A STUDY OF FIRST-PERSON NARRATION IN THREE MODERN NOVELISTS: HENRY JAMES, GRAHAM GREENE, AND KEITH WATERHOUSE

by

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Abstract

A description of the operation of narrative stance in any given novel contributes substantially to an understanding of the artistic effect created by that novel. One narrative stance which is particularly interesting in terms of its potential variations is the first-person form.

The examination of these variations is necessarily prefaced by a general discussion of the notion of narrative point of view. The approach to point of view formulated by Franz Stanzel provides a relatively unambiguous yet sufficiently descriptive set of operational definitions. Based on the distinction between the ostensible absence or presence of the narrating medium, Stanzel's approach to first-person narration involves two possibilities: authorial first-person and figural first-person. Graham Greene's The End of the Affair (1951) is examined as an example of the authorial type; Keith Waterhouse's Billy Liar (1959) illustrates the operation of the figural; and Henry James's The Sacred Fount (1901) represents an interesting combination of the two modes.

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CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

Although the first-person narrative form is as old as the art of fiction in Western literature,[1] the first-person novel, in the twentieth century, has acquired a questionable reputation. It is either maligned because of its "fluidity of self-revelation"[2] and the unreliability of its narrator[3] or offered to the novice writer as the least sophisticated form with which to begin.[4] These positions are curious when one considers both the potential for the third-person narrator to provide, at will, a personal commentary on the story being presented and the challenges the first-person form provides in terms of technical manipulations.

The origin of these objections to the form can be traced to the critical writings of Henry James. James is largely responsible

[1]Bertil Romberg, in Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel, trans. Michael Taylor, & Harold H. Borland (Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962) suggests Petronius' Satyricon (A.D. 60) as the "earliest preserved novel - or . . . fragment - in the literature of the West" (p. 311). See pp. 311-319 for a historical survey of first-person novels.

[2]Henry James, The Art of the Novel (1907; rpt. New York: Scribner's, 1962), p. 321.

[3]Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate, The House of Fiction (New York: Scribner's, 1950), p. 625, and Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 239, 297.

[4]John Braine, Writing A Novel (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974), p. 114, and George Orwell, Collected Essays, Journalism & Letters (1968; rpt. Great Britain: Penguin, 1970) IV, 574.

for the twentieth-century emphasis, in novel creation and criticism, on the presentation of a fictional world in realistic terms. For James, the achievement of a fiction which is self-contained or dependent on no obvious external control implies the ostensible removal of the author. A basic premise in all art is that the presence of the creator is understood; it is the particular perception of reality of a selector and arranger which is transformed into the artistic product. The extent to which authors allow references to themselves as creators to appear in their final products obviously varies enormously. First-person narration, for example, provides the author, according to James, with the "romantic privilege" of being "at once hero and historian"; this privilege, in turn, allows for "variety, and many other queer matters as well, [to be] smuggled in by a back door".[5] The third-person narrative form, however, in the hands of certain non-discriminating authors, is equally susceptible to misuse. Thackeray, for example, reminds the reader constantly that he is the puppet-master manipulating his dolls through the course of Vanity Fair. The well-known ending is indicative of his attitude to his fiction (and his audience) throughout the novel: "Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out".[6]

[5]James, Art, p. 320.

[6]William Makepeace Thackeray, Vanity Fair (1847; rpt. Toronto: Macmillan, 1969), p. 746.

Despite these anomalies, it is a basic novel convention, for James, that the reader is invited to accept tacitly the authenticity of the fictional world. Even Thackeray operates, on this assumption; authenticity is implicit, for example, in dialogue which is, by nature, the most autonomous means of presentation. Although one's "suspension of disbelief"[7] is frequently challenged by the method of Thackeray and the "darkest abyss of romance"[8] of the first-person form, the formula is still a necessary one for fiction. This is so because the reader, at the outset, is clearly aware of the discrepancy between reality and its artistic representation.

The encouragement of "suspension of disbelief" requires more, however, than a simple minimization of the reader's awareness of authorial selection and arrangement. James's criterion for psychological realism implies a necessity for seeing the fictional subject in the process of accommodating mentally the experiences which make up his story. Presentation of events from the point of view of the central character is the first step in achieving this kind of realism. For James, the representation of a single consciousness in all its psychological complexity requires, further, the use of an unobtrusive, superior intelligence to serve as mediator between subject and reader. In this sense, the first-person narrative form is again inadequate. According to James,

[7]This description of the illusion contract originates with Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his Biographia Literaria (1817).

[8]James, Art, p. 320.

it is acceptable only "if one is prepared not to make certain precious discriminations".[9] As Percy Lubbock says, in an elaboration of James's position, "when the man in the book is expected to make a picture of himself, a searching and elaborate portrait, then the limit of his capacity is touched and passed".[10]

Refutation of James's judgement of first-person narration would seem, at first, to be a formidable task. The difficulty is somewhat modified, curiously enough, by reference to James's own use of the form in The Turn of the Screw. The "ghost story" is related, in the first person, by an inexperienced young woman who is susceptible to the workings of her imagination. The challenge presented to the reader regarding the reliability of this narrator is exaggerated by the fact that her narrative is introduced by two presumably reliable, level-headed men; their prefatory remarks regarding the governess establish no hint as to the ambiguous nature of her account. James's own comments on the work illustrate his justification of the particular technique used. With regard to the first of his criteria for realism, the creation of a self-contained, autonomous fiction, James says:

> . . . I find here a perfect example of an exercise of the imagination unassisted, unassociated - playing the game, making the score . . . off its own bat . . . the exercise I have noted strikes me now, I confess, as the interesting thing, the imaginative faculty acting with the whole of the case on its hands. [11]

[9] James, Art, p. 321.

[10] Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (1921; rpt. London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p. 140.

[11] James, Art, p. 171.

His confirmation of his achievement of the second criterion, psychological realism, is illustrated in this statement:

> The thing was to aim at absolute singleness, clearness and roundness, and yet to depend on an imagination working freely, working (call it) with extravagance; by which law it wouldn't be thinkable except as free and wouldn't be amusing except as controlled. The merit of the tale, as it stands, is accordingly, I judge, that it has struggled successfully with its dangers. 12

James's position regarding first-person narration will be contested more specifically, in the present discussion, by an examination of another of his first-person works, The Sacred Fount. At this point, however, a review of James's theoretical innovations and subsequent critical elaborations of the concept of point of view will help to place first-person narration in terms of both its strengths and its weaknesses and will isolate operational definitions for the purposes of textual explication.

The Teller and the Tale

Writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, James made the first serious critical attempt in English to establish formal principles of novel construction and appreciation. James's initial preoccupation with critical analysis of prose writing, in fact, precedes his experimentation with formal principles in his own fiction.[13] Even after his own reputation as a novelist had

[12] James, Art, p. 172.

[13] James's first critical publication, a review of Nassau W. Senior's "Essays on Fiction" in The North American Review, appeared in 1864; over the next ten years, James continued to produce critical studies at the same time as he was composing short fictional pieces. His first collection of short stories, A Passionate Pilgrim and Other Tales, appeared in 1875.

been well-established, James continued to produce reviews and essays on the art of the novel. James's critical starting point is that of defining fiction in terms of its realistic portrayal of life through a selective medium. In "The Art of Fiction" (published in 1885) he writes:

> In proportion as in what [Fiction] offers us we see life without rearrangement do we feel that we are touching the truth; in proportion as we see it with rearrangement do we feel that we are being put off with a substitute, ascompromise, a convention . . . Art is essentially selection, but it is a selection whose main care is to be typical, to be inclusive. [14]

Since James also says, however, that "Life [is] all inclusion and confusion, and art [is] all discrimination and selection",[15] the formula "life without rearrangement" clearly refers to the illusion effect produced. In short, the process of selection implicit in the creative act must be disguised in the end-product.

One of the most important decisions the artist makes in designing his fiction is the relation he, as narrator, will assume with respect to his material. For James, "life without rearrangement" implies fiction without a visible, determinable rearranger. Overt authorial guidance not only damages the illusion of reality but also allows for the author to indulge in commentary and description which may not be relevant for the fiction. James takes offense at Trollope's "betrayal of the sacred office" in this sense:

> In a digression, a parenthesis, or an aside, he

[14]Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," in The Portable Henry James, ed. Morton Dauwen Zabel, (1951; rpt. New York: Viking, 1968), pp. 409-410.

[15]James, Art, p. 120.

> concedes to the reader that he and this trusting friend are only "making believe". He admits that the events he narrates have not really happened, and that he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best. 16

It is obvious, then, why the drama as an art form appeals to James. In The Awkward Age James attempts to simulate a drama and justifies this attempt on the following grounds:

> The divine distinction of the act of a play - and a greater than any other it easily succeeds in arriving at - was, I reasoned, in its special, its guarded objectivity. This objectivity, in turn, when achieving its ideal, came from the imposed absence of that "going behind", to compass explanations and amplifications, to drag out odds and ends from the "mere" story-teller's great property-shop of aids to illusion . . . 17

This is surprisingly close to the original statement, by Aristotle, of the supremacy of tragedy as an art form. In the Poetics,, Aristotle says:

> As in the structure of the plot, so too in the portraiture of character, the poet should always aim either at the necessary or the probable . . . It is therefore evident that the unravelling of the plot, no less than the complication, must arise out of the plot itself . . . The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person, for it is not this that makes him an imitator. 18

The danger of imposing on fiction Aristotelian notions regarding dramatic form is obvious; as Kathleen Tillotson says, "When the critic objects that the author's voice 'destroys the illusion', it is surely dramatic rather than narrative illusion that he has in mind; in narrative illusion, the teller has a rightful place".[19]

[16] James, The Portable Henry James, p. 394.

[17] James, Art, pp. 110-111.

[18] Aristotle, "Poetics," in Criticism: The Major Texts, ed. W. J. Bate (1952; rpt. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), pp. 28, 35.

[19] Kathleen Tillotson, "The Tale and the Teller," in Mid-Victorian Studies, Geoffrey and Kathleen Tillotson (University of London: Athlone, 1965), p. 7.

Although Tillotson unfortunately uses the terms "author" and "teller" interchangeably (a fault which is all too common in discussions of narrative),[20] the generic distinction is a valuable one. John Killham elaborates on the differential natures of the dramatic and narrative forms:

> A performance, with the action occurring before one's eyes, is a 'happening' requiring no other warrant. But the novel, whose medium is the written word, suffers the great disadvantage of being always open to detailed inquiry even in the process of 'performance' . . . the fact that the actions in a novel do not happen before the eyes but are always reported . . . raises acutely . . . the question 'Who says so?'. 21

Thus the novelist, unlike the dramatist, must deal with the "inherent 'difficulty' of creating the need to supply some identity to the holder of the pen".[22] Despite the distinction, Killham goes on to support the play analogy for fiction on the grounds that both forms postulate an illusionary world:

> . . . a novel, though it has to be written by someone, does not as a form invariably make felt the need of a story-teller . . . Novel-writing . . . is not primarily a matter of drawing upon the art of persuasion or rhetoric, but rather of drama - narrated not acted. 23

It is true that James's attempt at a prose drama failed (by his

[20]Tillotson later indicates that she is, in fact, quite aware of the distinction: "The narrator . . . is a method rather than a person; indeed the 'narrator' never is the author as man . . ." (p. 15).

[21]John Killham, "The 'Second Self' in Novel Criticism," British Journal of Aesthetics VI (July 1966), 287.

[22]Killham, p. 287.

[23]Killham, p. 286.

own admission) to communicate the original idea to the reading audience (although he places the blame with that audience!). According to Matthiessen and Murdock,[24] The Awkward Age failed also to remain within the structural restraints inherent in the dramatic form. James's play analogy, however, is not intended to be applied literally; his point that fiction, as illusion, demands some degree of artistic restraint, some conscious attempt at structural control, remains a valid one.

Percy Lubbock, in an elaboration of James's dramatic objective,[25] clarifies the ingredients of the prose form to illustrate the alternating management of scene and "explanations and amplifications". To summarize Lubbock's terms of reference, the prose artist alternates panoramic presentation (surveying, from an elevated authorial viewpoint, facts relating to the generalized fictional picture) with scenic presentation (direct placing of a particularized action before the reader). Scenic presentation is sub-divided into pictorial representation (narrative material presented from the point of view of either the author or a character) and dramatic presentation (dialogue or action without narrative interpretation). According to Lubbock, James's use of a central consciousness represents the point at which prose rendering most clearly resembles a drama.[26] Lubbock says that although James in The Ambassadors,

[24]F. O. Matthiessen & Kenneth B. Murdock, eds., The Notebooks of Henry James (1947; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 192-193.

[25]Lubbock, pp. 66-69.

[26]Lubbock, pp. 156-157.

for example, presents Strether's consciousness pictorially (by virtue of the fact that an interpretative narrative is present), he effectively achieves the drama of a mind in action (by minimizing references to the narrative medium). At this point it becomes clear that Lubbock's technical description is too simplistic. James's use of a central consciousness, according to James, represents a compromise between the dramatic objective and the necessity for a discriminating, interpretative medium. James in fact acknowledges in his Preface to The Ambassadors his occasional interjections of commentary (which approaches omniscience). With regard to Strether's first meeting with Chad, he says:

> To report at all closely and completely of what "passes" on a given occasion is inevitably to become more or less scenic; and yet in the instance I allude to . . . expressional curiosity and expressional decency are sought and arrived at under quite another law. The true inwardness of this may be at bottom but that one of the suffered treacheries has consisted precisely, for Chad's whole figure and presence, of a direct presentability diminished and compromised - despoiled, that is, of its proportional advantage; so that, in a word, the whole economy of his author's relation to him has at important points to be redetermined. The book, however, critically viewed, is touchingly full of these disguised and repaired losses, these insidious recoveries, these intensely redemptive consistencies. 27

James goes on to justify these authorial interventions on these grounds:

> It wouldn't take much to make me further argue that from an equal play of such oppositions the book gathers an

27James, Art, pp. 325-326.

> intensity that fairly adds to the dramatic . . . or that has at any rate nothing to fear from juxtaposition with it. I consciously fail to shrink in fact from that extravagance - I risk it, rather, for the sake of the moral involved; which is not that the particular production before us exhausts the interesting question it raises, but that the novel remains still, under the right persuasion, the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms. 28

Despite these qualifications of Lubbock's analysis, The Ambassadors does come close to achieving a dramatization of a mind in action when compared with novels in which the point of view is more consistently that of the narrating medium.[29] James goes on to describe this effect (the one which dominates in The Ambassadors) in terms of his "central consciousness":

> . . . every question of form and pressure . . . paled in the light of the major propriety . . . that of employing but one centre and keeping it all within my hero's compass. . . . Strether's sense of these things, and Strether's only, should avail me for showing them; I should know them but through his more or less groping knowledge of them, since his very gropings would figure among his most interesting motions, and a full observance of the rich rigour I speak of would give me more of the effect I should be most "after" than all other possible observances together. It would give me a large unity, and that in turn would crown me with the grace to which the enlightened story-teller will at any time, for his interest, sacrifice if need be all other graces whatever. 30

The necessity of explanation, description, and summarizing narrative, limited by the use of the central consciousness, is achieved primarily for James by the use of "ficelles". These

[28]James, Art, p. 326.

[29]The extent to which James's technique can be called dramatic when compared with the first-person form will be made clearer as the discussion progresses.

[30]James, Art, pp. 317-318.

secondary characters elucidate essential external details with reference to both the central consciousness and the story as a whole. Again, with regard to Strether, James says:

> I had thus inevitably to set him up a confidant or two, to wave away with energy the custom of the seated mass of explanation after the fact, the inserted block of merely referential narrative, which flourishes so, to the shame of the modern impatience, on the serried page of Balzac, but which seems simply to appal our actual, our general weaker digestion. 31

James's experimentation with a mechanism for achieving fictional objectivity and realism laid the foundation for subsequent critical explorations of the concept of point of view. Joseph Warren Beach praises James's discriminating use of a central consciousness as opposed to "that arbitrary and unconsidered shift of point of view within the chapter, within the paragraph, that visible manipulation of the puppets from without, which is so great a menace to illusion and intimacy".[32] Percy Lubbock, in the first major critical treatment of point of view in fiction, restates this emphasis: "The whole intricate question of method, in the craft of fiction, I take to be governed by the question of the point of view - the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story".[33] For Lubbock, the author's choice of an appropriate point of view ("the mind that really commands the

[31] James, Art, p. 321.

[32] Joseph Warren Beach, The Method of Henry James (1918; rpt. Philadelphia: Albert Saifer, 1954), p. 67.

[33] Lubbock, p. 251.

subject")[34] is essential for two reasons. First, the creation of a centre of vision precludes the necessity for obvious authorial guidance. For example, in criticizing Thackeray's exaggerated use of the author's privilege of omniscience, Lubbock says:

> By convention the author is allowed his universal knowledge of the story and the people in it. But still it is a convention, and a prudent novelist does not strain it unnecessarily. Thackeray in Vanity Fair is not at all prudent. 35

By confining himself to a point of view within the fiction the author gives, to his illusion, its own validity: appeals to an external authority are neither necessary nor acceptable. According to Lubbock, ". . . the art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be shown, to be so exhibited that it will tell itself".[36] The second advantage that the centre of vision has is that it allows for the smooth, logical alternation between scene and connective narrative. If the descriptive and summarizing passages are related from the point of view of a central character, if, in short, they are dramatized, that character receives sufficient dramatic autonomy to make his purely scenic rendering credible. Again, in criticizing Thackeray's method, Lubbock says:

> It shows how little Thackeray's fashion of handling a novel allowed for the big dramatic scene, when at

[34]Lubbock, p. 62.

[35]Lubbock, p. 115.

[36]Lubbock, p. 62.

> length it had to be faced - how he neglected it in advance, how he refused it till the last possible moment. It is as though he never quite trusted his men and women when he had to place things entirely in their care, standing aside to let them act; he wanted to intervene continually, he hesitated to leave them alone save for a brief and belated half-hour. 37

In support of Lubbock's position, Edith Wharton writes:

> It should be the story-teller's first care to choose his reflecting mind deliberately, as one would choose a building site . . . and when this is done, to live inside the mind chosen, trying to feel, see, and react exactly as the latter would, no more, no less, and, above all, no otherwise. Only thus can the writer avoid attributing incongruities of thought and metaphor to his chosen interpreter. 38

According to Lubbock, the achievement of this objective is best exemplified, again, in James's idea of a central consciousness since this technique effectively maximizes the dramatic rendering of both scene and description. It precludes the necessity for overt authorial intervention, and hence preserves the sanctity of the illusion.

Whether one agrees with Lubbock's judgements regarding certain methods or not, The Craft of Fiction is important for its innovative emphasis on formal analysis in fiction and for its isolation of point of view as a tool for analysis. Twentieth-century critical terminology, in fact, owes much to Lubbock's formulations. It is my purpose now to examine some further elaborations of the

[37]Lubbock, p. 103.

[38]Edith Wharton, The Writing of Fiction (1924; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1966), p. 46.

notion of point of view with a view to isolating characteristics peculiar to the first-person narrative form.

Point of View

Twentieth-century novel theory has seen a proliferation of definitions and classifications of point of view.[39] An examination of a few such schemes will illustrate the problems inherent in precise definition of narrative stance and, incidentally, the relative crudity of Lubbock's formulations.

Brooks and Warren, in Understanding Fiction, use the term "focus of narration" to refer to the perspective from which the material of the story is presented. They classify narrative stance according to whether the focal point is inside or outside the fictional world. Their categories of point of view are as follows: 1) the narrator as the main character; 2) the narrator as a secondary character; 3) the author as an observer who "tells us everything that happens in the objective physical sense, and everything that is said, but . . . does not tell us what passes in the mind of any of the characters";[40] and 4) the author who is both "omniscient" and "analytic", "who does undertake to present the working of the mind of one, or more, of the characters, and

[39]For a comprehensive summary of the development of the point of view concept in novel theory see Romberg.

[40]Cleanth Brooks, Jr. and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Fiction (1943; rpt. New York: Crofts, 1947), p. 588.

who may investigate and interpret motives and feelings".[41] Brooks and Warren go on to classify these positions in terms of function: 1 and 4 provide internal analysis of character and 2 and 3 offer external observation of events.

Two problems are immediately apparent in such a scheme. First, the distinction between narrator and author is questionable: by definition, an author becomes a narrator from the moment he begins to tell his story. Even when he is not a fictional character himself, one cannot assume that the narrator is identical with the "real" author. Second, the distinction between internal analysis and external observation is not necessarily confined to 1 and 4 and 2 and 3 respectively. For example, the narrator as secondary character may reveal a great deal internally about himself while commenting externally on another character; further, the omniscient-analytic author is free to provide as much external information as internal analysis. It is clear, then, that these positions, are not mutually exclusive and, hence, are insufficient as precise definitions of narrative stance.

Norman Friedman provides a relatively comprehensive scheme in his article "Point of View in Fiction".[42] His narrative categories are ranked according to their respective emphases on Lubbock's telling (summary narrative) and showing (immediate scene). Friedman's

[41] Brooks and Warren, p. 589.

[42] Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction:" The Development of a Critical Concept," PMLA, LXX (Dec 1955), 1160-1184.

narrative positions, beginning with the least dramatic (or scenic) are as follows: 1) Editorial Omniscience, in which the author directly addresses the reader regarding his own perceptions and feelings at the same time as he is reporting on the thoughts and feelings of his characters. These intrusions take the form of generalizing comments which may or may not be specifically related to the story being told. Here the points of view the author can assume are unlimited and can be shifted at will. Friedman gives, as examples of this method, Tom Jones, War and Peace, and Tess of the d'Urbervilles; 2) Neutral Omniscience, in which there is no direct authorial intrusion: the story is related in the third person by an impersonal narrator, but from the author's point of view. Friedman again points to Tess as an example of this mode; 3) "I" as Witness, in which the author's voice is replaced by the voice of a narrator who is within the fictional world. In contrast to the omniscient author's position, the "I" as witness has limited access to the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of other characters, although he can make inferences on the basis of actions and information derived from other characters. An example of this form is The Great Gatsby; 4) "I" as Protagonist, in which the narrator, according to Friedman, is limited to his own thoughts and feelings regarding the action. Great Expectations is given as an illustration of this mode; 5) Multiple Selective Omniscience, in which the narrator has ostensibly disappeared: the story is presented through the minds of the characters as it takes place. As in Virginia

Woolf's To The Lighthouse, evidence of the author's function is limited to mere stage direction; 6) Selective Omniscience, in which the action is presented as if filtered through the mind of only one character. Friedman places A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man in this category; 7) Dramatic Mode, in which the story is rendered almost entirely in terms of immediate action and dialogue. Here again, the author makes an appearance only for the purpose of stage direction and information regarding the physical appearance of his characters. As examples of this method Friedman points to The Awkward Age and Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants"; and 8) The Camera[43] in which the material presented is in the form of a "slice of life" (description of external details and actions without the appearance of authorial arrangement or selection). Isherwood, in Goodbye to Berlin, attempts to operate in this mode.

Although Friedman's classification is more precise because more comprehensive than that of Brooks and Warren, it is still inadequate to account for all the possibilities of narrative stance. His categories, for example, are not mutually exclusive; as Friedman himself points out, Tess of the d'Urbervilles is at times representative of Editorial Omniscience, at times of Neutral Omniscience. Further, in the case of the first-person form, it

[43]One of the first references to the camera metaphor with respect to fictional technique appears in Emile Zola's Le Roman expérimental. Zola defines the novelist as an objective recorder of human behaviour in its determining environment: "[The novelist] should be the photographer of phenomena, his observation should be an exact representation of nature." (Trans. Belle M. Sherman, 1893; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1964, p. 7).

is difficult to conceive of an instance in which the narrator is not witness and protagonist simultaneously. In The Great Gatsby, Nick Carraway is certainly a witness to the story of the main protagonist yet he is also an important character in terms both of self-revelation and of providing a contrast to Gatsby. As Romberg points out, although the narrator in such a case is not ostensibly the main character,

> . . . it is the personality of the narrator that gives his story its characteristic colouring and cachet; often the information which the narrator gives unconsciously about himself is of greater interest than the information that he conveys as part of his conscious purpose. [44]

As a corollary to this, it is clear that Pip, as the narrator of Great Expectations, does not function in a social vacuum: his own thoughts and feelings are, at least in part, dependent on what he witnesses in his surroundings. The only instance in which Friedman's "I" as Witness is applicable involves the narrator presenting, in an inset, an account by another person. If the inset is substantial (as in Wuthering Heights) the first narrator assumes an almost editorial role but the second narrator takes over as witness-protagonist. If the inset is relatively short (as in The Plague) the function of the first narrator is only temporarily suspended.

Friedman's Dramatic Mode is also questionable as a discrete category. Certainly its emphasis on scenic presentation as opposed to a more balanced scenic-descriptive method is a distinguishable

[44]Romberg, p. 63.

feature. However, the novel still requires a narrating medium, whether direct or indirect. This category could, in fact, be seen as a variation of Neutral Omniscience in terms of its presentation effect.

Finally, the Camera is a much more complex form than Friedman implies. He claims that the Camera is incompatible with the requirements of the genre since fiction "requires . . . a structure, the product of a guiding intelligence which is implicit in the narrative".[45] Two questions immediately present themselves in this regard: to what extent can the limits of the genre be defined and to what extent does even the camera eye function outside the realm of interpretation? Robbe-Grillet, for example, experiments with a form which comes close to revolutionizing traditional novel conventions. His focus on external description of the material phenomena of life gives the impression of a scrupulously objective rendering. But even here a certain amount of subjectivity (however limited) is implicit in the recording of visual impressions. In Jealousy, although the narrator is never explicitly self-defined, his photographic impressions are not without interpretative elements:

> He drinks his soup in rapid spoonfuls. Although he makes no excessive gestures, although he holds his spoon quite properly and swallows the liquid without making any noise, he seems to display, in this modest task, a disproportionate energy and zest. It would be difficult to specify exactly in what way he is

[45]Friedman, p. 1179.

> neglecting some essential rule, at what particular point he is lacking in discretion. [46]

The presentation in this novel, in fact, approaches the first-person narrative stance; although the narrator never refers to himself as "I", he is identifiable as the jealous husband silently watching the discreet flirtations of his wife with another man. Here is a case, then, in which the Camera category proves too limited in terms of its description of effect. This effect can be adequately accounted for in a scheme, proposed by Franz Stanzel, which will be discussed below. As will become clear, Stanzel's narrative positions, unlike those of Friedman, do not imply the potential for assigning a novel to a limited and fixed category.

A problem of terminology also arises from Friedman's discussion, a problem which is characteristic of most definitions of point of view. The assumption that the operative voice in 1 and 2 is that of the author and, in 3 and 4, that of a narrator is confusing. In many third-person novels (indeed, in most) identification of the narrator with the author is questionable. Regardless of information one might derive from various sources about the author's personal attitudes and intentions, the fact remains that his voice, in writing, represents a transformation from his actual personality to that of a personality in relation to a fictionalized world.[47]

[46] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Jealousy," in Two Novels by Robbe-Grillet, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 46.

[47] Of relevance here is T. S. Eliot's statement that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates . . ." From "Tradition and Individual Talent," in Selected Essays (1932; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), pp. 7-8.

A final point with regard to Friedman's scheme, and one which will serve to introduce a third attempt at classification, is the question of Friedman's ranking of points of view according to the criterion of showing versus telling. Using Lubbock's notion of dramatized fiction, in which the story is given sufficient internal autonomy to "tell itself", Friedman places the first-person forms mid-way on the continuum between overt omniscience and selective omniscience. Romberg, in Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel, views first-person narrative as the most dramatic form since its medium of presentation is internalized: the narrator is, himself, dramatized and made a part of the fictional world. Although Romberg takes issue with Friedman on this particular point he formulates a classification of point of view similar to that of Friedman in other respects. His categories are as follows: 1) author is omniscient, visible, and omnipresent; 2) author is confined to the mind or minds of one or more characters; 3) author records as a behaviourist observer (a camera eye); 4) author hides behind a narrator: the first-person method. Again the problems of overlapping positions and author-narrator distinction arise. Without dwelling further on the limitations of such schemes, an elaboration of a different approach to narrative stance will provide an alternative set of operational definitions.

Stanzel, in Narrative Situations in the Novel,[48] presents an

[48]Franz Stanzel, Narrative Situations in the Novel, trans. James P. Pusack (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971).

approach in terms of the grammatical voice assumed by the narrating medium. A distinction between first- and third-person narration provides one, according to Stanzel, with a relatively unambiguous starting point from which one can delineate variations in narrative possibilities. Stanzel, first, isolates the central feature of the novel in the mediacy of its presentation, a narrative guise. The author's choice of a particular guise establishes, for the reader, certain expectations regarding the fictional illusion being presented. Contrary to Lubbock's personal preference for a technique which employs a consistent point of view, Stanzel points out that certain narrative techniques utilize, quite appropriately, conventions which do not require a single or consistent point of view for the preservation of the illusion.

The basic distinction to be made in terms of narrative stance, aside from the grammatical voice assumed, is the apparent absence or presence of the author in relation to his material. Stanzel is careful, here, to point out that his use of "author" in this context does not invoke the presence of the "real" author but rather of his persona or guise as narrator. He then postulates, on the basis of the distinction between first- and third-person narrative voice and the ostensible absence or presence of the author, three basic novel types. It is to be emphasized that Stanzel's types are not to be taken as categories in Friedman's sense; rather they are postulated as points on a continuum around which most novels cluster.

The first type of narrative stance Stanzel calls "authorial".[49] In this situation the reader is immediately aware of the author's (narrator's) guidance as the defining convention. The act of narration - the stance of the author-narrator - is seen as being separate and distinct from the fictional world being presented. To use Stanzel's terminology, the reader's centre of orientation lies in the now-and-here of the author. The author is temporally (reporting on something that has happened in the past) and spatially (looking on the action from an elevated viewpoint) removed from the events he is relating. This particular convention does not necessarily assume a fixed or consistent point of view. It allows for both the point of view of the author-narrator (particularly in panoramic passages) and the illusion of a point of view of a character (in scenic passages). The extent to which the reader is aware, however, that the overriding point of view is that of the author depends on the extent to which any given reader becomes so submerged in the scenic passages that he will forget the convention of authorial control.

The external manipulation of the illusion in this mode allows, further, for the exercise of the author's superior insight and reflection on the events being related. Indeed, the meaning of such a novel derives, in part, from the tension which is created

[49]Since Stanzel distinguishes betwen author and narrator, one assumes the term "authorial" to be based on the nature of the illusion effect.

between the events and characters themselves and the author's comments on them.[50] This method is typical, according to Stanzel, of pre-twentieth-century novels in which fictional material generally required an external authority in order for it to assume authenticity and validity. For example, Fielding's role in Tom Jones is clearly that of essayist-chronicler, authenticating and commenting upon his story at the same time as he is relating it.

Stanzel's second narrative type is the "figural" novel. Here the author is, in terms of the illusion, ostensibly absent. He assumes no apparent guise and minimizes references to the act of narration. In the figural novel the reader's centre of orientation lies in the now-and-here of a figure within the fictional world. In the variant of this form, the neutral novel, the reader's centre of orientation does not lie within the consciousness of a single figure but the reader imaginatively assumes the position of an observer of the action (as in Hemingway's "The Killers"). The convention of the figural novel assumes no distance between the narrator and his material (the narrator is ostensibly removed) or between the reader and the material. The reader has the illusion

[50]Kathleen Tillotson points out, quite correctly, that interpretative comments on the part of the "intruding" author are not necessarily to be taken at face value and, as a result, do not necessarily eliminate the possibility for interpretation on the part of the reader. As an example of equivocal authorial statements, Tillotson points to Thackeray's frequent use, in Vanity Fair, of the phrase "very likely" or his question regarding Becky Sharp: "Was she guilty or not?" ("The Tale and the Teller", p. 16).

of being involved in the continuous shaping of the figure's consciousness: he imaginatively identifies with the subject in focus. This convention further produces the illusion that there is no predetermined arrangement of, or goal for, the material. This effect is reminiscent of James's formula for fiction as "life without rearrangement" which is, of course, exemplified in The Ambassadors. Stanzel acknowledges the obvious potential for this form in presenting the actions of an individual consciousness. Indeed, it is clear that the thematic tendency of twentieth-century fiction in this direction has resulted in the more frequent use of this particular narrative form (Joyce and Woolf are obvious examples).

Thus, in the authorial and figural novel types, Stanzel isolates the two third-person narrative stances and distinguishes them according to the apparent absence or presence of the author-narrator. His third type is unique in that it is narrated in the first person and has the potential for assuming characteristics of both the authorial and the figural stances. The first-person form resembles the mediacy illusion created in the figural mode since the medium of presentation is contained in the fictional world: the reader's centre of orientation is that of the "I". This form can also, however, resemble the authorial novel in the sense that the narrator can be obviously present and separate from the narrated material and the act of narration can be brought directly to the reader's level of awareness.

The extreme of this authorial narrative situation in the first-person form in terms of narrative distance can be seen in a novel such as The Great Gatsby. Here, the narrator is ostensibly an observer, quite removed from the story of his "main character". Nick Carraway's interpretation of Gatsby's story, however, reflects his own experiences and perceptions; he is, thus, much more than mere observer. In terms of the other characteristic of the authorial stance, the salience of the act of narration, the novel in which the narrator is ostensibly observer does not necessarily uphold this condition. It is quite possible, for example, for such a narrator to relate a story with little apparent interpretation. As a corollary, it is obviously possible for a narrator, in relating his own story exclusively, to draw continual attention to the act of narration. It is clear that the operation of distancing and interpretative elements must be viewed in terms of the degree to which they are utilized and the differential effects they create for the reader. It is in this sense that Stanzel's scheme provides an effective set of descriptive tools, and one which is clearly superior to that of Friedman for suggesting subtle variations of technique.

Since first-person novels obviously vary in the extent to which they are predominantly authorial or figural, Stanzel distinguishes the two types according to the narrating and experiencing functions of the narrative voice. The "narrating self" refers to the narrator in the position of recalling past experiences and commenting and reflecting on them from a temporal distance. The

"I" of the "experiencing self" takes over when the recall is shifted to the point in time when the action actually occurred and an essentially scenic passage illustrates that specific experience. In the authorial first-person novel, then, the narrating self is sufficiently removed in time from the experiencing self to allow for comment and reflection as it occurs in the true authorial novel. Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, for example, recounts, at the age of sixty, the adventures he experienced from age eighteen to age fifty. His posterior vantage point (and the fact that his story ranges over a broad expanse of time) allows for his mature reflection on the course of his unusual life. In the figural first-person novel, the narrating self remains close to the experiencing self; the events are assumed to have just preceded the act of narration and the effect is one of virtual immediacy. In Camus' The Outsider, references both to the time of narration and the narrative situation are minimal and vague. The illusion of virtual simultaneity of narrative act and experience is established in the opening sentences: "Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure".[51] With the exception of references to the passage of time while Meursault is in prison awaiting trial and, later, awaiting a decision on his appeal, the illusion of immediacy is sustained. This illusion is reinforced, at the end of the novel, by the fact that the condemned

[51]Albert Camus, The Outsider, trans. Stuart Gilbert (1942; rpt. Great Britain: Penguin, 1964), p. 13.

man looks forward to almost certain death; his allotted time is quite literally limited.

Two first-person forms which, in terms of their illusion effect, lie somewhere between the authorial and the figural types are the epistolary and the diary novels. In Sartre's Nausea, the fact that each diary entry involves a time reference and a reference to the act of recall reminds the reader of the authorial characteristic whereby the narrating self is distinguishable from the experiencing self. It is still the case, however, that this type of novel resembles the figural first-person form by virtue of the fact that the time lag between the experience and the recall is minimal. Similarly, Richardson's epistolary novel Clarissa represents a situation in which the reader is reminded of the narrating selves of the letter-writers each time a new letter is presented. This does not seriously jeopardize, however, the effect of immediacy which Richardson was quite clearly attempting.

As in the authorial novel, the authorial first-person form derives its meaning partly from the tension set up between the narrating self and the experiencing self; in the figural first-person novel, the meaning remains implicit - at least in part - in the proximity of the narrating and experiencing selves.[52]

Unqualified application of Stanzel's scheme can lead to problems

[52] An elaboration of the different ways in which authorial and figural first-person stances convey "meaning" will be found in Chapter II of this discussion.

in grouping novels according to type. The advantages of his classification, however, are clear: the distinction between first- and third-person modes is relatively unambiguous; the distinction between absence or presence (in terms of illusion) of the author-narrator is far less complex than that based on degrees of omniscience; and the grouping of novels along a continuum according to three distinguishable poles is more easily accomplished than grouping them according to a single dimension (the internal-external dichotomy of Brooks and Warren) or according to a multiple categorization (as in Friedman). The flexibility of Stanzel's types allows, for example, for a description of such an unorthodox novelist as Robbe-Grillet. I have suggested that fixed point of view categories are insufficient to explain the narrative effect of Jealousy. According to Stanzel's scheme, this novel would fall between the neutral type (in which the reader assumes an imaginary position of witness to externally perceivable events) and the first-person novel (in which the narrator is himself a character within the fiction and, as such, offers interpretative information).

Stanzel's scheme, then, will be used as the primary organizational approach in the following discussion simply because it is more applicable than other schemes reviewed. An exemplification of Stanzel's narrative theory, particularly as it applies to the first-person novel, will, however, be preceded by a discussion of the position of a major contemporary critic, Wayne C. Booth. The importance of The Rhetoric of Fiction for novel theory today, and the iconoclastic position of Booth with regard to point of view,

demand one's attention in the light of the proposed thesis.

As the title of his work implies, Booth sets out to upset the notion, introduced by James and Lubbock, that fiction can aspire to realistic presentation of life by refining out of existence technical impurities which damage the illusion to be created. Booth's point that rhetoric in this sense is an essential ingredient of the novel genre would not, despite his claims, be rejected by his critical predecessors. It is clear that James was fully aware of the artificiality of fictional conventions. His aim was to minimize one's awareness of this artificiality for the sake of the intensity of the illusion.

The problem with Booth's position derives, initially, from his definition of rhetoric. Although it begins by referring to those technical elements one associates with method and design, it gradually expands, over the course of his work, to include those characteristics associated with the traditional, moralistic use of rhetoric. Rhetoric as the use of impressive language calculated to persuade is implied in the following passage:

> The common ingredient that I find in all of the writing I admire - excluding for now novels, plays, and poems - is something that I shall reluctantly call the rhetorical stance, a stance which depends on discovering and maintaining a proper balance among three elements: the available arguments about the subject itself; the interests and peculiarities of the audience; and the voice, the implied character of the speaker. I should like to suggest that it is this balance, this rhetorical stance, difficult as it is to describe, that is our main goal as teachers of rhetoric. 53

53 Wayne C. Booth, Now Don't Try To Reason With Me (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 27.

Booth goes on, then, to speak of rhetoric in fiction as the ". . . permanent, universal responses embodied in the work . . .",[54] a definition which quite clearly transcends technique and approaches the art of persuasion.

One must question the application of rhetoric in the traditional sense to fiction since, as John Killham points out, fiction postulates an imaginary world quite removed from the realm of the rhetorical essay. According to Killham, the novel

> . . . has a special condition of being lifelike enough for us to be persuaded to enter it, but only to the end that we may see what the author makes us believe (which can, of course, be that there is nothing to believe). . . . No work of art, no novel, can be rightly considered rhetorical, for rhetoric is inimical to the freedom within the law a lifelike impression demands. . . . A work may attempt to teach, but only by being lifelike enough for that end: and this precludes rhetoric. 55

Peter Swiggart supports the contention that Booth's use of rhetoric is misplaced:

> Mr. Booth defines rhetoric so that if any literary passage is said to aid communication between author and reader, it can be called rhetorical . . . his aim is not to study fictional rhetoric itself, but to defend the subordination of problems involving narrative technique . . . to problems involving what might be called the content-values of literature, explicit moral themes or . . . vaguely formulated emotional concerns. 56

With the context of Booth's "rhetoric" thus established, an examination of his position will expose the fallacies which this definition

[54] Booth, Reason, p. 159.

[55] Killham, p. 289.

[56] Peter Swiggart, "Mr. Booth's Quarrel With Fiction," Sewanee Review LXXI (Jan-Mar 1963) 148.

imposes on his argument.

With reference to proponents of what are now established as Jamesian principles, Booth questions the novelist's ability to achieve a "pure" artistic product by the removal of rhetorical ingredients. He is critical of Flaubert's objective of "No lyricism, no comments, the author's personality absent! . . . What I should like to write, is a book about nothing, a book dependent on nothing external, which would be held together by the strength of its style . . .".[57] Booth objects also to Joyce's attempt at authorial impersonality which is evident in his exclusion, from A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, of adverbs and adjectives included in Stephen Hero. This authorial neutrality, for Booth, implies that "Joyce was always a bit uncertain about his attitude toward Stephen".[58] In a passage which is highly suggestive of Flaubert's position, Joyce, through Stephen, gives in fact a fairly explicit indication of his attitude as author: "The personality of the artist, at first a cry or a cadence or a mood and then a fluent and lambent narrative, finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalizes itself, so to speak".[59] For Joyce, the art form which is most conducive to impersonalization is the drama. To say, however, (as Booth does)

[57] See Louis Dudek, The First Person in Literature (Toronto: Hunter Rose, 1967), p. 50.

[58] Booth, Rhetoric, p. 330.

[59] James Joyce, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," in The Essential James Joyce, ed. Harry Levin (1948; rpt. Great Britain: Penguin, 1974), p. 221.

that attempted objectivity in fiction betrays authorial uncertainty is clearly arguable. Booth's objection is legitimate only in the sense that authorial rhetoric in terms of selection and arrangement is a prerequisite in fiction; an objection in this sense, moreover, would not be disputed by those practitioners of authorial neutrality. As the reference to Joyce demonstrates, the difficult aspect of Booth's position resides in the devastating implications it holds for a significant proportion of twentieth-century fiction. Booth's statement, ". . . if recognizable appeals to the reader are a sign of imperfection, perfect literature is impossible to find . . .",[60] ignores the fact that both novel technique and reader response change over time. Henry James nowhere implies that pre-twentieth-century fiction is unacceptable; his emphasis, like Joyce's, is on creating a new and different formula for fictional creation and criticism.

The most extreme part of Booth's position, however, emerges in his reason for rejecting the modern tendency toward impersonal narration: impersonality or neutrality eliminates the function of the author as a moral interpreter. For Booth, rhetoric in fiction is necessary not only for the purposes of illusion but also for the provision of a value orientation. The following statement illustrates the iconoclastic nature of his stance: ". . . the writer should worry less about whether his narrators are realistic than

[60] Booth, Rhetoric, p. 99.

about whether the image he creates of himself, his implied author, is one that his most intelligent and perceptive readers can admire".[61] This position ignores the capacity for the components of the fictional creation to provide their own value orientation or, alternatively, the ability of the reader to derive this orientation from the work without authorial guidance. Booth says, for example,

> No character in Tom Jones . . . Bleak House, The Scarlet Letter, or War and Peace, knows enough about the meaning of the whole to go beyond his personal problems to any general view. Since the same is true of almost all modern works, and since reliable narration is often not allowed, the task of generalization may be left entirely to the reader. No narrator's voice extends the significance of The Sun Also Rises except, of course, to provide the generalizing title and epigraphs. 62

The fact that all characters in the first four novels mentioned have limited vision reflects the fact (overlooked by Booth) that authorial intervention is the defining feature of these works; this is not at all the case with many modern works. Further, the modern tendency to rely on elements within the fiction to extend the meaning is not necessarily jeopardized by a character's limited vision. Booth naively assumes that a reader is incapable of seeing a character's deficiencies and, hence, will be corrupted by that character through identification with him. Booth points to Nabokov's Lolita as an example of the moral dangers of impersonal narration:

> Can we really be surprised that readers have overlooked Nabokov's ironies in Lolita, when Humbert Humbert is

[61]Booth, Rhetoric, p. 395.

[62]Booth, Rhetoric, p. 198.

> given full and unlimited control of the rhetorical resources? . . . is not the notion that one's readers will be morally sound rather naive? 63

Aside from the fact that the novelist can never be sure of the effect his art will have on a reader (even if the work is a "moral" one), Booth reveals a curiously unsophisticated awareness of technical devices. According to Stanzel, the narrative situation "can reveal the angle, the bias, and the kinds of references and relationships through which the narrated material is presented to the reader".[64] An illustration from Booth's own example of The Sun Also Rises reveals the potential for internal elements to provide sufficient indication of authorial intention:

> I was pretty well through with the subject. At one time or another I had probably considered it from most of its various angles, including the one that certain injuries or imperfections are a subject of merriment while remaining quite serious for the person possessing them.
>
> "It's funny," I said. "It's very funny. And it's lots of fun, too, to be in love". 65

In this case Jake Barnes is clearly being sardonic; one can only say that the reader who is not conscious of the narrator's tone is not reading in a discriminating way. It is true that the figural style adopted in the novel does challenge the reader's apprehension of the meaning; the position, however, that this ambiguity represents moral default is untenable. Mark Schorer, in "Technique as Discovery",

[63] Booth, Rhetoric, p. 390.

[64] Stanzel, p. 29.

[65] Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (1926; rpt. New York: Scribner's, 1970), p. 27.

elaborates on the way in which Hemingway's works convey meaning:

> Hemingway's early subject, the exhaustion of value, was perfectly investigated and invested by his bare style, and in story after story, no meaning at all is to be inferred from the fiction except as the style itself suggests that there is no meaning in life. This style, more than that, was the perfect technical substitute for the conventional commentator. 66

Since Booth rejects the potentialffor structural and technical devices to convey meaning, he devises the notion of the implied author as the source of a novel's moral vision. According to Kathleen Tillotson, the origin of the concept for fiction is attributable to Edward Dowden. Dowden, in a discussion (1877) of George Eliot, claimed that the persona which impressed the reader upon reading Eliot's novels was that of "one who, if not the real George Eliot, is that second self who writes her books, and lives and speaks through them".[67] Booth's implied author, "an ideal, literary, created version of the real man",[68] is identical with neither the real author nor the chosen narrative persona. His norms have typically been described in such terms as "'theme', 'meaning', 'symbolic significance', 'theology', or even 'ontology'".[69] Booth's own term is not effectively distinct from these labels: his implied author is recognized in ". . . the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole, the chief value to which this implied

[66]Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery," The Hudson Review 1 (Spring 1948), 84.

[67]Tillotson, p. 15.

[68]Booth, Rhetoric, p. 75.

[69]Booth, Rhetoric, p. 73.

author is committed, regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life, is that which is expressed by the total form".[70] Although Booth is critical of impersonal narration because of its lack of moral stance, he goes on to say "However impersonal [the author] may try to be, his reader will inevitably construct a picture of the official scribe who writes in this manner - and of course that official scribe will never be neutral toward all values".[71] One can only ask, at this point, how the reader constructs a picture of this scribe (especially in the case of impersonal narration) if the author's position is not implicit in his work. Killham, in demonstrating the fallacy of the implied author or second self concept, says:

> There is no harm in speaking of one's impressions of a writer's mind . . . there is no harm in following Dowden and dubbing one's impression the author's second self. But what cannot be admitted is that there is such a creature as an implied author. The term must be utterly banished and extinguished, exorcised from the house of criticism by constant repetition of the simple statement that every work has or had a real (flesh and blood) author. It really goes back to Dowden's classic imbecility (from which all this confusion stems) that in George Eliot's novels we sense the presence of 'one who, if not the real George Eliot, is that second self who writes her books and lives and speaks through them'. The second George Eliot who lives and speaks through them could not write them. That was done by George Eliot who is dead. 72

Booth's claim that the absence of commentary does not necessarily imply neutrality is quite right: norms are implicit in the author's

[70]Booth, Rhetoric, pp. 73-74.

[71]Booth, Rhetoric, p. 71.

[72]Killham, p. 280.

selection and arrangement of subject, character, action and so on. But the question of neutrality is surely one of degree and, according to Booth, since technical elements carry little weight in terms of meaning, authorial direction (through the implied author) is preferable to attempted neutrality. Booth restates the moral danger inherent in impersonal narration (or an undefined implied author) with reference to a proponent of moral elitism in art, Q. D. Leavis:

> By giving the impression that judgement is withheld, an author can hide from himself that he is sentimentally involved with his characters, and that he is asking for reader's sympathies without providing adequate reasons . . . as Q. D. Leavis says . . . "the author has poured his own day dreams, hot and hot, into dramatic form, without bringing them to any such touchstone as the 'good sense, but not common sense' of a cultivated society. The author is himself - or more usually herself - identified with the leading character, and the reader is invited to share the debauch". 73

This position overlooks three crucial points. First, the author can never be identified reliably with his character; even a "reliable" narrator is still a fiction, separable from the real author. Second, the degree to which a specific value orientation is both intended and made explicit varies enormously from one work to the next. Keith Waterhouse, for example, in his Introduction to his novel There Is A Happy Land, directly contradicts Booth's notions regarding authorial intentions:

> I have not explained what There Is A Happy Land is "trying to say". Nor do I intend to. It seems to me that if an author can explain what he is up to in five hundred words there is little point in spinning

73 Booth, Rhetoric, pp. 83-84. See Q. D. Leavis, Fiction and the Reading Public (London, 1932), p. 236.

> it out into fifty thousand. It is furthermore useless for the author to put forth that the book is about one thing if the reader decides that it is about something else. [74]

And, finally, in the words of Peter Swiggart,

> . . . it is . . . absurd to insist that readers are invariably at the mercy of their emotions and ideologies and thus incapable of enjoying the expression of bizarre philosophies or of suspending disbelief . . . [75]

This issue leads to Booth's discussion of sincerity in fiction. If a work is deficient in conveying the implied author's norms, or if "a narrator who by every trustworthy sign is presented to us as a reliable spokesman for the author professes to believe in values which are never realized in the structure as a whole", [76] then that work is insincere. A case in point for Booth is, again, Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. In this "authorless" work, the problem of a value orientation arises, according to Booth, in the treatment of three central acts of Stephen Dedalus: his rejection of the priesthood, his creation of an aesthetic theory, and his artistic production of the villanelle. The question, for Booth, - and indeed for numerous critics - arises when one is faced with deciding whether Stephen, in these cases, is to be taken seriously. Booth asks, for example, how one can avoid an ironic

[74] Keith Waterhouse, There Is A Happy Land (1957; rpt. London: Longman, 1968), pp. 145-146.

[75] Swiggart, p. 152.

[76] Booth, Rhetoric, p. 75.

interpretation[77] regarding a poem which is apparently inept? Yet an ironic stance regarding Stephen not only deflates his stature as developed elsewhere in the novel but also contradicts one's knowledge of Joyce's own attitudes toward his autobiographical creation. The fact that critics cannot come to a satisfactory resolution of this question forces Booth to see the novel as flawed.

The fact is that interpretation of many - if not most - works remains a continuous exploration of possibilities and rejections of improbabilities. In this respect, Swiggart points out the fallacy of Booth's assumption that "the reactions of an average or archetypal reader may be gauged by reference to the complex speculation of critics". He says:

> If the critics cannot agree, the argument runs, then ordinary readers must be even more confused. But critical controversies cover and enrich the entire field of literature, and only individual critics, like Mr. Booth, can decide whether a particular controversy is traceable to artistic defects. In a similar way Mr. Booth must classify himself as a reader fully aware of Joyce's artistic intentions in order to demonstrate that those intentions have somehow miscarried. 78

In the case of the Portrait, the notion that Joyce is presenting

[77] Ironic is used here in the sense in which it is used by most Joyce critics who apply this approach. Irony, for them, is taken to be mockery through deflationary techniques. See Hugh Kenner, "The Portrait in Perspective," in Joyce's Portrait: Criticisms and Critiques, ed. Thomas E. Connolly (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962); Robert S. Ryf, A New Approach to Joyce (1962; rpt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); William York Tindall, A Reader's Guide to James Joyce (New York: Noonday Press, 1959).

[78] Swiggart, p. 156.

Stephen as a young man could account for the relative crudity of his artistic theory and practice as well as the romanticism of his objectives. The fact that Stephen is presented as an idealistic youth may constitute a form of judgement on the part of his creator but does his portrayal in realistic terms demand explicit approval or condemnation? It is clear that Booth rejects the Portrait (and, by implication, many other twentieth-century works) on these grounds:

> Whatever intelligence Joyce postulates in his reader - let us assume the unlikely case of its being comparable to his own - will not be sufficient for precise inference of a pattern of judgements which is, after all, private to Joyce. . . . We simply cannot avoid the conclusion that to some extent the book itself is at fault . . . 79

Despite the critical legitimacy of Booth's probings, one can question their validity in the light of evidence pointing to ambiguity as a successful literary ingredient. Donald Pizer suggests that ambiguity in much of our modern fiction reflects the novelist's perception of "the destructiveness of modern life [and] a lack of uncertainty about alternatives". He says:

> . . . if most of our major contemporary novelists are similar in any one way it is in their antagonism to moral contracts, to the idea that moral values can be widely shared . . . Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction is therefore less a quarrel with fiction . . . than a quarrel with the modern temper . . . [his] interest . . . is less in how fiction communicates than in what it should communicate. 80

[79]Booth, Rhetoric, p. 335.

[80]Donald Pizer, "Wayne C. Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction: Five Years After," College English 28 (Mar. 1967), 474-475.

Keith Waterhouse provides indisputable support for fictional ambiguity in his comments on his own work:

> What *There Is A Happy Land* has to say starts on the first page and finishes on the last page. If the reader sees it as a straightforward record of childhood, that is what it is. If he sees it as a story about the loss of innocence, that is what it is. If he thinks it argues that childhood is the time of greatest disillusionment, that is what it does. A novel cannot force a reader to think along a certain line; the best it can do is to make him think. What the reader gets out of *There Is A Happy Land* is his own private affair; I am content to know that the experience has been a fruitful one. 81

Booth's criterion of a clear value orientation, transmitted by the implied author, even if acceptable, poses additional problems. His requirement deflates the capacity of the reader to appreciate and judge a work according to his own moral and intellectual predispositions and in relation to structural and thematic clues within the work. Further, it de-emphasizes the role of the narrator as the referential agent who replaces, for the sake of formal purity, the intruding author. And, finally, although Booth claims that his implied author is one step removed from his real author, is the implied author really a discrete entity? If his function is to convey, in an unequivocal way, the norms of the author, how is he capable of doing so outside the bounds of the fictional world when he is, at the same time, not to be taken as the real author? If, as Booth would have it, the narrator is incapable of fulfilling the function of value orientation, then that function

81 Waterhouse, p. 146.

must reside with the author. In short, the implied author is a mere theoretical abstraction, a concept which is too intangible to serve as a defining and controlling agent. Booth's "intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole" at this point becomes merely rhetorical.

In the end, the only potential personae one can isolate in a novel are those of the narrator and the author; since the true author can never be accurately identified within the fictional illusion (nor can his true intentions be determined), responsibility resides ultimately with the narrator. Again, the author is implicit in every decision regarding the form and content of his work, but once inside that work the reader can be certain only of what is related to him by the narrator. His reliability or unreliability, moreover, can be determined only on the basis of clues provided internally. As Swiggart says,

> Mr. Booth makes much the same mistake that at one point he warns his reader against, that of confusing the author as man with the implied self he projects into his work. He conceives such an implied author in moral terms that are appropriate only to human individuals and not to their artistic creations. 82

For Booth, then, classification of narrative stance or point of view is neither possible nor necessary. Since meaning derives from the norms of the implied author, Booth chooses to discuss, in general terms, the variety of qualities the author's voice can assume. He begins by rejecting narrative analysis in terms of first or third person. He says, for example, that Tom Jones is

[82]Swiggart, p. 159.

a first-person novel yet it conveys the impression of the third-person form. Booth's analysis of Tom Jones in terms of the grammatical voice is bound to be inadequate; the novel conveys the effect of the third person precisely because it is in the third person. The definitions provided by Romberg and Stanzel can, in this case, be proposed as adequate descriptions on the basis of grammatical voice. Romberg defines a first-person novel as one "that is narrated all the way along in the first person by a person who appears in the novel, the narrator".[83] Accordingly, Tom Jones is not a first-person novel because, although Fielding's essays and comments are provided in the first person, the story of Tom is related in the third. Further, the "I" in Tom Jones does not appear in the novel; that is, in the fictional world inhabited by Tom and the other characters. Stanzel's scheme, applied to this novel, provides additional evidence that analysis in terms of narrative stance can be sufficiently descriptive. For Stanzel, Tom Jones represents the authorial novel in which the world of the author-narrator is temporally and spatially removed from that of his fiction. The narration, as in the figural novel, is in the third person, but can be distinguished from the figural by the ostensible presence of the author-narrator as the manipulating, controlling force.

The same framework can be invoked to challenge Booth's objection to the first person-third person distinction with regard to The Ambassadors. Booth says, quite correctly, that this novel is narrated in the third person; he goes on to say, however, that it gives the

[83]Romberg, p. 4.

impression of being first-person form "since Strether in large part 'narrates' his own story".[84] In fact, Strether does not narrate his own story: a separate, though unidentified, person narrates the story. This narration consists, predominantly, of the presentation of the activities of Strether's mind, but Strether is always referred to as "he".[85] Stanzel's category of the figural narrative stance quite adequately accounts for such a case in which a third-person narrative form conveys the impression of the first-person mode.

One of the weak links in Booth's chain of argument is his de-emphasis of the basic fact that what is presented, in all fiction, is an illusion. In the case of The Ambassadors again, the reader, regardless of the extent to which he is invited to engage with Strether as if Strether were addressing him directly, is still forced, in this convention, to remember that it is only an impression. Stanzel, rather than leaving the reader as an undefinable entity about whom the author can make no assumptions and from whom he can, accordingly, expect no moral perception, distinguishes readers loosely according to their voluntary or involuntary awareness of formal elements. Starting from the assumption that all authors apply devices to encourage "suspension of disbelief", Stanzel postulates two kinds of readers: those who are quite readily submerged into the illusory world without regard for anomalies of form, and those who maintain an awareness of the operating conventions

[84] Booth, Rhetoric, p. 151.

[85] The narrator's occasional interpolations of commentary - which James dutifully justifies in his Preface to The Ambassadors - provide additional reminders that this is a third-person work. (See pp. 10-11 of my discussion.)

simultaneous with their assimilation of the story content. According to Stanzel, then, one cannot assume that narrative stance is irrelevant on the basis that the reader's awareness of the particular convention involved is probably minimal. Stanzel's position, consequently, deflates the importance of the implied author's norms.

What Booth does offer, in place of a classification of point of view, is a series of possibilities for the author's voice. As will become evident, each of these possibilities may be useful in a limited descriptive way; they do not provide, however, either independently or taken together, a scheme for classifying narrative stance which is essential for the proposed discussion of first-person form in fiction.

Booth begins by distinguishing between undramatized and dramatized narrators. In the case of such rigorously impersonal stories as Hemingway's "The Killers", the undramatized narrator is clearly identical with the implied author. Although the impression is one of direct presentation of the story to the reader without the mediation of "an experiencing mind", Booth cautions "the inexperienced reader [who] may make the mistake of thinking that the story comes to him unmediated".[86] This situation can be contrasted to that in which the narrator is dramatized, and reveals something of himself in the process of narration. In this category Booth places Strether of The Ambassadors. Again, Strether is not, strictly speaking, the narrator; although Strether's mind is dramatized, the narrator

[86]Booth, Rhetoric, p. 152.

remains undramatized. According to Romberg, and implied by Stanzel, the only pure form of dramatized narration occurs in the first-person novel since the narrator is part of the drama. In The Sun Also Rises, for example, Jake Barnes is at once narrator of and participant in the action. At the same time as he is ostensibly relating the story of Robert Cohn and Brett Ashley, Jake is creating a portrait of himself (in relation to the other characters) as the moral centre of the fiction. A narrator relating events in the third person is dramatized (in Stanzel's authorial novel) in a limited sense only: he is dramatized within his own world which is separate and distinct from that of his fiction. Fielding in Tom Jones dramatizes his narrator to the extent that he becomes, for the reader, a distinct personality. This narrator, however, does not fictionally partake of the drama being unfolded within the bounds of the story of Tom. By emphasizing his role as creator and manipulator of the story, in fact, Fielding's narrator decreases the dramatic intensity and independence of his fiction. Thus, Booth's use of the term "narrator" leads to confusion with regard to his discussion of dramatized and undramatized narrators.

Booth distinguishes, further, between narrators as mere observers and narrators as agents who have some effect on events in the fictional world. This distinction is clearly not applicable in the case of first-person novels; here the narrator is both observer - of his own actions and those of others - and participator. In fact, the narrator-agent can be seen only in the first-person form: by definition, the third-person narrator is distinct from (that is,

a non-participant in) the fictional world as such. Booth supports his claim that this distinction holds for both first- and third-person novels, however, by citing Paul Morel in Sons and Lovers as a narrator-agent. In fact, Paul is not the narrator, nor is the narrator of this novel anything more than an observer.

Booth's next three aspects of narrative possibilities are useful as descriptive tools but of no use in obtaining a set of features for the first-person novel as distinct from other forms. In his discussion of the traditional separation of scene and summary, telling and showing, he points out the inadequacy of such labels for indicating literary effect. With regard to authorial commentary, he believes that the twentieth-century bias against commentary in general is unfortunate because it fails to distinguish between commentary which is purely rhetorical and commentary which is relevant and necessary to the dramatic structure. And, finally, he points out the possibility of the observer-narrator or the narrator-agent to be presented either in a self-conscious light or as being unaware of himself as a writer. One cannot object to such observations but can question their efficacy as alternatives to a classification of narrative stance.

Another of Booth's descriptive dimensions is that of distance between the following: narrator and implied author; narrator and other characters; narrator and reader; implied author and reader; and implied author and other characters. Distance can range from complete identification to complete opposition in terms of value orientation, moral stance, intellectual level, and aesthetic quality. Again, the concept of the implied author is central to the issue

and, for Booth, eliminates the adequacy of a point of view approach in indicating distance. Booth says:

> . . . surely the moral and intellectual qualities of the narrator are more important to our judgement than whether he is referred to as "I" or "he", or whether he is privileged or limited. 87

One cannot argue that the narrator's qualities are unimportant; the problem with Booth's position resides in the fact that these qualities can be determined only in relation to the norms of the implied author. Booth's statement also overlooks the fact that the choice of first- or third-person narration itself carries an implicit suggestion of distance. In the case of the first-person form, the constant repetition of the "I" invites the reader to assimilate his norms with those of the narrator unless there is evidence from the narrator himself, or from other characters, that those norms are suspect. In the third-person also, the narrator carries the implied norms but acts as an intermediary between the reader and the characters involved in the story. In short, the conventions assumed by either first- or third-person narration suggest the norms implicit in the work. The implied author is merely a theoretical concept; again, Booth ignores the fact that the role of the author as the creator of the illusion is understood.

In his discussion of distance, Booth reasserts his position that a work, to be successful, must posit little or no distance between the norms of the implied author and those of the reader.

87 Booth, Rhetoric, p. 158.

He says: "A bad book . . . is often most clearly recognizable because the implied author asks that we judge according to norms that we cannot accept".[88] Even if one accepts the notion of the implied author, it is impossible to accept this statement in the light of the range of norms represented in the vast selection of so-called successful fiction. It is, similarly, impossible to accept the implication that all readers will judge according to a common, fixed standard of values.

In discussing variations in support or correction (by the implied author) of reliable and unreliable narrators, Booth comes dangerously close to relying on a distinction in terms of first- or third-person narrative stance. He says:

> Support or correction differs radically, it should be noted, depending on whether it is provided from within the action . . . or is simply provided externally, to help the reader correct or reinforce his own views as against the narrator's. 89

Providing one rejects the implied author concept and views the narrator in the third-person form as being external to the fiction, one can see this statement as referring clearly to a distinction between first- and third-person forms.

Another descriptive dimension discussed by Booth is that of privilege with regard to insight into character and event. Here Booth quite accurately points out the inadequacy of such terms as "omniscience" and "dramatic":

> Many modern works that we usually classify as narrated dramatically, with everything relayed to us through the

[88]Booth, Rhetoric, p. 157.

[89]Booth, Rhetoric, p. 160.

> limited view of the characters, postulate fully as much omniscience in the silent author as Fielding claims for himself. 90

This is quite right, as far as it goes. What is at issue is the accurate description of the effect or impression created for the reader by the ostensible absence or presence of the author-narrator. Booth isolates the problem of definition and seems to rely on the isolation as sufficient in itself. With reference to Stanzel's scheme, however, it is in fact possible to incorporate this distinction between an impression of impersonality and an impression of authorial control into a classification of narrative stance. Similarly, Booth's distinction between inside, psychological views of characters and superficial, external treatment can be handled by Stanzel's authorial-first-person-figural scheme.

The validity of Booth's notion of implied author in terms of its practical application is thus questionable. It would appear that a treatment of Booth's descriptive dimensions can be accomplished, in terms of exposition, quite adequately by a categorization of narrative stance. A discussion of the conventions assumed by the first-person narrative form and an application of this framework to specific first-person works will illustrate the functional efficacy of the narrative-stance approach.

[90]Booth, Rhetoric, p. 161.

CHAPTER II

FIRST-PERSON NARRATION

Definition

The types, characteristics, and problems of the first-person form, as discussed in this section, are based on the formulations of Romberg and Stanzel. The definition of a first-person novel used for this discussion is that of Romberg: "a novel that is narrated all the way along in the first person by a person who appears in the novel, the narrator".[1] This definition excludes those novels in which the narrator refers to himself in the first person but to his fictional characters in the third. Thus, Fielding's Tom Jones and Thackeray's Vanity Fair are third-person works or, in Stanzel's terminology, authorial novels. Romberg's definition also excludes those works in which various "I's" appear inset (for example, in passages of dialogue or sections of interior monologue) in a story told mainly in the third person. Joyce's Ulysses contains large segments of interior monologue by Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and Molly Bloom; the narrative connecting the various presentational techniques, however, is in the third person. Romberg's definition does include those works in which there are two or more first-person narrators as long as there is a primary "I" who provides the framework and serves as the authority for the secondary narrators.

[1] Romberg, p. 4.

In Apuleius's The Golden Ass, Lucius represents the primary narrator who provides continuity for the various stories inserted by secondary first-person narrators. Similarly, in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights, Lockwood's narrative frame constitutes the outer shell for the narrative of Nelly Dean who, in turn, relates the stories of the various central characters. In short, then, secondary first-person narrators do not, in themselves, constitute a first-person novel; the form requires a fictitious narrator, interposed by the author between himself and the reader, to whom authority for the story is given.[2]

According to Romberg, however, there are certain first-person works in which the narrator is not fictitious but represents the real author. Romberg sees Dante in The Inferno and Chaucer in the Canterbury Tales as placing themselves, as authors, into their respective fictitious worlds. These unique examples lead Romberg to the dangerous assumption that works in which the first-person narrator retains the name of the author do not have a fictitious narrator. It is to be remembered, at this point, that first- and third-person narrators who resemble the real author are still artistic transformations of the author's real self. It is clear that Dante and Chaucer both assume a persona for the purposes of

[2]A limitation in Romberg's definition appears when one considers a novel such as Faulkner's As I Lay Dying in which no one of the fifteen first-person narrators assumes authority for the whole. Although Romberg mentions such a situation and calls it an exception to the rule, he feels it poses illusion problems because it posits no "link between the novel's fiction and the reader's reality" (p. 48). Whether one agrees with this judgement or not, the form clearly falls into the first-person category.

the fictional creation: by the very fact that they place "themselves" as narrators into their stories they are overstepping the bounds between reality and illusion. Romberg goes on to point to W. Somerset Maugham as another example of a real author who steps into his fiction. Although Romberg does not specify a particular work in which Maugham operates in this way, one of Maugham's own statements regarding the fictional persona indicates his position on this matter. In his Preface to The Complete Short Stories, Maugham is careful to point out the distinction between narrator and author. He says:

> . . . [the stories] are founded on experiences of my own during [the] war, but I should like to impress upon the reader that they are not what the French call reportage, but works of fiction. 3

Christopher Isherwood's prefatory remarks to Goodbye to Berlin are similarly pertinent:

> Because I have given my own name to the "I" of this narrative, readers are certainly not entitled to assume that its pages are purely autobiographical, or that its characters are libellously exact portraits of living persons. 'Christopher Isherwood' is a convenient ventriloquist's dummy, nothing more. 4

In the light of the definition thus proposed, an examination now of the various types of first-person narrative situations will illustrate the range of possibilities - and problems - inherent in the form.

[3]W. Somerset Maugham, The Complete Short Stories (London: William Heinemann, 1951) II, vii.

[4]Christopher Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin (1939; rpt. Great Britain: Penguin, 1974), p. 6.

Types of First-Person Novels

According to Romberg, perhaps the most common form which the first-person novel takes is that of a fictitious memoir in which the narrator recalls events relating to all or part of his life up to the point in time at which the narration occurs. When the time span between the time of narration and the time of the experience is relatively short, the period of time being recalled is necessarily relatively short. In this type of memoir (which is equivalent to Stanzel's figural first-person type) the relative brevity of these two time frames allows for the minimization of narrative references to chronology and generalizations regarding experiential change. In Camus' The Outsider, Meursault's attitude at the end of the novel remains essentially the same as it was in the beginning; the brevity of the time period recalled and the proximity of Meursault's narrating and experiencing selves reinforce the stasis - or, at most, intensification - of his personal philosophy.

The memoir can involve, on the other hand, a recounting of the majority of the narrator's life. This memoir form (which corresponds to Stanzel's authorial first-person type) implies a large temporal and spatial gap between the act of narration and the experiences being recalled. This distance, in turn, implies that the narrator is in a position to both comment on his younger self and delineate the chronology involved. David Copperfield is an example of the authorial first-person situation in which the narrator relates and comments on his life experiences from a posterior and superior vantage point. At the time of writing, David views himself,

as he was as a young man in this light:

> [Agnes] looked so quiet and good, and reminded me so strongly of my airy fresh school days at Canterbury, and the sodden, smoky, stupid wretch I had been the other night, that, nobody being by, I yielded to my self-reproach and shame, and - in short, made a fool of myself. I cannot deny that I shed tears. To this hour I am undecided whether it was upon the whole the wisest thing I could have done, or the most ridiculous. 5

Although this position of posteriority for the narrator is implicit in the first-person form in general, the degree to which it is emphasized depends on whether the figural or authorial situation predominates. Posteriority implies that the narrator knows the outcome of the story and imposes, on the narrated material, a certain amount of selection and arrangement. It is clear, however, that in the figural first-person type (as in the diary or epistolary novel) the illusion is one of uncertainty for future events since the narrative act remains close to the narrated action.

Romberg's second first-person type, the diary, illustrates more clearly the figural quality potential in the short memoir. In the diary novel, the narrator and the reader come up against the action almost simultaneously since the entries typically follow shortly after the experience. As in the figural first-person memoir, the diary gives the illusion of uncertainty although in the latter, the sense of a pre-arranged fictional whole is even less noticeable since the point of view advances chronologically with the narrated material. This illusion of virtual immediacy can be seen in this passage from Sartre's Nausea:

[5]Charles Dickens, David Copperfield (1850; rpt. Great Britain: Penguin, 1973), p. 426.

> Three o'clock. Three o'clock is always too late or too early for anything you want to do. A peculiar moment in the afternoon. Today it is intolerable.
>
> A cold sunshine is whitening the dust on the window-panes. A pale sky, mottled with white. The gutters were frozen this morning. I am digesting dully near the stove; I know in advance that this is a wasted day. 6

The diary form departs, however, from the figural first-person type in two important respects. Each diary entry involves a time reference which reminds the reader of the act of narration; in this sense the diary novel approaches the authorial first-person type. The authorial quality is further reinforced in the diary novel by the possibility for self-analysis; introspection is, in fact, the dominant potential feature of this form.

Romberg's third type of first-person novel, the epistolary or "letter" novel is similar to the diary particularly with respect to the effect of immediacy it creates. Samuel Richardson, in his Preface to Clarissa, claims that he chose the form precisely because it allows for "instantaneous" description:

> All the Letters are written while the hearts of the writers must be supposed to be wholly engaged in their subject . . . So that they abound not only with critical Situations, but with what may be called instantaneous Descriptions and Reflections (proper to be brought home to the breast of the youthful Reader); as also with affecting Conversations; many of them written in the dialogue or dramatic way. 7

The epistolary form does, however, differ from the diary in that each epistolary entry typically has an addressee and includes a message. For this reason, Romberg suggests that the form typically

[6] Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, trans. Robert Baldick (1938; rpt. Great Britain: Penguin, 1965), p. 27.

[7] Samuel Richardson, Clarissa (1747; rpt. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), xx.

requires an editorial framework since the assumption is that someone is in possession of the letters and is presenting them to the public. A diary, by contrast, is composed primarily for the writer himself, and entries range from the recording of noteworthy events for purposes of self-instruction to the recording of idle, random thoughts and feelings. Romberg isolates the following forms the epistolary novel can assume: 1) in which one narrator writes to one or more addressees (whose replies are only alluded to by the narrator). Romberg's example of this type is Richardson's Pamela;[8] 2) in which correspondence between two or more primary narrators is presented. Richardson's Clarissa is an illustration of this type; 3) in which the letters of two or more writers are presented without reply-correspondence. Romberg's example, in this case, is Smollett's Humphry Clinker.[9]

Romberg then proceeds to point out variations on the three first-person forms outlined above. The abundance of these so-called mixed forms underlines the fact that a categorization such as Romberg's must be viewed in the light in which it is offered: that is, as a means of generalizing for the purpose of achieving an overview.

[8] Pamela actually includes more than one letter-writer but Romberg places the novel in this category since Pamela's narrative predominates. Although this form is theoretically possible, it is difficult to provide an example of a single-narrator epistolary novel (Romberg's other examples consist of foreign-language works). It would seem that the effects apparent in this narrative situation could be handled with equal success in the diary form.

[9] It should be noted at this point that the extent of the editor's role in these three types varies considerably from rather frequent interpolations in Clarissa to only two (aside from the fictitious Editor's Preface) in Humphry Clinker.

In the end, each first-person (or third-person) novel provides its own unique narrative situation, and categorizations such as Romberg's serve primarily as descriptive tools. Variations on the three basic types can be seen in the following instances: 1) in which the editor is the narrator and presents letters, diary entries or memoir fragments to authenticate his narrative. An example of this situation is Camus' The Plague; 2) in which a fictitious editor serves to introduce and authenticate the papers of the primary narrator. Gulliver's Travels is an illustration of this variation; 3) in which a mixture of diary entries, letters, and memoir fragments are presented without a connecting editorial narrative but under the auspices of an implied editor. In Wilkie Collins's The Moonstone, several of the narrators refer to the editorial role assumed by Franklin Blake; Blake, however, never directly addresses the reader in this particular role; 4) in which letters or diary entries are inserted into a narrative which is primarily of another type. Pamela is predominantly epistolary in form but includes a substantial segment of journal entries; 5) in which the first- and third-person forms alternate (as in Bleak House) or merge (The History of Henry Esmond is told primarily in the third person by the narrator about himself as the main character).

These mixed forms can be loosely associated with one of the three basic forms, memoir, diary, or epistolary. Just as in Stanzel's authorial first-person and figural first-person types, however, one can determine only the predominant mode in which any given novel is operating. Flexibility regarding descriptive analysis becomes

important in proportion as the individual work is examined in detail. The following discussion will explore the potential variables which distinguish individual first-person works.

Characteristics and Problems of the First-Person Form

Time

The issues involved in this particular category relate to both the time scheme or chronology invoked in any given work and the temporal distance existing between the time of narration and the time of the experiences being recalled. In a discussion of the latter, narrative distance, Romberg begins by isolating the "epic situation" or the circumstances surrounding the narrator at the time of narration. Indications of the epic situation include references to the narrator's specific writing situation and his motivation for telling the story. For example, Dowell, in The Good Soldier, is quite explicit about his epic situation very early in his account:

> Florence's people, as is so often the case with the inhabitants of Connecticut, came from the neighbourhood of Fordingbridge, where the Ashburnhams' place is. From there, at this moment, I am actually writing.
>
> You may well ask why I write. And yet my reasons are quite many. For it is not unusual in human beings who have witnessed the sack of a city or the falling to pieces of a people to desire to set down what they have witnessed for the benefit of unknown heirs or of generations infinitely remote; or, if you please, just to get the sight out of their heads. 10

Another important fact to be gleaned from the epic situation is the time at which the narration is occurring in relation to the

10 Ford Madox Ford, The Good Soldier (1927; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1955), p. 5.

time of the narrated events; it is this distance which determines the quality of the narrator's present (narrating) self as it relates to his past (experiencing) self. Although the time of the epic situation may not always be explicitly designated by the narrator (as in The Sun Also Rises) or may change as the narration progresses (as in The Good Soldier), the reader typically makes assumptions about the narrative distance on the basis of the narrator's disposition toward his material. A long temporal gap is clearly evident in John Braine's Room At The Top in which Joe Lampton reflects upon his younger self from a more mature vantage point. Works in which such a long temporal gap is involved typically include explicit references to narrative distance. Short narrative distance, on the other hand, may or may not be specified but is implicit in a novel such as The Outsider where Meursault, at the time of narration, assumes an emotional and mental affinity with his experiencing self. It is possible that a long temporal gap will not result in any gain of insight for the narrator, but in such a case, references to the passage of time are necessary in order that the lack of emotional or mental growth be made clear. To take the example of Dowell again, it is clear that although the narrator is temporally close to some of the events he is relating and removed from others (by as much as ten years), he is no more perceptive about the former than he is about the latter.

With regard to Romberg's first-person novel types, a long temporal gap is possible only in the memoir; it may be possible for a narrator to present a diary or letters from the distant past,

but in such a case, narrative reference to the fact that they are from the past would, in effect, simulate the conditions of the memoir form.[11] The diary and epistolary forms, (as in Nausea and Clarissa respectively) typically involve a short narrative distance.

Stanzel's authorial first-person and figural first-person types correspond respectively with Romberg's long and short temporal gaps. Stanzel's approach allows, however, for a more accurate description of the epic situation in the diary and epistolary forms in which the figural effect of virtual immediacy is counteracted by the authorial effect of the entry dates. An examination of Stanzel's experiencing and narrating selves in terms of narrative distance will clarify the possibilities the time scheme can involve. The narrating self typically predominates when a long time span is being invoked. In The Good Soldier, Dowell, in the act of narration, relates a story which occurs over the space of ten years. His identity as narrator is emphasized when references to chronology are presented. His experiencing self, on the other hand, typically predominates when a short period in the course of events is being rendered. To recall Lubbock's description of scenic and/or dramatic passages, it becomes clear that intense

[11] Aldous Huxley's Eyeless in Gaza represents an interesting combination of diary and third-person narration. All of the third-person chapters except the last deal with a time period which precedes the first of the diary entries. The final chapter is temporally removed from the last diary entry by a period of two months. Thus, although such a narrative framework would allow for the presentation of diary entries from the distant past, the temporal separation is, in fact, relatively small.

rendering of a particularized event cannot be sustained for long without some reference to the passage of time. Thus, the narrator of The Good Soldier alternates scenic passages in which his experiencing self predominates (by virtue of the fact that he is enacting the event for the reader) with passages, such as the following, in which the narrating self takes over and reminds the reader of the narrative distance: "Those words gave me the greatest relief that I have ever had in my life. They told me, I think, almost more than I have ever gathered at any one moment - about myself".[12] The Good Soldier, of course, approximates more closely Stanzel's authorial first-person type. In a more figural first-person novel such as The Sun Also Rises, the concentration on scenic presentation limits the extent to which the narrative can be sustained without authorial references; thus, the figural first-person novel (or the figural third-person novel) is typically shorter than the authorial first-person type.

Another aspect of narrative distance suggested by Lubbock's distinction between scenic and panoramic rendering and elaborated by Stanzel involves the varying tense illusions evoked by the different means of presentation. Stanzel begins with the axiom that the novel form combines epic preterite, or expository narrative in the past tense, with present tense (evident in dramatic passages). To clarify the effect of presentness evoked in dramatic rendering, Stanzel quotes J. W. Beach as saying:

> In a story we have the psychological equivalent of the

[12]Ford, p. 46.

> dramatic present whenever we have a vividly "constituted scene" . . . it is this which cheats the imagination, and persuades the reader that he is actually present, as a spectator, nay, perhaps as an actor in the drama. 13

A. A. Mendilow extends the effects of this illusion to include all scenic rendering, even that which is presented in the past tense:

> Mostly the past tense in which the events are narrated is transposed by the reader into a fictive present, while any expository matter is felt as a past in relation to that present. 14

In short, even the epic preterite can assume the imaginative value of the present tense in the course of the reading process. In an elaboration of this illusion effect, Stanzel claims that the reader's centre of orientation determines the temporal orientation in which the story operates for him. In the authorial first-person novel, the reader is frequently situated in the now-and-here of the narrating self (or in the epic situation) which is operating in the epic preterite. In the figural first-person type, on the other hand, the reader's centre of orientation is mainly that of the experiencing self in which the epic preterite assumes the imaginative value of the present. Although tense illusion depends, to some extent, on the individual reader's awareness of the manipulation of narrative distance, in general, the more temporally distinct the narrating self is from the experiencing self, the more the reader will get the effect of "pastness" for the events

[13]Stanzel, p. 33. (See Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel: Studies in Technique, New York, 1932, p. 148.)

[14]Stanzel, p. 33. (See A. A. Mendilow, Time and the Novel, London, 1952, p. 94.)

being recalled.

There are certain potential problems inherent in the first-person form regarding the manipulation of time. For example, because the first-person narrator is not omniscient (as he is in the authorial or figural novel), a potential illusion problem resides in the degree to which he can accurately recall past events. This problem is noticeable in the memoir which attempts to cover a long time span, and in any one of the first-person novel types when specifics such as scene and dialogue are being reconstructed. Some narrators attempt to circumvent this problem by making explicit references to their conscious efforts to recall as accurately as possible. David Copperfield says,

> Looking back, as I was saying, into the blank of my infancy, the first objects I can remember as standing out by themselves from a confusion of things, are my mother and Peggotty. What else do I remember? Let me see. 15

David also uses the device of emphasizing his own inherent powers of recall to reinforce the illusion of veracity for his material:

> . . . I think the memory of most of us can go farther back into such times than many of us suppose; just as I believe the power of observation in numbers of very young children to be quite wonderful for its closeness and accuracy. Indeed, I think that most grown men who are remarkable in this respect, may with greater propriety be said not to have lost the faculty, than to have acquired it; . . . if it should appear from anything I may set down in this narrative that I was a child of close observation, or that as a man I have a strong memory of my childhood, I undoubtedly lay claim to both of these characteristics. 16

Others narrators invoke the convention of the perfect memory

[15]Dickens, p. 61.

[16]Dickens, p. 61.

which implicitly demands that the reader accept, as part of the illusion, the narrator's reconstruction. In Wuthering Heights, Nelly Dean's story of the Earnshaws - an account which begins at a point in time twenty-four years previous to the time of narration - begins in this way:

> One fine summer morning - it was the beginning of harvest, I remember - Mr. Earnshaw, the old master, came down stairs, dressed for a journey; and, after he had told Joseph what was to be done during the day, he turned to Hindley and Cathy, and me - for I sat eating my porridge, with them - and he said, speaking to his son,
>
> "Now, my bonny man, I'm going to Liverpool to-day . . . What shall I bring you?" 17

Although it is Lockwood who is presenting Nelly Dean's narrative to the reader, he assumes her account to be accurate regarding details of events and dialogue. In the case of either the perfect memory convention or the explicit provision of recall credentials, the question to be asked involves the extent to which the illusion of veracity can be stretched. The answer, of course, varies with each work; the convention of the perfect memory appears to succeed in Room At The Top since Joe Lampton sufficiently emphasizes the fact that the experience being recalled represents an emotional turning point in his life. The convention is less successful in Waugh's Brideshead Revisited for the simple reason that the recorded experiences of Charles Ryder do not dramatically carry the emotional weight with which he attributes them. In novels in which the narrator brings the memory problem to the fore, the reader's

17 Emily Bronte, Wuthering Heights (1847; rpt. Great Britain: Penguin, 1970), pp. 76-77.

suspicion regarding the accuracy of the recall may, in fact, be heightened; this sacrifice can be counteracted, however, by the reader's affiliation with a narrator who is humanly fallible, and thus authentic. Stanzel, by emphasizing the notion of the reader's centre of orientation, suggests that the question of authenticity is automatically minimized in passages of dialogue which, by their very nature, provide the most serious source of questioning:

> The narrator, who stands at a great temporal distance, is permitted to reproduce long dialogues as direct quotations although such a feat of memory is beyond what is humanly possible. Since scenic presentation prevails in such passages, the reader's centre of orientation lies in the scene; the presence of a narrating self can be ignored temporarily, so that even the logical impossibility of such a detailed reproduction of the distant past is not disturbing. 18

Another aspect of narrative distance in the first-person novel which provides a potential illusion problem is the fact that the temporal distance between the narrating self and the experiencing self decreases as the story moves toward its conclusion. As Romberg points out, this decrease in temporal distance is seldom matched by an increase in the narrator's power of recall. However, in the figural first-person novel, which typically assumes the convention of the perfect memory, the convention may be said to include implicitly a consistency of accurate recall over the time span involved. In The Sun Also Rises, although no reference is made to narrative distance or Jake Barnes's process of recall, reconstruction of events is consistently precise.

[18]Stanzel, p. 72.

The authorial first-person novel allows for an obvious device to counteract the problem: the narrator's references to conscious attempts at remembering can decrease in frequency as the time of experience approaches the time of narration. In Lolita, Humbert Humbert's explicit attempts at recall decrease as the narrative distance decreases from approximately forty years to approximately two months. In both novel types, the problem at hand may be further reduced by the assumption that the narrator is attempting to present a consistent picture of past development which will either serve as a contrast to his more mature, narrating self or strengthen the identity of his unchanged, narrating self.

The second aspect to be discussed with regard to the management of time is that of chronology. It is a given condition of the first-person novel that the narrator is looking back on events which occurred in either the distant or the recent past.[19] This condition of posteriority is inescapable; although the epistolary and diary forms come closest to a situation of immediacy, it is difficult to conceive of an entry which does not refer to past occurrences. Sartre's Nausea represents a rather unusual situation in this respect since the narrator's account frequently assumes the present tense:

> Thirty years old! And an annual income of 14,400 francs.

[19] This condition, incidentally, indicates that the narrator (except in the case of an editor presenting the memoirs of a deceased narrator) is, first, alive to tell his story and, second, aware of the course which the events are to take. I mention the obvious merely to point out the limitation that the first-person form imposes with regard to the fate of the narrator.

> Dividend coupons to cash every month. Yet I'm not an old man! Let them give me something to do, no matter what. . . . I'd better think about something else, because at this moment I'm putting on an act for my own benefit. I know perfectly well that I don't want to do anything; to do something is to create existence - and there's quite enough existence as it is. The fact is that I can't put down my pen: I think I'm going to have the Nausea and I have the impression that I put it off by writing. So I write down whatever comes into my head. 20

Although such passages come closest to the effect of simultaneity apparent in a passage of interior monologue, the fact that the narrating medium, in the diary, is a necessary presence implies a degree of posteriority, however slight. In short, the physical transcription of a thought necessarily follows its inception. 21

Given the initial "flashback" implicit in the recall from the present epic situation, then, the time scheme of the first-person novel can proceed in one of two ways: a straight linear fashion or a linear manner interrupted periodically by flashbacks to a time period previous to the point at which the narrated events begin. Dowell in The Good Soldier adopts a technique in which flashbacks are presented in an ostensibly rambling, maze-like fashion. He authenticates this approach by superimposing, on his "real" epic situation, a fictive one in which he is talking at random to an imaginary listener:

> . . . I shall just imagine myself for a fortnight or so

[20] Sartre, pp. 245-246.

[21] The unusually frequent use of the present tense in Nausea is functional in reinforcing the existential theme: Antoine wants to "be", "behind the existence which falls from one present to the next, without a past, without a future . . ." (p. 249).

> at one side of the fireplace of a country cottage, with a sympathetic soul opposite me. And I shall go on talking, in a low voice while the sea sounds in the distance and overhead the great black flood of wind polishes the bright stars. From time to time we shall get up and go to the door and look out at the great moon and say: "Why, it is nearly as bright as in Provence!" 22

The freedom which this situation allows Dowell in terms of chronology is functional in suggesting the disorganized, superficial way in which his perceptive faculties operate.

In general, flashbacks require some narrative reference (or direction by the narrating self) to the time adjustment. Such interpolations heighten the reader's awareness of the epic situation and, hence, suggest the characteristics typical of Stanzel's authorial first-person type. In Orwell's Coming Up For Air, George Bowling directs the reader as to the course his reminiscences are taking as he is walking up the Strand:

> The past is a curious thing. It's with you all the time, I suppose an hour never passes without your thinking of things that happened ten or twenty years ago, and yet most of the time it's got no reality, it's just a set of facts that you've learned, like a lot of stuff in a history book. Then some chance sight or sound or smell, especially smell, sets you going, and the past doesn't merely come back to you, you're actually in the past. It was like that at this moment. 23

By contrast, in the figural first-person novel, The Outsider, the events (covering a time span of approximately one year) are presented in a linear scheme. The diary and epistolary forms similarly proceed in a linear fashion although each entry reference temporarily suspends the time flow.

[22]Ford, p. 12.

[23]George Orwell, Coming Up For Air (Great Britain: Penguin, 1939), p. 30.

Authenticity

Although fictional realism is an objective which has been especially emphasized since the critical innovations of Henry James, many modern novelists and critics dispute authenticity as a criterion for fictional creation. Wayne C. Booth questions both the ability to achieve realism in fiction and the moral validity of attempted realism. The former, according to Booth, is theoretically impossible in a form which is, of necessity, artificial. Booth ignores the fact that the illusion convention is understood and that once inside that illusion, realistic conditions are applicable. The morality of realism is questioned by Booth because the achievement of realism often requires removal of the authorial voice or the moral orientation of the implied author. Booth says:

> It is thus in the failure to think clearly about ends and means that the prophets of realism have not most often tarnished their remarkable achievements. To have made naturalness of technique an end in itself was, perhaps, an impossible goal in the first place. Whatever verisimilitude a work may have always operates within a larger artifice; each work that succeeds is natural - and artificial - in its own way. It is easy for us now to see what was not so clear at the beginning of the century: whether an impersonal novelist hides behind a single narrator or observer . . . multiple points of view . . . or . . . objective surfaces . . . the author's voice is never really silenced. It is, in fact, one of the things we read fiction for . . . and we are never troubled by it unless the author makes a great to-do about his own superior naturalness. [24]

In a discussion of this issue, Stanzel claims that the traditional view that "the aim of all narrative technique is none other than the creation of verisimilitude for the narrated material"[25] must be supplemented with the admission that a certain amount of

[24]Booth, Rhetoric, pp. 59-60.

[25]Stanzel, p. 7.

modern fiction "seeks to present the narrated material as a part of the reader's experience of reality".[26] Achievement of the latter condition often depends less (than does the former) on the identification of a palpable, believable narrative persona. The scrupulously objective representation of reality achieved by Robbe-Grillet's camera eye, for example, attempts to appeal to the reader's own physical sense of reality; the interposition, between the reader and the material, of a personality who authenticates the material by virtue of the fact that he is a personality, in this case becomes less important. It is still true, however, that a fictional creation demands a certain amount of commitment, on the part of the reader, to the illusion contract; this contract is, in fact, what differentiates fiction from other forms of prose. Nevertheless, differentiation in terms of the degree to which fictional verisimilitude is attempted in various works is legitimate; it is conceivable that the selection of the first-person form represents a very obvious attempt to verify the story material. The achievement of authenticity is particularly facile in this form since the illusion which prevails is that the experience being related is the narrator's own: he has, quite simply, first-hand knowledge of the events. [27]

Various critical responses to first-person narration reinforce the notion that this form in particular strives for authenticity.

[26] Stanzel, p. 7.

[27] John Braine, in Writing A Novel, recommends the first-person form to the novice writer since it offers unquestionable authenticity: "You know all the details because you were there" (p. 114).

Percy Lubbock, while criticizing the first-person form in some respects, suggests that in terms of authenticity it has obvious advantages. In the form,

> . . . the author has shifted his responsibility and it now falls where the reader can see and measure it; . . . the spokesman is there in recognizable relation with his matter; no question of his authority can rise. 28

George Orwell, similarly reacts against first-person narration except on the grounds that it is inherently authentic:

> In the first person anything can be made to sound credible. This is so in the first place because whatever he writes seems credible to the author, for you can daydream about yourself doing no matter what, whereas third-person adventures have to be comparatively probable. The reader, again, finds anything told in the first person credible, because he either identifies himself with the 'I' of the story, or, because an 'I' is talking to him, accepts it as a real person. 29

W. Somerset Maugham provides a more unqualified statement of support:

> Its object is of course to achieve credibility, for when someone tells you what he states happened to himself you are more likely to believe that he is telling the truth than when he tells you what happened to somebody else. 30

Romberg's position on the first-person form in this regard recalls Stanzel's distinction between the traditional demand for verisimilitude and the more recent de-emphasis of this criterion. He says that the first-person narrative technique

> . . . gives to the author the opportunity to take advantage of the primitive but remarkably persistent demand that the novel-reader in general makes of a narrative: namely, that it shall give an illusion of

[28]Lubbock, pp. 251-252.

[29]Orwell, Essays, p. 574.

[30]Maugham, vii.

reality and truth. 31

And, finally, Stanzel adds that the form authenticates not only the events presented but also (in contrast to the authorial and figural novel) the narrative act:

> The identification of the first-person narrator with a figure of the fictional world represents the first-person novel's characteristic means of verifying the narrated material. . . The incorporation of the narrative process into the realm of the fictional world causes the reader to forget the division into a presenting and a presented reality. Everything, even the narrative process, appears with a fictive claim to a quasi-real existence. 32

Despite critical support for first-person narration in terms of veracity, the form presents certain problems in this respect which are worthy of examination. The first of these can be considered as being relatively minor since the objection can be legitimately over-ruled. Orwell objects to the form on the grounds that it is autobiographical and, hence, not a "true" fictionalization. He says:

> The narrator is never really separable from the author. It is impossible to avoid crediting him with one's own thoughts occasionally, &, since even in a novel the author must occasionally comment, one's own comments unavoidably become those of the narrator (which would not be so in a third-person novel). 33

Stanzel refers to the critic Hildegard Zeller as similarly equating (erroneously) a first-person narrator with the author of the work. Stanzel goes on to describe the position of another critic, Kate Hamburger, who carries this argument even further. He says: "As an autobiography and thus historical document, according to Hamburger,

[31]Romberg, p. 59.

[32]Stanzel, p. 91.

[33]Orwell, Essays, pp. 574-575.

the first-person narrative theoretically ceases to share the fictionality of narrated worlds".[34] In direct refutation of this notion, Stanzel, quite rightly, states that

> . . . it is difficult to understand why the identification of the narrating self with a figure of the novel, namely the experiencing self, should be taken so literally. The third-person novel's comparable claim of authenticity for its narrated material is almost always taken for what it is - a part of the quasi-real guise which has become a common convention of this narrative situation. 35

Support for Stanzel's claim is provided by Louis Dudek who points out that in Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past, for example, there is a strong element of autobiography (the narrator is named Marcel) yet the narrator is still different from the author in many respects. In a statement which is reminiscent of the doctrine of impersonality employed by Eliot and Joyce, Dudek emphasizes that "the author may be involved with his work, but the first person in literature is in fact a literary creation and a dramatic fiction even when it is presumed to represent the actual ego of the author".[36] Dudek goes on to give Proust's own statement regarding the translation of subjective impressions into an artistic product. Proust says that his characters and scenes, rather than being re-creations of actual, experienced impressions, are "constructed from numerous impressions which, derived from many young girls, many churches, many sonatas, would go to make up a single sonata, a single church, a single young girl".[37]

[34] Stanzel, p. 90.

[35] Stanzel, p. 90.

[36] Dudek, The First Person in Literature, p. 39.

[37] Dudek, p. 42.

Keith Waterhouse similarly claims that, although "background" material used in fiction may be autobiographical, "truth must go through many processes before it becomes acceptable as fiction". This is so because

> . . . real life provides the long shot - the faithful, plodding record that for all its authenticity is somehow flat and undramatic: fiction provides the close-ups, the panning shots of faces in the crowd, the camera angles on unexpected detail which - paradoxically - bring the whole thing to life. 38

In disputing critical objections to the autobiographical nature of first-person narration, it is perhaps appropriate to pose, in addition to Stanzel's, the question as to why the fictional authenticity of the narrator is any more difficult to accept, in terms of the illusion, than the convention of the perfect memory. The latter may, in fact, present more of a problem for the illusion contract. This is so because the contingent facts (of the time span, for example) are at the reader's disposal; by contrast, facts pertaining to the "real" author outside his fictional world are neither knowable nor indispensable to the appreciation of the fiction itself.

A second and more tangible problem which faces the first-person narrator with regard to authenticity is the extent to which he can justify, within the bounds of the illusion, the provision of external details about himself. This problem can be especially acute in the diary form since, in this case, the narrator is ostensibly addressing himself only. The problem can be minimized, however, by narrative

38 Waterhouse, Land, p. 143.

resort to introspection. The narrator in Sartre's Nausea begins his diary in this way:

> The best thing would be to write down everything that happens from day to day. To keep a diary in order to understand. To neglect no nuances or little details, even if they seem unimportant, and above all to classify them. I must say how I see this table, the street, people, my packet of tobacco, since these are the things which have changed. I must fix the exact extent and nature of this change. 39

In this context, he soon proceeds to describe the effect his physical appearance has on his frame of mind:

> On the wall there is a white hole, the mirror. It is a trap. I know that I am going to let myself be caught in it. I have. The grey thing has just appeared in the mirror. I go over and look at it . . . It is the reflection of my face . . . Other people's faces have some significance. Not mine. I cannot even decide whether it is handsome or ugly. I think it is ugly, because I have been told so. All the same there is one thing which is a pleasure to see, above the flabby regions of the cheeks, above the forehead: it is that beautiful red flame which gilds my skull, it is my hair. That is something pleasant to see. At least it's a definite colour: I am glad I have red hair. 40

The problem of self-description is present also in the epistolary novel: the narrator must give enough information about himself for the reader's sake but not more than can be reasonably expected from someone writing to an acquaintance. The problem can be overcome, to some extent, in the multiple narrator situation in which each writer is free to comment on the characteristics of the others. In Clarissa, the letters of Anna Howe provide a certain amount of information regarding the heroine, information which would damage authenticity if it were provided by Clarissa herself. The problem

[39]Sartre, p. 9.

[40]Sartre, p. 30.

can be alleviated, further, by the narrator's expressed desire to analyse his situation for the sake of the correspondent. Similarly in the memoir, the narrator typically assumes that he is writing, at least in part, for the benefit of someone else; in this case, the reading public. In this sense, then, the narrator's provision of background information regarding himself is justifiable. The authorial first-person memoir, of course, allows for such commentary more readily than does the figural first-person form. In Orwell's Coming Up For Air, George Bowling assumes a conversational situation with an imaginary reader:

> The truth is that I'm inclined to be a little bit on the fat side. I don't mean that I'm like something in a side-show at a fair. . . . And I'm not what they call 'disgustingly' fat, I haven't got one of those bellies that sag half-way down to the knees. It's merely that I'm a little bit broad in the beam, with a tendency to be barrel-shaped. Do you know the active, hearty kind of fat man, the athletic bouncing type that's nicknamed Fatty or Tubby and is always the life and soul of the party? I'm that type. 'Fatty' they mostly call me. Fatty Bowling. George Bowling is my real name. [41]

The figural first-person novel, on the other hand, typically minimizes external references to personal details; such information emerges more often by dramatic means. In The Sun Also Rises, Jake Barnes's impotency is revealed in the following manner:

> She cuddled against me and I put my arm around her. She looked up to be kissed. She touched me with one hand and I put her hand away.
> "Never mind."
> "What's the matter? You sick?"
> "Yes." . . .
> "You're not a bad type," she said. "It's a shame you're

[41] Orwell, Air, pp. 7-8.

> sick. We get on well. What's the matter with you, anyway?"
> "I got hurt in the war," I said.
> "Oh, that dirty war." 42

In certain other narrative situations, information about the narrator is provided by a fictitious editor. In Nabokov's Lolita, the Foreword by John Ray, Jr., Ph.D. lends a superficial air of authenticity to the story to be presented by explaining the circumstances of composition and the "facts" pertaining to the fates of the characters involved. In this case, however, the Foreword serves an additional purpose: it establishes the ironic frame in which the story (including the Foreword) is set. The following words of the self-righteous social scientist are to be taken no more seriously than is the account of Humbert Humbert himself:

> As a case history, "Lolita" will become, no doubt, a classic in psychiatric circles. As a work of art, it transcends its expiatory aspects; and still more important to us than scientific significance and literary worth, is the ethical impact the book should have on the serious reader; for in this poignant personal study there lurks a general lesson; the wayward child, the egotistic mother, the panting maniac - these are not only vivid characters in a unique story: they warn us of dangerous trends; they point out potent evils. "Lolita" should make all of us - parents, social workers, educators - apply ourselves with still greater vigilance and vision to the task of bringing up a better generation in a safer world. 43

A final problem involving authenticity in the first-person novel relates to the grammatical style which the narrator adopts. If the narrator is a deficient individual, the extent to which he can compose a stylistically-sophisticated narrative is obviously

[42] Hemingway, pp. 15, 17.

[43] Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (1955; rpt. New York: Berkeley, 1969), p. 7.

limited. In Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury, the relative unintelligibility of Benjy's first-person account must be offset by the more lucid first-person accounts of Quentin and Jason and the final segment which is rendered in the third person.[44] Benjy, however, is an unusual example of a limited first-person narrator; in order for a story to be presented all the way through by a limited first-person narrator, some attempt, on the part of the narrator, to authenticate his creative credentials is usually necessary. In Keith Waterhouse's Jubb, the narrator, although emotionally abnormal, displays a mental fastidiousness which is reflected in his prose style. Jubb's pedantic mind sufficiently justifies his ability to write lucidly at the same time as it accommodates the perversity of his character.

Other narrators make more explicit reference to their intellectual credentials. Humbert Humbert in Lolita describes himself as having been a "meticulous and intense" student who achieved excellent grades. His academic activities following his education are described as follows:

> A paper of mine entitled "The Proustian theme in a letter from Keats to Benjamin Bailey" was chuckled over by the six or seven scholars who read it. I launched upon an "Histoire abrégée de la poésie anglaise" for a prominent publishing firm, and then started to compile that manual of French literature for English-speaking students (with comparisons drawn from English writers) which was to occupy me throughout the forties. [45]

Still other narrators leave the question of their qualifications as an assumption to be accepted (or not) by the reader. Joe Lampton

[44]Booth makes this point (Rhetoric, p. 152).

[45]Nabokov, p. 18.

in Room At The Top, for example, might reasonably be expected to operate on a somewhat lower literary level than he actually does. Justification for his style is provided implicitly only in his attraction to the local drama group and explicitly only in occasional remarks such as in the following exchange:

> 'D'Eon Rides Again,' said Alice. 'What a thought - erotic vices among the working-classes.' She spoke directly to me.
> 'I am working-class,' I said sulkily. 'And you needn't explain your little quip. I know all about the Chevalier. I read a book once.' 46

Much more typical of Joe, however, is his expressed awareness of his lack of formal credentials:

> I stood in the little alcove they called the Reference Department, feeling absurdly exultant and at the same time envious. Cambridge: I had a mental picture of . . . the atmosphere of power, power speaking impeccable Standard English, power which was power because it was born of the right family, always knew the right people: if you were going to run the country you couldn't do without a University education. 47

As is the case with the convention of the perfect memory, the question of the authenticity of the narrator's style involves the degree to which the illusion can be stretched. In the case of Benjy, the presence of a more intelligent narrating medium is perhaps more obvious - because implicitly necessary - than in a situation in which the narrator may be emotionally abnormal yet not mentally incapacitated. Maugham effectively dispenses with the problem at hand by emphasizing the assumptions which the illusion contract involves:

[46] John Braine, Room At The Top (1957; rpt. Great Britain: Penguin, 1970), p. 49.

[47] Braine, Room, p. 56.

> . . . if [the writer] makes the I of his story a little quicker on the uptake, a little more level-headed, a little shrewder, a little braver, a little more ingenious, a little wittier, a little wiser than he, the writer, really is, the reader must show indulgence. He must remember that the author is not drawing a faithful portrait of himself, but creating a character for the particular purposes of his story. [48]

Reliability

Although first-person narrative allows for authenticity regarding the narrator and his material relatively easily, the form poses considerable problems regarding the extent to which the narrator can provide an objective view of the experiences being recalled. A potential problem resides in the fact that the narrator is restricted mainly to external information about other characters. This limitation can be offset, however, by the possibility for the narrator - and the reader - to make inferences about the thoughts and feelings of other characters on the basis of their speech and actions. The reverse of this problem is also a potential limitation: the narrator presents his own actions from his own, internal point of view. For this reason, the reader is somewhat limited in acquiring an objective view of the narrator although, again, the reader is quite free to make inferences about him on the basis of his own (the reader's) standards as well as on the basis of comments and actions of the other characters.

In the light of these problems, however, critical statements regarding reliability in first-person narration have been particularly skeptical. Lubbock feels that the first-person form is

[48] Maugham, viii.

acceptable when the subject demands only the narrator's limited point of view (as in David Copperfield); however, when interpretation of that narrator is necessary, the form is deficient (as in The Adventures of Harry Richmond).[49] Orwell similarly sees the narrator's inherent limited vision as a disadvantage of the first-person form. His objections more specifically describe the practical difficulties involved:

> If the arrangement is strictly kept to, the events of the story are seen only through the consciousness of one person. Merely in order to find out what is happening, this involves the narrator in eavesdropping & amateur detective work, or makes it necessary for people to do things in company which in real life they would only do alone. If the thoughts of the other characters are to be revealed, then they have to be made to talk more freely than any real person would do, or else the narrator has to say something which amounts to, 'I could see what he was thinking, namely,' etc. etc. 50

Louis Dudek, on the other hand, claims that even in cases where the narrator is deficient in certain respects, this deficiency does not necessarily limit his perceptions regarding human behaviour. Dudek again refers to the narrator of Remembrance of Things Past; although Marcel is a "chronically sick man", extremely sensitive and overly-dependent on "protection and love", he, quite legitimately, "sees himself and other people with an incredible lucidity, with objectivity, with absolute fidelity to truth".[51] The narrator is, in fact, no more or no less reliable than is the deficient - because human - reader. At this point it is important to remember

[49] Lubbock, p. 15. Lubbock prefers James's use of a superior intelligence to provide discriminating but subtle interpretation of the central consciousness.

[50] Orwell, Essays, p. 575.

[51] Dudek, p. 40.

also that a third-person narrator, even if capable of presenting a more comprehensive view of internal and external events, is not necessarily exempt from bias or limited perception.

Romberg, in a further elaboration of the question of narrator reliability, points out that it is a convention of the first-person form that the story represents one man's opinion. The convention assumes that the reader is - or should be - implicitly aware of this fact. Romberg goes on to examine the ways in which the subjectivity of the narrator may be counteracted. For example, the fact that the narrator is writing in retrospect bolsters the illusion that he is viewing his younger self from a superior vantage point. This assumption is particularly valid in the case of the long memoir although it can also hold in the diary or epistolary novel which incorporate, to varying degrees, introspection and analysis.[52] In the case of Stanzel's figural first-person type, authorial comments are minimal; thus, the meaning often resides in the fact that the narrator is limited or unreliable, and is incapable of seeing that he is. For this reason, the figural first-person novel typically places more demands on the reader to make inferences about the narrator's deficiencies. In The Outsider, Meursault's final words provide the reader with a basis for forming an opinion of him (an opinion which is likely to be contrary to Meursault's own):

> For all to be accomplished, for me to feel less lonely, all that remained was to hope that on the day of my ..

[52]With regard to narrative distance, the long memoir is equally capable of presenting a narrator who has not gained in insight over the years. In this case, meaning derives from the fact that he has not matured.

> execution there should be a huge crowd of spectators and that they should greet me with howls of execration. 53

A final problem regarding reliability in the first-person novel is raised by those critics who demand, from fiction, some commitment to morally-justifiable artistic expression. In this context, first-person narration is viewed as being particularly suspect since the narrator is often not only deficient but also incapable of being objective and candid about his deficiencies. Gordon and Tate, in The House of Fiction, suggest that first-person narration is dangerous (for the reader) because the narrator presents a biased view of events which will work to his own advantage. According to Gordon and Tate, "He must necessarily do this or lose our sympathy, for if he is an ignoble person he will be an improper narrator of a serious action".[54] Wayne C. Booth, in a similar vein, views first-person narration - the most extreme form of impersonal or neutral narration - as being antithetical to the presentation of a distinguishable moral orientation. He says that

> . . . objective narration, particularly when conducted through a highly unreliable narrator, offers special temptations to the reader to go astray. Even when it presents characters whose conduct the author deeply deplores, it presents them through the seductive medium of their own self-defending rhetoric. It is consequently not surprising that reactions to such works have been marked with confusion and false accusations. 55

Booth's objection, then, stems from the fact that first-person narration interposes a barrier between the reader and the implied

[53] Camus, p. 120.

[54] Gordon and Tate, p. 625.

[55] Booth, pp. 388-389.

author; the narrative persona diverts the reader's attention away from whatever moral orientation the implied author may be attempting to provide. In short, according to Booth, the intimacy invoked in the first-person narrative form between narrator and reader encourages the reader to accept the word of the narrator at face value. To recall Booth's example of Lolita, the salience of the pathetic love Humbert Humbert has for his nymphet - even if his story is presented in a blatantly ironic tone - blinds the reader to the narrator's real deficiencies. The following passage from The Rhetoric of Fiction illustrates Booth's implicit denigration of reader perceptiveness:

> "Despite our tiffs, despite her nastiness, despite all the fuss and faces she made, and the vulgarity, and the danger, and the horrible hopelessness of it all, I still dwelled deep in my elected paradise - a paradise whose skies were the color of hell-flames - but still a 'paradise' (p. 168)." All for love. Just like Antony and Cleopatra, or any of the other great lovers! 56

The approach represented by Booth and Gordon and Tate can be contrasted to the approaches which emphasize both the conditions inherent in a fictional illusion and the validity attributable to ambiguity in fiction. With regard to the former, Romberg points out that the illusion of intimacy evoked in the first-person narrative situation is still an illusion: regardless of the extent to which a reader identifies himself with the problems of the narrator during the course of the novel, he is still aware that he is involved in a fictitious world. To be sure, distancing of the characters is more easily accomplished in the authorial novel type in which

56 Booth, p. 390.

the narrator interposes himself between the reader and the fiction; this does not, however, imply that the intimacy of the first-person form is to be taken as anything other than an illusory phenomenon.

The question of ambiguity in fiction can be viewed as a corollary of this illusion effect. The first-person novel (especially the figural type) can be seen as placing more demands on the reader in terms of distinguishing a reliable narrator from an unreliable one. With regard to one of the most controversially ambiguous works of modern fiction, The Turn of the Screw, Leon Edel says,

> . . . the reader is led unsuspectingly to accept the narrator in good faith, and this may have been what James meant when he said he had set "a trap for the unwary." In The Turn of the Screw James even provides an elaborate testimonial to the good character of the unnamed governess, who is the first-person narrator. Yet . . . if the reader reads attentively, he will discover that he is tied down by the limitations James imposes on him. The data go only so far: beyond, he can have recourse only to his own imagination. 57

The authorial novel, on the other hand, typically provides the reader with both story and interpretation. Fielding's narrator in Tom Jones explicitly presents himself as the morally-superior guide for the reader who, without such aid, might be led astray by the sometimes questionable behaviour of the lovable hero. Reader preference for either ambiguity or clarity is, quite obviously, prevalent and legitimate; problems arise, however, when critical opinion demands one to the exclusion of the other.

57 Leon Edel, "The Point of View," in The Turn of the Screw, ed. Robert Kimbrough (New York: Norton, 1966), p. 229.

Dramatization

The final characteristic of the first-person novel to be discussed in this section involves the concept of dramatic presentation. To recall Lubbock's terminology, dramatic rendering refers to the presentation of action or dialogue without the presence of narrative interpretation (authorial arrangement being understood). According to Lubbock, the dramatic mode is a sub-division of scenic presentation; the other means of achieving scenic presentation is pictorial representation in which a particularized scene is rendered from the point of view of either author or character. Lubbock somewhat crudely collapses the dramatic and pictorial rendering of James's The Ambassadors into the single category of dramatic presentation. His definition of dramatization in this context is as follows:

> The world of silent thought is thrown open, and instead of telling the reader what happened there, the novelist uses the look and behaviour of thought as the vehicle by which the story is rendered. Just as the writer of a play embodies his subject in visible action and audible speech, so the novelist, dealing with a situation like Strether's, represents it by means of the movement that flickers over the surface of his mind. The impulses and reactions of his mood are the players upon the new scene. In drama of the theatre a character must bear his part unaided..58 . 58

Although the earlier discussion of James established the ways in which Lubbock's interpretation must be qualified,[59] Lubbock's distinction

[58]Lubbock, p. 157.

[59]Stanzel further clarifies the use of the term "dramatization" with reference to James by contrasting it with the first-person situation: "The aim in The Ambassadors was to present in Strether . . . mental processes which are produced by a highly delicate situation, portraying them in the undelineated state of theifirst moment . . . In the autobiographical account of a first-person narrator all this would appear in the perspective of that which is permanently terminated, of that which is past" (p. 98).

between dramatic and pictorial - or dramatic and panoramic - presentation is a generally useful one. The following prerequisites for dramatization, then, will be used to describe the nature of first-person narrative in this respect: the ostensible removal of authorial mediation and the resultant effect of direct presentation of actions which are, in terms of the illusion, self-contained.

To return to Lubbock's characterization of James's presentational approach, it is clear that Lubbock reveals, like James, a preference for dramatic presentation but, also like James, a reluctance to forego the possibility of a discriminating narrative medium. For this reason, Lubbock is critical of the limitations of the first-person form; he does, however, admit that the form is dramatic in the strictest sense of the word. His comments on first-person narration illustrate his acceptance of the fact that the conditions for dramatization, as outlined above, are fulfilled in the form:

> This, then is the readiest means of dramatically heightening a reported impression, this device of telling the story in the first person . . . The characterized "I" is substituted for the loose and general "I" of the author; the loss of freedom is more than repaid by the more salient effect of the picture. Precision, individuality is given to it by this pair of eyes, known and named, through which the reader sees it . . . the arbitrary quality which may at any time be detected in the author's voice is disguised in the voice of his spokesman. Nothing is now imported into the story from without; it is self-contained, it has no associations with anyone beyond its circle. 60

The admitted narrative preference of Lubbock (the foregoing statement notwithstanding) must be seen for what it is: no more, no less, than an individual opinion. Romberg and Stanzel, by

60Lubbock, pp. 127, 252.

contrast, discuss the question of dramatization in the first-person form in less evaluative terms. Romberg claims that it is an assumption of the form that the author cannot intrude; indeed, in this form, the necessity for such intervention is obviated. In comparison with third-person novels, according to Romberg, the first-person form is the most dramatic since the narrative act is fictionalized: the narrator is at once recorder and figure.

Stanzel's interpretation provides further elaboration of the dramatic quality peculiar to first-person works. In terms of his scheme of novel types, the authorial novel represents a situation in which the mediacy of narration is dramatized in a realm which is separate and distinct from the drama of the fictional world. In the figural novel, the fiction is dramatized but the mediacy of narration is not; it remains, in terms of the illusion effect, an undefined, unobtrusive, and non-committal entity. Finally, in the first-person novel, the original creative act is dramatized and made a part of the fictional drama:

> The narrative process no longer represents the real author's actual process of creation; rather, the original creative act now undergoes a dramatization, which is presented in a figure of the novel. Both the dramatization and the transposition to a fictional figure establish the fact that the narrative process in the first-person novel is a part of the fiction. 61

An examination now of three specific first-person novels will clarify further the characteristics and problems discussed above. The novels selected for explication represent three variations of the first-person form within the context of Stanzel's scheme. The

[61]Stanzel, p. 91.

first of these, Graham Greene's The End of the Affair, will be discussed as an example of the authorial first-person novel; the second, Keith Waterhouse's Billy Liar, as a figural first-person novel; and, finally, Henry James's The Sacred Fount as an example of a first-person novel in which authorial and figural characteristics co-exist within one work.[62] It is to be remembered, at this point, that Stanzel's typology represents an attempt to delineate the predominant mode in which any given work operates. Stanzel's own statement regarding the extent to which narrative typing can be achieved emphasizes the flexibility which must be exercised in textual explication:

> It has more than once become clear from the individual interpretations that a novel with a given narrative situation will also contain the narrative situations of the other two types to a certain degree. Approximations, partial assumption of the conventions characteristic of the other two narrative situations, for a time even complete transition to a narrative situation of the other type are all possible. It can therefore be said that the individual narrative work establishes one dominant narrative situation, but that the remaining two possibilities of presentation are kept concealed under the external guise of the narrative process. 63

[62] My rejection of a chronological treatment of these works is based on my opinion that the authorial situation provides the more readily-accessible terms of reference of the two types to be discussed. The Sacred Fount, being a combination of the figural and authorial stances, necessarily follows an explication of its component parts.

[63] Stanzel, p. 168.

CHAPTER III

GRAHAM GREENE'S

THE END OF THE AFFAIR

The End of the Affair has received remarkably consistent critical praise as Graham Greene's technical triumph. Certain critics go so far as to suggest that the novel displays a perfect reconciliation of content and form, a reconciliation which, given the subject matter, is particularly challenging in Greene's case. A review of critical responses to the work, as well as an examination of Greene's own position regarding theme and technique will serve to introduce a close textual analysis.

Greene's Collected Essays,[1] aside from demonstrating his general critical awareness, reveal that Greene's primary concern in fiction is the relationship between method and message.[2] He acknowledges the importance of technique when speaking of the skepticism with which the innovations of James, Conrad, and Ford Madox Ford (among others) were greeted:

> The conspiracy, of course, failed: the big loose middlebrow novel goes on its happy way unconscious

[1]Graham Greene, Collected Essays (London: The Bodley Head, 1969).

[2]Greene, in fact, uses the term "message" (although he calls it a "horrible" word) to distinguish his novels (Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter, The End of the Affair) from his "entertainments" (Stamboul Train, Gun For Sale, The Confidential Agent, etc.). See Martin Shuttleworth and Simon Raven, "The Art of Fiction: Graham Greene," in Graham Greene - A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Samuel Hynes (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

> of James's 'point of view'. . . an anonymous writer in "The Times Literary Supplement" remarked in [Ford's] obituary notice that his novels began to date twenty years ago. Conservatism among English critics is extraordinarily tenacious, and they hasten, on a man's death, to wipe out any disturbance he has caused. 3

Greene is critical, however, of the extent to which formal purists (such as Woolf and Forster) have carried the notions first elaborated by James. Although technical control is essential, it should serve as a complement to a "religious sense . . . the sense of the importance of the human act."[4] Greene praises Mauriac as a writer

> . . . for whom the visible world has not ceased to exist, whose characters have the solidity and importance of men with souls to save or lose, and a writer who claims the traditional and essential right of a novelist, to comment, to express his views. 5

He goes on to place the question of technique over form in further perspective:

> I am not denying the greatness of either Flaubert or James. The novel was ceasing to be an aesthetic form and they recalled it to the artistic conscience. It was the later writers who by accepting the technical dogma blindly made the novel the dull devitalized form (form it retained) that it has become. The exclusion of the author can go too far. Even the author, poor devil, has a right to exist . . . 6

In short, while supporting the Jamesian emphasis on the craft of

[3]Greene, Essays, p. 159.

[4]Greene, Essays, p. 115.

[5]Greene, Essays, p. 116.

[6]Greene, Essays, p. 117.

fiction?[7] Greene is adamant that "message" is crucial to successful fiction.

It is the contention of several critics that Greene's preoccupation with a meaningful theme (in his case, religious) typically overrides his technical concerns to the point that his fiction seems contrived. With regard to The Heart of the Matter, Morton Dauwen Zabel says that

> . . . the arguments which [the] characters enact tend to become increasingly "loaded" as they advance toward explicit theological conclusions. And the fiction that embodies such arguments soon runs into the difficulty which all tendentious or didactic fiction sooner or later encounters. It no longer "argues" the problems and complexities of character in terms of psychological and moral forces; it states, decides, and solves them in terms of pre-established and dictated premises. 8

George Orwell, in a similar vein, claims that the novel

> . . . gives the impression of having been mechanically constructed, the familiar conflict being set out like an algebraic equation, with no attempt at psychological probability . . . by trying to clothe theological speculations in flesh and blood, it produces psychological absurdities. 9

As an illustration of the imposition of theme on the dramatic evolution of character, Orwell points to the discrepancy between

[7]It is interesting to note Greene's comment regarding Lubbock: ". . . of the many, many books on the art of the novel, only Percy Lubbock's The Craft of Fiction has interested me at all." (See Shuttleworth and Raven, p. 165).

[8]Morton Dauwen Zabel, "The Best and the Worst," in Hynes, pp. 43-44.

[9]George Orwell, "The Sanctified Sinner," in Hynes, p. 107.

the hero's motives and his actions:

> Scobie is incredible because the two halves of him do not fit together. If he were capable of getting into the kind of mess that is described, he would have got into it years earlier. If he really felt that adultery was mortal sin, he would stop committing it; if he persisted in it, his sense of sin would weaken. ... . if he were the kind of man we are told he is - that is, a man whose chief characteristic is a horror of causing pain - he would not be an officer in a colonial police force. 10

Such adverse critical reaction to The Heart of the Matter[11] renders the positive responses to The End of the Affair particularly emphatic. Frank Kermode claims that Bendrix, the narrator, is "not a Scobie but the hero Mr. Greene has needed: a natural man who sees . . . God as a natural man would".[12] Anthony West contrasts the "complete control of content and technique" in The End of the Affair with the "unresolved conflicts" in Greene's previous works in which "his manner has warred with his material".[13] Evelyn Waugh draws on Lubbock's distinction between telling and showing to express the qualitative differences between The End of the Affair and the earlier novels:

> Hitherto . . . his villains have been vile and his heroines subhuman . . . Every book has ended with death and a sense of finality. Whatever speculations were

[10]Orwell, p. 108.

[11]Similar objections have been made to Brighton Rock.

[12]Frank Kermode, "Mr. Greene's Eggs and Crosses," in Hynes, p. 136.

[13]Anthony West, "Graham Greene," in Principles and Persuasions (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1958), p. 174.

> aroused, the reader felt that as far as the author was concerned the job was done. He had been told all that was needed . . . the great change in [The End of the Affair] is the method of telling. For the first time there is a narrator; everything is seen through his eyes and with his limitations. Instead of an omniscient and impersonal recorder we have the chief character giving his distorted version . . . 14

A. A. DeVitis elaborates on the nature of Greene's achievement:

> He has been steadily and surely improving his art. Since Brighton Rock, he has developed the scope of the novel in England; he has devoted more and more energy to characterization and less and less to the contrivance of plot. The religious theme has been more and more artistically integrated into the overall pattern of the novels until, in The End of the Affair, it has become one with the plot. 15

Critical opinion thus isolates the fact that Greene's choice of first-person narration for the novel is, given his thematic tendencies, a successful one. Critics stop short, however, in describing how such a method realizes its subject; it is at this point that the scheme proposed by Stanzel is useful. The End of the Affair, viewed as a predominantly authorial first-person novel, allows for interpretative commentary (Greene's "message") by a narrator who is distanced from the action, at the same time as it allows for dramatic probability since the narrator and the narrative act are a part of the fictional world. An examination of those aspects of the novel which bear directly on the use of a first-person narrator will both demonstrate the applicability

[14]Evelyn Waugh, "The Point of Departure," The Month (Sept. 1951), 174.

[15]A. A. DeVitis, Graham Greene (New York: Twayne, 1964), p. 115.

of Stanzel's approach and substantiate critical claims regarding form and content.

Time: Chronology

The authorial first-person memoir typically covers a long time period (which necessitates narrative references to the passage of time) and often uses the devices of foreshadowing and flashback (which further reinforce the presence of a narrator in the process of recalling). Greene's critical comments regarding the management of time in fiction suggest a rationale for the authorial quality of The End of the Affair in this respect. In his essay "The Dark Backward", he quotes James as saying:

> This eternal time-question is . . . for the novelist always there and always formidable; always insisting on the effect of the great lapse and passage, of the "dark backward and abysm," by the terms of truth, and on the effect of compression, of composition and form, by the terms of literary arrangement. It is really a business to terrify all but stout hearts . . . 16

Greene goes on to commend the efforts of those "stout hearts" who, rather than adopting the "frontal assault", face up to the challenge and devise techniques which will disguise the impossibility of total presentation. With respect to Ford Madox Ford he says,

> Mr. Ford is unable to write narrative; he is conscious of his inability to write, as it were, along the line of time. How slipshod and perfunctory the joins between his dramatic scenes would seem if they were not

[16]Greene, Essays, p. 69.

> put into the minds of the characters and their perfunctory nature 'naturalized'. The memory is perfunctory . . . 17

A review of the time scheme of The End of the Affair will demonstrate the extent to which Greene deliberately bolsters the illusion of a memory in the process of recall and will explain the resulting necessity for authorial (narrator) guidance.

The presented material of the novel occurs on four distinct time levels. The first, the time at which the act of narration is occurring, is 1949; unlike Ford's The Good Soldier, The End of the Affair includes no mention as to the length of time the narrator requires to tell the story although Maurice Bendrix (by occupation, a novelist) states that he can write a novel in a year.[18] The second time level consists of the immediate flashback - the time of the ostensible story which Bendrix sets out to reconstruct. This period begins in January, 1946[19] (when Maurice meets Henry and Sarah Miles for the first time in eighteen months) and ends in mid-March of the same year (one month after Sarah's death). The third time frame is presented in what may be called secondary flashbacks: events the narrator recalls as he is in the process of reconstructing the main story. This period is the time of the affair: it occurs from 1939 to 1944 and is, in terms of the overall chronology, interwoven with the

[17]Greene, Essays, p. 73.

[18]Graham Greene, The End of the Affair (1951; rpt. Great Britain: Penguin, 1973), p. 34. All further references to the text are taken from this edition.

[19]Although Maurice cannot recall the exact date, it is later fixed, in Sarah's diary, as January 10.

second time frame. The fourth period presented is that of Sarah's diary: it begins on June 12, 1944 and ends on February 12, 1946.

The complexity of the chronology, of course, necessitates constant narrative references to the particular time frame being invoked. The following passage illustrates the nature of the shift from the time of the main story to the secondary flashback period:

> . . . at the moment when Mr. Parkis returned across the Common, he didn't even know that Sarah and I had once been lovers. And when I write that word my brain against my will travels irresistibly back to the point where pain began. (p. 42)

Even when the narrator cannot make exact time references, he makes a point of commenting on the time lapse:

> I cannot say how many days passed. The old disturbance had returned and in that state of blackness one can no more tell the days than a blind man can notice the changes of light. Was it the seventh day or the twenty-first that I decided on my course of action? (p. 19)

The presence of the narrator in the act of narrating is similarly invoked in instances of foreshadowing. The following passage from Chapter 1 of Book I reinforces the impression that the narrator, with complete knowledge of the outcome of the events he is recounting, is controlling the course of the story:

> . . . Henry added with apparent anxiety, 'You're wet through, Sarah. One day you'll catch your death of cold.'
> A cliché with its popular wisdom can sometimes fall through a conversation like a note of doom, yet even if we had known he spoke the truth, I wonder if either of us would have felt any genuine anxiety for her break through our own nerves, distrust, and hate. (p. 18)

Although the chronology of The End of the Affair is, for the

most part, characteristic of Stanzel's authorial first-person type, an interesting modification of its web-like quality evolves as the story moves toward its conclusion. The authorial quality diminishes, to some extent, as the number of secondary flashbacks decreases and as the time of the immediate flashback approaches the time of narration. In Book I, one of the seven chapters consists (except for Bendrix's typical interpretative introduction) of a particularized scene from 1939 and the remaining six chapters are heavily laden with references to the time period of the affair. In Book II, four chapters out of eight are devoted almost entirely to the secondary flashback period (the time at which the affair was at its most intense) while the remaining four deal with the time of the main story. The alternation of these time frames is handled by the narrator's explanations as to how his mind is recalled to certain experiences. Book III consists of Sarah's diary which includes explicit (in the diary entry dates) but terse directions as to the time being invoked. Bendrix as narrator is apparent even here, however, in his editorial note which explains that he is presenting only those entries which are of particular interest to him. He also, to add a touch of complexity to what would otherwise be a straight linear account, presents the last two entries first and then goes back to present the diary from the beginning. It is in Books IV and V that the chronology is reduced to two levels: the time of narration and the time period of the main story. The dates ending Maurice's

account of the affair and Sarah's diary respectively merge with the time of the first flashback. The account now becomes linear with one exception: Maurice recalls, while riding the tube to Golders Green, the encounter with the priest which occurred on the previous day. The account, in the last two books, is still well-stocked with commentary but narrative references to time adjustments are now less necessary and are, therefore, reduced. The effect, particularly in Book V, approaches that of a figural first-person novel since the identity of Maurice's experiencing self becomes less distinguishable from that of his narrating self. Stanzel describes the effect thus:

> . . . this flowing of the time of action into the narrative time . . . strengthens the identity of the experiencing and narrating self . . . there is generally an attempt to harmonize the authorial realm and the fictional world. 20

Time: Narrative Distance

The salience of the narrator and his creative act in the authorial first-person novel is further enhanced by narrative references to the epic situation. We learn from Bendrix, for example, that he lives and writes in a bed-sitting room on a Common in London. He is explicit regarding his work habits: "I have always been very methodical and when my quota of work is done, I break off even in the middle of a scene" (p. 34). He similarly gives us an idea of his physical situation: "I

[20]Stanzel, p. 45.

looked up just now from writing and caught sight of my own face in a mirror close to my desk . . ." (p. 55). We are given clues as to his motivation for writing:

> I had told myself all the way from the Common that it was hate, as I tell myself still, writing this account of her, trying to get her out of my system for ever, for I have always told myself that if she died, I could forget her. (p. 57)

> She had been as dead then as she was dead now. For a month or two this year a ghost had pained me with hope, but the ghost was laid and the pain would be over soon. I would die a little more every day, but how I longed to retain it. As long as one suffers one lives. (p. 135)

We also assume that his profession leads him to write an account (he begins the story, in fact, by emphasizing his technical ability) although this assumption is qualified by his later statement:

> . . . I have come to an end of my interest in work now: no one can please me much with praise or hurt me with blame. When I began that novel about the civil servant I was still interested, but when Sarah left me, I recognized my work for what it was - as unimportant a drug as cigarettes to get one through the weeks and years. (p. 145) 21

Bendrix is, finally, methodical in establishing the time distance existing, at various points in the account, between his narrating self and his experiencing self. Since the authorial first-person type typically assumes a considerable distance, the narrating self is free to comment on and interpret the action as he is describing it; this allows, further, for the frame of mind of the narrating self to be revealed.[22] In speaking of a

[21] A discussion of the implications of this discrepancy is reserved for the section on narrator reliability.

[22] This situation bears on the extent to which scenic and panoramic presentation respectively are apparent. A discussion of this is reserved for the section on dramatization.

comment of Henry's, for example, Maurice juxtaposes a past incident with a present comment:

> It wasn't what I had ever expected him to learn in the Ministry of Home Security. And there - in that phrase - the bitterness leaks again out of my pen. What a dull lifeless quality this bitterness is. If I could I would write with love, but if I could write with love, I would be another man: I would never have lost love. (p. 12)

Similarly in recalling a scene from the time period of the affair, his narrating self interposes:

> I would have liked to have left that past time alone, for as I write of 1939 I feel all my hatred returning. Hatred seems to operate the same glands as love: it even produces the same actions. If we had not been taught how to interpret the story of the Passion, would we have been able to say from their actions alone whether it was the jealous Judas or the cowardly Peter who loved Christ? (p. 27)

Sarah's diary, in comparison, presents a picture of a narrator participating in, describing, and analysing events almost simultaneously. The immediacy of Sarah's account is suggested in the following passage:

> This evening the sirens went - I mean last evening of course, but what does it matter? In the desert there's no time. But I can come out of the desert when I want to. . . . A vow's not all that important - a vow to somebody I've never known, to somebody I don't really believe in . . . and He doesn't exist, does he? He can't exist. You can't have a merciful God and this despair. (p. 91)

The diary form allows for a more objective - because distanced - view as the time of writing moves away from the time of the initial entry. It is interesting to compare the amount of insight gained by Sarah over the course of two years with that

of Maurice, writing from a temporal distance of several years. Sarah's perceptions at the end of the diary, in fact, support the point that an authorial account, while giving the illusion of an objective narrator, does not necessarily guarantee one:

> . . . he loved me and touched me as he never did any other woman. But was it me he loved, or You? For he hated in me the things You hate. He was on Your side all the time without knowing it. You willed our separation, but he willed it too. He worked for it with his anger and his jealousy, and he worked for it with his love. For he gave me so much love, and I gave him so much love, that soon there wasn't anything left when we'd finished, but You. For either of us. (pp. 120-121)

The establishment of narrative distance bears, further, on the tense illusion evoked in the account. The emphasis on Maurice's present, narrating process in The End of the Affair produces the effect of pastness for the events being recalled. Even in scenic passages, which typically assume the illusion of presentness, Maurice frequently invokes the time level of the epic situation and, consequently, reinforces the pastness of events. In the following passage, the presentness of the direct quotations is modified, initially, by a transition to the past perfect tense, and then by a partial shift to the present tense of the narrative act:

> 'What's troubling you, Henry?' I asked. I had long abandoned that novel about the senior civil servant: I wasn't looking for copy any longer.
> 'Sarah,' he said.
> Would I have been frightened if he had said that, in just that way, two years ago? No. I think I should have been overjoyed - one gets so hopelessly tired of deception. (pp. 13-14)

In Sarah's diary, on the other hand, descriptions of past events

assume the illusion of presentness since the temporal gap is minimal:

> All today Maurice has been sweet to me. He tells me often that he has never loved another woman so much. He thinks that by saying it often, he will make me believe it. But I believe it simply because I love him in exactly the same way. (p. 89)

The long temporal gap between the time of narration and the time of action typical of the authorial first-person novel offers a challenge in terms of the narrator's powers of recall. For this reason, the authorial narrator often makes conscious attempts to validate his reconstruction; in terms of the illusion, these attempts are not necessarily disruptive since the expectation for narrative interruption is an established condition in an authorial narrative stance. Maurice Bendrix, very early in his account, justifies his accurate recall (which is presented in full, later) of the night on which the affair ends:

> . . . I closed the stained-glass door behind me and made my way carefully down the steps that had been blasted in 1944 and never repaired. I had reason to remember the occasion and how the stained glass, tough and ugly and Victorian, stood up to the shock as our grandfathers themselves would have done. (p. 8)

He bolsters the illusion of authenticity at other times, however, by admitting that his memory is fallible:

> I have a vague memory now, after three years have passed, of vigils along the edge of the Common, watching their house from a distance, by the pond or under the portico of the eighteenth-century church, on the off-chance that the door would open and Sarah come down those unblasted and well-scoured steps. (p. 19)

When he moves into the particular scene following this indefinite

time reference, he then resumes perfect recall: ". . . one morning I woke up and knew, as though I had planned it overnight, that this day I was going to visit Mr. Savage" (p. 20).

When compared with the convention of the perfect memory, typical of the figural first-person novel, authorial attempts to reinforce powers of recall face certain difficulties. When a descriptive passage is included for purposes of atmospheric effect, reference to recall ability may not be desirable; the absence of such reference, however, often detracts from the credibility of the description. In the scene in which Maurice encounters Henry in the park in January, 1946, the following passage is conspicuously included for effect:

> He said sadly, 'I don't know anything else that does,' looking up at the grey cumulus passing above the south bank. The gulls flew low over the barges and the shot-tower stood black in the winter light among the ruined warehouses. The man who fed the sparrows had gone and the woman with the brown-paper parcel, the fruit-sellers cried like animals in the dusk outside the station. It was as if the shutters were going up on the whole world. (p. 66)

The final point to be made regarding the question of recall involves the degree to which explicit attempts to authenticate recall decrease as the time of action approaches the time of narration. In this respect, Maurice supports the illusion of decreasing narrative distance by using such interjections as "I recall" less frequently as the story progresses. This condition contributes to the increasingly figural effect of the novel in the last two books.

Authenticity

Since the narrator and the narrative act in the first-person form are fictionalized, and since the narrator obviously has first-hand knowledge of the events described, first-person works inherently provide a quality of verisimilitude. It is still the case, however, that narrative attempts to strengthen the illusion of veracity for the material are often included. The nature of authorial first-person narration readily lends itself to explicit attempts at authenticity; in the figural first-person type, the illusion of veracity is typically achieved in more subtle ways or, alternatively, left as an assumption for the reader to accept or reject.

In The End of the Affair, Bendrix deliberately lends authenticity to his story by contrasting his presentation of it to his achievements as a novelist:

> How can I make a stranger see her as she stopped in the hall at the foot of the stairs and turned to us? I have never been able to describe even my fictitious characters except by their actions. It has always seemed to me that in a novel the reader should be allowed to imagine a character in any way he chooses: I do not want to supply him with ready-made illustrations. Now I am betrayed by my own technique, for I do not want any other woman substituted for Sarah . . . (p. 18)

A similar tactic is used again in:

> 'And if there's anything more you could tell me that would be relevant?' I remember Mr. Savage had said - a detective must find it as important as a novelist to amass his trivial material before picking out the right clue. But how difficult that picking out is - the release of the real subject. The enormous pressure of the outside world weighs on us like a peine forte et dure. Now that I come to write my own story the

> problem is still the same, but worse - there are so many more facts, now that I have not to invent them. (p. 25)

He bolsters the illusion of veracity at another point by questioning his ability to present the story in a comprehensible way: "If this book of mine fails to take a straight course, it is because I am lost in a strange region: I have no map. I sometimes wonder whether anything that I am putting down here is true" (p. 49).

The achievement of verisimilitude in Sarah's diary is somewhat more challenging than it is for Bendrix as authorial narrator. The fact that the diary is kept for the purposes of one individual only justifies the extensive provision of thoughts, feelings, and questions. A problem arises, however, when the diarist must include an event which is significant in terms of later, unforeseen developments but which appears irrelevant at the time of its occurrence. The second entry in Sarah's diary, for example, includes a description of Richard Smythe speaking on the Common on behalf of the Rationalist Society of South London. Sarah is there specifically to meet Maurice and the narrative attempt to justify her inclusion of this incident is conspicuous: "I stayed and listened for a few minutes: he was arguing against the arguments for a God. I hadn't really known there were any - except this cowardly need I feel of not being alone" (p. 90). The awkwardness of this reference is reinforced when the reader discovers it is not until more than a year later - according to

the diary - that Sarah becomes involved with Smythe. The provision of such details is clearly more admissible in the authorial stance in which the assumption is that the narrator is, in retrospect, designing his account for the benefit of himself and/or a reading public.

The first-person situation can pose other problems in terms of authenticity. On the one hand, the narrator obviously desires to provide enough external details about himself to substantiate the reader's picture of him; on the other hand, too much external setting threatens to stretch the illusion of a fictitious narrator to an extreme. Again, the assumption that the narrative is being presented, at least in part, for the benefit of an audience tends to justify such details. This condition is more easily accomplished in the authorial situation than in the figural since the latter attempts to minimize the identity of the narrating self.

In this context, Bendrix again emphasizes his occupation as writer to legitimate his comments:

> A story has no beginning or end; arbitrarily one chooses that moment of experience from which to look back or from which to look ahead. I say 'one chooses' with the inaccurate pride of a professional writer who - when he has been seriously noted at all - has been praised for his technical ability, but do I in fact of my own will choose that black wet January night on the Common, in 1946, the sight of Henry Miles slanting across the wide river of rain, or did these images choose me? (p. 7)

He also, in other instances, assumes a conversational tone with an imaginary reader: "For some reason I am a man known by his surname - I might never have been christened for all the use my

friends make of the rather affected Maurice my literary parents gave me" (p. 9). In certain other situations, he provides information about himself ostensibly to introduce an incident which is clearly relevant to his story:

> When I was young not even a love affair would alter my schedule. A love affair had to begin after lunch, and however late I might be in getting to bed - so long as I slept in my own bed - I would read the morning's work over and sleep on it. Even the war hardly affected me. A lame leg kept me out of the Army, and as I was in Civil Defence, my fellow workers were only too glad that I never wanted the quiet morning turns of duty. I got, as a result, a quite false reputation for keenness, but I was keen only for my desk, my sheet of paper, that quota of words dripping slowly, methodically, from the pen. It needed Sarah to upset my self-imposed discipline. (p. 34)

The narrator of a diary is faced with more serious problems regarding self-description. This is so because the diary is assumed to be a personal record. In The End of the Affair the difficulty is largely overcome by the fact that Sarah's diary is inset into Maurice's longer narrative. By the time the reader confronts the diary, he has already constructed a picture of Sarah on the basis of Maurice's comments: "All I noticed about her that first time was her beauty and her happiness and her way of touching people with her hands, as though she loved them" (p. 25).

The other potential problem with which the first-person narrator must be concerned involves the extent to which the narrative style appears authentic, given what the reader knows about the narrator. Again, the nature of the authorial first-person stance allows for explicit references to stylistic credentials. We are constantly reminded by Bendrix, for example,

that he is a technically proficient novelist and that he comes from a literary background. The illusion of stylistic authenticity is upheld in the two other samples of writing included in the novel: those of Mr. Parkis and Sarah. Parkis's style reveals a peculiar blend of poor grammar, attempted precocity, and business-like formality:

> 'I am glad to be able to report that me and my boy have made friendly contact with the domestic at Number 17. This has enabled the investigation to proceed with greater speed because I am sometimes able to take a squint at the party's engagement book and thus obtain movements, also inspect from day to day the contents of the party's waste-paper basket, from which I include herewith an interesting exhibit, which please return with observations.' (p. 51)

Sarah's diary suggests, as the following two passages illustrate, a rambling, instrospective style and a cursory, point-form technique respectively, both characteristic of the diary form:

> I said very slowly, I'll give him up for ever, only let him be alive with a chance, and I pressed and pressed and I could feel the skin break, and I said, People can love without seeing each other, can't they, they love You all their lives without seeing You, and then he came in at the door, and he was alive, and I thought now the agony of being without him starts, and I wished he was safely back dead again under the door. (p. 93)

> Caught the 8.30 with Henry. Empty first-class carriage. Henry read aloud the Proceedings of the Royal Commission. Caught taxi at Paddington and dropped Henry at the Ministry. Made him promise to be home tonight. Taxi-man made mistake and drove me to the south side, past Number 14. Door mended and front windows boarded. (p. 93)

In Book V Bendrix's authorial style is modified to the extent that it resembles the subjective analysis revealed in Sarah's diary. In the following passage he begins by questioning himself

and ends by addressing Sarah's ghost:

> If I hate her so much as I sometimes do, how can I love her? Can one really hate and love? Or is it only myself that I really hate? I hate the books I write with their trivial unimportant skill, I hate the craftsman's mind in me so greedy for copy that I set out to seduce a woman I didn't love for the information she could give me. I hate this body that enjoyed so much but was inadequate to express what the heart felt, and I hate my untrusting mind, that set Parkis on the watch who laid powder on door bells, rifled waste-paper baskets, stole your secrets. (p. 178)

This stylistic change emphasizes the fact that the narrative distance is diminishing. The reader is increasingly forced to construct a picture of the narrator at the time of narration, a picture which will be appreciably different from that formed on the basis of the narrator's earlier self-commentary.

Reliability

A first-person narrative stance clearly offers challenges to the author in terms of providing clues to narrator reliability and to the reader in terms of detecting these clues. Although the authorial first-person form permits the narrator to be more objective regarding his actions than does the figural first-person form, the distinction may be, in fact, merely apparent. Maurice Bendrix, writing from a distance of ten years from the beginning of the affair, is careful to give the illusion that his account is the truth:

> . . . this is a record of hate far more than of love, and if I come to say anything in favour of Henry and Sarah I can be trusted: I am writing against the bias because it is my professional pride to prefer the near-truth, even to the expression of my near-hate. (p. 7)

As Romberg points out, however, the first-person form is, by nature, one man's opinion; the author's choice of this particular stance may actually suggest that the reader must be on guard with a form which is inherently egocentric. Maurice does, in fact, betray his intention of objectivity very early in his account:

> . . . for a week after lunching with Sarah at Rules I could do no work at all. There it goes again - the I, I, I, as though this were my story, and not the story of Sarah, Henry, and of course, that third, whom I hated without yet knowing him, or even believing in him. (p. 35)

Thus, although the figural first-person type demands interpretation of the action on the part of the reader in the absence of authorial narrative commentary, the authorial type demands evaluation of both the action and the narrator's distanced reconstruction of it. Authorial professions of reliability do not, in short, guarantee it.

The range of internal devices available to the reader to aid in the evaluation of narrator reliability is wide. At a formal level, Maurice's writing style reveals a certain amount of confusion which is peculiar, given his frequent emphasis on his technical skill. Aside from the fact that the complex chronology is suggestive of a mind which haphazardly travels back and forth over the past against the narrator's will, the fact that the record is as much of love as it is of hate reveals the fallibility of Bendrix's design:

> When I began to write our story down, I thought I was writing a record of hate, but somehow the hate got

> mislaid and all I know is that in spite of her mistakes and her unreliability, she was better than most. It's just as well that one of us should believe in her: she never did in herself. (p. 128)

A. A. DeVitis elaborates on the extent to which the narrative style reflects the state of mind of the narrator:

> He is uncomfortable in the telling of his story . . . There are rhetorical questions in profusion, contradictions, and apostrophes - all indicating the spiritual turmoil of the writer, who should be objective, betraying himself into subjective analysis. 23

Another way in which the reliability of the narrator can be measured involves the degree to which he comments, from a superior vantage point, on the action. Although a large time gap does not necessarily ensure a more perceptive narrator, it allows for certain revealing comments by the narrating self. We learn, on page one, that Maurice at the time of narration believes in a God. His present self is apparent, further, in such comments as:

> The arguments always took the same form and I only describe one particular occasion because on that occasion the argument ended in action - a stupid action leading nowhere, unless eventually to this doubt that always comes when I begin to write, the feeling that after all perhaps she was right and I was wrong. (p. 54)

Maurice can see, in 1949, the degree to which he was play-acting in his arguments with Sarah:

> . . . I took her words as an insult and walked straight out and down the stairs and into the street... . . There's no need ever to go back. If I can get her out of my system, can't I find somewhere a quiet friendly marriage that would go on and on? Then perhaps I wouldn't feel jealous because I wouldn't love enough: I would just

[23]DeVitis, p. 106.

> be secure, and my self-pity and hatred walked hand in hand across the darkening Common like idiots without a keeper. (p. 55)

In a pathetically comical scene with Mr. Parkis, Maurice's comment on his own behaviour is sharply accurate:

> 'He's called Lance, is he?'
> 'After Sir Lancelot, sir. Of the Round Table. . . . He found the Holy Grail,' Mr. Parkis said.
> 'That was Galahad. Lancelot was found in bed with Guinevere.' Why do we have this desire to tease the innocent? Is it envy? Mr. Parkis said sadly, looking across at his boy as though he had betrayed him, 'I hadn't heard.' (p. 75)

Another scene with Parkis evokes a similarly honest self-comment:

> He said, 'I've been thinking, sir, I'd like to give you a little memento - but then that's just what you wouldn't want to receive.' How strange it is to be liked. It automatically awakens a certain loyalty. So I lied to Parkis, 'I've always enjoyed our talks.' (p. 84)

When Richard Smythe reveals to Bendrix that he has evidence that Sarah had begun religious instruction, Maurice can deprecate his own remark by the time he comes to record it: "That was a shock for you, wasn't it?' I jeered at him, trying to transfer my pain" (p. 139).

In the course of his narration, the authorial first-person narrator reveals his own disposition, further, in his comments on other characters. With regard to Henry Miles, Maurice says: "Poor Henry. But why should I say poor Henry? Didn't he possess in the end the winning cards - the cards of gentleness, humility, and trust" (p. 26)? In the final scene of the novel, Maurice, speaking again about Henry, unwittingly reveals that he himself

has acquired a sense of love quite different from the jealous, possessive love he had for Sarah:

> He bent over his laces: there was a knot that he couldn't untie - he was always bad with his fingers. He got tired of struggling and wrenched the shoe off. I picked it up and uncoiled the knot for him.
> 'Thank you, Bendrix.' Perhaps even so small an act of companionship gave him confidence. (p. 182)

Maurice's account is also full of unconscious suggestions as to his real nature, suggestions which must be viewed as important indications of his reliability as an "objective" narrator. He mentions, for example, his lame leg on three separate occasions. On one occasion the implications of this physical defect are apparent: ". . . I could feel no trust: in the act of love I could be arrogant, but alone I had only to look in the mirror to see doubt, in the shape of a lined face and a lame leg - why me?" (p. 47).[24] Maurice's feelings of inferiority are further reinforced in his experience with Sylvia:

> She saw me to the courtyard of the station, and then she wanted to go back. It seemed strange to me that she had taken so much trouble. I have never seen any qualities in me for a woman to like, and now less than ever. (p. 153)

He goes on to display - unconsciously - a certain amount of compassion toward Sylvia of which he was, ironically, incapable

[24] In the opinion of DeVitis, this condition is more important than one might, at first glance, suspect:

> When Bendrix first meets Sarah, he is not impressed by her because, paradoxically, she is beautiful. To love, Bendrix must feel himself superior, chiefly because he has one leg shorter than the other, a handicap that accounts for a good deal of his cynicism. (pp. 108-109)

in his relationship with Sarah:

> She stood there in her black trousers, among the frozen puddles, and I thought, this is where a whole long future may begin. I implored Sarah, Get me out of it. I don't want to begin it all again and injure her. I'm incapable of love. (p. 156)

In other instances, the extent to which the narrator is to be seen as a reliable spokesman is conveyed by dramatic means. In Maurice's argument with Smythe regarding a Catholic funeral for Sarah, the invitation to contrast the good intentions of Smythe - a confirmed atheist - to the selfish motives of Maurice is obvious:

> 'Let her have her Catholic funeral. She would have liked it.'
> 'What earthly difference does it make.'
> 'I don't suppose any for her. But it always pays us to be generous.' (p. 140)

Maurice's treatment of Sarah is rendered implicitly questionable too when compared with Henry's: "'I shall never want to do that. I'm not the marrying kind. It was a great injury I did to Sarah when I married her. I know that now'" (p. 167).

The expressed views of other characters in the novel provide further evidence regarding narrator reliability. Sarah's diary, allows for an unadulterated alternative view of Maurice since it is presented verbatim. From Sarah we get a modified version of Maurice's cruelty:

> Sometimes I get so tired of trying to convince him that I love him and shall love him for ever. He pounces on my words like a barrister and twists them. I know he is afraid of that desert which would be around him if our love were to end, but he can't realize that I feel exactly the same. What he says aloud, I say to myself silently and write it here. (p. 89)

In a dialogue with God, Sarah reveals an understanding of Maurice as she is in the process of questioning her own worth:

> Where do you find that immortal soul they talked about? Where do you see this lovely thing in me - in me, of all people? I can understand you can find it in Henry - my Henry, I mean. He's gentle and good and patient. You can find it in Maurice who thinks he hates, and loves, loves all the time. Even his enemies. But in this bitch and fake where do you find anything to love? (p. 99)

We learn, also from Sarah, of an incident which is irrelevant to the action of the novel but indicative of Maurice's other side:

> . . . today . . . I thought, instead of my own body, of Maurice's. I thought of certain lines life had put on his face as personal as a line of his writing: I thought of a new scar on his shoulder that wouldn't have been there if once he hadn't tried to protect another man's body from a falling wall. He didn't tell me why he was in hospital those three days: Henry told me. That scar was part of his character as much as his jealousy. (p. 108)

And, finally, Sarah's diary provides a different perspective on scenes which Maurice has previously recounted. With regard to their lunch meeting in 1946 she says:

> Every now and then he tried to hurt me and he succeeded because he was really hurting himself, and I can't bear to watch him hurting himself. . . . Only for a little I was unhappy, saying good-bye above the grating I thought he was going to kiss me again, and I longed for it, and then a fit of coughing took me and the moment passed, I knew, as he walked away, he was thinking all kinds of untrue things and he was hurt by them, and I was hurt because he was hurt. (p. 112)

Sarah's diary, in general terms, offers an interesting contrast to Maurice's account with respect to reliability. While Maurice makes every attempt to reconstruct the truth, he is still the conscious craftsman; Sarah, on the other hand, can be honest to

the point of self-humiliation. The diary form, after all, is perhaps the closest one can get to truth because it is, by nature, a personal record. Thus, Sarah can write:

> . . . there's not a single person anywhere to whom I can even say I'm unhappy because they would ask me why and the questions would begin and I would break down. I mustn't break down because I must protect Henry. Oh, to hell with Henry, to hell with Henry. I want somebody who'll accept the truth about me and doesn't need protection. If I'm a bitch and a fake, is there nobody who will love a bitch and a fake? (pp. 92-93)

Maurice's authorial comments, on the other hand, are calculated to present a preconceived picture of himself which conflicts - despite his technical proficiency - with a picture one can construct from his actions. Thus, the reader can measure the inaccuracy of this statement:

> Now I knew the whole absurd story of the vow, now I was certain of her love, I was assured of her. If two people loved, they slept together; it was a mathematical formula, tested and proved by human experience. (p. 125)

He also knows, at the end of the novel, that Maurice is clearly not "too tired and old to learn to love" (p. 187).[25]

The other aspect of reliability which deserves attention

[25] Frederick R. Karl, in The Contemporary English Novel (1961; rpt. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1972), offers a thematic interpretation of Maurice's state at the end of the novel, an interpretation which is essentially corroborated by Greene himself in his interview with Shuttleworth and Raven. Karl says:

> The lovers of God do not necessarily find Him through their belief. He is more likely to be discovered by the tortured deniers. Thus, those who hate may be closer to God than those who love; those who deny closer than those who believe; those who despair closer than those who are elated. . . . In every instance Greene feels that God seeks out the ones who would deny Him, for they are probing the very root of His existence, and with this, God can sympathize. (p. 90)

involves the extent to which a first-person narrator can provide a fair picture of the other characters. The provision of information regarding the internal states of others sufficient to render the account reliable is perhaps more of a challenge in the authorial first-person stance than in the figural. This is so because the de-emphasis on the narrative process in the figural first-person type has the effect of diminishing one's questioning of narrator information. As in the convention of the perfect memory, the figural form assumes that the narrator is in possession of certain knowledge: attempts to justify the source of knowledge are, in terms of the illusion, unnecessary. The authorial first-person narrator, on the other hand, tends to be explicit in explaining his resources. In this sense, again, Maurice's profession justifies his habit of soliciting information about people for the purposes of character portrayal. It is in this context that Maurice - and the reader, vicariously - learns about Henry:

> I doubt whether I should ever have troubled to know Henry or Sarah well if I had not begun in 1939 to write a story with a senior civil servant as the main character . . . and the first night I took Sarah out to dinner I had the cold-blooded intention of picking the brain of a civil servant's wife. (p. 10)

> I knew he had a mole on the left of his navel because a birthmark of my own had once reminded Sarah of it. I knew he suffered from short sight, but wouldn't wear glasses with strangers . . . I even knew his sleeping habits. Was he conscious that I knew so much already, that one more fact would not alter our relation? (p. 12)

The most obvious device for character revelation in The End of the Affair is, of course, the inclusion of Sarah's diary. The

inset is necessary, not only from the point of view of revealing, for the reader's sake, Sarah's personal struggle, but also from the point of view of Maurice's acquiring an understanding of himself and their relationship. The device is precisely what Orwell refers to as "eavesdropping & amateur detective work"[26] but it works simply because the reader has come to see Maurice as a man who would take such steps.

Dramatization

Although the authorial first-person narrator resembles the authorial third-person narrator in the sense that he is distanced from his material (and, therefore, in a position to comment on it), he is still an inhabitant of the fictional world. According to Lubbock's terminology, the first-person narrative stance represents a dramatization of both narrator and narrative; the impression of mediation in the authorial first-person form is no more than an illusion. Assuming this condition, it is helpful to examine the mediation effect of Maurice Bendrix's account in order both to determine how it is modified over the course of the novel and to establish a basis for comparison with the remaining two works to be discussed.

I have suggested that the mediation of Maurice's story qualitatively changes as it progresses. In the first two books, as Maurice is recalling the affair and the renewed involvement with the Mileses in 1946, the narrative is predominantly authorial.

[26]See Chapter II, p. 84 for my discussion of Orwell's position.

The following passage illustrates the kind of generalized commentary (equivalent to Lubbock's panoramic presentation) to which Maurice resorts frequently:

> The act of love . . . has been described as the little death, and lovers sometimes experience too the little peace. . . . That is how I think of those first months of war - was it a phoney peace as well as a phoney war? It seems now to have stretched arms of comfort and reassurance all over those months of dubiety and waiting, but the peace must, I suppose, even at that time have been punctuated by misunderstandings and suspicion. (p. 46)

In the early chapters, scenic passages are rendered most often in a pictorial manner:

> Directly I began to cross the Common I realized I had the wrong umbrella, for it sprang a leak and the rain ran down under my macintosh collar, and then it was I saw Henry . . . he had no umbrella and in the light of the lamp I could see his eyes were blinded with the rain. The black leafless trees gave no protection: they stood around like broken water-pipes; and the rain dripped off his stiff dark hat and ran in streams down his black civil servant's overcoat. (p. 8)

Even the strictly dramatic parts of scenic passages are heavily interpreted:

> 'Bendrix,' he said with affection, and yet the world would have said <u>he</u> had the reasons for hate, not me.
> 'What are you up to, Henry, in the rain?' There are men whom one has an irresistible desire to tease: men whose virtues one doesn't share. (p. 8)

The turning point in terms of the mediation effect occurs with the presentation of Sarah's diary. The quality of Sarah's narrative, in contrast to that of Bendrix, is primarily figural: the workings of Sarah's mind are placed directly before the reader and any narrative interpretation is ostensibly for her sake only. Following the diary, Maurice's narrative (although

still authorial when compared with a more obviously figural presentation) becomes increasingly scenic. The effect of the diary on Maurice's state of mind is rendered in the most dramatic terms: the chapter directly following the diary is almost totally scenic. The decline in authorial commentary in the last two books further suggests that Maurice is becoming less aware of his state of mind as his experiencing self temporally approaches his narrating self. Thus, the reader is, at the end, left to interpret Maurice's thought processes which have, at this point, come to resemble those of Sarah:

> It's something He can demand of any of us, leap. But I won't leap. I sat on my bed and said to God: You've taken her, but You haven't got me yet. I know Your cunning. It's You who take us up to a high place and offer us the whole universe. You're a devil, God, tempting us to leap. But I don't want Your peace and I don't want Your love. (p. 186)

Although a full treatment of theme in The End of the Affair is beyond the scope of this discussion, it is clear that an examination of narrative stance contributes substantially to an appreciation of the working relationship between form and content. It can be argued that Greene's choice of the first-person form for the novel is critically admirable because the form automatically imposes on the subject matter the necessity for psychological probability. Greene's choice of an authorial first-person narrator (as opposed to a figural one) is interesting in the light of Greene's professed thematic criterion; the form has the advantages of both allowing authorial-type commentary on the central issue and containing the

discussion within the bounds of the fictional illusion. An examination, now, of Keith Waterhouse's Billy Liar will illustrate the very different ways in which a figural first-person novel operates.

CHAPTER IV

KEITH WATERHOUSE'S

BILLY LIAR

The body of critical response to Keith Waterhouse in general and to Billy Liar in particular is small. Such appraisals as exist, however, are notably consistent in pointing to a distinguishing feature of the novel: the author's apparent skill in realizing the perspective of the young hero. Maurice Richardson, in The New Statesman, says: "Mr. Waterhouse has a remarkable gift for projecting himself under the skin of the modern adolescent".[1] Francis Wyndham, in The London Magazine, goes further to attribute this effect to the adoption of the first-person form:

> [Mr. Waterhouse's] Billy is a faithful version of . . . the seething teen-ager, endearingly gauche, surrounded by adult phoniness and expressing his contempt of this in a private language . . . Billy Liar is a shapely and consistent work; the first-person technique . . .imposes a discipline, within which the author's remarkably fertile comic invention and verbal skill are allowed full play. 2

Keith Waterhouse's own remarks in his Introduction (1968) to There Is A Happy Land are particularly revealing with respect both to point of view and to Billy Liar since this Introduction was written subsequent to both novels. That his portrait of Billy is meant to be a picture of a particular imagination defined primarily

[1]Maurice Richardson, rev. of Billy Liar, New Statesman, 12 Sept. 1959, p. 328.

[2]Francis Wyndham, rev. of Billy Liar, London Magazine, 7, No. 1 (1960), 72.

by age is suggested in this statement: "There's a strong reader-identification in my novel Billy Liar, because I think every adolescent goes through the kind of fantasy period which that book describes".[3] That Waterhouse is consciously operating from an awareness of point of view effect is indicated in his comment on There Is A Happy Land:

> . . . I have tried to persuade the reader that a boy is talking by using as far as possible a boy's limited vocabulary, by selecting my various adjectives and similes and analogies from a boy's range of experience, and above all, by trying to view all the events described through a boy's eyes . . . [4]

To return to Francis Wyndham's suggestion that Billy Fisher is an adolescent in revolt, it is clear that the use of first-person narration for Billy enhances the sense of his isolation from both the adult world and the world of his peers. And, as will become evident, the adoption of a figural first-person stance reinforces the immediacy of the adolescent experience by virtually eliminating self-comment and evaluation from a posterior and superior vantage point. In short, Billy Fisher must be taken as he is: the narrative stance reinforces the implicit lack of alternative behavioural standards in Billy's limited world.

An examination now of the operation of first-person narration in the novel will both illustrate the efficacy of Stanzel's scheme and demonstrate the contrast between the figural and authorial stances.

[3]Waterhouse, Land, p. 145.

[4]Waterhouse, Land, p. 144.

Time: Chronology

Billy Liar fulfills the conditions typical of Stanzel's figural first-person type in terms of chronology: the events occur within the space of one day (approximately seventeen hours) and are presented in a linear fashion. The figural quality of the novel is upheld, further, by the indirect way in which references to the date are provided. One calculates, for example, the month in which the action occurs on the basis of the following information:

> As for Thousand??? this was a ghost of idle thinking, the last traces of a plan to write a thousand words each day of a public-school story to be entitled *The Two Schools at Gripminster*. Having conceived the plan in early August, I was already thirty-four thousand words behind on the schedule. 5

Later, Billy is explicit about the month but presents his time reference as if it were part of his own, present thought process:

> It was now September. The calendars had been given to me to post about two weeks before Christmas of the previous year. This meant that this particular problem had been on the agenda for over nine months or, as I sometimes worked it out, six thousand five hundred and twenty-eight hours. (p. 17)

We learn, almost incidentally in the course of a descriptive passage, that it is a Saturday: "Anyway, satanic or not, it was the usual Saturday morning down in town, the fat women rolling along on their bad feet like toy clowns in pudding basins, the grey-faced men reviewing the sporting pinks".(p. 24).

[5]Keith Waterhouse, *Billy Liar* (1959; rpt. Great Britain: Penguin, 1962), p. 7. All further references to the text are taken from this edition.

Once the time period and the date of the action are established, the only remaining time references necessary are those regarding the time of day. Although self-evident, this point is important because it suggests a distinction between the figural and the authorial first-person situations. The latter typically requires narrative time adjustments according to years as well as to months, days, and specific times. In Billy Liar, each of the fourteen chapters is concerned with a particular scene; as the novel progresses, the chronology of the day advances.

At times, Billy is precise in his recording of time. He begins his day slightly before 8:40:

> My mother shouted up the stairs: 'Billy? Billy! Are you getting up?' the third call in a fairly well-established series of street-cries that graduated from: 'Are you awake, Billy?' to 'It's a quarter past nine, and you can stay in bed all day for all I care', meaning twenty to nine and time to get up. (p. 6)

His first argument of the day is over by 9:05: "I pushed back the polished chair, about whose machine-turned legs I had once had so much to say, and went into the kitchen. It was five minutes past nine" (p. 14). His first meeting of the day with the Witch occurs at one o'clock and he gets on a bus on his way to the New House at 7:30 in the evening. And, finally, the last actions of the day occur at precisely indicated intervals:

> . . . I bought a single second-class to St. Pancras . . . I looked up at the big station clock. It was ten minutes to one. (p. 177)

> The man in the black coat called: 'Two men, buckets, mops. Floor cleaned. . . . I slid out of the waiting-room and stood irresolutely in the booking hall, still

> shaken. It was just on one o'clock. (p. 181)
>
> The porter banged the gate shut and I saw Liz clamber into the last carriage after two soldiers. I watched the train disappear. . . . It was twelve minutes past one. (pp. 184-185)

Certain other time references are precise but presented dramatically (usually, curiously enough, in conversation with his mother):

> My mother shouted up the stairs: 'You'll never get into town at this rate, never mind London! It's after half past nine! (p. 17)
>
> 'What time do you call this?' my mother asked as I opened the kitchen door. I knew my part in this little passage and replied: 'Twenty-seven minutes past two, though you may have another phrase for it,' reflecting that my answers were becoming as stereotyped as her questions. (p. 78)

Still other time points are alluded to by Billy either before or after the actual occurrence of the event. The time of the second meeting with the Witch (which occurs in Chapter 7) is established in Chapter 4. In the scene at the Infirmary, we learn from Billy's mother that it was 9:30 when Billy was leaving the Roxy with Liz - just as the phone message was being delivered over the loudspeaker.

In six out of the fourteen scenes presented, time references are either ommitted altogether or left vague. When Billy arrives home from the evening's activities, for example, the time is left deliberately ambiguous:

> The old man said: 'I'm surprised t' bloody chip shop's still open, this time o' night.' He nodded towards the cuckoo clock, swinging its lead weights against the sad wallpaper. He turned to chuck his cigarette end in the fire and said . . .'They're down at t' Infirmary.' (p. 158)

It is interesting to compare this lack of precision with the frequent "placing" in the final chapter. The specified departure time of the train to London and Billy's consciousness of the time remaining emphasize the necessity of a decision: he can no longer ignore or suspend time - it is quite literally running out in this day which was to have been "a day for big decisions" (p. 6).

Time: Narrative Distance

A discussion of narrative distance bears on the identification of an interplay between a narrating self and an experiencing self. In a figural situation, since such an interplay is minimized, discussion must centre, rather, on the absence of a narrating persona. The presence of a narrating self is, of course, understood, as is his posteriority - however limited or ambiguous - to the events being recalled. In terms of the illusion effect in the figural first-person novel, however, the narrator in the process of recalling becomes one with his experiencing self.

In Billy Liar the construction of a picture of Billy as narrator is indeed a challenge for the reader. References to his epic situation and his motivation for writing are non-existent (although one can make assumptions regarding Billy's motivation on the basis of his writing aspirations). Since the time period of the recalled events is short, the necessity for authorial-type time adjustments is minimal. And, finally, the designation of the time gap between the experience and the recall is limited

to infrequent hints such as "They knew how Danny Boon, who was not so famousthen as he is now, had played a week at the Stradhoughton Empire" (p. 12).

Although the extent of the narrative distance in Billy Liar is unknowable, the fact of narrative distance can be inferred from passages which can be attributed only to Billy's narrating self. Passages of what James calls "explanations and amplifications"[6] imply a narrator who is conscious of constructing a comprehensible story. The now-and-here of the experiencing self in the act of shaving and indulging in some No. 1 thinking is interrupted, for example, by the following:

> I had two kinds of thinking (three, if ordinary thoughts were counted) and I had names for them, applied first jocularly and then mechanically. I called them No. 1 thinking and No. 2 thinking. No. 1 thinking was voluntary but No. 2 thinking was not; it concerned itself with obsessional speculations about the scope and nature of disease (such as a persistent yawn that was probably symptomatic of sarcoma of the jaw), the probable consequences of actual misdemeanours, and the solutions to desperate problems. . . . The way out of all this was to lull myself into a No. 1 thinking bout, taking the fast excursion to Ambrosia, indulging in hypothetical conversations with Bertrand Russell, fusing and magnifying the ordinary thoughts of the day so that I was a famous comedian at the Ambrosia State Opera, the only stage personality ever to reach the rank of president. (p. 15)

Billy as narrator later interrupts the scene in the Kit-Kat café with Rita to provide the necessary background information for the sake of an imaginary reader:

> The position with Rita was that I had had my eye on

[6] James, Art, p. 111.

> her ever since she moved into the Kit-Kat from a transport café in the Huddersfield Road . . . [She was] somewhat low on the conversational level, but she was a good, or at least a stolid, listener. The previous night, in an eloquent mood, I had proposed marriage and Rita, probably thinking it bad manners to refuse, had accepted. The only complicated thing was that I was already engaged to the Witch, so that Rita's status was roughly that of first reserve in the matrimonial team. (p. 46)

His narrative persona is similarly invoked in descriptive passages which are necessary to suggest the quality of the environment against which Billy is rebelling:

> Stradhoughton Moor was a kind of pastoral slum on the edge of the town. It was fringed on Moorside by the dye-works, Stradhoughton Town football ground, and some public lavatories. The centre of the Moor was paved with cinders, where generations had tipped their slag and ashes, and where the annual fairs were held. There was a circumference of sparse yellow grass where the old men walked in summer, and I took the path they had worn towards a pocket of stone cottages, mostly condemned, that huddled miserably together in a corner of the Moor. (p. 86)

Although such passages are provided from the perspective of the narrating self, the authorial quality is modified by the absence of self-comment. In certain other passages, interpretation is offered but only from the point of view of the experiencing self; this situation similarly diminishes the power of the mediator. When Billy encounters Councillor Duxbury on the Moor, the inarticulate nature of his perceptions reinforces the fact that they are rooted in the temporal level of the particular scene:

> He released my arm, leaving me feeling that he had said something sage and shrewd, although I was unable to fathom quite what he was getting at. He was stuffing his handkerchief into his overcoat pocket, preparing to go. I did not want him to go. I did not feel afraid.

> I felt a kind of tentative serenity and I wanted him to go on with his old man's advice, telling me the things I should do. (pp. 92-93)

Similarly, when Billy meets Liz at the X-L Disc Bar, his responses are consistent with what we have come to expect of him in the context of his experiencing self:

> I was trying on expressions, as though I carried a mirror about with me and was pulling faces in it. I tried to look stunned, because after all there was the material for it, and I tried to assemble some kind of definite emotion that I wasn't putting on or concocting out of the ingredients of the atmosphere she carried around with her. . . .
>
> 'Hullo, Liz.'
>
> 'Hullo, Billy.'
>
> I spoke in what I hoped was the low, husky voice, indicating the end of a long journey or something, but she spoke frankly and happily, as though she were delighted to see me and had no reason to hide what she felt. (p. 108)

Although Billy's behaviour in such instances is clearly immature, his experiencing self retains a sufficient degree of self-analysis to indicate his <u>lack</u> of social adeptness. In the figural novel, the contrast between the narrator's actual behaviour and what it <u>might</u> be must be handled by the experiencing self; The superior consciousness of the narrating self is denied expression. The lack of an objective perspective, in this case, serves to enhance the sense of Billy's isolation; we are offered no immediate or tangible assurance that Billy has, at the time of narration, changed.[7]

The salience of the experiencing self in contrast to the obscurity of the narrating self in the figural first-person novel

[7]The operation of the figural situation here clearly demonstrates the applicability of Schorer's formula for technique as discovery.

has the additional effect of emphasizing the presentness of the action. The compression of events into a short time period, the resultant lack of narrative time adjustments, and the ambiguity of the narrative distance all contribute to the illusion that the reader is in the now-and-here of Billy as figure. In the following passage, although the tense alternates between present, past, and future, the perspective - in terms of the illusion - is clearly that of Billy in the process of experiencing:

> Now, lying under the pale gold eiderdown, staring up at the crinoline ladies craftily fashioned out of silver paper and framed in passe-partout (they would be coming down, for a start) I began to abandon the idea of saving the [nail] clipping in an ointment box; I would throw it right away, without a backward glance, and from now on short nails, and a brisk bath each morning. An end, too, to this habit of lying in bed crinkling my toes fifty times for each foot; in future I would be up at seven and an hour's work done before breakfast. There would be no more breath-holding, eye-blinking, nostril-twitching, or sucking of teeth, and this plan would start tomorrow, if not today. (p. 6)

The operation of the convention of the perfect memory in Billy Liar is also typical of the figural situation as described by Stanzel. At no point does the narrator attempt to authenticate his reconstruction with interjections (natural for Maurice Bendrix) such as "I had reason to remember . . .". The only possible justification one can infer regarding Billy's power of recall resides in his artistic aspirations. As his "routines" with Arthur demonstrate, he is imaginative and witty; interestingly enough, however, he occasionally forgets punch lines:

> 'A 'A man can lose himself in London,' I said. 'London is a big place. It has big streets and big people -'

> I tailed off, because she would not be drawn, and in any case I had forgotten the end of the sentence. (p. 145)

This propensity, in fact, serves to underline the fact that Billy as narrator is operating in terms of the perfect memory convention since it is clear that his experiencing self is somewhat inadequate in this respect.

The merging of the time of action and the time of recall is similarly left as an assumption; the credibility of this situation is,difficult to question in the figural novel since the time period recalled is short and the narrative distance is unknowable.

Authenticity

Since the narrative act is de-emphasized in the figural first-person novel, it is unusual to find authorial-type attempts to authenticate the story. Unlike Maurice Bendrix, Billy Fisher as narrator (indeed, one is virtually unaware of the fact that it is an older Billy who is narrating) makes no comments regarding the validity of his account. He simply presents the story and tacitly assumes that it be accepted as authentic. It is still the case (in the figural as well as in the authorial first-person novel) that the author, in the process of designing his fiction, makes certain conscious decisions regarding devices to promote verisimilitude. In the authorial first-person novel, these devices can be incorporated into the creative act of the narrator; in the figural they remain, for the reader, a matter for speculation.

In Waterhouse's *There Is A Happy Land* the inclusion of an introduction by the author throws some light on the nature of decisions made at the time of writing. Waterhouse's comments on the novel's central character may be indicative of his approach to Billy:[8]

> The boy has no given name and no given age. . . . In my own mind, the boy is about ten years old. But I've found that some readers think of him as a nine-year-old, others as an eleven-year-old - anywhere, in fact, within a range of eighteen months or so on either side of the age I had set for him. People grow up faster or slower; the nine-year-old in one family has the mental age of the eleven-year-old next door. Had I put my birthday cards on the table, so to speak, I would have had readers pulling up short and saying, "Wait a minute. That's not how I was behaving when I was ten." This would have spoiled credibility, and would have done serious harm to the story I wanted to tell. 8

Although Billy is similarly given no specific age, Waterhouse goes on to qualify implicitly his realistic intentions regarding Billy when discussing the question of the hero's name:

> I felt that by calling my narrator [in *There Is A Happy Land*] John or Tom or Dick or Harry I would somehow throw the reader a little off-balance; he'd see the narrator more as a separate person and identify with him the less. This is a debatable point but I think a valid one. There's a strong reader-identification in my novel *Billy Liar*, because I think every adolescent goes through the kind of fantasy period which that book describes; but because I gave Billy a name I think readers tend to think of him mainly as a "character" of fiction rather than as someone with whom they share a common experience. 9

As he says, the point is debatable and perhaps valid if one compares

[8]Waterhouse, *Land*, p. 145.

[9]Waterhouse, *Land*, p. 145.

Billy Liar with There Is A Happy Land. Authenticity in Billy Liar in this respect is, however, no less apparent than it is in other figural first-person works which (typically) have a central character with a name.

The lack of a distinct narrative persona in the figural first-person novel presents potential illusion problems with respect to self-description. The problem can be most readily circumvented by the simple comission of details:offappearance.. In Billy Liar, one is hard pressed to construct a precise mental picture of the narrator. Rather than receiving information (common in other novel types) regarding height, weight, hair colour, and so on, we are given peripheral clues such as "I . . . began brooding over the matter of the black bristles under my chin which, shave as I might, would never come smooth" (p. 16) and "I sat by her, legs apart, head bowed, staring down at my feet and counting the stains on my suède shoes" (p. 172). The reader is, of course, free to speculate on Billy's appearance on the basis of information regarding his thoughts and actions; the knowledge that he is young, self-conscious, adept at making facial grimaces, and given to walking as if he had flat feet contributes to the formulation of a picture of sorts. In any case, the illusion of authenticity is not jeopardized by the provision of such information nor isthe quality of Billy as figure diminished by the absence of concrete details.

The authentication of narrative style in the figural first-

person form is, again, managed implicitly. In place of authorial-type references to stylistic credentials, Billy's narrative ability is only suggested in his aspiration to script-writing and his expressed awareness of the varying intellectual levels of those around him. With regard to Liz's letters he says:

> They were matter-of-fact little notes, full of tediously interesting details about the things she had seen in Leicester, Welwyn Garden City, and the other places where whatever urge possessing her had taken her; but at least they were literate. I felt mildly peculiar to be treasuring love-letters for their grammar, but there was nothing else I could treasure them for. (p. 19)

He is acutely aware of the fact that most of Stradhoughton seems capable only of clichés:

> Everybody I knew spoke in clichés, but Rita spoke as though she got her words out of a slot machine, whole sentences ready-packed in a disposable tinfoil wrapper. There was little meaning left in anything she actually said; her few rough phrases had been so worn through constant use that she now relied not on words but on the voice itself, and the modulation of the animal sounds it produced, to express the few thick slabs of meaning of which she was capable. (p. 47)

Billy cannot resist the urge to correct Shadrack's careless usage:

> 'Same as I tell Councillor Duxbury. You've got to move with the times. It's no use living in one style and dying in another. It's an anarchism.'
> 'Anachronism,' I said, before I could stop myself. (p. 70)

And, faced with his two fiancées simultaneously, Billy's first impulse is to call on his intellectual resources:

> I skimmed through my mind, more or less in despair, to see if I could find a piece of skilful double-talk, aimed at their different intellectual levels, that would succeed in fooling them both. I opened my mouth to speak but felt the yawn welling up in my throat and I finished up standing there with my mouth open, gaping

> at them. 'What's up with him, is he catching flies or summat?' said Rita. It was obviously too late for the academic niceties, anyway. (p. 135)

Although Billy is conscious of the intellectual wasteland surrounding him and expresses a desire to move beyond it, he is still very much a product of the cliché world himself: "'I turn over a new leaf every day . . . but the blots show through'" (p. 144). His single attempt at sustained prose not only displays dubious literary value but also repeatedly trails off into irrelevant doodlings about a pen-name:

> '"I say, weed! Aren't you a new bug?" Sammy Brown turned to greet the tall, freckle-faced boy who walked across the quad towards him. Sammy's second name was appropriate - for the face of this sturdy young fellow was as brown as a berry. W. Fisher. William Fisher. The Two Schools at Gripminster, by William Fisher. William L. Fisher. W. L. Fisher. Two-School Sammy, by W. L. P. Fisher . . . WilLashwood Fisher. W. de L Fisher.' (pp. 27-28)

The similarity between this "artistic" attempt of Billy's and the romanticized world of public school-life popularized in the various British Boys' Weeklies[10] certainly compromises one's assessment of Billy's credentials. An even more serious indication of Billy's level at the time of his experience is suggested in the fact that

[10]George Orwell's essay, "Boys' Weeklies" in Critical Essays (1946; rpt. London: Secker and Warburg, 1960), provides an interesting glimpse into the highly artificial serial "accounts" of the "glamorous" life at posh public-school institutions in Britain. Orwell points out the widespread appeal of such papers particularly for private-school boys with whom Billy must be compared. Here, Billy is unconsciously imitating the dialect adopted by the stereotyped characters portrayed in such stories.

much of his intellectual activity exists only in his fantasy:

> 'Pay attention to me, Fisher. I have thought very carefully about sending you to prison. Only your youth and the fact that your employers have spoken so highly of your abilities . . .' Tying my tie, I began to imagine myself in Armley Jail, impressing the governor with my intelligence, making friends with the padre . . . (p. 18)

Thus, although Billy's imagination and awareness of "academic niceties" suggest a potential for realized writing skill, the figural stance of the novel in this respect emphasizes his limitations at the time of his experiences. The authenticity of the adolescent style is, in short, upheld in Billy's curious mixture of sophistication and naivety. His credentials as narrator are never made explicit: the fact that he is now writing his story is the only indication (and, implicit) that he has fulfilled his potential.

Reliability

The assessment of narrator reliability in the figural first-person novel depends on the examination of internal clues similar to those discussed with respect to the authorial stance with one exception: all are rendered, in the former, from the perspective of the experiencing self. In the authorial situation, although the interpretation imposed on the material by the narrator must be evaluated simultaneously with the action itself, narrator objectivity remains a possibility. The absence of a superior narrative persona in the figural first-person type, on the other hand, forces the reader to draw his own conclusions regarding narrator reliability. In this case, in fact, one is evaluating

not so much the narrator as the figure; the narrator is effectively absent or neutral.

Although a limited individual in some respects, Billy Fisher does display a certain amount of perception regarding his behaviour at the time of action. After a bout of No. 1 thinking while shaving he says: "I began . . . scraping the back of my hand against the bristles, listening to the noise of it and wondering whether there was something wrong with me" (p. 16). Watching people get off the buses and go their various ways in town, he says: "I was amazed and intrigued that they should all be content to be nobody but themselves" (p. 112). His response to his mother's commentary in the Infirmary is similarly revealing:

> 'Then she said, "I love you Jack"' - my mother had difficulty in pronouncing this word love. I had never heard her say it before, and it sounded strange on her lips. . . . My mother said it as though the word had just been invented, like Terylene. . . . I found it difficult to feel anything beyond indignation that my grandmother should be seen off with this gossiping commentary. (p. 168)

However, when compared with Maurice Bendrix's comments, which have the double perspective of the experiencing self and the narrating self ("When I replied that I loved her too in that way, I was the liar, not she, for I never lose the consciousness of time")[11] Billy's perceptions are indeed limited. In the absence of evaluation from a distanced, wiser self, Billy's insights have no associations beyond the context of the experience.

[11] Greene, The End of the Affair, p. 50.

One can also form an impression of Billy's reliability on the basis of his comments on other characters. Grateful to Arthur for helping him out of an embarrassing situation with Stamp, Billy says:

> I often told myself that I had no friends, only allies, banded together in some kind of conspiracy against the others. Arthur was one of them. We spoke together mainly in catchphrases, hidden words that the others could not understand. (p. 33)

When speaking of Rita he reveals an ability to perceive people and acts in something other than a comic vein: "In moments of tenderness a certain gruffness, like Woodbine smoke, would curl into her throat, but she had long ago forgotten, and probably never knew, the vocabulary of human kindness" (pp. 47-48). In his description of the Witch, the incongruity of the fact of Billy's proposal provokes a real question as to his actions:

> I had learned to dislike everything about her. I did not care, to begin with, for her face: the scrubbed, honest look, as healthy as porridge. I disliked her for her impeccable shorthand, her senseless, sensible shoes, and her handbag crammed with oranges. The Witch did nothing else but eat oranges. She had in fact been peeling a tangerine when I proposed to her during a youth-club hike to Ilkley Moor, and her way of consummating the idea had been to pop a tangerine quarter in my mouth. She had not been very much amused when I said, 'With this orange I thee wed'. (p. 55)

Still other clues - and these are perhaps the most elusive - are extractable from scenically-rendered passages. In what should be - to Billy - a serious exchange with his father before he goes to the Infirmary, he displays an inability to face reality; the only way of handling facts, for him, is to use them in a

"routine" or to distort them for use in Ambrosia:

> 'Well I told you I didn't want to work for Shadrack's when I first started, didn't I?'
> 'You didn't want to work for nobody, if you ask me owt,' the old man said. 'You thought you'd live on me, didn't you?'
> 'No, I didn't. I could have kept myself.'
> 'How?'
> 'Writing scripts,' I said thickly.
> 'Writing bloody scripts, you want to get a day's work done, never mind writing scripts. Who do you think's going to run this bloody business when I'm gone?' He jerked his thumb in the direction of the garage outside, and it was so exactly like the trouble at t'mill routine that Arthur and I had between us that the response flicked immediately into my mind 'But father, we all have our lives to lead, you yours and I mine!' (pp. 161-162)

Comments by other characters regarding Billy provide the only perspective at variance with Billy's own. His father's "I'm not having you gallivanting round at all hours, not at your bloody age" (p. 10) and Gran's "He wants to make up his mind who he is going with" (p. 10) are comic (from Billy's point of view) but reasonably telling. Arthur's statement that Billy is a "pathological bloody liar" (p. 43) adds a serious dimension to Billy's relentless practical joking. His adolescence is emphasized by his mother's comment: "He's not old enough to go to London, or anywhere else . . . He doesn't think. He gets ideas into his head" (p. 82). And Rita's assessment is: "You're rotten! All through! I've met some people in my time but of all the lying, scheming . . . ." (p. 181).

At this point it becomes obvious that such comments must be qualified by the extent to which we see the speakers as being reliable themselves. In the first-person novel, one's evaluation

of characters other than the narrator relies heavily on how they are presented by the narrator. Although a third-person narrator is not exempt from bias, his rendering is less susceptible to questioning than is that of the "I" who is quite obviously presenting his own version. Again, the authorial type (both third and first person) gives the illusion of narrator objectivity; the figural stance makes no such claims but places the reader immediately in a position of independent interpretation. In this situation, then, the actions and statements of the characters stand as the only means of determining their reliability. With respect to Rita, for example, (Billy's comments as figure aside) one comes to question her understanding of anything beyond the superficialities of human contact: "'Oo, it's woke up again! . . . Aren't you supposed to go to church or summat when you wear one of these? . . . You can bring me a fur coat tomorrer'" (p. 103). Liz, on the other hand, presents a figure of amused objectivity mingled with real affection and understanding with respect to Billy. Thus, her comments are particularly acute:

> 'You know, my lad, the trouble with you is that you're - what's the word - introspective? You're like a child at the edge of a paddling pool. You want very much to go in, but you think so much about whether the water's cold, and whether you'll drown, and what your mother will say if you get your feet wet -' (pp. 144-145)

That Liz's perceptions regarding Billy are likely to be relatively reliable is reinforced by Billy's reaction to her mere physical presence:

> She was still wearing her old black skirt, but with a

> fresh white blouse. Her green suède jacket hung on the back of the basket chair. I was happy to be with her; it was like being in a refuge, her beaming, comfortable presence protecting me from the others. (p. 129)

Despite her mysterious disappearances, Liz remains the single consistent, trustworthy figure in Billy's world.

The degree to which a first-person narrator can provide an objective picture of other characters merits further consideration. In the figural first-person work, the absence of qualifying commentary from a posterior vantage point places two demands on the reader with respect to measuring reliability: to infer the nature of the characters on the basis of their specific words and acts and to gauge the accuracy of the narrator's comments on them. Ironically, Billy's estimation is very often humorously accurate. A typical family scene illustrates the point:

> 'I've been offered that job in London.'
> The replies were predictable, so predictable that I had already written them down, although not on a used envelope, and had meant to present the family with this wryly-humorous summing-up of their little ways as some kind of tolerant benediction on them after they spoke, which according to my notes was as follows:
> Old man: 'What bloody job?'
> Mother: 'How do you mean, you've been offered it?'
> Gran: 'What's he talking about, I thought he was going to be a cartooner, last I heard.' (pp. 11-12)

In the scenes with the Witch, it is possible to omit Billy's interpretative comments and still construct a picture of Barbara which is consistent with Billy's own:

> 'How many cigarettes today?'
> 'Two,' I said.
> 'That's a good boy' . . .
> 'Did you talk to any men today?' I asked her. This

> was another idea she had. I was supposed to be jealous if she spoke to anybody else but me.
>
> 'Only Mr. Turnbull, and Stamp when I rang up. Did you talk to any gurls?'
>
> 'Only the waitress when we went out for coffee.'
>
> The Witch put on a mean expression. 'Couldn't your friend have spoken to her?' she pouted. She wouldn't speak Arthur's name, because even that was supposed to make me jealous. (pp. 56-57)

Not surprisingly, Billy is more aware of his limitations when he is with Liz than when he is with any of the others. One feels that Liz's part in the following is reliably rendered even though it diminishes one's impression of Billy:

> 'I'm not coming, you know, Billy.'
>
> 'Please.'
>
> She shook her head. 'I won't live with you, Billy.'
>
> 'Come anyway,' I said. 'Live next door' . . .
>
> 'One condition,' she said.
>
> I closed my eyes tightly and smote my forehead, teetering on the brink of a decision. All the details of it were there, in a compact parcel of No. 1 thinking, from the registry-office ceremony to the Chelsea attic. All it needed was the decision.
>
> 'And I wouldn't want the communal ring,' said Liz. But I did not answer, and she knew that there was no answer. (p. 184)

Dramatization

The different approaches to assessing narrator reliability in the authorial and the figural first-person novels respectively reflect the different means of presentation in the two types. The figural quality of Billy Liar precludes the illusion of external mediation; although Maurice Bendrix's narrating "I" is a part of the fiction, it gives the impression of isolation from the "I" of the action time. In Billy Liar the narrative act is implicitly removed from the events being recalled; the absence of time

adjustments, recall credentials, and comments by the narrating self all reinforce the dramatic quality of the presented material.

The nature of the presentation in Billy Liar is, further, more consistent than that in The End of the Affair. It is true that the opening chapters of Billy Liar include more panoramic passages than do the later chapters. The following passage, for example, indicates the necessity to set the scene, to provide background information prerequisite to the story:

> I could see out across the gravel to the pitch-painted garage with its wordy, gold-painted sign: 'Geo. Fisher & Son, Haulage Contractors, Distance No Object. "The Moving Firm." Tel: 2573. SStamp, Signs.' The sign was inaccurate. I was the son referred to, but in fact the old man had gone to great trouble to keep me out of the family business, distance no object. (p. 8)

Similarly, a description of Stradhoughton is essential to one's understanding of Billy's revulsion:

> Off Market Street there was a little alley called St Botolph's Passage, the centre of most of Stradhoughton's ready-money betting. Besides the bookies' shops, the stinking urinal, the sly chemist's with red rubber gloves and big sex books in the window, and the obscure one-man businesses mooning behind the dark doorways, there was a pub, a dyer's and cleaner's, and Shadrack and Duxbury's tasteful funerals. Many were the jokes about St Botolph and his passage, but even more were those about the dyers and the undertakers. (pp. 24-25)

Such passages are rather conspicuous, however, because infrequent. Far more typical of the means of presentation is the pictorial quality of the opening scene:

> Lying in bed, I abandoned the facts again and was back in Ambrosia.
>
> By rights, the march-past started in the Avenue of the Presidents, but it was an easy thing to shift the whole thing into Town Square. My friends had vantage

> seats on the town-hall steps where no flag flew more proudly than the tattered blue star of the Ambrosian Federation, the standard we had carried into battle. One by one the regiments marched past, and when they had gone . . . a hush fell over the crowds and they removed their hats for the proud remnants of the Ambrosian Grand Yeomanry. (p. 5)

This abrupt shift into fantasy is, in fact, characteristic of Billy's rendering throughout the novel:

> The sun was still out, in a watery sort of way, and there was a hard, metal-grey shine on the afternoon . . . In Ambrosia, we were settling down to a shaky peace..... Liz, potentially the country's first home secretary, was abolishing the prisons. (p. 87)

In other instances, the pictorial quality is emphasized by Billy's alluding to a certain fact without providing an explanation:

> I took the used envelope out of my pocket with the letter still in it and thought up some jottings. 'Calendars. See S. re job. Write Boon. Thousand ??? See Witch re Captain.' Most of these notes were unnecessary, especially the bit about seeing Witch re Captain; that, along with the calendars, always a part-time worry, and the other bit about seeing S. re job, had kept me awake half the night. (p. 7)

Background information about the calendar business is provided later, only when it can be incorporated effectively into a scene. The following passage is presented in such a way that the provision of details is appropriate to Billy's thought process at the time; it is as if he were recalling the morbid details for himself in his own peculiarly masochistic way:

> . . . by now the calendar theme had me in its grip, and I staggered into my bedroom, gasping and clawing for breath, doing some deep-level No. 2 thinking on the subject. It was now September. The calendars had been given to me to post about two weeks before Christmas of the previous year . . . (p. 17)

An indication of the extent to which meaning in a figural first-person novel is conveyed dramatically can be illustrated by reference to three key scenes in Billy Liar. Councillor Duxbury's advice to Billy is presented essentially in scenic terms. Although Billy does provide some commentary, his lack of complete understanding forces the reader to interpret for himself:

> 'Straighten thi back up! That's better. Now sither. Ah don't know what ah'sll do. Ah'sll have to think about what's best. But sither -' He gripped my arm. I did not feel embarrassed; I was able, even, to look steadily into his eyes. 'Sither. Tha'rt a young man. Tha's got a long way to go. But tha can't do it by thisen. Now think on.' (p. 92)

Similarly, the accuracy of his mother's statement at the Infirmary provokes a comment from Billy which is inappropriate to the quality of the advice:

> 'If you're in trouble, Billy, it's not something you can leave behind you, you know,' she said in a shaky voice. 'You put it in your suitcase and take it with you.'
>
> My mother was so little given to this kind of imagery that I wondered if she had gotrush reports on the calendars in my suitcase.
>
> 'Well, I'm still going,' I said doggedly. 'I told you I'm going and I'm going.' (pp. 170-171)

And, finally, the ambiguity of the ending - presented pictorially - precludes assurance that Billy has, in fact, acquired a new understanding of himself and his situation:

> I walked across Bull Ring and up Moorgate. Suddenly I began to feel excited and buoyant, and I was almost running by the time I reached Town Square. I began to whistle 'March of the Movies' and to march in step with it. There was nobody about. When I came to the War

> Memorial I transferred my suitcase to my right hand and at the correct moment I saluted with the left - up, two, three, down, two, three, head erect, shoulders back. I brought the whistling to a huffing crescendo and wheeled smartly into Infirmary Street. I dropped into a normal step, and then I began the slow walk home. (p. 187)

This passage could be viewed as representing either a last fling with the security of Ambrosia or a confirmation that the fantasy will continue to sustain him in the frightening future. Billy's expressed intention of making this a day of decisions can be seen as either having defaulted (he decides against London) or succeeded (London is merely another fantasy). Whichever interpretation one applies, the lack of indication that Billy even sees his actions in these terms illustrates the defining characteristic of the figural first-person stance.

CHAPTER V

HENRY JAMES'S

THE SACRED FOUNT

It is by now quite clear that first-person narration possesses an inherent capacity to challenge the unsuspecting reader. It is also clear, however, that the form allows for a variety of devices to aid the reader's progress through the maze. Maurice Bendrix's older and somewhat wiser self provides a second perspective by which to judge his experiences; the characters and setting which define Billy Fisher's existence provoke pertinent questions as to the nature of his revolt. The degree of ambiguity in The End of the Affair and Billy Liar respectively are thus controlled. This is not at all the case with the next work to be examined; indeed, it can be said that ambiguity is the defining feature of Henry James's The Sacred Fount. A brief look at critical responses to the work will illustrate that "ambiguous" is in fact the only interpretation that can be safely applied to it.

Having proposed this approach, one must confront immediately the objection of Mr. Booth to ambiguity as a legitimate arena for fiction. In speaking of James's The Turn of the Screw, Booth quotes Marius Bewley as saying:

> There are a number of essential questions that simply cannot be answered without bringing to The Turn of the Screw that kind of attention which a work of art ought not to require. And

> yet the questions are not idle ones if one assumes that a work of art has a moral value. 1

Booth himself goes on to support Bewley's moralistic position:

> But The Turn of the Screw is by no means alone. If Bewley's claim is true, it applies equally well to The Sacred Fount and to a dozen other stories by James. The critical disagreement revealed to anyone who compares two or three critics on any one story is a scandal. 2

Taken together, these statements raise three points, the first invalid and the second and third debatable. In the first place, it is certainly not legitimate to legislate the degree to which one must "think" in order to appreciate a work of art. In the second, Booth's premise that critical unanimity on any given work is possible is questionable. And finally, the assumption that every reader demands from art a clear-cut moral statement is clearly arguable. James, in his Preface to The Turn of the Screw, comments on his deliberate evocation of moral ambiguity and the consequences this holds for the reader:

> There is . . . no eligible absolute of the wrong; it remains relative to fifty other elements, a matter of appreciation, speculation, imagination - these things moreover quite exactly in the light of the spectator's, the critic's, the reader's experience. Only make the reader's general vision of evil intense enough . . . and his own experience, his own imagination, his own sympathy (with the children) and horror

[1] Booth, Rhetoric, p. 315. (Marius Bewley, The Complex Fate, London, 1952, p. 110).

[2] Booth, Rhetoric, p. 315. Booth's use of the word "scandal" is an obvious - if not blatant - indication of his moral imperative.

> (of their false friends) will supply him quite sufficiently with all the particulars. 3

Curiously, certain other critics align themselves with Booth rather unwittingly; while admitting that ambiguity is the defining feature of The Sacred Fount (and defensible, they say) they proceed to undermine their position by drawing certain conclusions from the work. Jean Frantz Blackall says: "I find myself in agreement with the great majority of critics who have found in The Sacred Fount some kind of unplumbed depths . . ."[4] yet she proceeds to give her "own version of this deeper meaning".[5] Blackall's startling conclusion is that Gilbert Long and Grace Brissenden are "having an affair".[6] This discovery, together with her statement that "the narrator is completely unreliable",[7] surely contradicts the assumption implicit in the title of her work: Jamesian Ambiguity and "The Sacred Fount".

William Dean Howells begins his critique by providing an astute argument for ambiguity in fiction:

> . . . why should not a novel be written so like to life, in which most of the events remain the meaningless, that we shall never quite know what the author meant? Why, in fact, should not people come and go, and love and hate, and hurt and help one another as they do in reality, without rendering the reader a reason for their behaviour, or offering an explanation at the end with

[3] James, Art, p. 176.

[4] Jean Frantz Blackall, Jamesian Ambiguity and "The Sacred Fount" (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 34.

[5] Blackall, p. 34.

[6] Blackall, p. 62.

[7] Blackall, p. 9.

> which he can light himself back over the way he has come, and see what they meant? Who knows what anyone means here below, or what he means himself, that is, precisely stands for? Most people mean nothing, except from moment to moment, if they indeed mean anything so long as that, and life which is full of propensities is almost without motives. In the scribbles which we suppose to be limitations of life, we hold the unhappy author to a logical consistency which we find so rarely in the original; but ought not we rather to praise him where his work confesses itself, as life confesses itself, without a plan? Why should we demand more of the imitator than we get from the creator? 8

Howells goes on to say mischievously, however, "I have mastered the secret, though, for the present I am not going to divulge it".[9]

Edmund Wilson, in a similar vein, finds the novel "mystifying, even maddening"[10] and treats himself to a bit of rationalization by concluding that "Henry James was not clear about the book in his own mind".[11] Again, the contradiction in terms is apparent in Wilson's comparison of The Sacred Fount and The Turn of the Screw: " [James] has carried his ambiguous procedure to a point where it seems almost as if he did not want the reader to go through to the hidden meaning".[12] And Leon Edel, in his Preface to the 1959 edition of The Sacred Fount, implies that the puzzle is in fact

[8]William Dean Howells, "Mr. Henry James's Later Work," in The Question of Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. F. W. Dupee (London: Allan Wingate, 1947), p. 36. Howells expresses a preference for the ambiguity of The Awkward Age and The Wings of the Dove in which the author leaves "his people more to. . to me". (p. 37)

[9]Howells, p. 37.

[10]Edmund Wilson, "The Ambiguity of Henry James," in The Question of Henry James, p. 181.

[11]Wilson, p. 182. Wilson is here betraying a suspiciously defensive reaction in his assumption that critical bewilderment is attributable to a failure on the part of the artist.

[12]Wilson, p. 183.

solvable: ". . . it is a detective story without a crime - and without a detective. The detective, indeed, is the reader".[13]

Certain other critics reveal themselves to be more faithful to the meaning of the term "ambiguous". Philip M. Weinstein's approach displays a cautious attempt to generalize without jeopardizing the "essential ambiguity" of the work.[14] He supports his statement that "the absence of information is the chosen condition of the narrator"[15] by reference to James's expressed desire, in similar contexts, to shun facts in order to allow the imagination free-play. In his Preface to The Spoils of Poynton, James describes his acquisition of the "germ" of the story thus:

> There had been but ten words, yet I had recognized in them, as in a flash, all the possibilities of the little drama of my "Spoils," which glimmered then and there into life; so that when in the next breath I began to hear of action taken, on the beautiful ground, by our engaged adversaries, tipped each, from that instant, with the light of the highest distinction, I saw clumsy Life again at her stupid work. For the action taken, and on which my friend, as I knew she would, had already begun to report, I had absolutely . . . no scrap of use; one had been so perfectly qualified to say in advance: "It's the perfect little workable thing, but she'll strangle it in the cradle, even while she pretends, all so cheeringly, to rock it; wherefore I'll stay her hand while yet there's time. 16

[13] Leon Edel, Introduction to The Sacred Fount by Henry James (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1959), p. 15.

[14] Philip M. Weinstein, Henry James and the Requirements of the Imagination (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 114.

[15] Weinstein, p. 105. Weinstein here means that the absence of "facts" is the condition chosen by the narrator.

[16] James, Art, p. 121.

The appropriateness of Weinstein's approach is reflected further in the fact that his "conclusion" is in the form of a question: ". . . is not The Sacred Fount a perfect example of the novel that explores without defining, that exposes without deadening, that begins as a detective story but ends - through ambiguity - in privacy?"[17]

In the opinion of James Reaney the only possible conclusion to be drawn regarding the meaning of The Sacred Fount is inferable from the form. Quite simply, the reader is placed and held in a limited range of vision; there is no mystery but rather a picture of events (mainly subjective) from a single point of view. According to Reaney, the reader is free to speculate on the narrator's reliability - even his sanity - but Reaney quite accurately warns "see where that will get you".[18] Although he proceeds to approach a factual interpretation (that the narrator has a victory of sorts at the end), Reaney does so only to present an alternative to the interpretation typically applied to the narrator's final state.

Walter Isle[19] similarly begins with the premise that ambiguity is the quality which most accurately describes the technique and, hence, the content of The Sacred Fount. Isle's approach is particularly convincing since it draws on James's own remarks

[17]Weinstein, p. 114.

[18]James Reaney, "The Condition of Light: Henry James's The Sacred Fount," University of Toronto Quarterly XXXI (Jan 1962), 138.

[19]Walter Isle, Experiments in Form: Henry James's Novels, 1896-1901 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968).

regarding the first-person form: ". . . the darkest abyss of romance" and "the terrible fluidity of self-revelation".[20] That first-person narration is most conducive to romantic - as opposed to realistic - presentation is supported, for Isle, by reference to James's comments in his Preface to The American:

> The real represents to my perception the things we cannot possibly not know, sooner or later, in one way or another; it being but one of the accidents of our hampered state, and one of the incidents of their quantity and number, that particular instances have not yet come our way. The romantic stands, on the other hand, for the things that, with all the facilities in the world, all the wealth and all the courage and all the wit and all the adventure, we never can directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire. 21

James's further elaboration of the nature of romance would seem to be an apt description of the precise source of critical confusion regarding The Sacred Fount:

> . . . it deals [with] - experience liberated, so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it and, if we wish so to put the matter, drag upon it, and operating in a medium which relieves it, in a particular interest, of the inconvenience of a related, a measurable state, a state subject to all our vulgar communities. 22

[20] James, Art, pp. 320-321.

[21] James, Art, pp. 31-32.

[22] James, Art, p. 33. It is interesting to note that in this Preface James goes on to qualify his assessment of The American as a successful romance. He feels, for example, that the behaviour of the Bellegardes is an "affront to verisimilitude" (p. 37). One might argue that James recovered this loss in The Turn of the Screw and The Sacred Fount through the use of the first-person form which necessarily renders the account more subjective. The romance derives, in these cases, from the fact that certain "events" are unknowable.

The pertinency of Isle's approach is confirmed, further, by reference to James's comments on The Sacred Fount itself. In a letter to William Dean Howells (August, 1900) James writes: "I have just finished . . . a fine flight . . . into the higher fantastic . . .".[23] And in a letter to Mrs. Humphry Ward he describes the novel as a "small fantasticality . . . a consistent joke".[24] This description, not surprisingly, is consistent with James's statement regarding The American: "The art of the romancer is, 'for the fun of it,' insidiously to cut the cable, to cut it without our detecting him".[25]

An examination now of the text itself will illustrate more fully how the particular first-person stance adopted by James effects the essentially ambiguous nature of the work. The discussion will reveal, further, that the form is identical with neither the authorial position apparent in The End of the Affair nor the figural stance in Billy Liar. It will become clear, however, that the applicability of Stanzel's scheme is not jeopardized even in such a unique narrative situation as this. In fact, an analysis of The Sacred Fount in terms of the authorial and figural characteristics of its narrative situation contributes to an understanding of the novel's complexity.

[23]See Norton edition of The Turn of the Screw, p. 116.

[24]Edel, Introduction to The Sacred Fount, p. 14.

[25]James, Art, p. 34.

Time: Chronology

In terms of the time scheme and the elapsed time of the narrated events, The Sacred Fount conforms to Stanzel's figural first-person type. The events take place over the course of two days, from an undefined time on the morning of the first day to some time after midnight on the second. The sequence is linear: as in Billy Liar, each of the fourteen chapters deals with one short episode or (unlike Billy Liar) period of internal rumination. Time orientation in The Sacred Fount is also similar to that of Billy Liar in that no reference is given to the year in which the events occurred.[26] The season, however, is made clear in: "The picture without was all morning and August"[27] and "The day, as it developed, was large and hot, an unstinted splendour of summer" (pp. 72-73). References to the time of day are the most frequent time adjustments although, in absolute terms, these are few. Some are rather vague: "I did on the morrow several things, but the first was not to redeem that vow. It was to address myself straight to Grace Brissenden" (p. 36). Other references are precise: "What was most evident to me by five o'clock in the afternoon was that I was too preoccupied not to

[26] One assumes, in such cases, that the year in which the action takes place is coincident with the year in which the work is published. Certain other works, by contrast, require explicit time references for purposes of setting: the affair in The End of the Affair rather ominously coincides with World War II.

[27] Henry James, The Sacred Fount (1901; rpt. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1959), p. 39. All further references to the text are taken from this edition.

find it the best wisdom to accept my mood" (p. 74). The only interruption of the figural-type time orientations consists of occasional references to the elapsed time of narration: "The time she took to meet my last remark is naturally not represented by this prolonged glance of mine at the moment of suggestion that just then happened to reach me from the other quarter" (p. 131).

Time: Narrative Distance

The authorial quality suggested in this last remark of the narrator's acquires more force with respect to narrative distance. It is at this point that the unusual confusion of authorial and figural characteristics begins to effect the narrative ambiguity. The figural quality is apparent in the sense that distance between the narrating self and the experiencing self is never made explicit and is assumed to be minimal since the narrative persona has a natural affinity to his experiencing self. This affinity is illustrated in:

> I don't know why - it was a sense instinctive and unreasoned, but I felt from the first that if I was on the scent of something ultimate I had better waste neither my wonder nor my wisdom. I was on the scent - that I was sure of; and yet even after I was sure I should still have been at a loss to put my enigma itself into words. (p. 30)

This proximity between the two selves is explained, at least partially, by the fact that the narrator is an older (rather than younger) man at the time of the experience. This condition, however, also allows for the intensely interpretative nature of the experiencing self's rendering. Although some commentary is

provided from the perspective of the narrating self ("I am afraid I must frankly confess that I called deception to my aid", p. 46) by far the majority of interpretation is provided from the time frame of the action. The prevailing narrative perspective, then, is that of the experiencing self; the figural nature of this situation is qualified, however, by the authorial approach of this experiencing self. This situation is distinguishable both from that of The End of the Affair in which a distanced Maurice comments on his younger self and from that of Billy Liar in which comparatively little interpretation is offered; we are presented, in Billy Liar, primarily with an "acting" versus a "thinking" narrator. A more detailed isolation of the figural and authorial elements involved in narrative distance will illuminate the delicate interplay operating in the novel.

The minimization of the narrative persona in The Sacred Fount is evident in several ways. The conditions of the narrator's epic situation are unknowable; the fact of the epic situation is merely suggested in such statements as: "This odd feeling was something that I may as well say I shall not even now attempt to account for . . ." (pp. 75-76).and "I left [Mrs. Server] behind me for ever, but the prayer has not been answered. I did see her again; I see her now; I shall see her always . . ." (p. 140). His motivation for reconstructing the story is similarly only inferable; his expressed obsession for observation and the formulation of psychological theories together with an indication that he has

discussed the "events" with Ford Obert since the time of their occurrence provide the only rationale for telling the story. And, finally, reference to the gap between the time of narration and the time of action is merely implicit: ". . . my memory associates with the rest of the long afternoon many renewals of acquaintance and much sitting and strolling . . ." (p. 24). It is when one attempts to examine the narrative distance by isolating perceptions of the narrating self from those of the experiencing self that the pure figural quality of the presentation breaks down. What is merely hinted at in depicting the narrative persona in the process of creating becomes extremely explicit in the created product. The bulk of the presentation (excluding for the moment dialogue) consists of authorial-type interpretation. The purity of the authorial quality is also, however, modified by the salience of the figure's perceptions. In the following passage, the commentary begins from the point of view of the narrating self but soon merges with that of the experiencing self:

> Singular perhaps that only then - yet quite certainly then - the curiosity to which I had so freely surrendered myself began to strike me as wanting in taste. It was reflected in Mrs. Brissenden quite by my fault, and I can't say just what cause for shame, after so much talk of our search and our scent, I found in our awakened and confirmed keenness. Why in the world hadn't I found it before? (p. 44)

Here, then, we are being presented, by the narrating self, with a perception which was quite clearly within the consciousness of his experiencing self. Similarly, in the following passage, one gets the speculations of the narrating self simultaneous with

those of the experiencing self. The two, in fact, are virtually interchangeable:

> I made the effort, facing my sharp interlocutor; and I think it was at this point that I fully measured my dismay. I had grown - that was what was the matter with me - precipitately, preposterously anxious. Instead of dropping, the discomfort produced in me by Mrs. Brissenden had deepened to agitation, and this in spite of the fact that in the brief interval nothing worse, nothing but what was right, had happened. Had I myself suddenly fallen so much in love with Mrs. Server that the care for her reputation had become with me an obsession? It was of no use saying I simply pitied her: what did I pity her for if she wasn't in danger? She was in danger: that rushed over me at present - rushed over me while I tried to look easy and delayed to answer my friend. (p. 54)

The clue, of course, as to which persona is operating at any given point resides in the respective tenses used. In this passage, one assumes the narrating persona to be represented in the past perfect, the experiencing persona in the simple past. The affinity between the two selves is even more apparent, however, in passages such as the following in which the experiencing self assumes the tense function elsewhere used by the narrating self:

> He fixed me a moment with his pathetic old face, and I knew more than ever that I was sorry for him. I was quite extraordinarily sorry, and I wondered whether I mightn't without offence or indiscretion really let him see it. It was to this end I had held him [a few minutes earlier] and wanted a little to keep him, and I was reassured as I felt him, though I had now released him, linger instead of leaving me. I had made him uneasy last night, and a new reason or two for my doing so had possibly even since then come up; yet these things also would depend on the way he might take them. (p. 84)

It is clear, then, that even in passages in which the preterite voice of the narrating self is evoked, the illusion of presentness

is sustained through the mental proximity of the two personae.

The question of the narrator's ability to recall accurately the events of the two days further bears on the interplay of figural and authorial characteristics. Unlike Maurice Bendrix, the narrator of The Sacred Fount provides no explicit credentials for accurate reconstruction: they are implicit only in his artistic obsession with detailed observation and mental notation. He does, however, make overt attempts to remind the reader of his efforts: "I shall never forget the impressions of that evening, nor the way, in particular, the immediate effect of some of them was to merge with the light of my extravagant perceptions in a glamour much more diffused. I remember feeling seriously warned . . ." (p. 114). Again, however, this authorial element is modified in passages such as the following in which the perfect memory of the figure is invoked: "It at all events duly came out between us that Mrs. Server was the person I did have on my mind; and I remember that it had seemed to me at the end of a minute to matter comparatively little by which of us, after all, she was first designated" (p. 131). It is true that in a more strictly authorial situation such as The End of the Affair, the narrator slips into perfect memory in detailed scenic passages (particularly in dialogue). In general, however, the authorial stance is less conducive to the authentic recall of sustained internal thought processes or even momentary impressions. For this reason, Maurice's inclusion of the descriptive passage beginning "The gulls flew

low over the barges and the shot-tower stood black in the winter light among the ruined warehouses"[28] lacks credibility. In The Sacred Fount the focus on the recall of subjective impressions rather than external, objective events must be accomplished by a salient experiencing consciousness. That this condition is satisfied is illustrated by the ease with which the narrator slips into an impressionistic description of the garden in which he meets May Server:

> My few steps brought me to a spot where another perspective crossed our own, so that they made together a verdurous circle with an evening sky above and great lengthening, arching recesses in which the twilight thickened. Oh, it was quite sufficiently the castle of enchantment, and when I noticed four old stone seats, massive and mossy and symmetrically placed, I recognised not only the influence, in my adventure, of the grand style, but the familiar identity of this consecrated nook, which was so much of the type of all the bemused and remembered. We were in a beautiful old picture, we were in a beautiful old tale, and it wouldn't be the fault of Newmarch if some other green carrefour, not far off, didn't balance with this one and offer the alternative of niches, in the greenness, occupied by weather-stained statues on florid pedestals. (p. 98)

This unique combination of figural and authorial characteristics with respect to recall can be seen as being consistent with what one has come to expect of James. The authorial elements remind us of his desire for creating a narrator who is intrusive enough to indicate a conscious, intelligent medium;[29] the figural elements

[28] Greene, The End of the Affair, p. 66. See Chapter III, p. 107, for my discussion of this passage.

[29] James, for example, justifies authorial mediation at the point at which Strether first meets Chad in The Ambassadors (see my discussion of this point in Chapter I, pp. 10-11).

represent his simultaneous concern for demonstrating a consciousness in the process of receiving impressions.[30] One might infer, in short, that James would reject the simple posteriority of Maurice Bendrix's account as well as the bald record of objective action apparent in Billy Fisher's reconstruction.

Authenticity

Although first-person narration is inherently authentic by virtue of the fact that the narrator has first-hand knowledge of the events recalled, we have seen that the authorial type allows for direct reinforcement of the illusion. The figural type operates on the assumption that the authenticity of the story be accepted outright. The Sacred Fount again falls between these two extremes. The narrator occasionally points to his conscious attempts to present a comprehensive picture for the imaginary reader: "If I seem to falsify my generalization by acknowledging that her husband, on the same side, made no more public profession of joy than usual, I am still justified by the fact that there was something in a manner decorative even in Brissenden's wonted gloom" (p. 115). Such efforts are, however, far less frequent and less obtrusive than those of Maurice Bendrix: "Now that I come to write my own story the problem is still the same, but worse - there are so many more facts, now that I have not to

[30] In his Preface to The Ambassadors, James says, for example: ". . . Strether's sense of these [occurrences] and Strether's only, should avail me for showing them; I should know them but through his more or less groping knowledge of them, since his very gropings would figure among his most interesting motions . . ." (Art, pp. 317-318).

invent them".[31]

The narrator in The Sacred Fount comes even closer to the figural stance with respect to the provision of details about himself. Indeed, the nameless narrator in this case is perhaps even less imaginable than is Billy Fisher. The only hints we are given regarding his physical appearance must be deduced from veiled references to his age:

> The wonderful reason was that I was not a much older man; Guy Brissenden, at any rate, was not a much younger. It was he who was old - it was he who was older - it was he who was oldest. That was so disconcertingly what he had become. It was in short what he would have been had he been as old as he looked. He looked . . . quite sixty. (p. 29)

Similarly, the narrator's avuncular mannerisms in relation to those he pities aid but slightly in constructing a mental picture of him:

> This personage, under that deeper induction, I suddenly became aware that I also greatly pitied - pitied almost as much as I pitied Mrs. Server; and my pity had doubtless something to do with the fact that, after I had proposed to him that we should adjourn together and we had, on his prompt, even though slightly dry response, placed the invidious arbour at a certain distance, I passed my hand into his arm. (p. 83)

With regard to the authenticity of the narrator's style, we are given no explicit rationale for his eloquence yet we are not required (as we are in Billy Liar) to assume that the narrator, by the time of narration, has acquired a good deal of polish. The authenticity of the narrator's style derives, again, from

[31]Greene, p. 25.

the fact that his experiencing self possesses all the attributes of the typically older and wiser narrating self. Since this experiencing self is clearly highly imaginative, verbally precocious and (overly-) skilled in the art of observation, the credibility' of his style is not at all questionable.

There remains one important distinction to be made between the style of The Sacred Fount and The End of the Affair and Billy Liar respectively. Although Greene's novel deals with the illusion question directly and Billy Liar does not, both novels uphold authenticity by varying stylistically the renderings of various characters. In The Sacred Fount all the characters sustain the peculiarities of expression characteristic of the narrator. Since she is the most important character other than the narrator, Mrs. Brissenden serves as an example:

> "It profits most. It takes and keeps and uses all the lips give. The cheek, accordingly ! ! ! is Mr. Long's. The lips are what we began by looking for. We've found them. They're drained - they're dry, the lips. Mr. Long finds his improvement natural and beautiful. He revels in it. He takes it for granted. He's sublime." (pp. 66-67)

This stylistic consistency, however, serves to bolster the illusion that all is being rendered subjectively and to reinforce the narrator's early acknowledgement that he is giving but "the general effect" of this "sequence of impressions" (p. 24).

Reliability

It is by now quite clear that first-person novels present an immediate challenge to the reader in terms of assessing the

reliability of the account. This is so because virtually all the material is rendered from the narrator's point of view. Although the posteriority of the narrating self in the authorial type does not guarantee objectivity, it implies the possibility of detachment. Although Maurice Bendrix has not gained complete self-knowledge by the time he comes to write The End of the Affair, he has acquired enough to say: "Even in the moment of love, I was like a police officer gathering evidence of a crime that hadn't yet been committed".[32] The inclusion of Sarah's diary obviously contributes further to the reader's ability to evaluate Maurice. In the figural novel, words and actions of all the characters (including the narrator) assume a similar function; we add, for example, Arthur's description of Billy as a "pathological bloody liar"[33] to our composite assessment of Billy. And although one might not readily agree with Arthur in this case, one is able to construct, in turn, a reasonable assessment of his reliability. This continuous adjustment of evidence until one arrives at an even tentative notion of character reliability is, quite simply, an impossibility in The Sacred Fount. James here seems to be playing out the inherent ambiguity of the first-person form to its fullest. No one character in the novel is given sufficient reliability to qualify as the centre of authority. This is not to say that The Sacred Fount does not abound with traditional

[32]Greene, p. 50.

[33]Waterhouse, Billy Liar, p. 43.

"clues": the clues, however, continuously cancel each other out. If we begin, for example, with the narrator's comments about himself, we discover that he vacillates - even to the last - between self-recrimination and self-adulation. To confuse this picture, we find that comments about the narrator by other characters at times support his perceptions, at times contradict. The confusion is increased even further by the fact that a substantial proportion of the presentation is rendered subjectively: the actions and words of all the characters are heavily coloured by the narrator's impressionistic account. Thus, we travel full circle back to the question of the narrator's reliability and this, indeed, is what constitutes the meaning of the whole. In short, we can never be sure whether the narrator is simply a fool, a clever but tactless detective, a sensitive and compassionate human being, or a worthy observer-artist.

In terms of reliability, then, the confusion of authorial and figural characteristics is sustained. The narrative is figural in the sense that the narrating self is too close to the experiencing self to offer substantially distanced clues. It is authorial, however, in the sense that commentary predominates. The subjectivity of the <u>experiencing</u> self limits the extent to which other devices (typical of the figural situation) can serve as clues. External action becomes almost entirely a matter of speculation on the part of the narrator; even dialogue often turns out to be his <u>impression</u> of what is usually rendered objectively. Having thus

rejected the possibility of reaching any conclusions regarding narrator reliability in The Sacred Fount, one can only demonstrate how internal devices which ordinarily provide clues continuously counteract one another.

A look, first, at the narrator's self-comments will illustrate the problem. With regard to his theory of psychologic relations, he says:

> I was just conscious, vaguely, of being on the track of a law, a law that would fit, that would strike me as governing the delicate phenomena - delicate though so marked - that my imagination found itself playing with. A part of the amusement they yielded came, I daresay, from my exaggerating them - grouping them into a larger mystery (and thereby a larger "law") than the facts, as observed, yet warranted. (p. 30)

He later qualifies the validity of such theoretical speculations:

> These opposed couples balanced like bronze groups at the two ends of a chimney-piece, and the most I could say to myself in lucid deprecation of my thought was that I mustn't take them equally for granted merely because they balanced. Things in the real had a way of not balancing; it was all an affair, this fine symmetry, of artificial proportion. (p. 130)

He at times asserts his "transcendent intelligence":

> Mrs. Brissenden asked me if I then regarded Gilbert Long as now exalted to the position of the most brilliant of our companions. "The cleverest man of the party?" - it pulled me up a little. "Hardly that, perhaps - for don't you see the proofs I'm myself giving you?" (p. 39)

His fine perception is at other times, however, rendered suspect: "If I had known nothing about them I should have just unimaginatively said that talk was all on one side and attention all on the other; I of course, for that matter, did know nothing about them . . ." (p. 140).

With respect to the ethics of his detective work he vacillates between:

> . . . I asked myself rather ruefully what on earth I had been thinking of. I hadn't in the least had it in mind to "compromise" an individual; but an individual would be compromised if I didn't now take care. (p. 45)

and:

> It appeared then that the more things I fitted together the larger sense, every way, they made - a remark in which I found an extraordinary elation. It justified my indiscreet curiosity; it crowned my underhand process with beauty. (p. 96)

He similarly wavers between a desire to protect May Server and Guy Brissenden and a desire to substantiate his theory:

> That was Mrs. Server's tragedy, that her consciousness survived - survived with a force that made it struggle and dissemble. This consciousness was all her secret - it was at any rate all mine. I promised myself roundly that I would henceforth keep clear of any other. (p. 101)

> . . . I wasn't there to save <u>them</u>. I was there to save my priceless pearl of an inquiry and to harden, to that end, my heart. (p. 203)

And, finally, the question as to whether the narrator's theory - and his integrity - remain intact throughout the anecdote is rendered unsolvable by the following contradictory passages:

> I <u>should</u> certainly never again, on the spot, quite hang together, even though it wasn't really that I hadn't three times her method. What I too fatally lacked was her tone. (p. 219)

> I left [Mrs. Server] behind me for ever, but the prayer has not been answered. I did see her again; I see her now; I shall see her always; I shall continue to feel at moments in my own facial muscles the deadly little ache of her heroic grin. (p. 140) [34]

[34] James Reaney points to this passage as being evidence that the narrator, at the time of narration, retains faith both in his theory and in the compassion he brought to bear on the victims. Although this may be a valid argument, it does not point conclusively to how the reader is to view the narrator's conduct.

Comments by other characters regarding the narrator's theory similarly fall into two categories. In support of his reliability, it is important to note that the "facts" of certain relationships are first suggested to the narrator by Gilbert Long and Grace Brissenden. At Paddington Station, Long says of Grace:

> "She looks so well - and somehow so 'fine' . . . . she has been married so little and so stupidly. It must be desperately dull to be married to poor Briss. His comparative youth doesn't, after all, make more of him. He's nothing but what he is. Her clock has simply stopped. She looks no older - that's all . . . That's the awfulness, don't you see? of the married state." (p. 20)

Grace embellishes the "germ" of the theory by pointing out Long's acquisition of "a mind and a tongue" (p. 22). She attributes this to his relationship with Lady John and reveals a knowledge of the game of appearances:

> "It's a thing that from time to time such people - don't you know? - make a particular point of: they cultivate, to cover their game, the appearance of other little friendships. It puts outsiders off the scent, and the real thing meanwhile goes on. Besides, you yourself acknowledge the effect. If she hasn't made him clever, what has she made him? She has given him, steadily, more and more intellect." (p. 23)

Mrs. Brissenden later decides that it is May Server, not Lady John, who is Gilbert's sacred fount. Ironically, the narrator has, at this point, to be convinced of this match and, again ironically, Ford Obert helps to persuade him: "[May's] as charming as she possibly can [be] . . . she's different from herself - as she was when I painted her. There's something the matter with her" (pp. 54-55). Even further support for May's complicity in a

relationship comes from Guy Brissenden: "She has something to hide . . . What she tries for is this false appearance of happiness" (p. 92). At this point, Guy's empathy with May's state quite naturally reflects on his own similar condition: "I do - 'for' her - help to keep it up . . . I want to - I try to; that's what I mean by being kind to her, and by the gratitude with which she takes it. One feels that one doesn't want her to break down" (p. 92). Obert later reinforces the probability of the affinity between May and Guy: "I've arrived at [a sense of] her vision . . . The instinct of sympathy, pity - the response to fellowship in misery; the sight of another fate as strange, as monstrous as her own" (p. 157). And Mrs. Brissenden, in direct contradiction of her statements in the last three chapters, says at one point: "If Lady John's out of the question, how can Mrs. Server possibly not be in it? We want a fool . . . exactly by your own theory, in which you've so much interested me! It was you who struck off the idea" (p. 61).

There exists an equal amount of evidence, on the other hand, for questioning the narrator's perceptive faculty and, hence, his theory. Lady John accuses him of having "the imagination of atrocity" (p. 124) and goes on to say: ". . . give up, for a quiet life, the attempt to be a providence. You can't be a providence and not be a bore. A real providence knows; whereas you . . . have to find out . . ." (p. 126). His reliability is undermined even more effectively in his final confrontation with

Mrs. Brissenden in which she says, among other things, "I think you're crazy" (p. 192). His response to this is particularly incriminating: "I remember just wondering if perhaps I mightn't be" (p. 192).

At this point the question of the reliability of characters other than the narrator adds another dimension to the puzzle. Ford Obert reveals himself to be at least as suspect as the narrator with regard to theoretical obsessions:

> "[Such an inquiry] . . . is made not only quite inoffensive . . . but positively honourable, by being confined to psychologic evidence. . . . Resting on the kind of signs that the game takes account of when fairly played - resting on psychologic signs alone, it's a high application of intelligence. What's ignoble is the detective and the keyhole." (p. 57)

The narrator succeeds in qualifying one's interpretation of Mrs. Brissenden's change of heart in the final scene in:

> "I see what I see, and this morning, for a good bit, you did me the honour to do the same. I returned, also, the compliment, didn't I? by seeing something of what you saw. We put it, the whole thing, together, and we shook the bottle hard." (pp. 180-181)

and:

> "If I'm crazy, I must once more remind you, you were simply crazy with me; and how can I therefore be indifferent to your recovery of your wit or let you go without having won from you the secret of your remedy?" (p. 194)

One also suspects Mrs. Brissenden of lying throughout the whole of this scene when she admits to having done so up to a point:

> "You've worried me for my motive and harassed me for my 'moment,' and I've had to protect others and, at the cost of a decent appearance, to pretend to be myself half an idiot. I've had even, for the same

> purpose - if you must have it - to depart from the truth; to give you, that is, a false account of the manner of my escape from your tangle. But now the truth shall be told, and others can take care of themselves!" (p. 208)

And, finally, Mrs. Brissenden's trump card - her husband's claim that it is Lady John and Gilbert Long who are, after all, lovers - is seriously undermined by her statement: "He's peculiar, dear old Briss, but in a way by which, if one uses him - by which, I mean, if one depends on him - at all, one gains, I think, more than one loses" (p. 213).

This, then, is the extent of the objective clues one has to work with. The complexity of the reliability question is increased still further by the narrator's unconscious provision of information about himself. The opening paragraph, for example, suggests a narrator who is at once a meticulous observer and interpreter of human behaviour and a social cynic:

> It was an occasion, I felt - the prospect of a large party - to look out at the station for others, possible friends and even possible enemies, who might be going. Such premonitions, it was true, bred fears when they failed to breed hopes, though it was to be added that there were sometimes, in the case, rather happy ambiguities. One was glowered at, in the compartment, by people who on the morrow, after breakfast, were to prove charming; one was spoken to first by people whose sociability was subsequently to show as bleak; and one built with confidence on others who were never to reappear at all . . . I so little expected [Gilbert Long] to recognize me that I stopped short of the carriage near which he stood - I looked for a seat that wouldn't make us neighbours. (p. 17)

The credibility of his powers as an observer is qualified later in this exchange with Obert:

> I reflected. "Mrs. Server? Does Mrs. Server make love?"

> "It seemed to me," my friend replied, "that she began on it to <u>you</u> as soon as she got hold of you. Weren't you aware?"
>
> I debated afresh; I didn't know that I had been. (p. 27)

The narrator's considerable sense of superiority similarly precludes the possibility of an unbiased account:

> Newmarch had always, in our time, carried itself as the great asylum of the finer wit, more or less expressly giving out that, as invoking hospitality or other countenance, none of the stupid, none even of the votaries of the grossly obvious, need apply; but I could luckily at present reflect that its measurements in this direction had not always been my own, and that, moreover, whatever precision they possessed, human blandness, even in such happy halls, had not been quite abolished. There was a sound law in virtue of which one could always - alike in privileged and unprivileged circles - rest more on people's density than on their penetrability. (pp. 77-78)

And, finally, the dominance of his imaginative faculty reflects on his reconstruction of all the proceedings at Newmarch. To Obert's visual recollection of the parade of the ladies bedward, the narrator replies: "I wish I had seen it. But I do see it. Yes - splendid" (p. 144).

The final area of reliability in which ambiguity is manifested as the prevailing feature is that of the mode of presentation. It is at this point that James's own distinction between realistic and romantic is most illuminating. To call again upon his Preface to <u>The American</u>, we can see the attraction of the romantic for James in the challenge which it presents to the conscious craftsman:

> There is our general sense of the way things happen - it abides with us indefeasibly, as readers of fiction, from the moment we demand that our fiction shall be intelligible; and there is our particular sense of the way they don't happen, which is liable to wake up unless reflexion and criticism, in us, have been skilfully and

> successfully drugged. There are drugs enough, clearly - it is all a question of applying them with tact; in which case the way things don't happen may be artfully made to pass for the way things do. 35

Now although the narrator of The Sacred Fount is careful to emphasize that his anecdote is based on a particular perception of reality for the sake of a theory, his presentation in fact acts as a drug: it invites us to believe that what he is reconstructing is objectively perceivable. One can isolate, however, certain peculiarities in the rendering which counteract the effect; and it is these which underline the romantic nature of the spectacle before us. One such clue is the symbolic use of the Mask of Life-Mask of Death painting. This picture is suggestive not only of the sacred fount theme but also of the impossibility of definitive interpretation of human behaviour. It is the use of this interlude as a symbol which is, for our purposes, most important; and what marks it as a symbol is the narrator's abrupt disruption of the narrative flow in order to provide the reader with the necessary information:

> The figure represented is a young man in black - a quaint, tight black dress, fashioned in years long past; with a pale, lean, livid face and a stare, from eyes without eyebrows, like that of some whitened old-world clown. In his hand he holds an object that strikes the spectator at first simply as some obscure, some ambiguous work of art, but that on a second view becomes a representation of a human face, modelled and coloured, in wax, in enamelled metal, in some substance not human. The object thus appears a complete mask,

35 James, Art, p. 34.

> such as might have been fantastically fitted and worn. (pp. 50-51)

At this point the narrative resumes the scenic form and the significance of the symbol is provided in dramatic terms. After the narrator refers to the painting as "the picture, of all pictures, that most needs an interpreter" (p. 50), each of the characters present proceeds to offer his own opinion. While the narrator sees the artificial face as the Mask of Life, Mrs. Server sees it as the Mask of Death. The "beauty" of the mask reminds the narrator, Long, and Obert of Mrs. Server; she herself sees in it only a grimace. Thus, although the narrator's perception is here supported by that of Long and Obert, the subjective nature of interpretation of human "masks" is reinforced; and it is the narrator, throughout the scene, who controls the interpretation.

Another way in which the romantic nature of the "story" is suggested can be seen in the narrator's frequent analogies between his theory and the art of composition. The narrator's statement regarding Mrs. Server: "still the controlling image for me, the real principle of composition, in this affluence of fine things" (p. 121) calls to mind James's creative gropings in his Notebooks. In his notes for "The 'K.B.' Case",[36] for example, he says:

> I make out a number of [people] there now, and I see by their means my situation constitute and foreshadow'

[36] Otherwise referred to in The Notebooks as "Mrs. Max", "The 'K.B.' Case" as such was never finished although some of its characters were used in "The Ivory Tower".

> itself. I see in other words my Exposition made perfect - see the thing as almost the Prologue, after the manner in which the first Book is the Prologue in "The Other House". Oh, blest "Other House", which gives me thus at every step a precedent, a support, a divine little light to walk by . . . It only looms, it only shines and shimmers, too beautiful and too interesting; it only hangs there too rich and too full and with too much to give and to pay; it only presents itself too too admirably and too vividly, too straight and square and vivid, as a little organic and effective Action. 37

In an exchange with Obert, the narrator invokes a similar analogy:

> He relaxed, he responded, and the next moment I was in all but full enjoyment of the piece wanted to make all my other pieces right - right because of that special beauty in my scheme through which the whole depended so on each part and each part so guaranteed the whole. (pp. 156-157)

This is reminiscent of James's statements regarding the technical virtues of drama in his Preface to The Awkward Age:

> The play consents to the logic of but one way, mathematically right, and with the loose end as gross an impertinence on its surface, and as grave a dishonour, as the dangle of a snippet of silk or wool on the right side of a tapestry. We are shut up wholly to cross-relations, relations all within the action itself; no part of which is related to anything but some other part - save of course by the relation of the total to life. 38

The relation of the sacred fount theory to life is, of course, still a question but it is impossible to say that the theory may not in fact be realistically plausible. What is knowable is only that we are receiving a view of life "suspected".

The final area in which the romantic mode is invoked involves the manner in which the narrator provides the details of the story.

37 James, Notebooks, p. 348.

38 James, Art, p. 114.

The quality of his presentation is perhaps best expressed in this statement:

> These remarks - of which I give rather the sense than the form, for they were a little scattered and troubled, and I helped them out and pieced them together - these remarks had for me, I was to find, unexpected suggestions, not all of which was I prepared on the spot to take up. (p. 47)

Similarly, his description of the meeting between Lady John and Guy Brissenden consists solely of internal surmise:

> That he bored her to death I might have gathered by the way they sat there, and she could trust me to believe - couldn't she? - that she was only musing as to how she might most humanely get rid of him. She would lead him safely back to the fold if I would give her time. She seemed to ask it all, oddly, of me, to take me remarkably into her confidence, to refer me, for a specimen of his behaviour, to his signal abandonment of his wife the day before, his having waited over, to come down, for the train in which poor she was to travel. It was at all events, I felt, one of the consequences of having caught on to so much that I by this time found myself catching on to everything. I read into Lady John's wonderful manner - which quite clamoured, moreover, for an interpretation - all that was implied in the lesson I had extracted from other portions of the business. (p. 80)

The narrator even goes so far as to attribute to Mrs. Brissenden's back the ability to convey the words: "I am young - I am and I will be; see, see if I'm not; there, there, there!" (p. 138).

The narrator's propensity to speak for others is paralleled by his ability to portray personalities figuratively. Lady John was "like a hat - with one of Mrs. Briss's hat-pins - askew on the bust of Virgil. Her ornamental information - as strong as a coat of furniture-polish - almost knocked you down"((p.226). May Server reminds him "of a sponge wrung dry and with fine pores

agape. Voided and scraped of everything, her shell was merely crushable" (p. 101). So much, in fact, derives from the narrator's imaginative perception that his description of his final meeting with Mrs. Brissenden may be applied to the whole of the story:

> It could not but be exciting to talk, as we talked, on the basis of those suppressed processes and unavowed references which made the meaning of our meeting so different from its form. We knew ourselves - what moved me, that is, was that she knew me - to mean, at every point, immensely more than I said or than she answered; just as she saw me, at the same points, measure the space by which her answers fell short. This made my conversation with her a totally other and a far more interesting thing than any colloquy I had ever enjoyed.. . . (p. 188)

We return, thus, to the narrator's joyful obsession with "determining, almost . . . creating results" (p. 151) which is necessarily based on a desire not to know all the facts. That it is Mrs. Brissenden's tone rather than her method which deflates him, in the end, points to the romantic nature of his game. The romancer simply has no concern for the vulgar truth: "If I had a material clue I should feel ashamed: the fact would be a deterrent" (p. 57).

Dramatization

The final area in which Stanzel's two narrative types appear to be operating simultaneously can be examined with reference again to Lubbock's terminology. We have seen that Maurice Bendrix's frequent use of panoramic presentation creates the illusion of a mediation process quite distinct from the fictional material. Even in passages of dialogue - potentially the most dramatic means of presentation - Maurice's interpretative comments reinforce the

sense of an authorial presence. Billy Fisher's account, on the other hand, diminishes the mediation effect by virtually eliminating panoramic rendering and focusing on scenic. The Sacred Fount simulates the condition of Billy Liar in its lack of generalized commentary; the furthest remove from the time of action consists in the narrator's few remarks on the quality of the social life at places such as Newmarch:

> . . . while I leaned for refreshment on the sill I thought of many things. One of those that passed before me was the way that Newmarch and its hospitalities were sacrificed, after all, and much more than smaller circles, to material frustrations. We were all so fine and formal, and the ladies in particular at once so little and so much clothed, so beflounced yet so denuded, that the summer stars called to us in vain. We had ignored them in our crystal cage, among our tinkling lamps; no more free really to alight than if we had been dashing in a locked railway-train across a lovely land. (pp. 141-142)

Yet the authorial quality of The End of the Affair is also simulated in the constant interpretation imposed on dialogue:

> [Mrs. Brissenden] was all logic now, and I could easily see, between my light and my darkness, how she would remain so. Yet I was scarce satisfied. "And it's only on 'that effect' -?"
>
> "That I've made up my mind?" She was positively free at last to enjoy my discomfort. "Wouldn't it be surely, if your ideas were worth anything, enough? But it isn't," she added, "only on that. It's on something else."
>
> I had after an instant extracted from this the single meaning it could appear to yield. "I'm to understand that you know?"
>
> "That they're intimate enough for anything?" She faltered, but she brought it out. "I know." (pp. 209-210)

Since the majority of the narrator's presentation is pictorial, however, it is here that one must look for the most sustained confusion of authorial and figural characteristics. Pictorial

rendering, in Lubbock's terms, represents a median between the panoramic and dramatic modes. This is so because the description of a particular event involves the presence of the narrative persona yet that description is rooted in the perspective of the scene (that is, the time of the action). Maurice Bendrix's pictorial rendering tends to emphasize the narrating medium since it involves a description of objective, perceivable events:

> There was no pursuit and no seduction. We left half the good steak on our plates and a third of the bottle of claret and came out into Maiden Lane with the same intention in both our minds. At exactly the same spot as before, by the doorway and the grill, we kissed. I said, 'I'm in love.' 39

Billy Fisher's pictorial rendering, on the other hand, emphasizes the perspective of the experiencing self to an extreme. His descriptions of events are interspersed with imaginary actions borrowed from his fantasy world:

> I was just drawing breath for the second run when Shadrack, who had undoubtedly been listening for the past ten minutes, came into the office through the door that led down to the lavatory. I stuck a finger in my throat and began going 'Ar! Ar! Arrgh! Sharrgh!' trying to falsify his memory of what he had heard. My first real thought was one of relief that I had not been going through his desk; my second was to turn on him the Ambrosian repeater gun, rather like a machine-gun, which I kept permanently manned for such occasions as this. 40

By contrast, the narrator of The Sacred Fount provides neither an objective picture of external action nor a description which is

[39]Greene, p. 44.

[40]Waterhouse, pp. 68-69.

solely the product of his own imaginings. He gives, rather, an interpretation of action which is neither refutable nor irrefutable. In the following passage, for example, the reader has no reason to either believe or disbelieve the thoughts attributed to May Server:

> . . . she was convulsed, in the extravagance always so pretty as to be pardonable, with laughter, and she even looked over at us as if to intimate with her shining, lingering eyes that we wouldn't be surprised at her transports if we suspected what her entertainer, whom she had never known for such a humourist, was saying. (p. 53)

Similarly, while the narrator is with Obert in the smoking room, the entrance of Guy Brissenden is a source of fertile speculation:

> The door of the room, to which my back was turned, had opened, and I quickly looked round. It was Brissenden himself who, to my supreme surprise, stood there, with rapid inquiry in his attitude and face. I saw, as soon as he caught mine, that I was what he wanted, and immediately excusing myself for an instant to Obert, I anticipated, by moving across the room, the need, on poor Briss's part, of my further demonstration. . . . he had never been so much poor Briss as at this moment. . . . his particular aspect was something of a shock. I can't present this especial impression better than by the mention of my instant certitude that what he had come for was to bring me a message and that somehow - yes, indubitably - this circumstance seemed to have placed him again at the very bottom of his hole. (pp. 157-158)

In such instances, the question of appearance versus reality is brought to the fore: the reader is challenged to accept the validity of the narrator's report which is based on mere appearance. That the labelling of action as fact or fancy is an impossibility underlines the fact that the story material eludes explication in conventional terms.

The peculiar nature of this pictorial rendering is at its most intense in passages which come close to a form of interior monologue. The whole of Chapter VI, in fact, consists of the narrator's internal rendering of what is typically presented as perceivable action. In the following situation, one knows with certainty only that the narrator has come upon Lady John and Guy Brissenden together in the arbour. The content of this meeting is purely surmise:

> She broke out in a manner that could only have had for its purpose to represent to me that mere weak amiability had committed her to such a predicament. . . . He said as little as possible, seemed heedless of what was otherwise said, and only gave me on his own account a look or two of dim suggestiveness. Yet it was these looks that most told with me, and what they, for their part, conveyed was a plea that directly contradicted Lady John's. I understood him that it was he who was bored, he who had been pursued, he for whom perversity had become a dreadful menace, he, in fine, who pleaded for my intervention. (pp. 80-81)

Although the predominance of such elaborate commentary is immediately suggestive of the authorial narrator, the impression that the narrator is internally speculating at the time of the occurrence reinforces the presentness of the scene.[41]

Whatever the merits of The Sacred Fount are from a thematic point of view, it is clear that James's scrupulous use of the

[41] Walter Isle supports this interpretation of James's use of pictorial rendering. He says: "Although he is recounting the story from a later time, the narrator seldom breaks the illusion of the present and tells more than he knows at a particular moment . . ." (p. 218).

first-person form succeeded in making the work a technical masterpiece. That James saw it as being at least technically pure is suggested in his remark to Mrs. Humphry Ward: "Let me say for it . . . that it has, I assure you, and applied quite rigorously and constructively, I believe, its own little law of composition".[42] Although his remarks regarding the disadvantages of the first-person form indicate that The Sacred Fount and The Turn of the Screw were little more than romantic flirtations for James, the fact that the form "worked" - even in his own estimation - cannot be denied.

[42]Edel, p. 14.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion represents an attempt to compare a selection of modern works of fiction along a single dimension. The adoption of the particular framework used arose from a desire to approach different works comprehensively enough to allow for a degree of generalization and specifically enough to accommodate the obvious need for accurate description. The importance of Henry James as both critic and artist immediately earned, for The Sacred Fount, a legitimate place in the analysis. It is evident, further, that the quite different effects of the novels of Graham Greene and Keith Waterhouse respectively rendered The End of the Affair and Billy Liar serviceable in a scheme which relies on disparities in narrative approach.

Although existing critical formulations of the intricacies of point of view are still relatively unsophisticated, a retrospective look at the evolution of narrative theory is encouraging indeed. It is clear that the simplistic approach of Percy Lubbock provoked subsequent critics to compensate by exploring more subtle aspects of point of view. As is often the case in new critical territory, however, the efficacy of unambiguous description is sacrificed for the sake of attempted precision. Thus schemes such as those proposed by Brooks and Warren and Friedman suffer from the understandable but unfortunate desire to atomize narrative variations to the point of redundancy. In a similar way, a work

such as The Rhetoric of Fiction, although original and detailed, quite simply fails to recognize undeniable narrative facts. By contrast, the relatively narrow approach of Romberg, an approach defined purely on the basis of grammatical voice, appears refreshingly unambiguous. Stanzel's addition, to the grammatical-voice approach, of the ostensible absence or presence of the author-narrator seems to condense effectively the variations sought by so many of Stanzel's critical compatriots. The primary advantage of such a scheme is that it accommodates not only the established, conventional forms of narrative technique, but also experimental approaches which characterize much of twentieth-century fiction.

But the adoption, in the present discussion, of a technical approach to fiction reflects more than a simple desire to examine technique for technique's sake. As the discussions of the three novels selected point out, an analysis of narrative stance reveals not only the way in which content is conveyed but also - necessarily - what that content is. The use of technical means to explore theme possesses, moreover, a distinct advantage over a specifically thematic approach. Since it relies on the description of identifiable elements within a work (such as the effects of time scheme, narrative distance, narrator reliability, and so on), a formal approach avoids the persistently dangerous area of critical supposition. As the textual interpretations of Booth demonstrate, an implicit rejection of technique for the sake of the apprehension of values inevitably leads to logical and interpretative fallacies. The

question as to the respective merits of evaluative and descriptive criticism will persist, naturally, as long as the art of criticism exists. If, however, an analysis which is founded on descriptive "facts" simultaneously contributes to the understanding of meaning, it would seem to be the more defensible approach.

If one agrees with the status accorded Henry James as both critic and artist, one can acknowledge thellegitimacy of his formal preoccupations as prerequisites for a worthwhile story. A perusal of James's Notebooks and Prefaces at first suggests that many of his creative decisions are intuitive; a deeper understanding of his criteria for "the effect [he was] most 'after'",[1] however, points out the indisputable necessity for technical control. If the critic, in turn, seeks to know the effect "he" was most after, surely the first step in the critical process is the examination of technical effects. This first step, in fact, may be the only step: the author who leaves for posterity as full an account of the creative process as did James is indeed rare.

[1]James, Art, p. 318.

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