (2)—from the male body.[6] In this case, part of woman's crime, I would add, is that masculinity's appropriation by the female body makes a most subversive claim unambiguously: that masculinity is as much of a construction as femininity. Gender passing from female to male, in other words, will undo the marked/unmarked distinction by foregrounding the constructedness of the "unmarked universal" subject, and will also undo unmarked as dominant and invisible equation (see Lisa Walker 14). Female masculinity is obviously one such instance when masculinity leaves the male body: this is masculinity in women which appears as the ultimate transgression; this is the appropriation not only of gender but also of power, as well as of unmarked transparency. (Masculinity's wider reassignment to the female body is a rather recent phenomenon only, part of "postmodern cool," as Susan Bordo points out [*Male Body* 41]). In spite of the many examples of cross-dressing, female-to-male transsexuals, thirdness, or cross-identifying women (which Halberstam cites throughout *Female Masculinity*), this female masculinity has not found its entry in literature to the degree a man's passing for a woman has. I too will discuss the mechanism of gender passing through examples only where womanhood is being performed.

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[6] This is an even graver crime than the foregrounding of masculinity *on* the male body, which happens, as Halberstam claims, when masculinity is performed by a gay man, such as Agent Q in the James Bond film *Goldeneye* (4), or when it appears in excess and turns into its own parody, in Bond's own performance (4), or, to take another example, in the case of Walt Whitman constructing himself as the hairy-chested virile man.

Passing is a most complex phenomenon. Two kinds of passing can be discerned from the perspective of binaries. Both can be shown to exploit the imitative structure of gender and reveal, in Butler's words, "gender itself to be an imitation" (*Psychic* 145); both are, moreover, parodies "of the *idea* of the natural and the original" (*Gender Trouble* 31), since what they copy are technologies and not "essences." Of the two kinds, the first refers to the replacement of one pole for the other in the system of binaries; this is the case when a man "passes over" for a woman or a black person for white, for example. This type, which I will call *full passing*, is always perfor*mance*, since it stages existing normative identities. The other kind which I call *play passing*, or, in the case when passing occurs within the sphere of gender, *gender play*, is the interrogation and subversion of the binary system; as such, these instances can be seen as the perfor*mative* creations of new ontologies. It is much like mimicry, to adopt the meaning of Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry: of wanting to be "almost the same, but not quite" (86). While full passing will aim to deceive (to be altogether "the same"), gender play will want to reveal its own transgression by constantly producing its own slippage. While the first is a deadly serious game, where the stakes are high indeed, in the second playfulness is a key factor.

I will start with full passing. By openly deploying imitative-mimetic processes taken from the "other" in the binary, this perfor*mance* foregrounds the theatrical basis of gender and race, and gives a high visibility to playful repetition or mime—to be reenacted by a person of the "opposite" gender or race. As a narrative which "assumes that there is a self that masquerades as another kind of self," as Halberstam puts it, full passing will limit gender or race identification by allowing movement between the binaries of man and woman or black and white only. This binary understanding of passing—when the passer can only step from one category into the "opposite" other—involves the either/or logic of power relations. This is especially obvious in the example of race passing, seen by Elaine

K. Ginsberg as "an attempt to move from the cultural margin to the center," into the "dominant race" (8). Concomitantly, there is often a moral element involved: the passer is considered a trespasser, while passing is seen as deception, "an attempt to claim status and privilege falsely" (Ginsberg 8). This element of deception, as well as the claiming of privilege falsely, is present even in instances where the passer masquerades as belonging to the subordinated group: in the case of gender passing, when a man passes as a woman. In these instances, however, as I will show, the male passer assumes only more power (in the legal, sexual, or political arena) by masquerading as woman.

But, as I mentioned above, this is only one kind of passing, from one pole to the other. There exists that other kind too, play passing or mimicry, where the passer refuses the logic of dichotomous thinking and assumes both gender and race to be hybrid categories, occupying a continuum rather than opposite poles. So, together with the insistence of passing as "almost the same, but not quite" comes a multiplication of categories for constructions between the two poles. As Susan Bordo puts it, "some people are trying to reconstruct the categories as well as their bodies" (*Male Body* 41). This claim is, of course, more acceptable in the case of race, where genetic mixing will allow a plethora of unforeseen gradations between "black" and "white." But the new "colors" brought about by play passing are not only about genetic mixing: they are also about construction and self-construction along socially more mutable categories. Bordo writes about the younger generation who "truly and honestly *don't* think of themselves as one race or another" (41; emphasis in original) and about cultures with greater diversity even among gender categories, among them, India, the Philippines, or Portugal, where "[t]he *travestis* . . . are male prostitutes who adopt feminine names, clothing, and hairstyles, take female hormones and inject themselves with silicon in order to create breasts, wide hips, and large buttocks; yet they do not identify themselves as women" (40; emphasis in original). It is playful approximation and in-betweenness, as well as the opening of the field for new, transitional categories.

Confounding the logic of binary thinking, gender play will allow for new possibilities of gender configurations to come about by showing that all identities are constructed, acted out, through a series of normative perfor*mances* (when woman performs femininity, for example). Once femininity leaves the body of the woman, what was purportedly the "essential" site naturalized for its perfor*mance*, gender ceases to be a binary category: not conforming to the two poles of the binary, gender will be constructed at variable or random points of the continuum, making for multiple and contingent gender categories (depending, for example, on the imbrications of other identity categories such as race, class, sexuality, nationality). Moreover, gender play will contribute to the fundamental destabilization of the categories themselves, creating a "category crisis" defined by Marjorie Garber as "a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another" (16)

Let me give some examples. George Harris's Spanish masquerade and Eliza Harris's cross-dressing in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* satisfy all the specifications of full passing: they aim at deception, wanting to fully enact the "other" race and gender, and make some alterations on their bodies. George's full passing is proclaimed a "dangerous game" (123), one of life and death, where he not only dresses up as a Spanish gentleman but changes his skin and hair color too:

> "I am pretty well disguised, I fancy," said the young man, with a smile. "little walnut bark has made my yellow skin a genteel brown, and I've dyed my hair black; so you see I don't answer to the advertisement at all." (123)

Similarly, when, in another deadly serious game, Eliza dresses up as a man before crossing Lake Erie, she adapts "her slender and pretty form the articles of man's attire," cuts her "black curly hair" (410), and is learning to take long steps in an effort to "try to look saucy" (412). No slippage is allowed in either case; otherwise they would be caught and returned to their owners. Historically, cross-dresser women in the Civil War, of whom there were probably around four hundred, according to Elizabeth Young (184), made every attempt to perform full passing. One of the better-known passers, Loretta Velasquez/Lt. Harry Buford went as far as "combining gender masquerade with heterosexual seduction" (Young 192). But, to take an example of gender play, George Sand sports a masculine look by wearing pants and smoking cigars without wanting to pass fully as a man; hers is a perfor*mance* that meant to reveal its slippage. The effort to not fully hide but highlight this playful slippage from a linguistic-orthographic perspective is there even in the name *George*, spelled purposefully differently, in the English way, without an *s*. If much of passing is about visibility—or "specularity," as Ginsberg claims (2)—then this kind of gender play is much about making the slippage visible too.

Wholly constructed in processes that challenge biology, gender passing provides a serious argument against gender essentialism. Of course, both full passing and gender play relate to biology in certain ways: the first attempts at some alterations of the body, "biology" (like skin or hair), while the second applies changes on the body, but usually not to the body. But not even do the alterations performed on the body in full passing involve radical sex changes as in the case of transgendered/transsexed bodies, for example. We could say that sex is made irrelevant in both forms of gender passing; it is through gendering institutions and practices only that gender perfor*mance* is conducted. All gender traits will be produced by gendering institutions, discourses, practices, and perfor*mances* independent of whether man performs womanhood (in the Mark Twain and the David Hwang texts), or, in the case of the as yet "unsexed" child's performance, a woman comes about without regard to biology (in the Nabokov text).

Passing, finally, usually does not occur within one category only, that of gender, for example, but involves other inflections of identity too, like race and sexuality. Since identities are not made up of single inflections but are formed of complex imbrications of such inflections, the passing figure will most often be seen as passing along more than one axis. Therefore, gender passing will involve, more often than not, additional forms of passing, between white/black, straight/gay, genuine/fake, original/copy, subject/object, for example.

I turn now to my three texts informed by gender passing.

Full passing: (cross-)dressing and constructing the body: Mark Twain, *Is He Dead?*

Mark Twain's late comedy *Is He Dead?* was thought to have been lost for over a hundred years. Written in Vienna in 1898, it was published in 2003 only, just in time perhaps to offer another supporting argument for theories on the performative construction of the subject.

The play was inspired by the fate of what was considered the most famous painting of the time, *The Angelus* of Jean-François Millet, the object of an "intense bidding war" between France and America (see Fishkin 159), to sell finally for the amazing price of 550,000 francs. The issue problematized in the play concerns the fact that while artists are unable to sell their paintings during their lives, heirs and art dealers make fortunes on these same paintings after the death of the artists. The Millet in Twain's play cannot sell a single painting, not even the one recognized as a masterpiece by all, *The Angelus*, and not for the meager sum of 275 or even one hundred francs. Bound by a contract to the villain of the play, the art dealer Bastien André, who wants to ruin the painter, Millet and his pupils decide to stage the master's death. Giving him three "last months" to enjoy his creative frenzy and to introduce Millet's heir, his "twin sister" "Widow Daisy Tillou" (played by the cross-dressing Millet of course), they first spread the news of his imminent death, then start selling his paintings. Some of the same buyers appear, now happy to pay 80,000 francs for pieces they refused to buy for a hundred earlier. The art dealer also reappears, insisting that he owns the pictures (the same which he considered invaluable before) by contract. Having to attend his own funeral, Millet/Widow Tillou now must find a way to get rid of the art dealer, who wants to marry the widow in exchange for burning the contract. The painter passing as his own twin sister takes a desperate step and performs a peculiar Swiftian undressing ceremony for André, who thinks he is unnoticed in the room, as she removes her wig, glass-eye, false teeth, and even wooden legs. Having successfully disposed of André, Millet reveals the whole theatrics to his grieving fiancée, together with the new plan that he will reenter art life under the name of Placide Duval, a "marvelously successful imitator of the late lamented" (128)—and the whole victorious gang rejoices to the simultaneous sound of the *Marseillaise*, *Yankee Doodle*, *God Save the Queen*, and *Die Wacht am Rhein.*

Three circumstances are relevant from the perspective of my argument: Millet's passing as a woman, the foregrounding of "her" constructed body, and the plan to reintroduce Millet as his own imitator. Of course, these incidents are not without parallel in Twain's works. Male cross-dressing appears in several Twain texts, among them *Huckleberry Finn* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, fitting well into his larger fascination with doubles and duplicities. Throughout his career Twain was intrigued by mistaken identities and the dilemma, described by Susan Gillman, as "whether one can tell people apart, differentiate among them" (5). Clemens, who took the rather revealing pseudonym *Twain*, was fascinated by masks, twins, double personalities, look-alikes, impersonators, as well as impostures: "the pose of a pose, the fake of a fake" (Gillman 6). He liked to amuse his audience with what he called "double jokes," those that "aimed at deceiving the listener but at making him pleasurably conscious of his own deception" (Gillman 21). The idea of the constructed body also appears in some other pieces, such as "Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man," *Roughing It*, and "The Lowest Animal" (see Fishkin 181). Moreover, the man who only wore his famous white suit in his seventies was not only eccentric but transgressive too: "why not adopt some of the women's styles?" he asked, justifying his "Dress Reform" by linking it to gender roles (qtd. in Gillman 186).

So, to return to my first point, the Widow's cross-dressing perfor*mance* is a convincing full passing to the degree that even Millet's fiancée is deceived. This is so in spite of the fact that it is difficult for him to "endure these awkward clothes" (63) and that he appears smoking a pipe (62). Moreover, since the Widow is unable to present a coherent story of her own life, she must be seen as having a "touched" mind (86), as being "eccentric" and "a little crazed by this great sorrow" (82). Not only does she give a fantastic account of having "slathers" of children (88), "seven in two years" (89), of having not just sons and daughters but a "considerable variety" (91) of children, from a "whole colony" of husbands (89), but—and this is her most severe transgression—she uses very unladylike language, telling André, for example, that he is "a mean, cowardly, contemptible, base-gotten damned scoundrel" (99). All these forms of slippage should give away the mimicry. But not even does Millet's fiancée see through the perfor*mance*, although she does find the Widow "queer" (115). But no slippage is noticed, because, as Twain seems to suggest, people will believe what they want to believe. As Millet claims at the end (ironically about France only), "[w]hen France has committed herself to the expression of a belief, she will die a hundred thousand deaths rather than confess she has been in the wrong" (143).

Millet's passing, however, involves more than gender: he also transgresses object/subject categories, or, in this case categories of agency. Instead of allowing André to act as his agent art dealer, Millet and his friends decide to claim agency in a very particular way, by making himself into his own agent, even if he needs to pass as a dead man for that.

Second, it is the constructed body *par excellence* which is being reenacted during the perfor*mance* which the Widow puts on in order to scare away the art dealer. This perfor*mance* seems to be exactly the reverse of Corinna's disassembling herself in the Swift poem I discussed earlier: in this comedy, the "woman" starts out without her body, as having but one eye, no hair, no teeth, and no legs; all the missing parts will be supplied during her self-construction, during which she assembles herself into a "supremely beautiful" woman (135). Confronted with the prospect of having a wife who has no part that is "genuine" (138) or "solid" (139), André is of course happy to sneak out and not "marry that débris if she was worth a billion" (139). In this perfor*mance* not only are the boundaries of gender transgressed, but those between "genuine" and "fake" too.

Third, with Millet's market value sky-rocketing in the art world, the pupils decide to continue tapping the artist's creative energies and introduce him as a Millet-imitator. They find a name for him too, Placide Duval, who would now supply an unlimited flow of Millet-imitations. Twain deconstructs the original/copy binary by giving primacy to the copy as that which will make the original original (and more valuable). Indeed, the copy is shown to be valued over the original when sold for hundreds of thousands, and the Englishman buys the original of *The Angelus* as a worthless copy. But, as Millet himself (still as the Widow) observes, people "will never know it" (129). Moreover, it is "a *fictitious* François Millet" (132; emphasis in original) who now passes as his own imitator ("Imitator of myself" [128]); it is fiction that passes as imitation, and the original/copy distinction gets conclusively erased.

Transgression's slippage, gender play, or girl performing woman (with a difference): Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) foregrounds an instance of gender passing usually not discussed under the heading of passing: in this case it is a preadolescent, a still boyish girl who turns into a "nymphet" or "girleen" (*Lolita* 19) in order to pass for a woman. This novel, subverting in other ways too the stability of identity (we need only to think of the Humbert-Quilty doubling or characters described as having "a salad of racial genes" [9] or "mixed parentage" [11]), puts in its center the carnal desire of the grown man for "pale pubescent girls" (16), or "girl-children" (16)—whether called Annabel or Dolores. The object of his desire is the nymphet, the Dolores/Lolita who is not a child any more but not a woman yet either.

The nymphet for Nabokov occupies a stage between girlhood and womanhood, somewhere between nine and fourteen, as he says in the novel (16). For the Nabokov who made his name in lepidoptery by collecting and identifying butterflies, the nymphet corresponds to the "pupa" stage of insects undergoing metamorphosis. In fact, he emphasized this transitional nymphet-stage of the pupa when naming one of his lepidopterological finds "Nabokov's Wood-Nymph" (see *Lolita* 339). Expanding this nymphet/pupa metaphor, the author/lepidopterist gives the evocative name "nympholepts" to the "lone voyagers" who have a passion for collecting these nymphets (17).

Dolores the child only plays with the man first, when she still rather innocently sits on his knees or sneaks up to him from the back and plays peek-a-boo. Her transformation is marked by her first applying lipstick and eating a "banal, Eden-red apple" (58). She becomes a nymphet by responding to Humbert's desire and becoming his creation: "my own creation, another, fanciful Lolita" (62), who starts to see herself as a "starlet" (65). When she "flows" into his arms, he realizes it was him who "willed into being" this "ineffable" life (113), while on her part it was "but an innocent game . . . in imitation of some simulacrum of fake romance" (113). At this stage the twelve year old Lolita is still a pupa: half-child, munching on candy bars and ice cream cones, and half-woman, flirting with the man in a seemingly innocent manner, thinking (seemingly) that they are lovers already. While laughing in a childish manner with a "young golden giggle" (119), she seems to know that their relationship verges on "incest" (119). She becomes a good performer when her perfor*mance* involves the copying of copies, or the imitation of simulacra of fakeness—as all nymphets do, Nabokov suggests, when, in an effort to pass for a woman, they imitate "the cheapest of cheap cuties" (120). Lolita does not aim at full passing: her performance is play passing, mimicry rather, and the in-betweenness of this "fey child" is emphasized in various ways.

> A combination of naïveté and deception, of charm and vulgarity, of blue sulks and rosy mirth, Lolita, when she chose, could be a most exasperating brat. I was not really quite prepared for her fits of disorganized boredom, intense and vehement griping, her sprawling, droopy, dopey-eyed style, and what is called goofing off—a kind of diffused clowning which she thought was tough in a boyish hoodlum way. (148)

Both a girl of "very childish appearance" and one who, "owing perhaps to constant amorous exercise," radiated "some special languorous glow" (159), she is the ultimate pupa, at home both in children's libraries and in bed with Humbert on "violent mornings" (160). The "most mythopoetic nymphet in October's orchard-haze" (186), who in school gives the impression that she is "morbidly uninterested in sexual matters" (195), yet knows exactly how to tempt Humbert when saying, "Carry me upstairs, please. I feel sort of romantic to-night" (207).

What is very important in the novel is that Lolita's construction is carried out as much by Humbert as Lolita. In other words, it is the man's desire which constitutes the nymphet, who responds to this desire by her self-construction. But what Humbert desires is not the "powdered" butterfly of a grown woman (12), but a pupa in metamorphosis, a transgressor from girlhood to womanhood. It is this in-betweenness which turns him on, giving him an "incestuous thrill" (80): seeing the nymphet verging on womanhood, the daughter turned into lover, child into woman, boy into girl even. He will not want to be wholly deceived; he does not demand full passing from Lolita (in fact, once a mature woman, a mother, she does not interest him any more). His obsession is rather with transgression itself: the complete destabilization of categories—metamorphosis, transitionality, in-betweenness, slippage.

Orientalism as perfor*mance*: David Hwang, *M. Butterfly*

The transgressions between dichotomies are further problematized in David Hwang's drama *M. Butterfly* (1988), where discourses of gender, sexuality, race, and colonialism intersect, while imitation and reversal are foregrounded as dominant thematics. In his afterword to the play, Hwang labels *M. Butterfly* a "deconstructivist" play (2869). Indeed, in this drama of sex, politics, camaraderie, and spying, several binaries are being subverted, among them, man/woman, East/West, reality/fiction, innocence/experience, gay/straight, truth/deception, and copy/original.

This thematic of imitation is exploited in a twofold manner: on the one hand, the French diplomat, René Gallimard plays out a perfor*mance* of cultural imitation as he reenacts (or thinks he reenacts) the plot of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* (becoming both Pinkerton and Cio-Cio-San, actually), while on the other, an agent of the Chinese intelligence service puts on a masquerade of Oriental womanhood as s/he gives the perfor*mance* of Gallimard's ideal of the "Perfect Woman."

The plot unfolds as the reworking of the popular Western opera (in fact, in several scenes we have a crisscrossing between performances of the Puccini opera and Song's "real-life" performance). Here, however, the love plot between the American naval officer and the Japanese Cio-Cio-San, or Madame Butterfly, gets subverted into a Frenchman falling in love (and having a long relationship) with the beautiful Chinese diva, Song Liling, who turns out to be not only a spy but also a drag artist, a man. If *Madame Butterfly* was, as Mari Yoshihara puts it, "a white female performance of white male Orientalist fantasy" (976), then *M. Butterfly* is its contemporary reworking, its parodic and subversive Asian re-perfor*mance* of passing and Orientalism. So the play can be seen as the reverse staging of the narrative of "an exotic and imperialistic view of the East," as Hwang himself puts it (2869)—in other words, Orientalism.

Orientalism, defined by Edward Said as an interest in the East which turns into "an all-consuming passion" (132), is present indeed as the hypotext. The East is not only shown as a "career" (which it certainly is for Gallimard), but is itself Orientalized in the sense that here too "[t]he relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (133). This relationship of power gets further gendered, exemplifying, as Yoshihara claims, the "gendered dynamics of East-West relations founded upon unequal power relations" (975). Gallimard takes great pleasure in this gendered power relation, getting dizzy from recognizing himself as another Pinkerton, who "caught a butterfly who would writhe on a needle" (2839) and from experiencing for the first time in his life "absolute power" over a woman: "I felt for the first time that rush of power—the absolute power of a man" (2840). "The West thinks of itself as masculine," Song explains in court; "big guns, big industry, big money—so the East is feminine—weak, delicate, poor . . . but good at art, and full of inscrutable wisdom—the feminine mystique" (2864).

A merging of the passing plot and the Orientalist narrative, the drama foregrounds the performative-imitative nature of Orientalist/feminine submission as a construction of Western fantasy. As Gallimard's friend Marc says about Song, "she must surrender to you. It is her destiny" (2836). Or as Song explains at the end, "[t]he West believes the East, deep down, *wants* to be dominated—because a woman can't think for herself" (2864). Moreover, the wide popularity of the "original" opera presupposes the Western point of view, as Gallimard learns from Song's explanation and, the hard way, from his own experience. "It's a very beautiful story," Gallimard admits; "Well, yes, to a Westerner," Song adds to the Frenchman's great surprise (2832). Gallimard also learns that there is no innocent enjoyment of Orientalist narratives: it is not possible to hear, as Helga would want to, Puccini just "as a piece of beautiful music" (2833), for this form of "innocence" only gives green light to hegemony and domination under the guise of a love-story considered supremely beautiful within the Orientalist frame. Having fallen from the position of the innocent imperialist to the position of the helpless but "experienced" colonial victim now gendering himself female, Gallimard will have experienced both perspectives, transgressing in the final scene all gender and cultural boundaries. Thus, in this second marriage of the narrative of Orientalism and the passing plot, he becomes Madame Butterfly and, committing hara-kiri, adopts the Oriental version of *dénouement*.

There is, however, an additional element here: Orientalism functions as an Althusserian ideology which will interpellate Gallimard: in this process the French diplomat becomes a socially constituted subject. Orientalism is presented as a perfor*mance* in both the opera and the drama: in fact, both Butterflies are cultural constructions, catering to the Orientalist fantasies of the men. But as much as Gallimard is constituted by power and ideology, he remains blind to his own Orientalism in the sense that he fails to see how his desire is moved by a particular cultural myth. Of course, Gallimard's subjugation itself is twofold: not only is he produced (interpellated) by Orientalism, but is also being used by what Althusser might consider another ideological state apparatus, Chinese intelligence. Moreover, the perfor*mance* of Orientalism is at work in Gallimard's two self-constructions too: both when he constructs himself as the powerful Western man and when he steps into the garb and role of the suicidal Cio-Cio-San.

Song seems to be similarly constructed by ideology, simultaneously by "true womanhood" and Orientalism. S/he appeals to existing gender conventions, staging and acting out well-known scripts in this perfor*mance*—applying a complex technology of gender, to use de Lauretis's term, in constituting his body as female—as if s/he was interpellated by the norms of gender. His is indeed a double masquerade, with mask, costume, and convention interacting in constituting him not only as a woman but also as an Oriental woman desired by the Western man. As the imperialist's vision of the Oriental Butterfly, Song responds to the man's desire, sexual as well as political, by letting him take the illusory role of a latter-day Pygmalion. "I am a man who loved a woman created by a man," he admits at the end (2867).

In Gallimard construction of the Oriental woman as the perfect woman, he makes her sole desire to please the Western man. The hypotext, however, is turned parodic, when it is revealed that it is the intelligence service of communist China who manipulates the French diplomat through Song and especially through the Westerner's blind belief in Orientalism. In the hypertext, power ultimately resides in the Orient, and the Westerner gets beaten at his own game by becoming the victim of his own cultural myth of domination.

The drama seems to carry the critique of essentialism further than other narratives of gender passing. Here it is not a man who simply prepares the surface of his body or takes women's clothing simply in order to look like a woman. In Song's case, deceit affects the functioning of gender. His performed gender is being put to use, so to speak, in bed for years; gender is not just theatrics, but gets tested at the point where, according to the sex/gender distinction, it is not gender but sex (biology, "nature," "essence") which should be at work—biology, which gender masquerade is not supposed to have affected. In this aspect, the play seems to enact the Butlerian tenet concerning the always already gendered nature of sex: the site of sexuality will shift from biology to gender and discourse, as Song performs a total, all-inclusive sex/gender passing. However, her seduction is carried out as much by the body as by language. Much like Don Juan, whose "erotic success," Shoshana Felman claims, "is accomplished by linguistic means alone" (*Scandal* 14), Song too seduces by producing a language of pleasure and desire, and prolongs, to use Felman's words again, "within desiring speech, the pleasure-taking performance of the very production of that speech" (15).

Furthermore, in the project of deception, the political motivation reinforces the erotic economy: while tapping Gallimard's desire to be another Pinkerton, s/he seemingly creates a high-class marketable good of him/herself as a woman, while all the time s/he is the consumer going after the goods Gallimard can sell. This ambivalence of subject-object relations (where in terms of his erotic pursuit, Gallimard is the desiring consumer, while in his political pursuit, the Chinese agent takes the dominative position) leads to the gender reversal of the final scene, where Gallimard dies as just another abandoned Madame Butterfly. Of course, the passer himself is not a free agent but the actual secret agent of the Chinese government, fully obeying his superiors. The staging of womanhood is really directed, so to speak, by them; behind all performance, agency is with the Chinese intelligence, who really act as theater directors in the sense that they both create and manipulate the Westerner's desire and at the same time move the primary performer Song so that she fully cater to his needs.

The copy/original dichotomy concerns the way in which the primacy of the "original"—whether of gender categories or earlier narratives—is being questioned. While passing is indeed a process informed by imitation, its end-product can by no means be taken as a copy. For passing, as I pointed out earlier, does not imitate the "original" ("essence") but reenacts the processes whereby that earlier "original" was constructed too. What Song performs is not some female essence but the performance of womanhood itself. She performs heterosexual performativity, thereby supplies a supporting argument to Butler's claim that "all gender is like drag, or is drag"; that "'imitation' is at the heart of the *heterosexual* project and its gender binarisms, that drag is not a secondary imitation that presupposes a prior and original gender, but that hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations" (*Bodies* 125; emphasis in original).

I think one way Hwang deconstructs the original/copy dichotomy is by having Chinese intelligence use a male rather than a female agent. For if Song's gender had been just a copy and if an "original" had been more "authentic" or useful, then they should have (and most probably would have) employed a woman, a "true woman," to seduce the Frenchman and act as his desired Butterfly. Sex is again made irrelevant in gender perfor*mance*: the "original" genital markers really do not matter—all that counts is that the perfor*mance* be credible. Of course, "true womanhood" as an "original" gender identity is parodied here: it is the man who knows best how a real woman thinks, feels, looks, or how his needs should be catered to. "[O]nly a man knows how a woman is supposed to act" (2854). Indeed, with this knowledge, s/he will "out-woman" all women, so to speak.

Similar to how drag is described by Butler as disputing "heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality" (*Bodies* 125), so too, when Song claims that only men know what a true woman is, he disputes the woman's claim on "feminine" naturalness and originality, while contributes to the parodistic re-idealization of woman. The model of true femininity is, then, a man here, along lines similar to those taken by the Polish performance artist Ktarzyna Kozyra, who was assisted by the Berlin based drag queen Gloria Viagra in best assuming the role of the truly feminine (see front flap, Wróblewska). By allowing a man to know best what a real woman is, Hwang highlights the contingency of gender and lays claim to what Butler calls the "transferability of the attribute" (*Undoing* 213): indeed, femininity, even in its "truest" form, is incidental and transferable to any other player of the mime.

But why is Gallimard so easily deceived? And, indeed, deceived in bed? This is the question posed in the French court as well:

> JUDGE: Did Monsieur Gallimard know you were a man?
> SONG: Well, he never saw me completely naked.
> JUDGE: But surely, he must've . . . how can I put this?
> SONG: Put it however you like. I'm not shy. He must've felt around? (2863)

One answer to this question is given by Song himself (dressed in a suit already): "[m]en always believe what they want to hear. So a girl can tell the most obnoxious lies and the guys will believe them every time" (2863). But Gallimard's vision is further tainted by his blind belief in Orientalism: not only does he too see what he wants to see, his stereotypes are constructed by the myth of Orientalism. So he sees the West's (sexual) mastery over the East; this is what ultimately blinds him. Gallimard wants to believe the performer who performs the stereotype so dear to his heart. (In addition to these Western clichés of the Orient, the drama exploits other national stereotypes, too: the Frenchman as sexual, as a "ladies' man" [2825], the French woman as turning a blind eye to her husband's extramarital affairs, or Scandinavian women as being uninhibited about sexual matters.) Gallimard will have to come to the recognition that neither is the West masculine, nor the East feminine; moreover, not only is it impossible to tell one Butterfly from another, copy from original, useful from fake information, but also heterosexual from homosexual, man from woman.

Hwang's is a perfor*mance* text because it reproduces some well-known scripts of gender normativity. And because of this reproduction, gender gets fixed into a single and culturally intelligible configuration: we all understand the theatrics of "Oriental womanhood," even if the performer is a man. But the question of agency emerges with a special twist here. Who acts as agent in this construction? Is it the Western man, whose sexual desire and desire for power construct the Oriental woman? Or is it the Oriental "woman" "herself," who will put on the perfor*mance* so desired by the Westerner? Or Song, who is an actual agent of the Chinese government? Or those who who control him? The answer is probably that they all do. For through these various perfor*mances* power comes to be redistributed in the play. To apply another phrase of Butler's, they "make over the terms of domination, a making over which is itself a kind of agency" (*Bodies* 137).

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I would like to conclude this section by reiterating the following claims.

First, gender passing presents new counter-arguments to the essentialist position. Whether woman becomes woman, man becomes man or, indeed, woman becomes man or man becomes woman, gender is shown as a discursive construct constituted by bodies whose biological markers have been made irrelevant.

Second, given the constructions of passing in these texts (French male artist to female sibling; nymphet to woman; Chinese man to Chinese woman, Frenchman to Japanese woman), gender's catachrestic character gets highlighted: it is shown to be a metaphor lacking its referent in "reality." The "original" biological sex of the gender performer is made totally inconsequential: the "authenticity" of the perfor*mance* has nothing to do with whether the performer is "originally" a man or a woman. In fact, there are no "original" or "true" genders to be "copied" when performed. It is not something "out there" which is cited, evoked, or imitated when gender is being performed; rather, those processes are iterated whereby gender is constructed again and again in discourse.

Third, the texts show differences in terms of agency and the degree to which they each reproduce existing scripts. The full passer, who follows normative scripts of gender perfor*mance* can lay little claim to agency other than overriding "original" biological sex; here the "new" gender will be performed simply by way of letting oneself be interpellated by a powerful ideology, some well-know script of womanhood. Yet agency does get to be problematized in texts of gender passing too, especially in gender play. Gender play will not only come about from shifting back and forth between gender constructions (which can happen in full passing too), but from the trying out of positions of in-betweenness and multiplicity, and the revealing of various forms of slippage.

The convergence of categories: race and class passing (James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*; Nella Larsen, *Passing*; Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*)

After exploring gender passing, I continue in this chapter with discussing the subject who performs race passing.[7] Similar to the gendered and sexualized subject, the racial subject is also produced in discourse. The primary marker of this subject is not simply skin color—in fact, in many cases skin color is not even the determining factor—but the place the person occupies in the hegemonic system. Thus a particular imbrication of the categories of race and class is clearly observable in the instances where race is being performed, including instances where race passing is performed. Therefore, I will explore passing as racial and social performance in James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, Nella Larsen's *Passing*, and Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*. These are novels where discourses of race and power intersect in plots of multiple transgressions. In two texts of the three, Johnson's and Larsen's, race and sexuality emerge as sites where one category can only be constituted and transgressed jointly with the other, and where the racialization of sexuality as well as the sexualization of race occurs.

The discourse of power itself structures the discourse of race. As is well-known, the black or the colored person (or the "Negro" or African or African American in the American context) is always the one occupying the socially inferior position, the oppressed, the Other, the subject subjected to power, or, to use Frantz Fanon's term, the "colonized personality," who comes about when "the colonised man and the colonial system form themselves into a structure" (*Black Skin* 201). As such, the black or African American subjectivity does not pre-exist its historical appearance, slavery, and the subsequent post-colonial situation, but is the product of the historical encounter of the colonizers with the peoples to be enslaved or colonized. Of course, race has not been a social construction only but a legal construction as well: as Gwendolyn Audrey Foster points out, "liberty and citizenship in America, from its inception, depended on being white and free" (26); "[w]hiteness defined citizenship, freedom; blackness connoted slavery, bondage" (30).This also means that when a "black" person (whose skin color is often not black at all) attempts to pass as "white," his or her passing very strongly involves a breaking out of whatever social condition his or her colonized and legal construction locked him or her into. Passing is a powerful example of how having an identity is not a matter of being born with an "original" self, but rather of taking it on in the process of performance. As Nealon puts it, "human identities do not exist as 'originals'; they come into being as they are named" (114).

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[7] I use the term *race* in its current meaning, referring, in the American context, to the identity marker of African Americans primarily. Although I am strongly aware of the fact that "race" is a misnomer and should thus be put into quotation marks throughout, but as with several other terms recently shown to be misnomers, some for other reasons (such as "black" and "white" and even "man" and "woman"), I assume a general theoretical agreement on its being a misnomer. With this position, I think it is better to refrain from the overuse of quotation marks, which, I think, puts many unnecessary artificial breaks into the text.

Race is therefore another catachrestic marker which lacks its referent; another signifier which is not only without a signified but is produced out of its differences from other signifiers. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has famously pointed out, "as a meaningful criterion within the biological sciences," race "has long been recognized to be a fiction" ("Writing 'Race'" 4). Indeed, it is a misnomer and a metaphor. I would go even further and claim that "race," a catachresis lacking its signified and structured solely by difference with relation to other signifiers, satisfies the definition of Derridian *différance*: its meaning derives from always differing and deferring. Lacking in concrete signified anchored in biology, it is always constructed and interpreted with regard to its other constructions. Nowhere is this *différance* more obvious than in the processes of construction; nowhere is it more clearly stated than in instances where performance wholly leaves the body, that is, in race passing.

Much like gender passing, race passing is also an asymmetrical term. I claimed earlier, in connection with gender passing, a predominance of one passing direction; in the case of gender passing, this was male to female passing, which I explained with the fact that it seemed easier to stage marked (female, feminine) than unmarked categories (male, masculine). The logic of this reasoning would necessitate the predominance of white to black passing, which is, of course, not the case. Although blackface shows, where white masquerades as black (and which would serve as the racial parallel of male to female passing), have always existed, race passing in the United States (and American literature) has consisted predominantly of black passing for white. The reason for this is obvious: blacks have passed, or tried to pass, for white with the hope of leaving behind a position of oppression, slavery, or post-coloniality. As Susan Gubar points out, in "the masquerade of whiteness . . . the passers comprehend exactly the gratuitous privileges" that go with being white (*Racechanges* 105). These are the cases I am primarily interested in too: where the masquerade is not mere theatrics, race play, but a deadly serious full performance, involving a radical change in social position and resulting in the ultimate destabilization of the category of race. In fact, the most exciting instances are those where passing is not an effort of masquerade to cover up an assumed "real" race, but rather an inherent part of the subject's performative self-construction into either back or white. In fact, the term *passing* proves to be a misnomer too, simply reflecting the biological justification (in the form of the one drop of blood rule) of the hegemonic group's hold to power. However, because I consider the claims that "race is biology" to be a myth in both cases—that is, when visibility makes a person's racial identity stable (when skin color makes it "obvious" and allows the person to consider himself/herself of a particular race) and when invisibility destabilizes race and racial awareness (when the person is unsure of the race he/she has)—I will still use the term, thereby emphasizing that race is a catachrestic cultural construct, no matter what seems visible and what doesn't.

Race passing, especially when white is the color (and class) targeted, denaturalizes whiteness and consequently deconstructs the white/black binary. Race passing challenges the belief in the essentialism, stability, and permanence of binary categories, while also challenges, as Juda Bennett points out, "the essentialist metaphors of 'black' and 'white'" (37). Conceptualized as a performative process, it makes visible the permeability of boundaries, while introducing the possibility unthinkable in the history of logocentrism: the undoing of binaries and ultimately the displacement of the whole system of binary thinking. With binary oppositions questioned, race becomes relative, meaningful only in the realm of the signifier, when difference structures sameness.

By performing whiteness, the passer makes visible what was formerly invisible, and makes marked categories out of categories that were formerly considered unmarked. The exploration of the performative-discursive processes, in turn, supports the radical theses of "whiteness studies," which question the invisibility of whiteness and the assumptions behind whiteness as the "natural" cultural "norm." Whiteness too proves to be not a biological given but a cultural construct, a chatachresis lacking a referent. This is so in spite of the fact that whites very often assume whiteness to be "natural," a color which is not one and a race which is, again, not one, to adopt Luce Irigaray's well-known phrase made widely current in connection with gender. bell hooks has pointed out, for example, how little white liberals see themselves as white (*Black Looks* 167); similarly, Hazel Carby noted the degree to which white students take for granted that primarily blacks constitute the "racialized subject" ("Multicultural" 193). Carby calls for admitting that everyone is a racialized subject and that whiteness is also an invented category (which I too demonstrated in my discussion of the perfor*mance*s of Southern white womanhood).

> Theoretically, we should be arguing that everyone in this social order has been constructed in our political imagination as a racialized subject. In this sense, it is important to think about the invention of the category of whiteness as well as that of blackness and, consequently, to make visible what is rendered invisible when viewed as the normative state of existence: the (white) point in space from which we tend to identify difference. ("Multicultural" 193)

"[D]o we honestly think that some people lack color," she continues,

> Do white women and men have no color? What does it mean socially, politically, and culturally not to have color? Are those without color not implicated in a society

> structured in dominance by race? Are those without color outside the hierarchy of social relations and not racialized? Are only the so-called colored to be the subjects of a specialized discourse of difference? And, most important, do existing power relations remain intact and unchallenged by this discourse? (194)

I believe that studies in passing intersect with whiteness studies at some very significant points. First, they both emphasize that white is a color just like black or brown or yellow; they both refute that whiteness should claim, as Susan Gubar points out, a "universalized default position" (*Critical Condition* 24). They both make whiteness visible by tracing its processes of performative construction. Second, they destabilize the normativity of whiteness: they "make strange" whiteness, to use Richard Dyer's term from his landmark book entitled *White*; "the racing of whites is to dislodge them/us from the position of power" and allow them to be "represented to themselves *as* whites" (3–4; emphasis in original). Dyer also notes the intimate alliance of whiteness to heterosexuality, which will be significant in at least two of my case studies (*The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* and *Passing*): race is "always about the reproduction of bodies through heterosexuality" (25). "Race and gender are ineluctably intertwined," he goes on, "through the primacy of heterosexuality in reproducing the former and defining the latter" (30). Mason Stokes comes to a similar conclusion when calling whiteness and heterosexuality "analogous structures—normative copartners in the coercions of racial and sexual power" (*Color* 191). Studies in race passing done from the performative perspective will disprivilege both whiteness and heterosexuality, stripping them both of perceptions of normativity and invisibility.

Not only does the passer make whiteness visible (by performing it), but also makes blackness invisible (by hiding it). Here studies in passing and whiteness studies intersect again in that they both discredit whiteness as the master signifier and racial (supremacist) thinking. Once the visible becomes invisible and the invisible visible, race itself gets wholly destabilized. Race ceases to be "fundamentally a regime of looking," a "practice of visibility," as Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks defined it (2). This "a regime of visibility that secures our investment in racial identity" (21) indeed evaporates in passing.

With passing, race ceases to be single and pure; instead, hybridity and multiplicity are taken as the general conditions of human identity, where the limits themselves are constructed, therefore movable and permeable. Coming from the *mestiza* subjectivity of the Chicana who grew up within a Spanish-speaking community embedded into the larger English-speaking society, Gloria Anzaldúa made the famed claim, "I made the choice to be queer" (*Borderlands* 41), underscoring this understanding of hybridity and multiplicity as vehicles of agency involved in acquiring multiple subjectivities.

Three observations that I made earlier—about the intersection of race and power; race being a purely discursive construction, a catachresis; and whiteness as being a construction too—figure in race passing, I want to suggest, as presuppositions which performativity responds to. The first such presupposition can be formulated as 'race is a shameful stigma, which should be kept in secret.' Passing, therefore, is performed out of social-political motivation; it is the vehicle of upward mobility that allows the subject to leave behind a racialized society. The second presupposition concerns the fact that race as a biological phenomenon is an empty category which can be filled by performing it. If race is what Anthony Appiah suggests, the "biologizing [of] what *is* culture," then passing is making it again into the "metonym for culture" (*In My Father's House* 45). Passing, in other words, de-biologizes race through cultural performance. Race is always illocutionary, that is, performative, responding to some governing ideology. To quote David Goldberg,

> [R]ace is whatever anyone *in* using that term or its cognates conceives of collective social relations. It is, in this sense, any group designation one ascribes of oneself as such (that is, as race, or under the sign) or which is so ascribed by others. Its meanings, as its forces, are always illocutionary. (81)

The third presupposition at work here refers to whiteness as a construction: a becoming, rather than a being. Only through the refutation of the presupposition underlying hegemonic discourse, that "whiteness is the natural cultural norm; only black is race," does the possibility of race passing emerge. Indeed, without assuming that whiteness itself is a socially constructed color or race, passing could not even be attempted. The person determined to pass knows that whiteness can be attained by the dramatic perfor*mance* of whiteness.

Foregrounding race as catachresis:
James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*

James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) offers a particular case of race passing, where, as I will show, race is foregrounded as pure construction, a catachresis lacking its referent. Although I agree with Martin Japtok's demonstration of the novel as partaking both in "a rhetoric of constructionism and in a rhetoric of essentialism" (34), I believe that ultimately anti-essentialism prevails in the form of the protagonist's inability to anchor his race in either black or white. Indeed, what he must find out is that he does not "have" a "true" or "real" race which he would hide through the mimicry of passing. The "incarnation of DuBoisian double consciousness," as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., points out (qtd in Japtok 32), the protagonist-narrator hesitates between making himself into white and making himself into black. Rejecting what Kathleen Pfeiffer calls "the ontology of racial categories" (404), he is never really comfortable with either identity; does not consider either his blackness or his whiteness as "natural" or "essential." So he will construct himself performatively each time. Although the plot can be read, as W. Lawrence Hogue suggests, as the chronicle of "the dominant society's myth of the rugged individual's quest for freedom" (41) as well, I believe that the anonymous protagonist actually beats white society at its own game by taking on an identity reserved for the dominant group. In this passing novel which presents, to use Ginsberg's words, the "complex imbrications of race and gender" (13), the protagonist, a man of multiple subject positions and sites of identification, moves back and forth between races and sexualities (and genders as a consequence): feminized and racialized (into black) in some relationships, he "passes" in others, by perfor*mance*, as a white heterosexual male. The protagonist makes himself into these multiple subjects by the performative power of the first person singular: it is indeed the genre of the confession, defined in performative terms by Foucault, which allows his multiple self-constructions (see "Beginnings"). Here the novel offers an example of generic passing[8] as well, where, as several critics have pointed out, Johnson transgresses the boundary between fiction and autobiography (see Donald C. Goellnicht 20; Pfeiffer 403; Samira Kawash 60).[9]

Born in a little town of Georgia after the Civil War, the anonymous narrator lives with his mother in a no name town. Uncertainty permeates his whole life: neither black nor white, neither poor nor rich, neither slave nor aristocrat—in fact, he is all of these. According to one of his earliest memories, his mother tried constantly to scrub his skin in the bathtub, thereby making him symbolically white.

> These tubs were the earliest aversion of my life, for regularly on certain evenings I was plunged into one of them, and scrubbed until my skin ached. I can remember to this day the pain caused by the strong, rank soap getting into my eyes. (778)

In another memory, he sees an elegant white man visit their home regularly. The boy must perform various favors for the mother's white patron, who then rewards him with bright coins, constructing him into the slave mulatto child, who is paid for his "services." Through the white man's patronage, mother and son are well-off: she becomes a dressmaker for white women, while he, spectacularly transgressing his own social class, becomes "a perfect little aristocrat" (779). The boy goes to a mixed school, where he, attracted to both races, makes two friends: a white boy, "Red Head," who becomes his protector, and a black boy, "Shiny," whom he idolizes. These are the first relationships where both his race and gender become malleable and relative. When he is with Red Head, not only does his skin color stick out, but he is objectified and is treated as a girl too; yet when he is next to Shiny, his whiteness and subjecthood are emphasized. With Shiny it is him who is attracted to the feminized other, whose "face was as black as night, but shone as though it was polished; he had sparkling eyes, and when he opened his mouth he displayed glistening white teeth" (782). He recognizes his "dual personality" (785) in what John Sheehy describes as a true Lacanian mirror scene, after he is told in school that he is a "nigger" (783). Checking his features, he sees ivory white skin as well as "liquid" dark eyes and black lashes (784); taking both the subject and the object positions, he is the one who looks (and wants to know) and the one who is looked at, or specularized (and wants to be known).

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[8] In order to assume generic passing here, one needs to accept such traditional categories of the epic genre as the novel and the autobiography. Otherwise, I believe it is equally valid to see Johnson's text as deconstructing the novel/autobiography distinction. Moreover, this deconstruction would support the claim of József Szili concerning the replacement of the category of the epic with the more inclusive category of the catalogue, which he defines as the hypothetical archaic genre relying solely on narrative sequentiality (see *A poétikai műnemek*).

[9] This generic passing is quite like the generic ambivalence between autobiography and fiction in Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Le miroir qui revient*, as described by Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (see *„A regény, amint írja önmagát"* 178ff).

> I was accustomed to hear remarks about my beauty; but, now, for the first time, I became conscious of it, and recognized it. I noticed the ivory whiteness of my skin, the beauty of my mouth, the size and liquid darkness of my eyes, and how the long black lashes that fringed and shaded them produced an effect that was strangely fascinating even to me. I noticed the softness and glossiness of my dark hair that fell in waves over my temples, making my forehead appear whiter than it really was. How long I stood there gazing at my image I do not know. (784)

After this scene he becomes conscious of his racial origin. I agree with Japtok with respect to the ex-colored man's accepting the "fact" that he is colored; indeed, from this point on, he cannot ignore his race. As Japtok puts it, "[o]nce he *knows* he is 'coloured' according to U.S. racial logic, he cannot be 'white' again the same way . . . he accepts that logic, internalizes it, and acquired double-consciousness; he cannot simply *be* but is always conscious of being, seeing himself through a DuBoisian 'veil,' as 'whites' might see him" (32; emphasis in original). His has been interpellated by white supremacist ideology, thus has not choice but to accept the essentialist argument.

On the other hand, in the rest of the novel he comes to realize that ambiguity is the only certainty about his racial identity. So he will construct and reconstruct himself several times, sometimes through full passing, at other times through play passing. Knowing now that there is nothing to know, he spends his life shuffling between identities, races, genders, and sexualities, as well as worlds and cities. He becomes a pianist, having found in the black-and-white keyed piano the appropriate instrument which allows him to move between black and white. Moreover, he finds his genre too, ragtime music, the vogue initiated by blacks but picked up by whites. Soon he develops an African American race consciousness. Although here the protagonist seems to embrace a previously unacknowledged racial identity, his narrative cannot be considered a coming out narrative. There is no “true” racial self, which he now lets out of his closet; he finds no way to “out” a “true” identity. In other words, his self-construction is performative rather than constative. In fact, it is a perfor*mance*, which does not reveal an already existing racialized self, but actually brings this self into being. He takes pride in Shiny, the class orator, who allows him “to form wild dreams of bringing glory and honor to the Negro race” (795). Having recognized the “peculiar fascination which the South held over [his] imagination” (797), he decides, after his mother’s death, to go to college in Atlanta. In the South, they again see him as white: again it is the difference between the signifiers which structures his race. So he goes North, where his racialization promptly happens: finding himself displayed for the gaze of men, he is objectified-feminized in the New York pool room.

> I could feel that I had gained the attention and respect of everybody in the room, every eye was fixed on me, and the widespread question, “Who is he?” went around. This was gratifying to a certain sense of vanity of which I have never been able to rid myself. . . . (814)

If Paul de Man is right about prosopoeia being “the trope of autobiography, by which one’s name . . . is made intelligible and memorable as a face” (“Autobiography” 76), then the Johnson text is informed by a double prosopoeia: here autobiography confers two faces, one black-female-homosexual and one white-male-heterosexual, upon the narrator. Shuffling as he is between races, genders, and sexualities, he remains consistent when taking on either of these two faces: he either chooses the subject position of the white heterosexual man or the object position of the black homosexual “woman.” Where there is a slippage in this consistency, he crosses inflectional boundaries: first when toying with the identity of a “white” “girl” (when looking at himself in the mirror) and later when contemplating the violation of manhood by a Negro (when watching the lynching scene). In both cases he refuses the mixing of racial and gender categories in the form of [white + female] and [black + male] by distancing himself from these images which, as Kristevan abject, seem to threaten the borders of his self.

As the narrative of multiple—racial, gender, and sexual—passing, the novel presents a protagonist passing within what Valerie Smith calls “the discourse of intersectionality” (35). Indeed, as race, gender, and sexuality emerge out of the permutations of power, the body of the protagonist becomes the discursive site of multiple intersectionality. His passing is at least two-fold: he performs racial and sexual—and, concomitantly, gender—transgression. On the one hand, his self-construction as “Negro” coincides with his feminization in a homosocial (homosexual?) relationship. While in such white fantasy of blackness as T. S. Eliot’s “Sweeney Agonistes,” where, as Rachel Blau DuPlessis has demonstrated, “the appropriation of the primitive force” of the “savage” character allows the white man to achieve a “remasculinizing uplift” (*Genders, Races* 104), in Johnson's novel the black man is stripped of his male power. Indeed, he becomes feminized, appearing either as the beautiful object (the object of attraction of white men) or the kept [wo]man, who enjoys the patronage of older (white) men: "When I grew to manhood I found myself freer with elderly white people than with those near my own age," he remarks (786). In his relationship with his older patron, where he play passes as a woman, he is again described as a kept woman, feminized and eroticized. On the other hand, his self-construction as white goes together with being masculinized in a heterosexual relationship while attempting full passing. All aspects of his identity are presented as mutable and transgressive, negotiated and renegotiated in various situations.

His objectification is complete when he meets a "clean-cut, slender, but athletic-looking man," who takes the narrator under his patronage. Required to perform certain "services" for a white man, he will again find himself in the position of a kept (black) woman (much like his mother was), a concubine, a piece of property, possessed by a "relentless tyrant" of a man (825). In this relationship of rigid hierarchy, his race and gender will be relativized. Still, to add to the narrator's "troubled state of mind" (835) resulting from his growing sense of racial ambiguity, the white patron, when hearing of the ex-colored man's determination to return to the South, argues for his whiteness. He uses both the essentialist and the constructivist arguments, insisting that he is a white man in terms of both biology and "making": "My boy, you are by blood, by appearance, by education and by tastes, a white man" (834), adding the constructivist conclusion, "This idea you have of making a Negro out of yourself is nothing more than a sentiment" (834). And, indeed, back in the South, the ex-colored man constitutes himself as white in a scene which might be considered one of the most significant moments of the book from the perspective of his racial consciousness. This is the lynching scene, where, while full passing, he mingles with the whites, the "fierce, determined men" (850), participating in the construction of the black man as a spectacle. "[F]ixed to the spot," he cannot take his eyes off the burning black man, yet he will not give himself away:

> He squirmed, he writhed, strained at his chains, then gave out cries and groans that I shall always hear. The cries and groans were choked off by the fire and smoke; but his eyes bulging from their sockets, rolled from side to side, . . . Some of the crowd yelled and cheered, others seemed appalled at what they had done, and there were those who turned away sickened at the sight. I was fixed to the spot where I stood, powerless to take my eyes from what I did not want to see. (851)

Standing in the white crowd all along, he transgresses the racial position which he holds at this time. This scene of the lynching will only strengthen his determination to abandon "his" race. Unable to bear any longer the "shame at being identified with a people that could with impunity be treated worse than animals" (853), he comes to the decision that it is not necessary to go about with the "label of inferiority pasted across [his] forehead" (852).

Feeling to have mis-taken the identity he happened to choose, he always feels bad about his choice. At one point this discomfort is amplified into a moral crisis: when at the end he chooses whiteness and feels that he has betrayed "his" race, having sold his "birthright," like Esau, "for a mess of pottage" (861). But, as Siobhan B. Somerville has so aptly pointed out, his choice here involves not just race but also sexuality: the two elements of his interracial heterosexuality together make up his transgression (124; see also Cheryl Clarke). With his marriage he dons whiteness and heterosexuality at the same time, leaving behind his racial past, as well as his former sexual and gender identities. I see this turn of the plot as illustrating two theses of Mason Stokes: that the marriage-plot emerges as the narrative superstructure when whiteness and heterosexuality meet (19), and that whiteness and heterosexuality actually threaten one another:

> Although the forms of heterosexuality—marriage, for example—pretend to create a racial order out of mongrel chaos, the pretense is never entirely persuasive. In some cases, heterosexuality's "coming to the rescue" not only doesn't "save" whiteness; it in fact reveals things about heterosexuality—and about whiteness—that their adherents would be shocked to discover. (20)

Indeed, in the case of the anonymous protagonist of the *Autobiography,* heterosexuality (marriage) will threaten whiteness: not just in the sense that the children will not be necessarily "white," but also because his having once been an "ex-colored" man—which, as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., points out, "is simply another form of 'colored'" (*Figures* 202)—will be revealed. Ultimately his identity as a white father and the widower of a white woman is the result of a successful perfor*mance* of socially accepted white masculinity. His passing is a complex perfor*mance* relating to power, and involves race, class, gender, and sexuality at the same time.

The narrative trajectory of the novel follows the expectations of classic passing texts as defined by Valerie Smith: indeed, passing for white will figure as the betrayal of the black race, giving associations of black accommodationism (see 36). Moreover, in this novel, where passing will have multiple reverberations, these associations will be multiplied: whatever he does, it seems he is passing—whether for black/woman/homosexual (in his relationship with his white patron) or for white/man/heterosexual (in his marriage)—for the sake of some race, gender, or class privilege.

Two models of race passing: mask and catachresis: Nella Larsen, *Passing*

Nella Larsen also presents a complex case of racial, sexual, and class transgression in her 1929 short novel, *Passing*. Employing not one but two passer protagonists who complement each other in many ways—or are, as Ann duCille claims, "body doubles" (104) or "halved selves" (105)—Larsen is able to create a tension between racial subjects constructed by masking strategies and subjects informed by a catachrestic notion of race.

I see a fundamental similarity between *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* and *Passing* in how they problematize biology, or "essence." As I tried to show, Johnson is rather hesitant in tying race to biology: his ex-colored protagonist will ultimately not have a "true" race which he either masks or uncovers in perfor*mance*. Indeed, his self-construction as black (which would be considered reverse passing in the case of whites) is no less of a perfor*mance* than his passing as white; race is pure catachresis in either case. Larsen conceptualizes race through two protagonist: as a one-way perfor*mance* in the case of Irene and as a two-way perfor*mance* in the case of Clare. Of the two protagonists, Irene clearly has a racial home, so to speak, to which she can always return. But ultimately no such "racial homecoming," as Gayle Wald aptly puts it (47), is granted to Clare, should she discard her "ivory mask" (*Passing* 157). This is why I see Larsen's novel as complying with all five features of the passing novel as defined by Juda Bennett—"chiarusco" style, polemics of racial justice, the topos of an almost atavistic return home, the secrecy and exposure, and the death of the heroine (48)—through the figure of Irene only. When it comes to Clare, Larsen, much like Johnson, destabilizes the racial home base and is not really concerned with racial justice.

Already on the first pages the reader is led to associate "theatrical heroics" (144) with the character of Clare Kendry, who has performed full passing after she has married a white man and kept her "true" identity secret. She is described by Irene Redfield, the central consciousness of the novel, as a passer of no race loyalty, a woman without any "allegiance beyond her own immediate desire" (144), but who now says she has "an ache, a pain that never ceases" (145). The difference between these two women, which Irene tries to enlarge in her free indirect discourse, all but diminishes in the scene where the two women meet in Drayton's, a restaurant in Chicago which does not "sit a Negro" (150) and stare at each other. They become the objects of each other's "persistent attention" (149), "outstaring" each other in a staring game provoked, at least for Irene, by the suspicion of her passing. It is this long stare which Barbara Johnson takes as supporting the irresistible sexual magnetism in this "overinvested and underexplained" relationship between the two women (*Feminist Difference* 160). Yet the scene is notable for another reason too: although Irene attaches the inability “to tell” to “stupid” whites only (150), it turns out that it is impossible even for blacks, and even for black women themselves wearing transgressive masks, to know race, or to know who is attempting full race passing. While Irene assumes that there exists a “true” race which is possible to tell or know, she must realize that biology is not socially readable, therefore, as Clare’s passing to and fro indicates, it does not exist. Especially in Clare’s case is it made obvious that race is not biological but discursive. No biological trait connects her either to the white or the black race. Only by introducing, which she never does, blackness as a “conversational marker,” as Butler puts it (*Bodies* 171), would her race have been made visible to her husband; and only when she associates with blacks does she “become” black, as if, Butler aptly puts it, “through proximity” (171). In other words, she becomes black by association: through similarities to and differences from other catachrestic signifiers, the racialized subjects of the black community.

For Irene, passing, “this breaking away from all that was familiar and friendly,” is a “hazardous business” (157); in her case, passing is, indeed, the taking on of “false, forged, and mistaken identities,” as Deborah McDowell claims (“Introduction” xxx). For Clare, however, her supposed homecoming to her familiar environment is an adventure. Clare has neither “true” identity, nor false or mistaken identity; she must construct her identity—which is, as Thadious M. Davis has rightly claimed, “racial fluidity” (ix)—each time, whether she makes herself into white or black. Of course, in both cases, passing involves class mobility as well; but while Clare’s class passing is the consequence of her race passing, in Irene’s case her self-construction as middle-class is itself a perfor*mance* independent of her occasional instances of race passing done for the sake of convenience. For example, every day Irene performs the ritual of taking tea and she even picks up the habit of giving tea-parties; moreover, she takes on white attitudes to her black servants as well, who are of dark color and whose welfare, as Wald points out, “Irene seems wholly unconcerned with” (49). These seem to me perfect examples of Homi Bhabha’s concept of colonial mimicry, where the colonized copy customs of the colonizers and perform them with a difference (86).

A complex ambivalence permeates Irene’s relationship to Clare: not wanting to see her, she finds herself setting up newer and newer engagements with the woman; determined that “she was through with Clare Kendry” (163), she yet bathes in the “seduction of Clare Kendry’s smile” (162), finding her voice “appealing” and “seductive” too (165). As Barbara Johnson’s observes, “Irene’s ‘no’ constantly becomes a yes,” thereby providing another “sign” of their sexual-erotic attraction (*Feminist Difference* 160). Irene is similarly ambivalent in connection with passing, admitting that blacks “disapprove of it and at the same time condone it” and that it “excites [their] contempt and yet [they] rather admire it” (185–186). In line with this admittance, she faults Clare, but manages to excuse herself. As she says to her friend Felise, “I don’t believe I’ve ever gone native in my life except for the sake of convenience, restaurants, theatre tickets, and things like that. Never socially I mean" (227).

Two elements gain emphasis when passing is thematized in the novel: the passer becomes the object of the gaze, and the scene, or some aspect of it, is described as "queer." The latter happens when Clare talks about her aunts who made the Negro girl into white (159), when Clare is shown at the height of her race perfor*mance* for her husband and is assisted by her two black friends (171, 172), or when Irene starts to be suspicious of another transgression of Clare's, her sexual violation of Irene's marriage (216), as well as Brian's sexual transgression (209). These are indeed queer situations, where the transgressor, concealing his or her racial origins or sexual practices, enters into dangerous games which threaten the status quo. I see these situations labeled as "queer" by the narrator to coincide with catachrestic passing, that is, when there is no "true" identity covered up by a mask, but when all identities are discursively performed. Moreover, I believe "queer" indicates instances of racial and sexual fluidity as well, making, as Davis claims, Clare into a "biracial and bisexual person" into whose personality, moreover, Larsen has scripted a "variety of moves for power and agency," "a mobility usually endemic to male subjects" (xiv).

Several instances of Clare's objectification can be cited for where the passer is made into the object of the gaze: "easy on the eyes" (207), she is able to give immense "aesthetic pleasure" to the onlooker (209). Each time Clare appears, her absolute beauty is acknowledged by Irene in what Bennett terms "'chiascuro' or 'Manichean' style," depicting the world "primarily in 'black' and 'white,' with particular attention to skin and eye color" (48). Indeed, her "dark, almost black, eyes" and "the ivory of her white skin" (148) are emphasized when she is first seen on the roof of Drayton's. Later too it is her "unsheared" "pale gold" hair, her "ivory skin [with] a peculiar soft lustre" and her "magnificent! dark, sometimes absolutely black, always luminous" eyes, "Negro eyes! mysterious and concealing" (160) that catches Irene's attention. But Clare's objectification does not stop here: in fact, she becomes a spectacle when she goes to the Negro Welfare League dance as well.

> Clare, exquisite, golden, fragrant, flaunting, in a stately gown of shining black taffeta, whose long, full skirt lay in graceful folds about her slim golden feet; her glistening hair drawn smoothly back into a small twist at the nape of her neck; her eyes sparkling like dark jewels. (203)

Irene is drawn to this beautiful exotic object in part out of her own desire and in part, as Butler points out, because her husband is drawn to the woman; as Butler claims, Irene "finds [Clare] beautiful, but at the same time finds Brian finding Clare beautiful as well" (*Bodies* 186). Clare's heterosexual transgression—or Irene's fantasy of it—seems to provoke the fantasy of homosexual transgression for Irene.

I would like to emphasize another issue here too. Clare, it seems, is no more at home, or less transparent, among blacks; she sticks out of the black background, which is supposed to be her native and familiar context, just as she sticks out of any white background (like Drayton's). Never able to attain the invisibility of the familiar, Clare's "passing figure," to use Bennett's phrase, is always foregrounded, always de-familiarized. Clare emerges as the ultimate passer and performer, the alien trespasser and, let's say, "tresperformer," of any environment: she is, indeed, a two-way passer. Although she thought for a while that homecoming was possible, she must realize that for her race is always construct, always catachresis. Clare, who Irene recognizes as "the menace of impermanence" in her marriage (229), is indeed the paragon of malleability: she can change races, sexualities, and subject positions, and as a consequence of her own multiple transgressions, she can destabilize situations and liaisons around herself. A "character with multiple significations," as Martha J. Cutter remarks (84), Clare's "plural identity destabilizes others' sense of identity" (89). In a desperate effort to reclaim the security of her marriage, to "hold fast to the outer shell of her marriage, to keep her life fixed, certain" (*Passing* 235), Irene contemplates revealing Clare's secret to her husband, until she is practically saved by the "accident" of Clare falling/jumping/being pushed out of the sixth-storey window—much like the cigarette Irene throws out of the window (238), Clare's body, "a vital glowing thing," falls "like a flame of red and gold" (239). Always cutting through the binaries of categories of race, class, and sexuality, the ultimate ambiguity surrounding Clare's death seems to underpin the ambivalence of her destabilizing transgressions.

The topos of the text as the vehicle of (self-)construction: Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*

In Philip Roth's *The Human Stain* (2000), the protagonist Coleman Silk, classics professor and former dean of small Athena College, full passes from black to white, more precisely, to the ethnically marked version of white, Jewish. Having, as a man of colored ancestry, performed Jewishness, he simply replaced one stigma for another, it seems; but "he now made sense": "a heretofore unknown amalgam of the most unalike of America's historic undesirables" (132). On the faculty of this all-white New England school, he teaches the foundations of Western culture; Silk has, so to speak, "out-whited" whites. As his sister tells the narrator at the end of the novel,

> As white a college as there was in New England, and that's where Coleman made his career. As white a subject as there was in the curriculum, and that's what Coleman chose to teach. . . . Coleman is more white than the whites. (336)

The fundamental topos of the novel is textuality: the text, the narrative is foregrounded in several ways. First, Silk's perfor*mance* is all too discursive. He invents his Jewishness with words, when at age twenty-six he decides to fiction his racial origins, making up an elaborate story about the saloon keeper Jewish father and the whole family. He passes down this fiction to his four children, providing the grounds for their Jewishness too. So, it seems, all races can be performed, the Jewish included; all one needs is a narrative of family origins, which will performatively bring about the Jewish identity. In other words, the identity does not pre-exist the narrative, rather it is the narrative that makes identity.

Second, the reader gets familiarized with Silk's passing through Nathan Zuckerman's imagining the events. In his imaginative reconstruction, the narrator does not tell of how it "really" happened, but necessarily only how he imagined it to have happened. In other words, what at first looks like a metalepsis, the crossing between "the world in which one tells [and] the world of which one tells," to quote Genette again (236), turns out to be intertextuality, the meeting of two textual worlds, the world of narrating and the world of imagining. It is "imagined life," as Derek Parker Royal puts it (117), that the narrator narrates, constructing "much of the novel as fiction" (122).

Third, the final fall of Silk is brought about by a text of sorts too: an old-fashioned and highly innocent comment. His words get interpreted by Athena purists, this "highly judgmental and self-righteous" academic community, as one critic puts it (Safer 211), as a racial slur, causing his ultimate downfall. He becomes the victim of the "calculating frenzy" and "persecuting spirit," as Zuckerman quotes Hawthorne (2), much like Clinton became the victim of a comparable frenzy and spirit during the same year, in 1998, Roth suggests. Unable to uncover his secret, Silk must die a death fitting a Greek hero, "in battle" (see Timothy L. Parrish 454), where the deaths of his wife and girlfriend come about as collateral damage to the primal tragedy.

As in several other novels of passing, including the ones I discussed earlier, the passer will be punished for crossing the color line. Like Clare in *Passing*, Coleman must die a violent death; and like the ex-colored man in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, he will lose his wife (and girlfriend) too. But his crime is somewhat different: it is not his race—for he feels no moral obligation to his biological brethren, which is why his brother thinks he is "the traitor to his race" (342)—but his family whom he betrays and for whose betrayal he must die. The "unshakable enmity" (61) which Mark feels for his father—the blind belief "that he was going to have his father around to hate forever" (314)—takes him to becoming an Orthodox Jew. He too will be punished for so thoroughly hating his father by never having the chance to know Coleman's (and now the whole family's) secret. So while Coleman takes Mark's hatred as a punishment, he too punishes the son, also a passer, albeit unknowingly, by "withholding something so crucial to what a person is, . . . their birthright to know their genealogies" (320). "Payback. There was no end to it," Zuckerman concludes (71). Roth indeed foregrounds the inevitability of Silk's fall: like Oedipus, he might think that with his children born (white), he managed to flee his fate, the "universal burden of his 'human stain,'" as Timothy L. Parrish puts it (454), only to have it return with a full-blown vengeance, killing them all. (On the Silk-Oedipus parallels, see Patrice D. Rankine.)

Several times Nathan Zuckerman presents Silk objectified, the object of his gaze. Not only does Silk, together with his secret, of course, occupy the narrator's attention, but he is often defined in his corporeality, whether as a Jew or an African American. The first long description comes in the memorable scene of the dance: Zuckerman sees Silk as "the small-nosed Jewish type" verging on the Negroid: "one of those crimped-haired Jews of a light yellowish skin pigmentation who possess something of the ambiguous aura of the pale blacks who are sometimes taken for white" (15–16). Again, race is not possible to tell, even for a most perceptive narrator, who is Jewish himself. Much like in the Larsen novel, race will be read not as skin color but by association here too: as a boy, he gets identified as Jewish because he boxes in the team of Doc, the Jewish trainer. "You look like you look, you're with me, and so he's going to think that you're one of Doc's boys. He's going to think that you're Jewish," he tells Coleman (99). Only in a brothel in the segregated South is he kicked out for being "just another nigger" (102); in "niggertown" 183), his race is read again by association. After this incident, when filling out the navy enlistment forms, he decides to pass officially. His passing becomes final, however, only when his college girlfriend, Steena Palson—who otherwise never detected his color, not even when they were naked—breaks up with him after meeting his colored mother. He can pass because he feels no race loyalty: "[b]eing a Negro was just never an issue with him," his sister Ernestine tells Nathan much later (325). Running away as far as possible from "the tyranny of the we and its we-talk" (108), Coleman decides to craft and follow his own personal Emancipation Proclamation and thereby make himself into a free individual.

> [F]ar from there being anything wrong with his decision to identify himself as white, it was the most natural thing for someone with his outlook and temperament and skin color to have done. All he'd ever wanted, from earliest childhood on, was to be free: not black, not even white—just on his own and free. (120)

This Emancipation Proclamation is the invented narrative of his family history: it is a piece of discourse whereby he is capable of reinventing himself. When she is visited by her son for the last time in their lives, she is naturally crushed at the thought of never seeing him again, or ever seeing his wife or children. She is disappointed because Coleman shows no race consciousness: "Lost himself to his own people," she says (324). But for Silk race consciousness is not the issue: it is the lack of a piece of discourse comparable to the one he makes up which allows his self-construction as a Jew "You think like a prisoner. You do, Coleman Brutus. You're white as snow and you think like a slave," the mother tells him (139). What she does not understand is that he gains a different kind of freedom by the invention of his own text and by his self-fashioning as a Jew.

Coleman never reveals to Iris, his wife, that, having come from an African American family, he performed full passing. In fact, Iris's fuzzy hair seemed like a good cover-up, should their children exhibit Negroid traits. Recognizing this, he "wondered if this entire decision, the most monumental of his life, wasn't based on the least serious thing imaginable: Iris's hair, that sinuous thicket of hair that was far more Negroid than Coleman's" (136). Ultimately, his Jewishness becomes naturalized, by association again, on the campus: it is the academic community whose proxy makes his passing fully credible. And perhaps it is no accident that his secret will be revealed to another Jew, Nathan Zuckerman, whose investigative proxy, providing them with a chance to reveal their racial *différance*, will put Silk's Jewishness into a new perspective.

Silk and his son are not the only passers, however. Faunia Farley, abused by her stepfather when she was a child, abused by her Vietnam veteran husband during their marriage and after, and tormented by the memory of the death of her children, lives a life in hiding. As the janitor cleaning in the college and the post office, she has disowned her past as a "rich, privileged kid," a "blond angelic child" (29), now concealing all her miseries "behind one of those inexpressive bone faces that hide nothing and bespeak an immense loneliness" (1–2). She is a traumatized individual, immobilized to the degree that now her overall response to life is disconnection and removal. As the narrator puts it in the novel, "She had managed to make herself so that *she* wasn't even here to be seen. The skill of an animal, whether predator or prey" (211; emphasis in original). Faunia's class passing, then, involves not just class but visibility: this white, once privileged but now traumatized woman makes a desperate effort to become invisible, to take over the position of the "invisible man."

Delphine Roux, the French professor, is another rational and, one might say, premeditated passer, who conceptualizes Americanization and American individualism in terms of performative constructionism:

> I will go to America and be the author of my life, she says; I will construct myself outside the orthodoxy of my family's given, I will fight *against* the given, impassioned subjectivity carried to the limit, individualism at its best—(273; emphasis in original)

But Roux will come nowhere close to the ideal of Transcendentalism, the withdrawing individualist and different drummer of Thureau, whose ideal emerges eslsewhere in the novel, in connection with Zuckerman as well as Silk. Roux is just a petty villain, who writes anonymous letters, speaks out on political correctness in order to bring down the Classics professor with charges of racism, and schemes, after learning of the news of Coleman's death, to blame on the former dean an embarrassing letter she mistakenly sent to her colleagues (instead of the ads department of *The New York Review of Books*). "She winds up as the author of nothing," the narrator's verdict goes (273). She is afraid to "out" with her sexual appetite, her loneliness, or her professional beliefs; and desperately wanting to save herself, she makes a pathetic effort to ruin Silk. But her efforts prove futile: Silk will be morally redeemed after his death, while she will live the rest of her life in limbo, never able to decide who she really is or wants to be.

I see the novel turn on the trope of passing: whether it is a man legally black who full passes as white (Jew), a secular Jewish boy who makes himself into an Orthodox Jew, a once privileged girl who now lives as an invisible woman, or a woman governed by her sexual appetite and drawn to old-fashioned humanists who takes on the mask of a zealous feminist. What is shared by these passers is that their perfor*mances* involve uncommon, uninvited, or unreadable transgressions. This holds especially true for the first three instances, where birth commonly determines identity now changed: passing over into Jewish, especially Orthodox, is not a move tolerated by Jewishness itself, while giving up social privilege for becoming a janitor or farm help is not a move held meaningful by society. These passers do not consider their biology or birthright as something given: rather because they see their subjectivities as catachresis, they move easily from one identity inflection to another, taking them on always by association, by proxy. "Play it any way you like, . . . that's the way I play it," the passing Coleman says to his one black girlfriend; "[w]hatever they think . . . let them think" (133).

Of course, Roth exhibits a tremendous sense of irony too, when he makes his plot turn on the self-making of a "black" man into a "Jew." On the one hand, by twice racializing his hero as the ultimate Other, he locks his protagonist the category of "race," catering, in a way, to what Virginia Domínguez calls "racialist talk" (142) dominant in American public discourse, as well as servicing and reinscribing what again Domínguez terms the "compulsory racialism of [American] nationhood" (153). Silk's full assing from "black" to Jewish underscores the fact that any member of America's "racialized Other" has no choice but to accept himself as the "perennially Other-ised 'non-white'" (Domínguez 153), whether African American or Jewish. Moreover, when Roth gives his readers a "black"/Jewish passer, he evokes an era, pre-World War II, preceding what Jon Stratton sees as "the historical shift of Jews from a racial group to an ethnic group" (348). At this time before the "ethnicization" of American Jews (Stratton 349)—the time before "Jews became white folk," to adopt the phrase from the title Karen Brodkin's well-known book on the issue—the traditional alliance still existed between African Americans and Jews (see

Paul Berman on this topic). Passing from one to the other, Coleman Silk, who remains locked into "race," embodies this alliance.

On the other hand, however, Silk's racial self-reconstruction makes mock of any "facts of biology," and, indeed, of any effort at social classification based on race. The protagonist successfully passing from one race to the other pulls the rug from under the racialist discourse setting apart "true" Americans from those who are racially marked. While ironically pointing his finger at racialist discourse, Roth exhibits Silk as the "true American," who will beat the classifiers at their own game.

* * *

In conclusion of this chapter, I would like to reiterate the following claims. Narratives of race passing problematize not only the visibility of race, but consequently the issue of biology. Performative racial constructions foreground race as catachresis, a misnomer lacking its referent. Moreover, race is presented in its interaction with other identity markers such as power and sexuality (and/or gender), where the possibility of passing along multiple subject positions suggests that those other markers might similarly act as catachreses. Neither race nor sexuality seems to pre-exist the making of the subject; they are both produced in power relations, where the discourse of power structures the discourse of race and sexuality (and/or gender). Two types of race passing can be differentiated from the perspective of the marked/unmarked dichotomy: where the subject passes over to marked and where the subject passes over to unmarked categories. It would seem that in Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* and Larsen's *Passing*, the protagonists experience both as they pass back and forth between races. However, in the case of the ex-colored man and Clare, neither form of passing involves unmarked categories: in each case, they must perform a masquerade of marking, while no "natural" racial home will shelter them. Only for Irene is there such a racial home, so when she passes as white, she too must perform, in a perfor*mance*, whiteness, while blackness is the unmarked "natural" category for her. Coleman Silk of Roth's *The Human Stain* passes purposefully between two marked races, black and Jewish, with the hope that his black traits would make him a "natural" Jew. His Jewishness is naturalized by association in the academic community. At the end, however, this Jewishness gains a new meaning when befriended by the "really" Jewish Zuckerman, making race meaningful as a difference, a *différance*, and not as self-presence.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing, I developed a performative constructionist theory and tested it on a variety of literary texts. Expanding the theories of Austin, Searle, Derrida, Althusser, Kristeva, Hillis Miller, and Butler, among others, and applying them to the reading of American literary texts, I have differentiated between two large types of performative mechanisms: (i) *strong* or *logocentric* and (ii) *discursive*. (i) I call *strong* or *logocentric* those cases of performativity, explored originally and overwhelmingly by linguistic speech act theories, where the word or the performative utterance is "strong," or binding: it brings about changes, or seems to bring about changes, in the world we experience as real. These are performative constructions of "reality" (or "things" in the Foucauldian sense). (ii) I call and describe as *discursive* those cases of performativity, explored by poststructuralist theories of literature and culture, whose exclusive context is language and other systems of signifiers. These are performative constructions of the subject, for it is ultimately the participants of discourse who get made, so to speak, through discourse.

I see two reasons for the joint yet differentiated discussion of these two types of performativity. First, they have become the objects of attention of two epistemically disparate theoretical approaches, theories of language, pragmatic theories, and speech act theories, on the one hand, and poststructuralist theories of literature and culture, on the other. Second, the performative mechanisms which I identified in literary texts as logocentric or strong seem to always take this trajectory to discursive construction. As I emphasized in the first chapters discussing instances of the logocentric version of performativity, changes by the "power of the word" are not made directly in spatial-temporal reality (be it historical or narrated); the strong or logocentric performative does not bring about "things" in the Foucauldian sense, or "outside the text" (the *hors-texte*) in the Derridian sense, as had been assumed before the poststructuralist paradigm change. In fact, only "words" (and not "things") change even in the strongest logocentric cases; it is in this sense and for this reason that whatever is brought about by performative mechanisms can be interpreted as catachresis. At the same time, one can also claim that although this entity is made in discourse, it can depart from discourse metaleptically, to find its context of operation in the "real" world (which, in my case studies, is either the historical world of historical texts or the narrated world of fictional texts).

Performative constructions of subjectivities form a neat class of social construction cases: they are such where the conceptual category interacts with the thing itself. For example, the concept of "womanhood" affects women, their construction and self-construction. Therefore, the subject is typically textual; it is a discursive construction in support of the Derridian thesis refuting outside-the-text existence. The subject's textuality is evidenced by the fact that it can construct itself through performative mechanisms; in the example cited above, woman makes herself into woman by quoting the ideal of womanhood. As I have demonstrated in my work, the subject is able to metaleptically (re)enter the physical world, the *hors-texte*, as text. As such, performativity has the ability to signal the borderline, ambivalent and receding, between text and outside-the-text.

While accepting social construction in the case of discursive subjectivity, I also critique the fashionable theories of social construction. Indeed, as I emphasize, only in those cases can we talk about the social and discursive constructedness of "things" where these things can be said to interact with their conceptual categories, binary categories in particular. In my work I explore the social constructedness of subjectivities as inflected by supposedly binary identity markers, considering them contingent cases, whose contingency is well demonstrated by performative analysis. I read texts where gender, womanhood in particular, sexuality, and "race" get performed. I differentiate between the perfor*mance* of gendered, sexualized, and raced subjectivities, where the subject performs by following existing norms, and perfor*mative* subjectivities, where social norms are resisted and the subject produced does not fit into well-rehearsed roles. I present both these types of cases as testifying to the claim that subjects do not pre-exist discourse but are produced in perfor*mance* and perfor*mative* processes. As such, they are catachreses, signifiers without pre-existing signifieds, which might move metaleptically from discourse into the physical world, where they behave as if they were signifieds, when actually they retain all along their inbuilt discursivity.

Why does all this matter? Probably because these issues concern some truly pertinent questions, which also cut very deep into our postmodern culture. Performativity offers a new angle on how we perceive the nature of the reality around us and on how we comprehend our becoming who we are. It contributes to our understanding of the constructedness of the real and the reality of the constructed world, and of how we can know, if at all, where the boundaries are. It also helps us understand how man is different (or not different) from woman, white from black, straight from gay, as well as understand the degree to which such difference is given and the degree to which is it done, performed, or played. Performativity provides us with the scripts which we follow when we "do" gender, race, and sexuality—and leaves us ponder whether we can "not do" gender, race, and sexuality. What if these scripts were only scripts, without an "original" referent—signifiers without signifieds? What if there is no "original" behind the many copies of our performances?

And finally, performativity, whether the performative construction of the "real" or performative subjectivity, tells a whole lot about how we live and think, how we act, how we participate in acts, how we live through language. Understanding the discursive subject, whether brought about by perfor*mance* or perfor*mative* processes, will give a new meaning to the idea of *Totus Mundus Agit Histrionem*, or the Shakespearean topos of "[t]his wide and universal theatre," where we are all actors playing many parts.

> All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players;
> They have their exits and their entrances,
> And one man, in his time plays many parts,
> His acts being seven ages.
> (*As You Like It* II, vii)

Because this is, indeed, what, knowingly or unknowingly, human beings do and enjoy doing, whether "out there" in the "real world" or in the textual world of literature: acting and performing, putting on masks and toying with masquerade, playing and replaying, imitating and inventing. Because performative subjectivity is really just another name for our ever-present—and all-pervasive—*comédie humaine*.

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Rosana Herrero Martín

The Doing of Telling on the Irish Stage

A Study of Language Performativity in Modern and Contemporary Irish Theatre

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Narrative performance arises as a key concept to understand the fundamental course of transformation and transfiguration undergone by reality on stage in all Irish theatre pieces here under discussion. This study pursues the performative nature of the central threefold axis *language-stage-reality* and its particular relevance within the idiosyncratic historical and identitarian parameters that have shaped a national theatrical tradition in Ireland. Part I of the book attends to a theoretical approach, aiming at an inclusive analysis of the counter-factual nature of language. The subsequent parts trace the incidence of language and its multiple and complex relationships with reality along a number of theatrical landmarks of Modern and Contemporary Irish Theatre, from Dion Boucicault to Enda Walsh.

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