NARRATIONS OF AMBIGUITY: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE THEORY

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines contemporary American novels and short stories through the lens of narrative and rhetorical theory. While I begin by tracing Wayne Booth's contributions in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* and the multitude of responses and challenges since made towards his book, I concurrently point out the persistent desire among narrative theorists to develop a systematic approach, one that can be applied consistently to all narratives. Recent narratologists have worked to show the variety of ways that narrative texts defy these attempts at systematization; my dissertation is an entry into this area of contemporary narratology. Each of my chapters focuses on a specific narrative element or technique—second person narration; the implied author; reader-as-translator; and collective/missing narrators. Specifically, I argue that narratives from authors such as Junot Diaz, Cormac McCarthy, Helena Maria Viramontes, and Dave Eggers, among others, contain usages of these techniques that further complicate attempts to encapsulate their potential textual potentialities, and that these narrative choices entail specific implications for the larger thematic elements of the narratives. Ultimately, this dissertation is structured in a way that brings together elements of narrative theory, postmodern critical theory, and literary studies in general.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Contemporary Challenges to Traditional Narratology

A fundamental impetus for many of the seminal texts in narrative theory and narratology is an attempt to establish a succinct vocabulary and approach to understanding narrative texts. In *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Gerard Genette refers to his study as "essentially a method of analysis" (23), while Jonathan Culler's Foreword to the text praises Genette for "[filling] this need for a systematic theory of narrative" (7). Mieke Bal similarly describes the focus of her *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* as a systematic approach to narrative; Gerald Prince went as far as putting together an explicit dictionary, titled bluntly *A Dictionary of Narratology*. These three texts make transparent an instrumental force behind narratological inquiries: explaining potentially- and unlimitedly-diverse narrative texts through a system of knowledge based on distinct techniques, patterns, and paradigms of understanding. However, the ever-increasing number of narrative texts seems to indicate an inherent fallacy in these comprehensive and systematic approaches. More contemporary scholars in narrative theory, such as those associated with the recent field known as unnatural narratology, recognize this fallacy of a systematic approach to *all* narratives in large part because authors continue to produce narratives that present direct challenges to these systems. Scholars like as James Phelan, Brian Richardson, and Monika Fludernik, among others, have posed questions that challenge narrative theory's attempts to "describe all narration—fictional and non-fictional, conversational and literary under the umbrella of one unified theory."

Contemporary challenges to traditional narrative theory are similar in many ways—and owe much—to broader examples from the major movements in literary theory

over the past half-century. To a certain extent, the work of contemporary narratologists, and their approaches to strange and challenging narrative texts, are exercises in postmodern literary criticism in general. Questions concerning issues of antimimetic narrative, narrator reliability/unreliability, distinctions between real author and implied author, and paralepses and problematic narrative time—although not necessarily using those terms—are approached and discussed in postmodern theoretical inquiries and are not unique to contemporary narratology. At the same time, the work being done by scholars like Phelan, Fludernik, and Richardson, among others, provides a framework through which the narrative elements themselves are more than devices used by authors to achieve grander theoretical goals. Contemporary narratologists allow for narrative texts to be approached in ways that, while remaining completely aware of the relevance and importance of surrounding theoretical approaches, hone in more specifically on the various narrative elements of said texts; i.e. postmodern narrative theory provides terms and strategies through which topics such as reliability, antimeticism, textual anomalies, and postmodern narrative elements can be investigated and utilized in ways that add to the ongoing theoretical conversations around said elements.

This study seeks to investigate the ways in which the questions and concerns of contemporary narrative theory offer important and necessary additions to discussions of contemporary narrative texts. Concurrently, my study will be a work in situating narrative theory among various other theoretical approaches to narrative texts, specifically approaches to the postmodern literature on which I will focus. I assert that current trends in narrative theory pose questions in ways that allow for readings and interpretations of narrative texts that are different from other postmodern approaches; I also propose to articulate the ways in which postmodern fictional texts have something to offer beyond the most common current theoretical approaches. Among others, widely read authors

such as Paul Auster, Helena Maria Viramontes, Bret Easton Ellis, Junot Diaz, Philip Roth, and Cormac McCarthy have produced texts that beg further analysis in terms of the narratological elements mentioned above. These analyses will enrich a number of literary discussions: those surrounding the literature; those concerning narrative theory; and those dealing with postmodern literary theory in general.

Critical Context

Significant for a number of reasons, Wayne Booth's seminal 1961 text *Rhetoric of Fiction* is responsible for a large portion of the work typically associated with narrative theory and narratology. Discussions of narrative elements had been taking place long before Booth's text, and many elements of the book have since become somewhat outdated. But the importance of *The Rhetoric of Fiction* in relations to narrative study is undeniable. Booth's text introduced many of the seminal points of analysis, discussion, and disagreement that have formed the foundation of narratology. Through his assertions, Booth paved a path of literary analysis simultaneously grounded in both formalist and rhetorical approaches. *The Rhetoric of Fiction* jumpstarted a surge of critical texts focused on narrative, quickly categorized under the labels of narrative theory and narratology. Scholars such as Gerard Genette, Gerald Prince, and Mieke Bal, among others, began to put forth various narrative-oriented theoretical investigations—many of which are direct responses to Booth and to each other. In *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (adapted from portions of *Figures III* and originally published in 1972), along with his follow-up *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, Genette tackles Booth-inspired questions, such as those surrounding the Implied author. Genette further delineates his study into questions of tense, mood, and voice, while also discussing narrative anomalies such as anachronies, polymodality, and questions of focalization (a term he prefers over "point of view" or "perspective"). Like Genette, Gerald Prince's work functions on a

system-producing motivation. *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (1982) is an extremely structuralized approach to narrative inquiry. Prince took this deliberate and systematic approach one step further with *A Dictionary of Narratology*. Although compiled in 1987, Prince's *Dictionary* still contains many helpful summative definitions of the central terms of the field. Along with these texts, a crucial 1979 conference in Tel Aviv focused specifically on narrative and narrative theory.

Mieke Bal's *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1985) is, in large part, a direct response to many of Genette's arguments. Similar to Genette, Bal uses her text to put forth her own system of analysis of narrative. Bal makes an important clarification to her purpose, though, which has remained crucial in narratology: "The theory presented here is an instrument for making descriptions, and hence interpretations, discussable. *That*, not objectivity or certainty, 'being right' or 'proving wrong,' is the point" (12). Bal is not proposing "right and wrong" ways to perceive texts; instead, she insists that readers—and narratologists—should seek to understand the *structure* of a narrative text. Understanding the narrative structure will, according to Bal, allow for appropriate interpretations. Situating her analysis in the context of deconstructionist theorists such as Bakhtin and Derrida and the postmodern tenets of multiple meanings, individual perceptions, and so on, she asserts, "The point is not that meaning can be pinpointed in any simple way. But it is only once we know how a text is structured that the reader's share—and responsibility—for acting within those constraints can be clearly assessed" (13). In many ways Bal is a forerunner to the more contemporary narratologists and their work with postmodern texts; this is perhaps in part due to Bal's wide expertise and her important work in other areas of literary theory. Bal's work on narratology, along with that of Genette and Prince and others, propelled many of the points of conversation introduced by Booth into fresh territories, while also raising

new questions in the context of scholarly attempts to read, analyze, and understand narrative texts.

These texts, the Tel Aviv conference, and two separate special issues of *Poetics Today* in 1981 and 1990 (focused on narrative) further widened and expanded the scope and depth of narrative theory/narratology. Articles such as Jackson G. Barry's "Narratology's Centrifugal Force: A Literary Perspective on the Extensions of Narrative Theory" and Bal's own "The Point of Narratology" (both published in the 1990 *Poetics Today* issue) point out the boom of various interdisciplinary extensions of the field that took place during this time. Along with the extremely diverse group of articles published in the two *Poetics Today* special issues, a number of scholars continued to put together book-length studies into narrative texts, such as James Phelan, Peter J. Rabinowitz, David Herman, Seymour Chatman, and others. Phelan's work, beginning with *Reading People, Reading Plots: Character, Progression, and the Interpretation of Narrative* (1989) and continuing unto his more recent *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative* (2007), works fundamentally on a *rhetorical* definition of narrative. Broadly speaking, Phelan's work focuses on rhetorical elements of narrative: how texts speak to specific audiences; how audiences interpret and "judge" stories and characters based on various factors; and questions of characters, narrators, and readers in ethical (and rhetorical) ways. Rabinowitz, who along with Phelan and Herman has edited and compiled many important collections of articles and approaches to narrative theory, focuses more on the readerly side of narrative theory. In *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (1987), Rabinowitz argues that much of the work done in terms of readerly interpretations of narrative texts actually takes place *before* the reading even begins. This work intersects with much of the work done in reader response theoretical approaches, such as Wolfgang Iser's *The Implied Reader:*

Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction, which is a helpful study into the role the reader plays in the process of meaning construction in narrative texts. Seymour Chatman's *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (1990) is similar in ways to Prince's *Dictionary of Narratology* in that it is concerned with defining and exploring key terms used in narratology, although Chatman's definitions are more complicated and derive from the decades of narratological debate surrounding the terms he chooses to define.

The various articles and books produced in the field of narratology from the time following the Tel Aviv conference in 1979 up until the present day, as evidenced by the titles previously mentioned, have continued to seek to answer many of the same seminal questions surrounding issues of author and reader, narrator and narratee, narrative reliability and unreliability, narrative time vs. real time, and others that were posed by Booth and complicated by scholars like Genette, Prince, and Bal. These studies—and the primary narrative texts with which they have been concerned—have also continuously come to fruition alongside the various advances in other theoretical fields. Thus, a number of narrative studies have sought to bridge gaps between narratology and areas such as deconstruction or postmodernity. Texts such as Andrew Gibson's *Towards a Postmodern Theory of Narrative* (1996), Michael Kearns's *Rhetorical Narratology* (1999), Richard Walsh's *The Rhetoric of Fictionality: Narrative Theory and the Idea of Fiction* (2007), among others, function on an attempt to bridge the gaps between narrative theory and other theoretical schools, while also recognizing narrative theory's—and its bias towards systematic approaches to narrative—inability to develop an approach that fully and comprehensively explains *all* narrative texts. Mark Currie, in the introduction to his book *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (1998), discusses the paradoxical nature of postmodern narratology. After quickly providing a historiography of the trajectory

narratology has taken over the past half-century, Currie then proposes what he sees as the necessary focus narratology must take, which he sees as paradoxical in the sense that it necessarily resolves in a place between the classicism of traditional narratology and the tenets of postmodern critical theory. He says, “What is required in the new model is an ability to describe the heterogeneity of contemporary narratology, its diverse applications and political uses, its respect for the particularity of narratives, while at the same time summarizing this diversity and assembling a more general collection of principles and techniques” (13).

The recognition of this paradoxical existence is a trademark of a recent trend in the field, unnatural narratology, and is further described in Brian Richardson’s essay “What Is Unnatural Narrative Theory?” Richardson is writing over a decade after Currie (the term “unnatural narratology” was not around when Currie published *Postmodern Narrative Theory*), but they both pick up on this paradoxical place of narratology. Towards the end of his essay Richardson creates a gap in theory in which unnatural narratology can exist. He writes, “Antimimetic elements continually remind us of the dual nature of narrative fiction, all of which is, in varying degrees, both mimetic and artificial at the same time” (38). Currie and Richardson both seem to be talking about contemporary narratology’s necessity to somehow offer a *systematic* way to critique *systematic* approaches to narrative. This paradox speaks to the fundamental manner of narratology—systematically approaching narrative—and the challenges of postmodern theory—deconstructing any sort of systematic, comprehensive approach to something as diverse as narrative. This seemingly self-conflicting goal of systematically thwarting systematization is an important aspect of unnatural narratology.

Unnatural narratology points out the fallacy of traditional narratology’s impetus towards systematic approaches to *all* narratives. This is not to say that narratology and its

approaches are inappropriate for *all* narratives; instead, unnatural narratology takes issue with narratology's insistence on being able to approach the wide expanse of available texts in any sort of comprehensive way. The Narrative Research Lab at Aarhus University in Denmark facilitates a website devoted to unnatural narratology, providing helpful clarifying explanations of the project. According to the site:

> If we analyze all narratives according to the same model, however, we miss something in them. It is an important task for narrative theory to develop models that account for the specific properties of storyworlds, of experientiality, and of representations and narratives that resist description and understanding based on linguistic understandings of natural, oral communication.

In the introduction to their collection entitled *Unnatural Narratives – Unnatural Narratology* (2011), Jan Alber and Rudiger Heinze propose three separate definitions of "unnatural" in relation to narratology, each of which comes from specific scholars use of the term within the field. While there are variations within the field, the fundamental impetus is the same: "Unnatural narratologists also point out that narrative theory has had a mimetic bias ever since the times of Aristotle and the unities of time, place, and action. And this real-world orientation has lead to the marginalization of the unnatural" (5).

In order to thwart this "marginalization of the unnatural" in narrative theory, recent scholars have produced studies that interrogate the ways in which narrative texts, classical and contemporary, exemplify the ability of narrative to thwart this mimetic bias. The use of the term "unnatural" is actually in response to Monika Fludernik's use of "natural" in *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (1996). Fludernik explains and contextualizes her use of the term "natural" in her essay "How Natural Is 'Unnatural Narratology'; or, What Is Unnatural about Unnatural Narratology?" (2012), while also pointing out some key differences between her approach and that adopted by unnatural narratologists. Fludernik's 1996 text has undoubtedly played a key role in creating a defining point of discussion for unnatural narratology. Alber and Heinze talk about Fludernik's use of the

term “narrativisation” in a similar way to Jonathan Culler’s term “naturalization.” Culler argues in *Structuralist Poetics* that readers, in order to understand inexplicable elements of texts, turn to previous reading experiences and familiar narrative patterns; Fludernik extends this to narrative: “narrativization” is “a reading strategy that naturalizes texts by recourse to narrative schemata” (qtd. In Alber, 10) and involves readers using previous reading experiences to understand “unnatural” narrative elements. Unnatural narratology builds off of this distinction between natural/unnatural narratives.

Along with the 2011 collection edited by Alber and Heinze, a number of articles and books have been published in the past decade. As one of the leading voices in contemporary narratology, Brian Richardson—in his *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction* (2006)—focuses on “the impressive range of unusual postmodern and other avant garde strategies of narration” (ix), and this text is mentioned and referenced a number of times in many of the articles in the 2011 collection. *Strange Voices in Narrative Fiction* (2011), a collection of essays covering topics such as second-person narration and narrative voices, is another important title in the field of unnatural narratology. Finally, the Aarhus website also contains a “Dictionary of Unnatural Narratology” (a clearly differentiating reference to Prince’s *Dictionary of Narratology*), which defines seminal terms of unnatural narratology such as anti-narrative, metalepsis, and redundant telling.

In reference to Richardson’s essay and Currie’s book, contemporary narratology finds itself in a contextual existence in which it must balance between the traditions of narrative theory and the hugely influential and important theoretical progressions of other theoretical fields. It is through a search for this balance that contemporary narratologists are able to find a place in which both fields—narrative and postmodern theory—are able to be utilized in a way that allows texts to be read and interpreted through a narrative-

oriented lens. Richardson writes, “Realism tries to hide its artifice as it strives for the verisimilar; postmodernism downplays its realism and flaunts its own, original forms of fabrication” (38). Richardson sets these two—realism and postmodernism—in opposing positions, with unnatural narrative theory providing the framework through which a productive middle ground can be found: “Unnatural techniques are pervasive in postmodern and many avant-garde texts. If we are to comprehend the most fascinating, creative, and challenging literature of our time, we need to employ the framework provided by unnatural narrative theory” (38-39). The key here is that unnatural narratives are not wholly “unnatural” or fabricated; Richardson asserts that realism still plays a part. Sure, many elements of these texts are strictly postmodern: intertextuality, authorly playfulness, metafiction, and fragmentation are elements of the narrative elements employed in these texts. But with a narratological perspective, these are *narrative* techniques first and foremost. In other words, these postmodern motifs are cast in a new light when discussed in the context of narrative conventions such as Author/Implied Author/Narrator; real time vs. narrative time; or narrative levels of diegesis.

Along with providing helpful descriptions of unnatural narratology, Richardson is also responsible for one of the key critical works to date that has begun the work of creating a critical space for the merger of narrative and postmodern theory. His *Unnatural Voices* looks at a wide array of contemporary narrative texts specifically in the context of postmodern critical approaches and traditional narratological methods of analysis. In his preface Richardson describes the fissure between postmodernism and narrative theory: “Though postmodernism is certainly the most important and successful literary movement of the last half century, it is one that has most often proven resistant to traditional narrative theory” (ix). *Unnatural Voices* is Richardson’s attempt to resolve this resistance and to fill what he sees as an important gap in the theory. His focus is on narrative

voices; specifically, “One of the most significant aspects of late modernist, avant garde, and postmodern narrative—the creation, fragmentation, and reconstitution of narrative voices” (ix). He is concerned with the “actual practices of significant authors” in order to avoid an attempt to add to a formalized, systematic categorization of texts (since, according to Richardson, this type of categorization is exactly what these texts are thwarting). An example from the book is Chapter Seven: “Implied Authors, Historical Authors, and the Transparent Narrator: Toward a New Model of the Narrative Transaction,” in which Richardson gives his attention to the often-debated topic of the implied author using texts such as *Candide* and *Lolita*; this chapter figures prominently in my own Chapter Three, which looks at autofiction and the implied author.

This is just a sampling of the considerable work done in the field of narrative theory over the past half-century. Although rather stark divisions exist within the field related to theoretical frameworks or epistemological differences, at the heart of the field is a direct attention to the *narrative* elements of texts. Rather than referring to elements such as narrator, or narrative audience, or diegetic levels in terms of being a means-to-an-end for larger theoretical purposes, these narratologists approach such elements with a fundamental acknowledgement of the crucial nature they play in the overall meaning of texts—a role that takes shape on the page, and one that deserves more critical attention than other paradigms afford.

Methods and Chapters

I seek to continue along the current trajectory of narratology in the context of contemporary American narratives that have important contributions to make to the discussion—contributions that, to this point, have not been discussed extensively. This study uses the following research questions to guide my analyses. First, I hope to offer my own answer the underlying question at the heart of recent trends in narratology: is a

systematic approach to narrative possible/plausible? By looking at various texts from a number of areas of American literature, I will contend that authors are producing texts that continue to problematize narrative theory's attempts to be "systematic" in its approach. In what ways does postmodern narrative theory mirror other threads of postmodern literary theory? Through my close readings and analyses of these narrative texts, I will undoubtedly be incorporating and borrowing from other analyses that do not adopt a narratological approach. As I do this, I hope to understand the ways in which narrative theory has and can benefit from—and also provide benefit to—these other strands of critical inquiry. Finally, how do these postmodern narratives complicate fundamental narratological issues such as the implied author, second-person narration, and the readerly participation in meaning construction? At the heart of this inquiry is an attempt to reveal the ways in which these unique narrative texts continue to broaden and complicate the various discussions and debates at the heart of narrative theory for the past three or four decades.

My own entry into the field of contemporary narrative theory relies heavily on the large amount of work already done in classical narratology, as well as the various critical approaches already applied to these primary texts. While I focus on approaching contemporary American narratives in the context of recent progressions in the field, each chapter is purposefully structured around an engagement with previous scholars and their takes on whatever aspect of narrative theory I focus on in that individual chapter; accordingly, this involves continuous reference to and reliance on the seminal work that set the stage for more recent contributions to the field. With this in mind, my own approach is situated in the context of those set forth by Genette, Prince, Bal, and others; in particular, many of the following chapters build off of a central response to Booth's seminal text, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Booth's study is the impetus for a large amount of

narrative inquiry, and while some of my own arguments stray from Booth's assertions, all of them in some way owe their beginnings to my own reading of Booth's text. While building off of the key points of discussion and analysis set forth by these scholars, I will also use their work to introduce specific points of contention within the field, which I will then bring directly into my own narratological critique of recent texts.

At the fundamental level, I borrow from both Gerald Prince and James Phelan in my definition of narrative texts. Prince's definition is quite simple: "Narrative is the representation of at least two real or fictive events or situations in a time sequence, neither of which presupposes or entails the other" (*Narratology*, 4). I choose to go with Prince's definition as opposed to that of Bal or even Booth because of its clarity but also its broad interpretation, thus allowing me to incorporate non-traditional texts in my analyses. Along with Prince's definition, I will incorporate Phelan's approach to narrative, which is fundamentally rhetorical. Introduced in his 1996 book *Narrative as Rhetoric*, Phelan uses the following definition of a narrative text throughout his many books and articles: "Telling a particular story to a particular audience in a particular situation for, presumably, a particular purpose" (4). The logistical clarity offered by Prince's definition, along with the helpful rhetorical tint of Phelan's, provide a way in which I am able to look at narrative texts, however variegated my grouping might be, in an at least somewhat consistent manner—although a central point of my argument is the manner in which contemporary narratives *challenge* notions of consistency. These definitive statements about what constitutes a narrative will frame this study in two ways: 1) they set standards through which I can approach my primary texts in a standardized way; and 2) they offer definitions to which I can pose rather serious questions, and to which I can offer ways that my primary texts thwart even these most basic of narrative criteria.

With this context based in narratological fundamentals, this study offers analyses of these novels and short stories by incorporating the various books and articles published in the past two decades in the field of narrative theory. Many of these critical approaches undertake similar investigations of texts from different genres or time periods, which will provide models for my own study. I seek to continue the work done in texts such as Andrew Gibson's *Towards a Postmodern Theory of Narrative*, Mark Currie's *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, and Daniel Punday's *Narrative after Deconstruction*. These texts, along with a number of other articles and books, focus on various points of discussion when looking at contemporary and postmodern narrative texts. I add to the conversations around topics such as the implied author, second personhood, translation studies, and the lack of a narrator through my unique choice of narrative texts and also my synthetic approach to relevant postmodern and narrative theory. Rather than focusing on individual authors specifically, this study instead focuses on narrative elements (such as those mentioned previously) and then draws on a variety of texts—primary and critical—in order to offer my own analysis on the specific element. While certain texts provide fodder for commentary in multiple chapters, such as Philip Roth's *Deception* and Junot Diaz's *This is How You Lose Her*, I attempt to cover a wide variety of American literature from authors with distinctly different biographical and literary backgrounds.

In summation, this project works work off a method based on the fundamentals of narrative theory, its seminal definitions and clarifications, and the points of contention from which contemporary movements in the field have risen. I offer assertions about these contentious points based on various theoretical approaches and close readings of a wide array of contemporary American narratives that offer direct challenges to traditional narratology. My choice of strictly American texts is, first and foremost, an

attempt to focus my study on a manageable group of texts. These narratological challenges are by no means limited to American narrative texts, but focusing on this specific group will offer me a realistic scope for my study. Along with this practical reason, I also limit myself to specifically American texts in an effort to show how American authors enact certain narratological techniques and challenges in order to further accentuate various thematic concerns—concerns commonly recognized as prevalent within American literature. For example: although it is by no means the only field of literature that concerns itself with the individual experience of immigrants, American literature undoubtedly possesses a strong corpus of texts that enact commentary on the American immigrant experience. In my reading, I argue Junot Diaz's depiction of the immigrant experience—specifically that of a 21st century Dominican American—is foregrounded by Diaz's unique employment of second person narration and radical code-switching in his novel and two short story collections. Furthermore, my choice of authors and primary texts is based off the fact that many of the names I investigate are widely considered to be the seminal names in contemporary American literature; yet, from my perspective, these major names and texts, to this point, have yet to receive due narratological attention. Thus, my choice of texts will provide an opportunity to offer fresh perspectives on already-recognized important American texts.

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As mentioned earlier, this study in large part focuses on narrative texts from well-known authors. On the whole, the authors of the narrative texts I plan on investigating are prolific and many of their works have received a large amount of critical attention, including the texts I plan on using. For example, Paul Auster, Bret Easton Ellis, and Philip Roth (the foci of Chapter Three) are some of the more influential American authors of the past three decades, garnering significant critical attention from a number of different

theoretical perspectives. Much of the work done by these authors is seen as quintessentially postmodern. Auster's *New York Trilogy* has been classified as being emblematic of postmodern anti-detective fiction. Auster's work is also commonly studied for its use of metafiction and sometimes frustratingly over-the-top postmodern playfulness with the reader. Ellis's novels have also garnered attention for their postmodernity, utilizing some of the same techniques as Auster. Ellis is often mentioned for his depictions of affluent America and yuppie culture in novels such as *Less than Zero* and *American Psycho*. Like Auster and Ellis, many of Roth's novels also employ technique of metafiction and author playfulness in books as diverse as *Portnoy's Complaint, Deception*, and *The Plot Against America.* These postmodern interpretations function heavily in a large portion of the critical studies that focus on these authors. There are articles that discuss narrative elements of these texts, such as Steven E. Alford's "Mirrors of Madness: Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy*," Timothy Baker's "The (Neuro)-Aesthetics of Caricature: Representations of Reality in Bret Easton Ellis' *Lunar Park*," and Henrik Skov Nielsen's "Natural Authors, Unnatural Narration."

Many of the other authors I investigate here have received similar scholarly attention. McCarthy, Diaz, and Viramontes have written some of the most widely read texts of the past few decades, and they have been addressed accordingly by literary scholars. Still, most of the work done on these texts resides in fields removed from narrative theory. This is not to say that narrative elements of the texts are ignored, because they most certainly are not. Rather than ignored, the narrative elements these authors employ are instead seen as a means to an end. For example, when Viramontes chooses to intersperse large amounts of Spanish with standard English in her novel *Under the Feet of Jesus*—Spanish that is both unmarked and untranslated—most critical approaches to this literary code-switching focus on Viramontes's purpose for doing so

and the political impetus behind the technique. Critics also note the ways in which this untranslated Spanish creates an "Other" experience for the monolingual, English-speaking reading. These are crucial important issues worth investigating, and these critical analyses hold significant weight when reading the novel. But there is also an important discussion to be had about the narratological implications of this linguistic code-switching; more specifically, how are readers supposed to confront this untranslated Spanish? Are they supposed to translate the passage with a dictionary or translation tool? Or is non-translation the key? If so, how do readings between bilingual and monolingual readers differ? Whenever narratological elements are discussed in relation to texts such as *Under the Feet of Jesus*, they are usually done so as side notes to larger concerns. For example, while discussing a text such as McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* and the mythic, almost Biblical qualities of the novel, a scholar might mention briefly a certain narrative trait that lends to this textual quality. Again, scholars have recognized and shown certain attention to narrative concerns with these authors. But, to a large degree, the rather important contributions these authors and their texts can make to narratological study—and the contributions narrative theory can make to the study of these authors—have yet to be fully addressed.

As far as some of the narrative topics I discuss, a number of scholars have already completed very helpful studies. For example, Jarmila Mildorf's article "Second-Person Narration in Literary and Conversational Storytelling" and Matt DelConte's "Why You Can't Speak: Second-Person Narration, Voice, and a New Model for Understanding Narrative" look specifically at second-person narration, its intricacies and subversions, and what it has to say to traditional approaches to narrative theory. Along with these articles, Richardson has a chapter on the subject in *Unnatural Voices*, and other scholars have also covered second-person narration. Many scholars have done some of the

interdisciplinary work done in this current study. Thus, my project is not intended to create a new method of narrative analysis, nor is it focused on deconstructing an old method. Scholars like Phelan, Fludernik, and Richardson have done the work of diagnosing the problematic nature of systematic approaches and of the mimetic, "natural" biases of narratology. Instead, I utilize this focus in my own investigations of narrative texts that beg further narratological attention—and that also specifically shine new light on some of the more commonly discussed elements of narrative theory. This study is unique in the texts it investigates and the way in which I use these texts to broaden discussions of said texts through a critical orientation based on narrative. This orientation allows for ways to approach the postmodern and antimimetic elements of these texts that have not been used in the large corpus of scholarship already done. Not only does this add to our understandings of these diverse contemporary texts, but it also adds to the current work being done to merge the poststructuralist work of literary theory with that of narrative theory. I seek to join the long-standing narrative conversations surrounding the various topics mentioned above by applying a contemporary, postmodern, and unnatural narratological approach to recent American texts that can further exemplify the variegated types of experiences afforded readers by narratives.

My second chapter, "You and Junot Diaz: Further Complications of Second Person Narration," focuses on the topic of second personhood, or—to use Bruce Morrissette's terminology—the narrative "you." Although the topic is all but ignored by most classical narratologists (Booth only affords a few sentences of a footnote to second personhood), the continuing usage of "you" in narrative texts has garnered quite extensive critical approaches to the topic, from within and without narrative theory. As with so many other narrative techniques, many of these critical attempts to discuss second person narration/narrative are geared towards systematizing the manner in which

"you" functions. Morrissette's seminal article on the topic, "Narrative 'You' in Contemporary Literature" (1965), sees "you" as a tool of direct address and call to the individual reader. This view of the function of "you" has remained fundamental, and it undoubtedly correlates with many authorly usages of the second person pronoun. But more recent scholars, such as Fludernik and Richardson, have pointed out the variegated ways in which "you" can and does function within narrative texts. In my chapter, I agree with scholars like this in their assertions that second person narration is, at its heart, a technique of ambiguity and purposeful defamiliarization, but I further contend that there are usages of "you" that go beyond even the more-inclusive analyses of scholars like Fludernik and Richardson. Specifically, I look closely at selected stories from Junot Diaz's two collections, *Drown* (1996) and *This is How You Lose Her* (2012), as examples of the narrative "you" that do not easily fit into these previous approaches. I look at the multiple ways in which Diaz uses "you" in these stories, and I ultimately argue that these variegated "yous" create a narrative situation in which many readers are unsure of exactly who "you" is referring to. Diaz's use of second person narration has various rhetorical and narratological implications, which I discuss in the chapter; furthermore, I contend that this narrative element of his stories is a central tool in Diaz's thematic concerns, such as the Dominican-American experience in contemporary American society.

The focus of the third chapter is on one of the most widely covered and debated topics in narrative theory: the implied author. In my chapter, "Roth is Roth as Roth: Autofiction and the Implied Author," I seek to advance the conversation of the implied author—a conversation with years and years of ups, downs, and mixed stances—through my reading of texts that incorporate autofiction (I borrow Serge Doubrovsky's terminology here); i.e. texts with characters and narrators that share names—as well as biographical

elements—with the real author. For example, in Bret Easton Ellis's *Lunar Park*, the main protagonist and narrator is a successful writer named Bret Easton Ellis (two elements that are identical to the real author). The chapter begins with a close look at Booth's introduction of the term "implied author" in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. From here, I go through a rather detailed look at the various responses and reactions to Booth's term, ranging from acceptance to all-out rejection. I eventually arrive at a contemporary middle ground amongst these more polarized views, setting the stage for my own entry into the discussion. Using these various scholarly approaches as a foundation, I then offer an analysis of the implied author in the context of specific autofictive narrative texts. Looking at three unique novels from Ellis, Philip Roth, and Paul Auster, I argue that the autofictional techniques employed in these texts create complex questions for readers; furthermore, they raise even more complicated challenges for those attempting to consider analyses based on fundamental narrative distinctions. The implied author relies upon distinguishing between narrative agents like Real Author, Implied Author, and Narrator. While the narrative situations of many texts lend themselves to such distinctions, I contend that these autofictive narratives overtly muddy these already-blurry lines between author (Real and Implied) and narrator through their blatant mixing of identities. These narrative convolutions enhance many of the postmodern thematic elements of the texts—the elements most commonly discussed regarding the novels—but I assert that they also provide fresh ground upon which to discuss the concept of the implied author. This chapter attempts to add to the recent approaches to the topic by analyzing this specific example of how the implied author continues to remain a complex narrative element; at the same time, it argues that a continued usage of the term within narrative approaches to texts affords interesting and important analyses of narrative—analyses that would otherwise be much more difficult to navigate.

From my discussion of a seminal point of narrative theory—the implied author—I move on to a topic that, to this point, has received little attention in the field: translation studies. In Chapter Four, “Non-Translation, Code-Switching, and the Reader-as-Translator,” I attempt to create a bridge between the fields of translation studies, bilingual studies, and narrative theory through analyses of texts that involve code-switching (a topic commonly approached in linguistics) and non-translation. My fundamental point of argument in this chapter revolves around my analysis of how texts from authors such as Helena Maria Viramontes, Cormac McCarthy, and Junot Diaz—and their use of untranslated, unmarked Spanish—create a situation in which the reader, in many ways, assumes the role of translator. The act of translation is an act of power, as I show through detailed looks at some rather politically- and theoretically-geared texts in translation studies. These texts exemplify the manner in which translation inherently involves an exchange of capital; the nature of this exchange ultimately depends upon many factors, including the motivations of the translator and the nature of the eventual translation in relation to the source material. Within this translation studies context, I specifically look at the narrative situations mentioned above—in which the reader is faced with decisions to make in terms of the untranslated material before them—and how these situations create a literary space in which these larger theoretical concerns (capital, the exchange of power, and so on) come to light. And from a narratological perspective, this position of reader-as-translator produces a unique relationship between the reader and the narrative. Certain translation scholars hint towards the work of translators as being similar to that of narrators; if this is the case, do these code-switching novels involve a blending of roles between reader and narrator? If so, what implications does this blending have on the narrative situation? This chapter combines elements of translation studies, bilingual studies, and narrative theory to confront the nature in which these code-

switching texts enact unique rhetorical and narratological reverberations on the traditional experience of reading narratives.

From code-switching and translation I move on to an element discussed rather substantially in narrative theory: complicated narrators. But my chapter hones in specifically on two unique types of narrator presences—ones that as of yet have not gained as much critical traction. "'It could have been any of us': Collective and Missing Narrators" begins by looking at first-person plural narrators, also known as the "we" narrator. This seemingly "impossible" type of narrator has been employed by a number of authors in the past; I look specifically at Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides* and Joshua Ferris's *Then We Came to the End*, and I posit that these "we" narrators are particularly challenging for readers. Along with raising questions about narrator culpability and individual identity, these first-person plural narrations simultaneously enact a sense of inclusion and exclusion for readers due to the consistently varying nature of the "we" presence. The second part of the chapter looks at implicit and missing narrators in Roth's *Deception* and Dave Eggers's *Your Fathers, Where are They? And the Prophets, Do They Live Forever*, two texts that essentially contain no narration at all. Roth's text contains only about a paragraph worth of exposition, while Eggers's is completely devoid. These dialogue-centric novels challenge traditional definitions of what a narrative is, and I address questions about what role a narrator plays in a narrative and also elements of Booth's seminal explication of "telling vs. showing." Overall, this chapter argues that these two complex types of narrators present further challenges to our conceptions about how stories are told, how readers confront them, and the nature in which the narratological elements of a story directly impact the ways that story is perceived and interpreted.

In my conclusion I address two important constraints of this study: 1) The narrow scope of my primary texts; and 2) The essentially small portion of narratological subversions I address in comparison to the large amount that exist in contemporary fiction. Accordingly, I spend time presenting various examples of *other* texts that employ similar narrative techniques and challenges; the texts I mention cover a wide span, both geographical and historical. After giving nods to texts outside of my particular scope, I then take a step back from my specific analyses and offer my own remarks about the nature in which narrative theory has, does, and will continue to offer important critical frames through which we can find cultural, critical, and theoretical meaning in fictional texts. I situate these remarks in relation to similar assessments made by scholars like Currie, Gibson, and Punday, and I ultimately conclude with an affirmation of the continued work that needs to be done to create synthetic theoretical approaches to texts—approaches that correlate with the layered, complex narratives that authors continue to produce.

Conclusion

It is in this context of recent trends in narrative theory, including unnatural narratololgy, where I attempt to add my own take on the ways in which contemporary narratives employ traditional narrative techniques in non-traditional ways, and vice versa, and the ways in which the non-traditional elements have prominent rhetorical and epistemological implications for readers of said texts. In a similar move to Richardson's structure in *Unnatural Voices*, I too dedicate each of my chapters to a specific element of narrative theory: I begin by tracing contextual backgrounds of narratological debates surrounding the technique or element, and I then move on to specific analyses of the ways in which contemporary texts employ these techniques in ways that defy and challenge these previously-held notions. While my study is oriented around Prince's

definition of a narrative—a definition based on telling, events, and a time sequence—and Phelan's (via Booth) rhetorical approach, it will also use these definitions as catalysts for some of the direct challenges these contemporary fictional texts pose to traditional ways of thinking about narratives. This inquiry speaks towards narrative theory as a grouping of tools to be used by readers and scholars to help them in attempts to access parts of particular narratives. Rather than seeing the job of narratology as developing a succinct, unitary system through which *all* narratives can and should be interpreted, my own approach seeks to build upon a view based on practical applicability; in other words, authors enact certain narrative techniques for certain purposes, and narrative theory provides ways through which readers can both recognize the usage of these techniques, and also analyze the ways in which said techniques enact thematic and rhetorical implications within and without the texts.

Chapter 2

You and Junot Diaz: Further Complications of Second-Person Narration

"She was not at all sure to whom the second person pronoun meant to refer" (218).

- Zadie Smith, *NW*

On the second page of his 1971 novel *Child of God*, Cormac McCarthy introduces us to the text's protagonist for the first time. After beginning with a quintessential McCarthyesque description of a caravan of cars and people pulling up to a clearing outside of "an aged clapboard house" (3), McCarthy writes, "To watch these things issuing from the otherwise mute pastoral morning is a man at the barn door. He is small, unclean, unshaven. He moves in the dry chaff among the dust and slats of sunlight with a constrained truculence. Saxon and Celtic bloods. A child of God much like yourself perhaps" (4). At this point—less than two pages in—the reader is most likely unaware of the rather horrendous and grotesque scenes that are to come in the novel. She does not know who this small and unshaven man is, or where he is from, or what he is capable of. Instead, she simply knows that she (the reader) and this unnamed man are potentially similar; as McCarthy puts it, "a child of God much like yourself perhaps." This use of the second-person is unique for McCarthy; it is not a technique that he uses often in his writing, and this instance in *Child of God* is particularly telling. What does McCarthy mean by "child of God"? In the context of mid-20th century Appalachia, the phrase is related to describing people with mental handicaps, or "simpletons." At the same time, the phrase has undeniable religious meaning, linking the reader and the character through their similar status as children of their creator. Who exactly is the "you" to whom the narrator is referring? Presumably it is the reader; does this mean that the reader is supposed to feel fraternity with this "man at the barn door"? In what ways are they similar? How are they "like" each other? Or is "you" a reference to someone else, perhaps the narrator himself?

The trajectory of narratological attention to second-personhood in narrative texts ranges from neglect and marginalization to book-length critical approaches. Although most classical narratologists, such as Booth, Prince, and Genette, all but ignored second-person narration, analyses and theoretical approaches to the topic have continuously increased, resulting in a rather large amount of criticism on the many facets of second-person narration. Still, considering the significant attention shown to it, second-person narration—like many other narrative techniques and elements—has ultimately resisted clear, all-encompassing, and systematic theoretical approaches. While scholars have pointed out a number of recurring patterns in the use of second-person, the ultimately infinite supply of narrative texts continues to utilize the narrative "you" in ways that resist, challenge, and problematize these traditional methods. In particular, contemporary American novelist and short story writer Junot Diaz implements the narrative "you" in a variety of ways in his texts. While certain elements of Diaz's usage fit nicely into previous theoretical approaches to second-person narration, others quite clearly do not. Diaz's variegated usage of narrative "you" provides fodder for further inquiry into second-person narration as well as thematic elements of Diaz's stories. In this chapter, through a look at a wide array of critical approaches to second-person narration—which I'll from here on refer to as SPN—and a focused look at Diaz and other American writers, I argue that SPN, much like the concept of the implied author (the focus of Chapter Three), offers important revisions to readings of these narrative texts. Specifically, I propose a wider assessment of potential types of SPN to include usages like those of Diaz; further, I contend that SPN is a useful tool for all readers of these narrative texts, not just narratologists: the narrative "you" provides further opportunities for readerly interpretations of narrative meaning.

Narratology and Second-Personhood

Several contemporary theorists have noted the lack of attention shown to SPN and the narrative "you" by traditional narratology; even Bruce Morrissette, in his 1965 seminal—though now itself outdated—article, "Narrative 'You' in Contemporary Literature," makes note of this lack of attention: "So far as I have been able to determine, few if any analysts of fiction have seriously considered the second-person narrative form" (6). While I am by no means original in my recognition of this systematic ignorance of the topic, a brief overview is nevertheless appropriate, especially considering my eventual goal of reconfiguring the narratological approach to SPN.

A quick survey of three seminal figures in classical narratology—and their hesitance to give any serious attention to SPN—will suffice in showing this systematic overlooking. In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Booth affords no in-text space on the topic. As Morrissette points out, Booth's only attention to SPN comes in a footnote. In Chapter Six, "Types of Narration," Booth is not hesitant to assert his distaste with the "overworked" attention afforded to "person" in the study of narrative. According to Booth, the variations between first- and third-person "will tell us nothing of importance . . . We can hardly expect to find useful criteria in a distinction that throws all fiction into two, or at most three, heaps" (150). These "heaps" are distinctions between first-, third-, and the most useless of all: second-person. Rather than spend time in his primary text, Booth chooses to address SPN in a footnote:

> Efforts to use the second person have never been very successful, but it is astonishing how little real difference even this choice makes. When I am told, at the beginning of a book, "You have put your left foot. . . . You slide through the narrow opening. . . . Your eyes are only half open . . . ." the radical unnaturalness is, it is true, distracting for a time. But in reading Michel Butor's *La Modification* (Paris 1957), from which this opening comes, it is surprising how quickly one is absorbed into the illusory 'present' of the story, identifying one's vision with "vous" almost as fully as with the "I" and "he" in other stories. (150)

Considering the nature of the paragraph that includes this footnote, Booth's tone is seemingly one of exasperation that he has to even spend this minimal amount of time on the topic of SPN. As mentioned before, Booth's text is perhaps the most important work in fundamental narrative theory, responsible for coining crucial narratological terms as well as sparking theoretical conversations and debates that have continued for the past five decades. Yet Booth only gives the slightest of nods to SPN, relegating the technique to the most marginal of positions.

Gerald Prince and Gerard Genette show a similar type of attention to SPN. In *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (1982), Prince addresses SPN early within his chapter focused on narrating/narrator. He writes, "Another possibility—and a relatively seldom exploited one in fiction—is the second-person narrative, where the events narrated pertain to a second person" (14). Rather than just a footnote, Prince does at least create an actual existence in his system of narrative inquiry, and he also goes on to hint towards some of the more signature aspects of SPN: "The narrator may be a character yet refer to himself as 'you,' and in a work like *La Modification* it is difficult—initially, at least—to tell whether the 'you' who is the protagonist designates a narrator-character or not" (15). Still, this is all Prince has to say on the subject, and he makes sure to include the telling descriptor of "a relatively seldom exploited one in fiction." In his *A Dictionary of Narratology*, Prince defines second-person narrative briefly as "a narrative the NARRATEE of which is the PROTAGONIST in the story s/he is told" (84). Genette ignores the subject completely in *Narrative Discourse* (1972), but he does cover it briefly in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1983). Like Prince, Genette does afford a place for second-person narratives, albeit a rather small one. In his chapter on "The Narratee," Genette describes "second-person narrating" as being common in legal and scholarly narratives, as well as certain literary works like Butor's (133). For Genette, "The

term ‘second-person narrating’ seems to fully define the situation,” which he sees as a “rare but simple case” (133). Genette goes on to spend a paragraph using the “simple case” as further proof of some of his previous statements about heterodiegetic narrating. Like Booth, Prince and Genette explicitly relegate SPN to rather small corners of narrative study, quickly summing up its potential use with a sentence or two.

Critical overlooking of SPN does not only appear in these traditional works of narrative theory, nor does it only happen in dated works. Many contemporary large-scale approaches to narrative still promulgate a marginal, if not non-existent, place for SPN in the scheme of narrative techniques. A quick example: Jonathan Culler’s *Literary Theory: A Brief Insight* (2009). This text is part of the “Brief Insight Series,” published by Sterling Publishing. Similar to a number of similar series, the “Brief Insight Series” is comprised of books on a wide range of topics in history, theory, science, and religion, written by major names in the field; basically, Sterling found major scholars in various fields to put together brief, easy-to-read—yet still quite detailed and theoretical—“insights” and overviews into specific topics. For literary theory, the experienced and extremely knowledgeable Culler got the nod. One of Culler’s chapters is titled “Narrative”; within this chapter, Culler walks through the basic fundamentals of narratology. At one point he looks at “Presentation” as one of the sub-genres of narratology, answering the questions such as “Who speaks?” In his answer to who speaks, Culler walks through two options: first-person narration and third-person narration. First-person narrators “may be protagonists of the story they tell; they may be participants . . . or they may be observers of the story” (118). He then moves immediately to the next question: “Who speaks to whom?” In other words, Culler only presents two options: first- or third-person narrators; there is no mention of second-person narration, not even in a footnote or an endnote. Granted, the nature of this text is a basic overview of common narrative techniques; but

the lack of attention or existence for SPN by Culler is another example of SPN's somewhat systematized existence in the marginalia of narrative study.

Opposed to these various examples of SPN being relegated to a secondary existence in narratology, certain narrative theorists and scholars have made note of the importance of SPN and the unique thematic and rhetorical effects created by the technique. Perhaps the most important text in regards to focused study of SPN is the previously mentioned article by Bruce Morrissette: "Narrative 'You' in Contemporary Literature" (1965). Published in *Contemporary Literature Studies*, Morrissette's article introduces SPN to serious critical attention; he also introduces the term "narrative 'you,'" still used by many scholars today—myself included. "Narrative 'You' in Contemporary Literature" reveals itself to be in reaction to Michel Butor's novel *La Modification*, published in 1957. According to Morrissette, Butor's novel is "the best-known recent case of excitement in readers and critics by a seemingly new narrative mode" (1). This "new narrative mode" is the narrative "you"; in response to Butor's novel, Morrissette sets out to "analyse as closely as possible the structural, esthetic, and metaphysical significance of the second-person technique" (2); according to Morrissette, "Narrative 'you' generates a complex series of perspectives whose multiple angles deserve to be explored" (2).

Although certain aspects of Morrissette's analysis have since been challenged and are somewhat dated, his basic offerings remain helpful, even if only as points of departure. Morrissette's fundamental analysis of SPN is related to the narrative "you"'s implications to the reader. He spends the early portions of the essay contextualizing the "yous" he is speaking of, eliminating instances such as imperatives and commands, the lyrical "you," as well as the oratory "you." He then walks through various narrative examples beyond Butor, including Faulkner in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Hemingway in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *A Farewell to Arms*, and Robert Penn Warren in *All the King's*

Men. In each case, Morrissette proposes specific rhetorical effects caused by the narrative "you," including a mixing of identities and personalities as in the case of Faulkner, or an "esthetic function" in the case of Hemingway. Beyond these specific effects, Morrissette's global analysis of SPN deals with an increased interaction between text and reader; in other words, for Morrissette, the narrative "you" has direct implications for the individual reader. He offers multiple descriptions of this basic analysis throughout the article: "The reader, therefore, is invited to share the experience by the momentary, almost subliminal, use of 'you'" (8-9). Later: "That narrative vous holds a strong implication of judgment, of moral or didactic address, is a frequent theme of the critics" (16). And, finally: "The second person constituted an immediate invitation to the reader . . . The novel is constructed in this way so as to provoke a 'prise de conscience' in the reader' . . . Implicated in the narration, the reader, summoned by vous, joins the protagonist" (17). In these last two examples, Morrissette is referring to fellow critical interpretations of Butor's uses of vous ("you") to further substantiate his analysis of SPN and its implications on the reader and the act of reading.

This seminal approach to SPN is exemplified in the passage from McCarthy's *Child of God* mentioned above. To put it simply, McCarthy's "you" is referring to the person that happens to be reading the book. The rarity of the second-person in McCarthy's corpus of work lends credence to this assertion; when talking to a generalized "you" or unnamed receiver, McCarthy most readily uses a vatic, open tone, one in which the intended narratee seems almost to be a timeless, universal manifestation of humanity. I discuss McCarthy's use of this vatic tone in more detail in the next chapter. This specific "you" address is rare for McCarthy, and I thus assert—along with most scholars of *Child of God*—that he is directly addressing his readers, forcing them to see Lester Ballard as a human being just as they seem themselves. This reading

correlates closely with most approaches to McCarthy's novel. Diane C. Luce writes, "McCarthy's deft manipulation of narrative stance in *Child of God* positions the reader to recognize Lester as being much like himself or herself" (185). Scholars such as Robert Jarrett in *Cormac McCarthy* and Lydia R. Cooper in "McCarthy, Tennessee, and the Southern Gothic," among others, adopt almost identical stances on the subject; the "you" is the reader, and McCarthy is directly calling for empathy and understanding on the part of the reader and on behalf of Lester. This direct address to the reader to empathize with Lester becomes more and more complicated as the narrative progresses, revealing the horrendous actions of murder and necrophilia of which Lester is capable. For many scholars, this call for readers to compare themselves to Lester—and perhaps even see the Lester inside their own personas—is at the very heart of McCarthy's central purpose in *Child of God*. McCarthy's text serves as an example of the rhetorical effects at the heart of Morrissette's analysis of the narrative "you"; but, as with most elements of narrative, this is not the only option.

In his conclusion, Morrissette offers a prediction of the decades of criticism to follow his 1965 essay. Speaking of second-person forms and the "you" mode: "Even if it occurs only occasionally . . . or is used only as a framing device . . . it seems destined to persist. Its very ambiguity, emphasized by the fact that critics are far from agreement as to its true import, favors its retention" (21). Although Morrissette's own view of SPN and its potential usage and effects is quite limited, the rather wide range of scholarly approaches to narrative "you" stand as substantiating evidence to Morrissette's prediction on the "retention" of SPN. Authors of narrative texts have continued to incorporate the narrative "you" in a number of ways, and narrative theorists have similarly paid consistent attention to the manner in which SPN has continued to evolve and transform. These texts and critical approaches speak toward this "ambiguity" of SPN mentioned by Morissette;

unpacking this “ambiguity” and its rhetorical and narratological effects is the focus of my close readings in the latter half of this chapter.

A crucial landmark in scholarly approaches to SPN came in the special topics issue of *Style* in 1994, including articles from Monika Fludernik, James Phelan, and Brian Richardson, among others[1]. These articles, along with subsequent pieces from other scholars, serve as fundamental starting points for post-Morrissette approaches to the narrative “you.” In “Second-Person Narrative as a Test Case for Narratology: The Limits of Realism,” Fludernik lays out some rather large-scale approaches to SPN; she maps out varietal usages of second-person, while providing important and helpful analyses of exemplifying texts. Fludernik responds to both Stanzel’s approach to “person” and Genette’s analysis of homo- versus heterodiegesis. Interestingly reminiscent to Booth, Fludernik moves away from Stanzel and asserts “that the category of ‘person’ does not constitute a theoretically meaningful concept” (445); similarly, she claims that approaching SPN in terms of heterodiegesis (as Genette does) ignores a large amount of second-person texts and their unique rhetorical effects. In contrast to these two positions, Fludernik proposes a “communicative” view of SPN, differentiating between different types of narrative “you”: “reflector-mode texts (in ‘noncommunicative narrative) . . . the teller-mode realm (which I have dubbed ‘communicative narrative’).” She further demarcates the teller-mode realm: “Homocommunicative texts share realms of identities between the personae on the communicative level and the fictional personae . . . Heterocommunicative texts, on the other hand, completely separate the realms of plot agents (characters) and interactants on the communicative level (narrators and narratees).”

[1] I was unable to attain physical copies of any of the articles from the 1994 *Style* issue. Therefore, in the following pages I do not have page numbers for references/quotes from the pieces by Fludernik, Phelan, and Delconte.

Fludernik clarifies her use of “communicative” in this context: “The term ‘communicative’ . . . respectively refers to the communicative circuit between a narrator (or teller figure in Stanzel’s typology) and the immediate addressee or narratee who is at the receiving or interactive end of that communicational frame.” Fludernik’s positions SPN between these two ends of the “communicative” structure, a view that is much more inclusive of *all* existing and potential usages of “you” than the approaches previously mentioned (and to which Fludernik is responding). These are essentially matters of diegetic levels, making narrative analyses depending upon the levels on which narrative agents (narrators, narratees, and characters) act and exist within a narrative. According to this structure of potential narrative positionings, Fludernik proposes that SPN is situated somewhere between the homo- and heterocommunicative levels; in other words, a clear, unified positioning of all second-person narratives is impossible.

A brief look at an exemplifying text might prove helpful. Philipp Meyer’s 2013 novel *The Son* is an expansive historical epic focusing on three members of the McCullough family, ranging over a span of time from mid-19th century to contemporary 21st century America. The novel rotates focus between the three main characters: Eli (the Colonel) McCullough; his son, Peter; and Peter’s granddaughter, Jeanne Anne. The chapters range in narrative perspective: first-person reflections in the Eli chapters; first-person diary entries from Peter; and third-person narration in the Jeanne Anne chapters. These perspectives are consistent throughout, with roles of narrator, protagonist, and narratee (or perhaps narrative audience is more appropriate here) remaining steady. But as with many narrative texts, the narrative “you” finds its way within these first- and third-person chapters. For example, in Chapter Five (a Jeanne Anne chapter):

> There had been a time when this was not unusual. A time when the wealthy were exemplars. When you held yourself to a higher standard, when you lived as an example to others. When you did not parade your inheritance in front of a camera; when you did not accept the spotlight

> unless you'd *done* something . . . If you did not work, you did not eat. If you did not wake up in the dark, be it ten degrees or a hundred, if you did not spend all day in the dust and thorns, you would not survive, the family would not survive, you had received God's blessings and been profligate. (52-53)

Again, this chapter—like all of Jeanne Anne's—is framed as a third-person narrative account of Jeanne Anne's life from a heterodiegetic narrator. In this passage, the narrative "yous" are not referring to Jeanne Anne, nor are they directly referring to the reader, since he or she certainly does not live in this historical "time" being described by the narrator. Referring back to Fludernik's model, this passage from Meyer's text serves as an example of a heterocommunicative text—within the larger category of "teller-mode texts"—in that there is a clear separation between the plot agents (Jeanne Anne) and the "interactants on the communicative level" (narrator and narratee). In other words, this passage is not directly concerned with Jeanne Anne; instead, the narrator seems to step back and take a moment to speak directly to the narratee in order to make sure he/she understands the realities of the culture of this place and time. Jeanne Anne is not the "you" that is deciding whether to get up in the dark and do the work; instead, this "you" is a generalized "you" being used by the narrator to portray this culture to the narratee. At the same time, Jeanne Anne can—and perhaps should—be included in this scheme of the generalized "you" that I identify; in a certain sense, it's as if Meyer is blending the third-person account of Jeanne Anne's life with a first-person account of the way things used to be. This blending is accomplished through the second-person, and while my reading does not see the "you" as directly addressing Jeanne Anne, it also does not necessarily exclude her from the almost-nostalgic recollections of the narrator. While Meyer's novel is far from a second-person narrative, this passage serves as an example of how Fludernik's model is helpful in its alternative vision of the fundamental workings of SPN.

This hesitancy towards wholly systematizing SPN comes to light in the articles by Phelan and Richardson as well. Apart from being quite a title to digest, Phelan's "Self-Help for Narratee and Narrative Audience: How 'I'—and 'You'?—Read 'How'" provides very useful analyses of particular cases of the narrative "you." According to Phelan, SPN blurs readerly roles: "Readers will simultaneously occupy the positions of addressee and observer." With these boundaries blurred, it is also difficult to distinguish exactly who "you" is in many SPN texts. Phelan uses this analysis to make a larger statement about Peter J. Rabinowitz's often overlooked and ignored term "ideal narrative audience"; eventually, Phelan asserts that SPN revitalizes the concept of the ideal narrative audience, using a reading of Lorrie Moore's story "How" to exemplify his points. He references Rabinowitz's definition of the term: "The ideal narrative audience: the audience 'for which the narrator wishes he were writing' (134), the audience that accepts every statement of the narrator as true and reliable." Through his helpful dissection of the structuralist approach (represented by Gerald Prince) to the narratee and the rhetorical approach (Rabinowitz) to narrative audience, Phelan simultaneously provides fundamental analyses of SPN and its uses, including in particular the genre of "self-help" texts.

For the sake of my study, Richardson's greatest addition to the study of SPN comes in *Unnatural Voices* (2006), but he does lay important groundwork to this later study in his contribution to the *Style* issue, "I Etcetera: On the Poetics and Ideology of Multipersoned Narratives" (actually, a chapter from *Unnatural Voices* is titled "I, etcetera: Multiperson Narration and the Range of Contemporary Narrators"). In his 1994 article, Richardson quickly points out the marginal existence for multipersoned—and second-person—narratives: "More heterodox experiments are consequently treated as secondary, peripheral, or even perverse literary gamesmanship." In the face of this

secondary treatment, Richardson sets out to articulate the various ways in which these "perverse" literary experiments actually have important and undeniable implications for narrative study as a whole. He maps out potential examples of multipersoned texts, offering readings and textual examples along the way, and eventually arrives at his proposal of an "alternative model" of narrative person (alternative to Stanzel's "narrative circle" model in particular). This model is split into four quadrants: "The quadrant on the right would cover first-person narration; its opposite, on the left, would include third-person forms. At the bottom, connecting the two, free indirect speech can be situated; at the top, the long neglected category of second-person narration can take its rightful place." This alternative model overtly creates a place for SPN within discussions of narrative person—something that previous models, as seen in Prince, Genette, and Stanzel, made conscious effort to not do.

Interestingly, these three articles within the 1994 issue of *Style* can quite easily be seen as direct precursors to the eventual creation of unnatural narratology; specifically for Fludernik and Richardson, their frustrations with "systematic" approaches to narrative topics—in this case SPN—lead to almost postcolonial efforts to create existences for these otherwise subalterned topics. Richardson closes "I Etcetera" with the following statement: "A genuinely comprehensive narrative poetics must include, as it were, its own negation and embrace works that fit smoothly within standard typologies as well as those that defy and transgress the typological imagination." Over a decade later, Richardson's book *Unnatural Voices*, although not claiming to be a "comprehensive narrative poetics," functions on unnatural narratology's fundamental recognition of the need for the self-negation within any approach to narrative texts. In his second chapter, "'At First You Feel a Bit Lost': The Varieties of Second Person Narration," Richardson expands upon his

view of SPN and provides rather helpful definitions and categorizations within the category.

As in the rest of Richardson's text, he is not hesitant to be quite clear with his purpose: "I will attempt to identify the main types of second person narrative, differentiate them from superficially similar forms, discuss their status, and show how they achieve their distinctive effects" (18). In his 1994 article, Richardson included SPN within a larger category of multipersoned narratives; in *Unnatural Voices*, he instead approaches SPN as a unique category with its own types and varieties. Richardson breaks SPN into three "types": 1) the standard; 2) the hypothetical; and 3) the autotelic; he also provides his own definition of SPN: "We may define second person narrative as any narration other than an apostrophe that designates its protagonist by a second person pronoun. This protagonist will usually be the sole focalizer, and is often (but not always) the work's principal narratee as well" (19). This definition is interesting in its staunch simplicity; in comparison to others (such as Matt DelConte, discussed below), Richardson's definition is quite open, relying heavily on pronominal usage. He walks through the three types mentioned above, giving textual examples of each. The "standard" is the most common type, which is "also the closest to more traditional forms of narration" (19-20). He uses *La Modification* and McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City* as examples. In the "standard" form, the protagonist/narratee (referred to as "you") is distinct from the reader; but, of course, one of the interesting aspects of SPN is how this boundary between reader and narratee can be collapsed quite quickly; according to Richardson, most authors using SPN are purposefully playing with this boundary. For Richardson, the "standard" usage of SPN is fundamentally playful and transgressive (23); he also refers to the defamiliarizing effect of SPN, using Shklovsky's seminal terminology (24). For Richardson, the "standard" type creates unique possibilities for the reading experience and entails specific rhetorical

effects, including: epistemological questioning concerning the identity of “you” (20); an “absence of clarity” (23) and a feeling of instability on behalf of the reader; and even unique representation of psychological states of characters (27), among others. In conclusion, the “standard” form “is situated between but irreducible to the standard dyads of either first and third person or hetero- and homodiegetic narration, but rather oscillates irregularly from one pole to the other” (28).

The other two types are not as common, and thus don’t receive as much attention from Richardson. The “hypothetical” form is usually written “in the style of the user’s manual or self-help guide” (29). He considered the term “subjunctive” rather than “hypothetical,” and points out three unique aspects of this form: “The consistent use of the imperative, the frequent employment of the future tense, and the unambiguous distinction between narrator and the narratee” (29). The “you” of the “hypothetical” type is rather all-encompassing, and thus Richardson does not see this type as being all that challenging to readers. Finally, the “autotelic” type has one defining criterion for Richardson: “The direct address to a ‘you’ that is at times the actual reader of the text and whose story is juxtaposed to and can merge with the characters of the fiction” (30). This form is similar to the “standard” in many ways, but “its unique and most compelling feature, however, is the ever-shifting referent to the ‘you’ that is continuously addressed” (31). To exemplify the “autotelic” type and the continuous moving, shifting, and changing between the reader and the narratee, he mentions a number of textual examples, such as Samuel Beckett’s *The Unnamable*.

Looking at the three types as a whole, Richardson clarifies that distinguishing between each type can be accomplished “by contrasting which figures are juxtaposed, fused, or destabilized” (32), but they each share a unifying feature of SPN: “The way the narrative ‘you’ is alternately opposed to and fused with the reader—both the constructed

and the actual reader" (33). Richardson points out how not all "yous" are created equal, and that there are certain limiting factors that dictate how certain "yous" are further clarified or not. Richardson ends the chapter by positing that one of the main reasons for narratology's heritage of refusal to acknowledge or approach SPN is the fact that unlike first- and third-person narratives, SPN is "an exclusively and distinctively literary phenomenon" (35), void of a nonfiction counterpart.

Opposed to Richardson's somewhat streamlined approach to SPN, Matt DelConte (2003) uses the topic to eventually propose an entire new system of narrative study. Whereas Richardson's treatise in *Unnatural Voices* takes a somewhat pragmatic, "here's how SNP works"-type stand, DelConte takes a different angle on the entire discussion as part of his larger argument about the ways in which we talk about narration. As noted by others (Phelan, Fludernik), DelConte sees an inherent problem in attempts to classify SPN within frameworks based on voice; he asserts, "We encounter an inevitable overlap of second-person with either first- or third-person because second-person is always also either first- or third- person." According to DelConte, this overlap is due to the fact that while first- and third-person are defined along axes of narrator, SPN "is defined along the axis of narrate." In other words, SPN is inherently different than first- and third-person narration, thus necessitating a different approach that can account for the "particular rhetorical effects" SPN has. Through a reading of *Bright Lights, Big City*, DelConte explores these rhetorical effects, piggybacking a bit on Morrissette's analyses of similar texts, and eventually offers his own revised definition: "Second-person narration is a narrative mode in which a narrator tells a story to a (sometimes undefined, shifting, and/or hypothetical) narratee—delineated by you—who is also the (sometimes undefined, shifting, and/or hypothetical) principal actant in that story." Like Richardson,

DelConte still emphasizes the pronominal importance of the use of “you,” but his definition focuses much more on the rhetorical exchange between narrator and narratee.

DelConte eventually uses this definition of SPN as “a point of reception, not a point of seeing or speaking” to build his argument for a new model of narration resisting a foundation of voice/narrator. He writes, “We need to explore a model of narrative that analyzes (without a priori privilege) the relationships among multiple variables in the narrative transmission. I propose a model based on the triad of narrator, protagonist, and narrate.” Within this model, DelConte identifies five basic configurations of these relationships. On one end is “non-coincident narration,” in which the narrator, narratee, and protagonist are all discrete; this is close to the “standard” type identified by Richardson, or Fludernik’s “peripheral second-person.” On the other end is “self-address autodiegesis: narrator, protagonist, and narratee are all the same and exist on the same diegetic plane”; he terms this “completely-coincident narration.” Between these two extremes are three figures that represent various forms of “partially-coincident narration.” DelConte’s points out how his model focuses on diegesis rather than the ontological relations of models such as Genette’s, and this shift in focus better accounts for specific rhetorical effects of SPN.

DelConte uses SPN to propose a rather significant shift to narrative study at large; Phelan argues that SPN necessitates a reappraisal of often-overlooked or dismissed narratological terms; Fludernik and Richardson contend that SPN challenges traditional distinctions based on hetero- and homodiegesis, or on narratological categories of person and voice. There are differences among these views, and a clear, unified vision of the 1) fundamental system of SPN; or 2) potential rhetorical effects of SPN, is by no means accomplished through a quick appraisal of these critical texts. But these scholars, carrying on the work began by Morrissette, make a strong, undeniable

claim against the traditional narratologists' blatant disregard and marginalization of SPN. No longer can it be seen as the "strange and rare case" incapable of "literary success"; instead, these theorists—and the narrative texts at the center of their studies—help to confirm the important, albeit untraditional, place of SPN within any approach to narrative and narration. Yet, like with most elements of narrative study, the use of SPN within contemporary narrative texts continues to present challenges and complexities to these very attempts to create a narratological approach to the technique. These challenges inevitably lead to further re-definings of SPN; in the remainder of this chapter, I argue that there are further usages of SPN not covered fully by previous scholars. Using close readings of particular texts from Dominican-American author Junot Diaz, I propose further ways in which SPN functions, leading to my own analysis of the term and its potential rhetorical influence on narrative.

The Colloquial "You"

Before turning specifically to Diaz, I want to first take a look at one use of SPN that is seemingly commonplace and ordinary, used quite often in both conversational and literary narration, but one which I do not see covered specifically in SPN scholarship. I term this usage colloquial/stylistic second-person. First, a quick example:

> I turned the deckled pages of the book Albert Vetch hadn't lived to hold. There was a laudatory text printed on the jacket flaps, and a startling photograph of the plain, high-browed, bespectacled man who had struggled for years, in his room in the turret of the McClelland Hotel, with unnameable regret, with the emptiness of his external life, with the ravages of the midnight disease. You certainly couldn't see any of that in the picture. He looked relaxed, even handsome, and his hair was just a bit unkempt, as befitting a scholar of Blake. (26-27)

These lines come early in Michael Chabon's *Wonder Boys*, a rather straightforward narrative text. As far as inventive narrative techniques, *Wonder Boys* is rather mundane; it's probably one of the least inventive of Chabon's novels in terms of narrative structure or technique. The choice of texts is purposeful on my part: I use this line to show how the

narrative “you” isn’t always easy to identify or clearly being used for larger narratological or rhetorical purposes. In the passage above, the “you” seems to be a rather clear address to the narratee, but it isn’t likely to make a reader pause or think twice about it. Instead, the “you” is being used to stress the disparity between the Albert Vetch in the picture—relaxed and handsome—with the Albert Vetch encountered by the narrator, full of regret and struggle. The “you” seems to be a rather general “you,” indicating that anyone would be unable to perceive the struggle and regret by simply looking at the picture.

Chabon uses this colloquial “you” other times as well. When describing Vetch’s lover’s dog he writes, “Doctor Dee had been blinded in puppyhood by a brain fever, and his weird blue eyes had an unnerving tendency to light on you when his head was pointed in some other direction and you thought, or in my case hoped, that he had forgotten all about you” (34). This use of “you” gestures towards having the reader imagine this blind dog looking at him or her, thus increasing the success of Chabon’s description. One more example: “Balanced atop those modest two-inch spikes of hers she projected a certain air of calculated daring, like one of those inverted skyscrapers you see from time to time, sixty-three stories of glass and light set down on a point of steel” (36). Again, the “you” in this passage is directly linked to an analogy, pushing the reader to envision the description Chabon is providing. But, at the same time, this “you” does not figure predominately in the text; in other words, it would be far-fetched, if not inaccurate, to label *Wonder Boys* as a second-person narrative. These “yous” can perhaps accurately be described as the narratee in these instances, but this same narratee does not gain “you” addresses in the majority of the novel, nor does Chabon frame the novel as a “you” address to a degree that readers will automatically situate

themselves in ways similar to how they would when reading a text such as *Bright Lights, Big City*.

These examples from *Wonder Boys* highlight what I see as a rather common use of the narrative "you," which can be situated within certain theoretical frameworks mentioned earlier, but which also seem to be acting in ways apart from these theoretical approaches. For example, I would have no reservation as qualifying Chabon's narrative "yous" mentioned above as the "hypothetical" form articulated by Richardson. According to Richardson, the "hypothetical" type of SPN has an "unambiguous relationship" between narrator and narratee, and this "you" also has the ability to "embrace almost all of us" (30). On these terms, Chabon's "yous" seem to fit quite nicely. There's no doubt that the narrator and the "you" are different people; Chabon even distinguishes between himself and "you" in the second example with the line "or in my case." And as far as the all-encompassing aspect goes, as I said earlier, these "yous" seem to be addressed to anyone that happens to be reading them. At the same time, I hesitate to simply classify these as "hypothetical" examples because my reading leads me to viewing these cases as being wholly and inextricably linked to the analogistic goals of the passages. In other words, for me, these "yous" are first and foremost mechanisms of descriptions: Chabon is choosing to use "you" in order to strengthen these descriptions. Yes, the fact that "you" is chosen rather than other pronouns or addresses is important, and the pronominal choice is undoubtedly relevant. But categorizing these examples as strictly narratological is somewhat dismissive of what I see as the fundamental stylistic nature of Chabon's choices here. They are linked, and there is a place for stylistic SPN; thus, my term colloquial second-person is geared towards encompassing this type of usage of the narrative "you." It is colloquial in the sense that this is simply *the way that people talk*; it is not unusual to use "you" in conversational situations similar to those written into

Chabon's narrator account. But this pronoun choice is also purposeful and meaningful, supported in my reading by the fact that so many other examples from Chabon—or other authors that use this colloquial "you"—do *not* use "you" in this way. In other words, Chabon doesn't always use "you" when setting up his descriptions of characters or scenes; thus, the choice of "you" entails certain motivations. This is also one of the types of SPN Junot Diaz employs throughout his two collections of short stories, *Drown* and *This is How You Lose Her*.

Published in 1996, *Drown* gained immediate critical acclaim. The majority of the stories center on Yunior, a young Dominican-American kid who is born in the Dominican Republic and moves to New Jersey at the age of nine. The stories in *Drown* bounce around between the DR and New Jersey, and cover all different aspects of Yunior's experience. A few of the stories focus on peripheral characters, including the "faceless" neighborhood kid Ysrael in "No Face." Throughout the collection, the narrative "you" is used consistently and in a number of ways, including the stylistic type mentioned earlier in reference to *Wonder Boys*. This begins in the first paragraph of the first story, "Ysrael." The story is clearly told in first-person from Yunior's perspective; the first line reads, "We were on our way to the colmado for an errand, a beer for my tio, when Rafa stood still and tilted his head, as if listening to a message I couldn't hear, something beamed in from afar" (3). "I" is Yunior, and Rafa is his older brother. The colloquial "you" is introduced in the next sentence: "We were close to the colmado; you could hear the music and the gentle chop of drunken voices." This is the first mention of "you" in the collection, and it sets the tone for what's to come: this generalized "you"—assumed to be a reference to the general audience of the story—is referenced often throughout a majority of Diaz's stories. Like in the example from Chabon's *Wonder Boys*, I see this type of "you" functioning specifically to heighten Diaz's descriptions; Diaz's point is to try

and turn up the volume, so to speak, of the noises he is describing. But, in my reading, this address to readers is not necessarily a call for them to actually imagine themselves in Yunior's position, nor is Diaz expecting him or her to be able to truly step into his shoes, so to speak. More on this later.

Examples of Diaz's stylistic "you" abound. On the next page: "In the campo there was nothing to do, no one to see. You didn't get television or electricity and Rafa, who was older and expected more, woke up every morning pissy and dissatisfied" (4). Later in the story when describing Ysrael: "His mask was handsewn from this blue cotton fabric and you couldn't help but see the scar tissue that circled his left eye, a red waxy crescent, and the saliva that trickled down his neck" (15). In this instance, Diaz wants his reader to "see" Ysrael's appearance, but this doesn't necessitate the reader actually entering into the persona of Yunior. In the next story, "Fiesta, 1980," Diaz uses "you" in a similar way. "Chickenshit or not, I didn't dare glance at him. Papi was old-fashioned; he expected your undivided attention when you were getting your ass whupped. You couldn't look him in the eye either—that wasn't allowed" (26); "She appeared happier now and the way her hands worked on our dinner you would think she had a life somewhere else making rare and precious things" (34); "She was the sort of relative who always remembered your birthday but who you only went to visit because you had to" (38). Each of these examples involve specific depictions of three people in Yunior's life—his father, mother, and aunt—and the "you" creates a situation in which a reader is called to imagine these people according to these description; in other words, the "you" is further instilling Diaz's descriptions into the reader's experience.

Considering that it is a seeming continuation of Yunior's experience in *Drown*, *This is How You Lose Her* also contains plenty of similar examples of this type of "you." Again, this colloquial "you" is introduced in the first paragraph of the first story, "The Sun,

the Moon, the Stars," during a description of Yunior's infidelity to his girlfriend, Magda: "Didn't tell Magda about it, either. You know how it is. A smelly bone like that, better off buried in the backyard of your life. Magda only found out because homegirl wrote her a fucking letter. And the letter had details. Shit you wouldn't even tell your boys drunk" (3). Again, this "you" doesn't seem to involve Diaz requesting of his readers to vicariously experience these things through Yunior. This is a source of much criticism towards Diaz from certain groups of readers: is Yunior a character worth empathy? If so, how exactly are readers—specifically women—supposed to do so? I take this point of conversation regarding readerly participation with Diaz's text up later in this chapter, but in relation to this current discussion of the colloquial "you," I read "you" as an enhancement of Diaz's portrayal of the scenario. Like in *Drown*, Diaz also uses "you" quite consistently when describing people's appearances: "Let me tell you about Magda. She's a Bergenline original: short with a big mouth and big hips and dark curly hair you could lose a hand in" (5); "Magda's been a star the whole time we've been here. You know how it is when you're on the Island and your girl's an octoroon" (16); "The Vice President waves his hand and shots of Barcelo appear so fast you'd think it's science fiction" (18). This is only a small sampling of this type of "you" found in *Drown* and *This is How You Lose Her*, and this narrative "you," like in *Wonder Boys*, is serving a different purpose than many of those pointed out by Richardson, Fludernik, and others. In these cases, the "you" is serving a particularly stylistic purpose; this is not to say that narratological and stylistic purposes are mutually exclusive, because they most certainly are not. The two overlap more often than not, and my argument of this stylistic "you" is simultaneously a comment on the narratological aspects of these "yous." At the same time, it would seemingly be an inaccuracy to label these "yous" under terms of person or levels of diegesis; in my reading experiences, I don't see these quick, sentence-level "yous" as enacting large-

scale subversions of narrative categories or classifications; instead, these "yous" are working quite simply: they are tools used to crystallize descriptions and analogies—and convey vernacular authenticity—through a momentary call for readerly imagining, which does not entail a necessary readerly immersion into Yunior's experience. But this is not the only type of "you" found in Diaz's stories, and these large-scale subversions and challenges to SPN do take place within the pages of *Drown* and *This is How You Lose Her*. First, the former.

A Closed Circuit of Narration

As mentioned earlier, Phelan's article ("Self-Help for Narratee") works specifically to recalibrate the relationship between narratees and narrative audiences through a look at SPN. He offers a balance between the structuralist and rhetorical approaches to points of reception in the narrative situation, eventually asserting a perennial overlap between the two—and thus a need for each—that takes place in examples of SPN. Within this discussion, Phelan looks specifically at the self-help and "how to" genre of SPN, with Lorrie Moore's *Self-Help* as a working example. Phelan writes, "Where the standard narrative in the self-help genre always leads its audiences (actual and authorial) onward and upward toward Self-Fulfillment and the Better Life (if genres has official songs self-help's would be 'Nearer My God to Thee'), Moore's narratee-protagonist is on a slow course to nowhere." Phelan classifies Moore's text as an exception in the genre of self-help narratives, the norm being one of positivity and advancement. Phelan sees Moore as satirizing the self-help genre, done in part by the blurring of the separation between narratee and narrative audience that he sees at the core of Moore's text (and many other SPN texts as well). Overall, "The stories paint a very bleak picture of women's chances for satisfying relationships."

This use of SPN to satirize the self-help genre is similar to what Diaz does in his story, “How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie.” Marisel Moreno’s analysis (2007) situates Diaz’s story within the general context of Dominican literature in the United States, along with the Dominican experience within hegemonic structures and the aftermath of the Dominican diaspora (103). In her article, “Debunking Myths, Destabilizing Identities: A Reading of Junot Diaz’s ‘How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, and Halfie,’” Moreno argues that the story “systematically questions the myth of the ‘Dominican Dream” (103), and contends that “the recognition of Diaz as part of the U.S. literary landscape, then, constitutes a significant step towards the integration of Dominican literature into both the American mainstream and the U.S. Latino literary canons” (104). The majority of Moreno’s analysis focuses on the ways in which Diaz’s story signifies this breakthrough towards the mainstream, and how Diaz’s thematic emphases on issues of race, class, and masculinity simultaneously bring these issues to the forefront of the American awareness of the Dominican experience. Within this analysis, Moreno does offer important nods towards certain narrative aspects of the story, including its link to the self-help genre (106). Moreno offers, “As a text that rhetorically mimics ‘Self-Help’ and ‘How-To’ literature, Diaz’s story has a narrative dimension that is not strictly narrative in form, which allows this seemingly straightforward piece to be read like a story, even if it does not conform to conventional definitions of this particular genre” (106).

Diaz’s story is a rather embellished account, from Yunior’s perspective, of “how-to” go about dating girls based on their ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, as seen quite clearly in the title. The story employs consistent use of second-person; the first sentence reads, “Wait for your brother and your mother to leave the apartment” (143), and this “you” remains constant throughout the text. The narrator, presumably Yunior,

proceeds to walk through various categories of advice, offering tips and suggestions for ways to approach aspects of the dating experience. This advice ranges from which restaurants to choose, to how to style "your" hair, to what to expect physically from each girl at the end of the night. An example:

> You have choices. If the girl's from around the way, take her to El Cibao for dinner. Order everything in your busted-up Spanish. Let her correct you if she's Latina and amaze her if she's black. If she's not from around the way, Wendy's will do. As you walk to the restaurant talk about school. A local girl won't need stories about the neighborhood but the other ones might. Supply the story about the loco who'd been storing canisters of tear gas in his basement for years, how one day the canister cracked and the whole neighborhood got a dose of the military-strength stuff. Don't tell her that your moms knew right away what it was, that she recognized its smell form the year the United States invaded your island. (145-46)

Similar passages from the story cover other aspects of "what to do," and throughout the text Yunior references certain successes and failures that he himself has had based on these different strategies. As Moreno points out, "The parodic nature of this text is achieved through its mimesis of the 'Self-Help' genre and its undermining of the narrative voice's authority" (106). Yunior's "authority" is undermined throughout the story due to the fact that he clearly is not successful in dating (as evidenced by the surrounding stories in *Drown*), therefore leaving the narratee—and narrative audience—wondering why he or she would be taking advice from him in the first place.

Like Moore's *Self-Help*, Diaz's story is undoubtedly satirizing the "How-To" genre, as Moreno points out; but there is an added narrative dimension in Diaz's text, which I see as even further complicating his use of "how-to" and, more importantly, his use of SPN. Specifically, the overlap between Yunior and Diaz himself creates complexities for a reader of the text. This overlap is quite broadly accepted in most critical approaches to *Drown* and also *This is How You Lose Her*. Susan Balee (2013) refers to Yunior as Diaz's "narrative alter ego" (338) and "avatar" (339); although he doesn't go so far as to

unequivocally equate the two, David Cowart (2006) describes Yunior as being "fairly close to Diaz himself" (193).[2] This is not to say that *Drown* is wholly autobiographical, because it certainly is not. But it also would be inaccurate to downplay the purposeful connections between Yunior and Diaz, as evidenced by interviews with Diaz and simple biographical similarities that are impossible to ignore. This raises similar questions to those addressed in my next chapter in terms of distinguishing between author, implied author, and narrator in cases in which lines between these narrative agents seem to be blatantly blurred. While certain theoretical approaches to texts deny considerations of the actual author—and while many scholars might deride the connection I see between Yunior and Diaz—I see these considerations as products of my actual reading experience and, more importantly, products of undeniable overlaps between these narrative agents. While he does not go as far as authors such as Paul Auster or Philip Roth, Diaz is overtly playing with conventions of autobiography here, as evidenced by textual and paratextual elements. This overlap is particularly important in "How to Date" because it raises significant questions about exactly whom this dating "advice" is meant for. Is this really a "How-To" story? Or is it more of a self-reflexive cautionary tale, intended to reveal the mistakes and regrets of Yunior and, perhaps, Diaz himself?

Midway through the story, the "How-To guide" describes Howie, the neighborhood kid with "two killer mutts" (146). He then writes, "If his dogs haven't cornered a cat, he will walk behind you and ask, Hey, Yunior, is that your new fuckbuddy?" (146). This direct reference to Yunior is problematic. Does this mean that

[2] More than the other Diaz scholars I reference, Cowart overtly acknowledges the multiplicity of viewpoints found within *Drown*, of which Yunior is just a part. Cowart describes *Drown* quite poignantly as "some version of the very blend so much commended as American mosaic" (192). This "mosaic" of narrators, in my reading, is the main reason for Cowart's hesitancy to blatantly equate Diaz and Yunior, although it does seem clear to me that in the stories focused on Yunior, Cowart does acknowledge this overlap.

Yunior is the narratee of this story, with someone else as the narrator? Is the narrator Diaz? Is Diaz giving dating advice to Yunior? But what if Diaz and Yunior are the "same" person—does this mean that Diaz is giving advice to himself? And considering the satirical nature of the "How-To" elements of the story, why would someone give fake advice to him- or herself? Is Diaz creating a mock "Self-Help" guide to himself? And if so, why? These questions and challenges are direct products of Diaz's use of the narrative "you," and they become even more compelling when taken in the context of various other usages of "you" in Diaz's two collections.

Diaz enacts a similar challenge through a use of SPN in *This is How You Lose Her*, exemplified in the story "Alma." The narrative complexity takes shape in the first sentence: "You, Yunior, have a girlfriend named Alma, who has a long tender horse neck and a big Dominican ass that seems to exist in a fourth dimension beyond jeans" (48). The question of who "you" is is answered quite quickly: there's no doubt that "you" is Yunior. Beginning with this first line, Yunior is consistently referred to in the second-person throughout the rest of the story. The narrator—Yunior, speaking to himself—proceeds to recount the story of what takes place between Yunior and his girlfriend, Alma. As in the majority of the stories in *This is How You Lose Her*, "Alma" reports Yunior's infidelities and mistakes that lead to him eventually screwing things up with a girlfriend who he seems to genuinely love—at least this is the case if we take the narrator's word for it. Yunior is proud of Alma—"You brag to your boys that she has more albums than any of them do, that she says terrible whitegirl things while you fuck" (48)—and he seems to be quite happy in the relationship—"It's wonderful! Wonderful!"—although his reasons seem to be mostly sexual and quite misogynistic. Before long, the "wonderful" breaks down because "one June day Alma discovers that you are also fucking this beautiful freshman girl name Laxmi" (49). Like in so many of the stories in

This is How You Lose Her, Yunior's inability to be sexually loyal to one woman leads to loss and regret. The story ends with the following scene:

> Instead of lowering your head and copping to it like a man, you pick up the journal as one might hold a baby's beshatted diaper, as one might pinch a recently benutted condom. You glance at the offending passages. Then you look at her and smile a smile your dissembling face will remember until the day you die. Baby, you say, baby, this is part of my novel.
> This is how you lose her. (50)

Beyond the mere fact that Diaz chose it as the title of the entire collection, this last line is telling within this current discussion of SPN.

We know that "you" in this story is a reference to Yunior, and we also know that Yunior is, to a certain extent, a biographical extension of Diaz. The story is told in simple present tense, as if the actions are taking place in real time, but contextual elements—and the way it is read—point towards the fact that these things have actually already happened, that the narrator is re-creating for Yunior what took place, in the past, between him (Yunior) and his ex-girlfriend, Alma. This re-creational nature of the story lends towards a self-reflexive quality, similar to that found in "How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie." When the narrator bluntly informs Yunior, "This is how you lose her," he doesn't seem to be saying so in a warning, cautionary way. Instead, it seems to actually read more as "This is how you lost her." The story is seemingly functioning as a reminder to Yunior of how he screwed up, of where he went wrong, and of the various ways he continuously chose the incorrect course of action. This is reminiscent of DelConte's term "self-address autodiegesis," and this sense of self-reflexive, almost memoir-like recounting of events is evident in many of the stories in *This is How You Lose Her*, including "The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars," another story recounting Yunior's infidelity and eventual loss. Self-reflexivity is by no means uncommon

in literature, but where Diaz's text is unique is in the manner in which he employs SPN to enact this self-reflexivity.

I choose the term self-reflexive second-person in the context of Diaz because, in my reading, the narrative "you" in these particular stories serves a sort of mirroring purpose: the narrator—sometimes Yunior, sometimes unnamed, sometimes presumably Diaz himself—forces the narratee—sometimes Yunior, sometimes presumably Diaz—to look at his own self and his own actions. The "you" forces self-reflection for Yunior, or for Diaz-through-Yunior. So whenever the narrator writes, "This is how you lose her," Yunior is made to accept the reality of what happened between he and Alma and to come to terms with the fact that "you" lost her because of his own selfish and irresponsible actions. In this same situation, if we grant the fact that this narrator is, to a certain degree, equivalent to Diaz, and that Yunior functions as a quasi-"avatar" for Diaz, then we have Diaz/Yunior forcing his own self-reflexivity. In other words, the situation is a closed cycle between narrator and narratee, with both roles being filled by incarnations of the same person. In this sense, the narrative "you" is functioning as first-, second-, and third-person simultaneously, thus furthering DelConte's assertion "that second-person narration is also always already either first- or third-person." This seemingly "closed circuit" of narration correlates with the "noncommunicative text" explained by Fludernik, which she refers to as "reflector-mode narration." When Diaz writes, "You, Yunior," a reader who has read *Drown* and is somewhat familiar with Diaz's own biography will quite quickly read this as a self-address; thus, "you" becomes entangled with "I." The second-to-last line of the story, in which Yunior exclaims to Alma that the affair is "part of my novel," only further strengthens the connection between Yunior and Diaz, since the story itself found its way into the story being written and published by real author Diaz. Thus, the collection could perhaps aptly be titled *This is How Junot Diaz Loses Her*.

In “First Person, Second Person, Same Person: Narrative as Epistemology,” Mieke Bal offers a similar analysis of the overlap between personhood(s) that takes place in the use of SPN. Her article focuses specifically on the relationship between narrative and epistemology through a close reading of two anthropological texts by Hubert Damisch and Johannes Fabian, respectively. In her reading of these texts, Bal focuses on each author’s use of second personhood, and how this usage entails specific epistemological implications for the texts, the authors, and their readers. She describes the texts: “Both books, then, are semantically ‘third-person,’ syntactically ‘first-person,’ and present attempts to achieve pragmatically a ‘second-person’ narrative” (297). This overlap is similar to that identified by DelConte, although Bal’s analysis brings in the topic of epistemology. The second section of the article focuses specifically on this relationship, where she writes, “Narrative as a mode entails that inevitably metanarrative position” (302). She continues later: “First and second-person positions are by definition reversible, and one way to measure the success of this epistemic style is precisely to examine the actual reversibility” (308). Again, this interchangeability echoes DelConte’s assertions, and in the case of Yunior/Diaz, Bal’s analysis seems to be spot on. Bal proceeds to go into further analyses of the two anthropological texts, illuminating the ways in which the fluid identifications between the first- and second-persons in the texts create challenges to readers—as well as to the authors themselves—in regions such as “truth,” mimeticism, and the construction of knowledge—each of which resides within the category of epistemology. In relation to Diaz’s text, Bal’s article stresses the centrality of the narrator position regarding epistemological concerns of the narrative text, and how SPN plays a unique role within this sphere. Thus, the overlaps between Yunior/narrator/Diaz bear heavily on issues of meaning and knowledge.

This same form of self-reflexivity is at play in Diaz's satirization of the "How-To" genre in "How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie." Rather than an actual guide of "how to" go about finding success in dating girls from different ethnic groups, the story reads as a reflection on how *not* to go about dating these girls, based on the experiences of Yunior—and presumably Diaz—himself. As mentioned early, midway through the story Diaz includes a direct reference to Yunior, again solidifying the equation between "you" and Yunior. As with "Alma," this overlap between "you" and Yunior necessarily involves an overlap between "you" and Diaz, leading the reader to appropriately read the story as being the result of specific experiences in Yunior's life. For example, when Diaz writes, "Run a hand through your hair like the whiteboys do even thought the only thing that runs easily through your hair is Africa" (145), it is reasonable to see this as a reference to Diaz's own mixed heritage. Cowart discusses Diaz's utilization of racial identity in *Drown*, pointing out how "Yunior intimates that his own features are irregular" (204), and asserting, "Diaz suggests at once the coalescence and the progressive refraction of immigrant identity" (204). Moreno takes similar notice of Diaz's emphasis on race: "The protagonist's choice to emphasize and/or undermine certain aspects of his ethnic, racial, class, and gender identities, problematizes fixed notions of identity and illustrates that identity can be fluid and situational" (108). With this in mind, Diaz's reference to Africa "running" through "your" (Yunior's/Diaz's) hair is related closely to Diaz's own experiences with the "refraction" of his racial identity. Again, this is heightened significantly by the presence of the self-reflexive narrative "you" in the story.

This type of SPN has been noted previously, although to a rather minor extent. Within her discussion of "nonnatural use of you" (a clear precursor to later work within unnatural narratology), Fludernik (1994) explicates this nonnatural use for what she sees as "the purpose of story telling and a subsequent naturalization of this oddity by means of

half-realistic frame projection." One example of this type of naturalization is the self-reflexive you I see at work in Diaz; Fludernik writes, "Such naturalizations include the option of claiming that the character is telling the story to himself in the second person." Within her analysis, Fludernik refers to this type of "naturalization" as problematic and removed from real-world storytelling. Alice Bell and Astrid Ensslin also remark on this type of narrative "you" with a more inclusive tone in their article, "'I know what it was. You know what it was': Second-Person Narration in Hypertext Fiction." Within their discussion of David Herman's take on SPN in *Story Logic*, Bell and Ensslin explore Herman's term "referential you." Herman uses the term to explain instances in which the protagonist, who is also the narrator, becomes his/her own narratee. Bella and Ensslin explain, "In this case, the narrator refers to him or herself with 'you'" (314). This also relates to the intended audience of a text: "The ideal narrative audience of a second-person narrative, for example, could be a referential 'you' or an addressed 'you' or indeed a combination of the two" (324). In the case of Diaz, the narrator, the "referential you," and the ideal narrative audience all seem to collapse into one individual, represented by the overlap between Yunior and Diaz.

Overlap between "you" and the narrator/author is also not unique to Diaz. In her article focusing on the variations of SPN between literary and conversational storytelling, Jarmila Mildorf, like Fludernik, Bell, and Ensslin, notes this common aspect of SPN. She too references Herman's *Story Logic* and adopts his term "double deixis," which refers to cases of "you" that fall between common categorical lines. Mildorf explains, "Doubly deictic you makes it difficult for readers to decide whether the pronoun is to be interpreted as generalized or generic you, as the protagonist's self-address, as the text's internal address to some narratee, or as an external address to the reader—or, in fact, as a combination of some or all of these possibilities at the same time" (78). Mildorf is outlining

the different options presented to readers in the case of doubly deictic narrative "you"; the second option resonates quite clearly with these examples—a "self-address." But where Diaz's text *is* unique is that this "self" is not simply a protagonist acting as self-reflexive narrator; instead, this "self" also entails involvement with the real author. As mentioned before, Balee refers to Yunior as Diaz's "alter-ego"; she references a 2008 interview with Diaz in which he says, "I kind of have the same narrator [Yunior], the same alter-ego in most of the work" (344); and by the end of her article, she uses the tags of "Yunior/Diaz" and "Diaz/Yunior." Balee's article focuses on code-switching and role-playing in *This is How You Lose Her*, and Diaz's use of the self-referential "you" creates a role in which he (Diaz) as author is using a conduit (Yunior) to speak to himself about what he's (Diaz/Yunior) done, why he's done it, and how much trouble it's cost him. Within this narrative situation, the "role" Diaz is playing is quite complex, functioning on certain levels simultaneously as author, narrator, character, and narratee. Self-referential second-person is recognized and used in a number of texts, but the added element of Diaz's own personal connection and role in these texts adds a unique and important layer to his narrative "you." Perhaps another revision to the Diaz's title is appropriate: *This is How I Lost Her*.

These stories exemplify the manner in which Diaz incorporates the narrative "you" in a number of ways within his texts, but thus far each example has been one in which Yunior functions in the "you" role. To make matters even more complex, within both *Drown* and *This is How You Lose Her*, there are multiple stories in which other characters function within the roles of narrator and narratee; thus, Yunior is not the only "you" in the text. For example, "Flaca" starts off with the following sentence: "Your left eye used to drift when you were tired or upset" (*TIHYLH* 81). Upon first reading, a reader of *This is How You Lose Her* is perhaps unsure of who this "you" is referring to. She knows

that, thus far, Yunior hasn't been described to have a "drifting" left eye, but this doesn't necessarily mean that the "you" can't be him. At this point, the reader has already been presented with a number of "yous," so a certain amount of confusion might be expected. On the next page, she learns who "you" is: "When I saw you, first in our Joyce class and then at the gym, I knew I'd call you Flaca" (82). The narrator references his room "overrun by books" and his Dominican family, so the situation is now clear: the narrator is Yunior, and the "you" he is speaking to is a girl he calls Flaca, whose real name is Veronica Hardrada (82). Accordingly, Yunior proceeds to recount to Flaca all that went wrong and the various ways he screwed things up ("At least you were honest, which is more than I can say for me" [83]). Mildorf explores this type of SPN in her analysis of conversational storytelling, recounting an example in which a son, Greg, re-tells a story to his father, Joseph, in which Joseph is the main actant. Like in "Flaca," Greg speaks to Joseph in the "you" form, recounting what his father did in the past ("Second Person Narration," 85-86). Although Mildorf explains this sort of SPN as particular to conversational storytelling, it seems as if Diaz is doing the same in "Flaca," with the same incorporation of "direct speech" (87) and "constructed dialogue" (88). Mildorf asserts, "It is significant that Greg addresses his father's story to his father," (89), and I propose the same significance for Yunior's (Diaz's) decision to address "Flaca" to Flaca.

Another example of Diaz's variegated SPN comes in "Otravida, Otravez," a first-person story told from the perspective of a woman named Yasmin. The first-person framing is consistent throughout the story, but as in the rest of the stories, the presence of the narrative "you" remains. Many of these "yous" are further examples of the stylistic, colloquial "you" mentioned previously: "You'd think, given the blood we see, that there's a great war going on out in the world" (57); "Or a day like this, so cold your mind shifts every time the wind does" (71); "I guess it's true what they say: if you wait long enough

everything changes" (73). But there are more significant "yous" in the story as well, in which Yasmin seems to be employing some of the same self-reflexivity that Yunior does. At one point in the story, Yasmin is describing Ramon—the main male presence in her life, who is both her boss and her (married) lover—and she recounts her early interactions with him:

> That was the same voice he used to tell me to swab a toilet or scrub an oven. I didn't like him then; he was too arrogant and too loud and I took to humming when I heard him discussing fees with the owners of the houses. But at least he didn't' try to rape you like many of the other bosses. At least there was that. He kept his eyes and his hands mostly to himself. He had other plans, important plans, he told us, and just watching him you could believe it. (63)

In this passage, the first "you" can be read two ways: it could be read as a generalized "you," emphasizing the fact that, in general, Ramon wasn't out to rape women he came across, whether they be Yasmin or the generalized reader of the story. On the other hand, the "you" here could validly be read as Yasmin reminding herself that Ramon specifically did not try to rape her, while also hinting at the fact that Yasmin had dealt with attempted rape from previous bosses. These various "yous" within the story are another example of how Diaz's use of SPN defies a single, unified approach to being labeled and explained.

These two examples from "Flaca" and "Otravida, Otravez" help to highlight the fact that the presence of "you" inside of Diaz's texts involves a rather complex system of various referents. There is not a unified "you" within the text. First and foremost, most readers wouldn't even think to label Diaz's stories as examples of SPN due to the fact that the narrative "yous" are not used consistently and universally across the spectrum of the stories. Despite the fact that even the title *This is How You Lose Her* explicitly incorporates the narrative "you," very little notice of his use of SPN has been taken. This perhaps echoes with the previously mentioned sentiments of scholars such as Fludernik

and Richardson concerning narrative theory's own history of hesitance towards approaching and exploring SPN; but I feel that an equally important factor in this ignorance of Diaz's implementation of SPN is the subtle, complex, and sometimes befuddling manner in which Diaz's employs the narrative "you." There are "yous" throughout *Drown* and *This is How You Lose Her*, but they are embedded in the text in ways that do not lend themselves to being quickly dissected. Many of the "yous" serve descriptive purposes, fitting closely with the "standard" approach to SPN (i.e. Morrissette and others) that sees "you" as working to enact a heightened since of interaction and involvement for the reader. Other "yous" are self-reflexive addresses by the self-referential narrator, speaking to him or herself in the second-person for purposes of self-reflection and contemplation on previous experiences. Sometimes this "you" refers to Yunior, the central protagonist for the majority of the stories whose identity has been noted to be closely linked with Diaz's own; other times, the "you" narrator or "you" narratee is another character, another figure in Diaz's stories. In other words, Diaz's "you" is a shifting and ever-changing narrative agent in the texts, enacting an assortment of rhetorical effects for the reader.

The majority of criticism on Diaz's work focuses on thematic elements of race and class, on masculinity and gender, and on the immigrant experience in contemporary America—specifically the Dominican American experience. Within these large categories of thematic emphasis, scholars have also quite unanimously taken notice of Diaz's unique style of prose and his ability to write with a voice that is simultaneously authentic—through its use of colloquialism—and ideologically complex. Through my reading and analysis of Diaz's use of SPN, I contend that the "yous" present throughout the stories of *Drown* and *This is How You Lose Her* are major tools used by Diaz to enact these various thematic concerns. For example, in her article Moreno emphasizes Diaz's

various forms of destabilization and subversion within “How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie,” including destabilizations based on traditional categories of race, class, and gender. Although Moreno makes note of Diaz’s use of SPN in his satirization of the “How-To” genre, I propose that the “you” in the story plays a much larger role in the central destabilizing theme of the story. The presence of the self-reflexive “you” in the story encourages a stronger depiction of these problematic ethnic and racial stereotypes by linking these experiences to Diaz’s own life, while also allowing for the opportunity for “you” to produce a stronger emotional interaction on behalf of the reader. Balee (2013) similarly bases her analysis on “code-switching” in *This is How You Lose Her*, but she fails to mention how this “code-switching” in large part takes place in the text through Diaz’s constant switching between narrative agents (narrators and narratees) and the central role of SPN in this switching. She refers to Diaz as “the master crafter of narratives” (346) and she proposes “perhaps Diaz wants English readers to feel like immigrants when they encounter the mixed languages of his books” (348). In my reading, specifically of a story such as “Flaca” in which Yunior/Diaz is speaking to himself about his own experiences, it seems as if this very enactment of reader-as-immigrant is a result of the closed-circuit of narration created by Diaz’s use of the self-reflexive second-person. Yes, we get to “hear” the self-narration taking place in “Flaca,” but are we really part of it? It seems as if this self-reflexive “you” works to create an “Other” position for readers, rather than pulling them into a relational experience with the primary actants of the story. The “you” of the story enacts the readerly experience proposed by Balee.

An assessment of the complex examples of SPN in Diaz’s texts leads to important amendments to the discussion of the narrative “you.” First, I contend that previous studies of SPN, in their often large-scale approaches and specified theoretical concerns, have often overlooked one of the more common uses of “you” within various

types of storytelling. I have labeled this “you” as stylistic second-person for the purposes of highlighting the fact that this “you” is used not to specifically relate to a reader or narrative audience; this is a natural consequence, but I do not see it as the central rhetorical concern. Instead, this “you” is used as a device of description, offering a way for the narrator to better depict the person or scene or experience he or she is trying to explain. This is by no means uncommon in either literary or conversational storytelling, as speakers often use this type of “you.” This does indeed involve a direct appeal to the narratee or narrative audience, as all uses of this generalized, hypothetical “you” do, but this “you” is not reliant on a specifically prescribed identification of or relationship to the “you” in question.

Along with this rather simple case of SPN, I also assert that Diaz’s texts offer a unique addition to the previously noted case of self-referential “you.” Collapsing the division between narrator/narratee through SPN is not unique to Diaz, as noted by scholars such as Herman and Mildorf, but where I see Diaz’s texts as unique is in the added element of the close relation between character/narrator Yunior and real author Junot Diaz. For Yunior to speak to himself when he says “you” is perhaps no special thing, but for Diaz to be enacting his own self-reflexivity through his “avatar” Yunior is a unique extension of what Bal claims is the inevitable “metanarrative position” of all narratives, of DelConte’s category of “self-address autodiegesis,” and Fludernik’s “reflector-mode heterocommunicative text,” leaving readers validly questioning their own relation to the text. If the “you” implies a conversation between Diaz and himself, does this necessarily require the reader to be outside of this conversation, unable to interact? Does this negate previous readings of SPN and in fact deny the reader the opportunity to better empathize with Yunior/Diaz, instead leaving him or her as an “other” to the text, removed from its thematic implications? I see these questions as important in readings of

Drown and *This is How You Lose Her*, along with valuable additions to the types of rhetorical effects possible through the use of SPN. This self-reflexivity, added to the fact that there are many different "yous" throughout the texts that refer to various narrators and narratees, provides helpful clarifications for readings of Diaz's texts and add to discussions of potential varieties of the narrative "you."

In McCarthy's *Child of God*, the narrative "you" serves as a prime example of SPN's tendency towards creating an opportunity for authors to enhance their readers' connection to the text, in whatever way he or she may choose to do so, whether it be to empathize with a character like Lester Ballard, or to further instill a sense of disconnect from a character or story element. But this is not the only way that "you" can or does function, as evidenced by texts like Diaz's. In these cases, "you" is not necessarily a call for interaction from the reader; instead, this "you" sometimes might actually serve as a signal of a lack of potential empathy or understanding. At certain times, Diaz seems to be reversing the readerly role in his text, emphasizing the fact that he or she is not on the same level—diegetic or realistic—as figures like Yunior, Flaca, or others. Rather than acting as an agent of readerly connection, Diaz's "yous" oftentimes further differentiate themselves from the readers. Most of his readers have not been Dominican Americans; they have not had fathers who abandoned them; they have not cheated on multiple lovers and spouses; they have not spent time as drugdealers or been surrounded by poverty and destitution. And, I propose, the "you" in these stories is not asking them to pretend that they have done these things. Instead, the reader remains outside observer, bearing witness to Diaz's own contemplation of his experiences in these various categories. It is in this act of witness that the reader is able to "experience" the rhetorical and thematic emphases of Diaz's texts, and this functions in large part because of Diaz's

variegated and intricate utilization of SPN. The stories in *Drown* and *This is How You Lose Her* are examples—and not the only ones—of how second-person narration is much more than a simple, unified use of a pronoun; instead, it is a complex narrative tool capable of enacting all sorts of stylistic, thematic, and narratological effects on the reading of a narrative text.

Chapter 3

Roth is Roth as Roth: Autofiction and the Implied Author

Since Wayne Booth introduced the term in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), perhaps no topic of narrative theory has been more widely discussed or more fervently argued than the implied author. While Booth is responsible for the term, the concept itself—and the surrounding debates—has been present in narrative discussions for centuries. In their comprehensive text on the topic, *The Implied Author: Concept and Controversy*, Kindt and Muller propose, "We find that Booth did not create *the* implied author concept in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* but actually introduced a cover term for several concepts or variants of a single concept" (7). Kindt and Muller point out the centuries-long heritage of debate behind the "single concept"—a heritage that has only been deepened and expanded since Booth introduced "implied author." This single concept—and the main impetus for Booth's creation of the term "implied author"—is closely related to broad-ranging theoretical discussions of literary theory, including authorly intention and biographical criticism. Booth introduces the "implied author" in order to, among other things, engage with the New Critics and their all-out refusal of authorly considerations; at the same time, the term also allows Booth—and others—to avoid a full-scale move towards biographical criticism. This theme of balancing between these two poles correlates with the critical impetus and "single concept" mentioned by Kindt and Muller. Many and most narratologists and narrative theorists since *The Rhetoric of Fiction* have had something to say about the subject, usually falling on one side or the other on a discussion around the usefulness of the term itself. By "usefulness" I implicitly am speaking about the accuracy, viability, and all-around applicability of the term in relation to the manner in which various critics have or have not been able to apply strategic components of "the implied author" to critical approaches to narrative texts.

Contemporary narratologists—and contemporary narratives—are no exception in this context: they too continue the ongoing discussion and debate surrounding the implied author.

In this chapter, I first lay out a historical look at the tradition of debate surrounding Booth's term. Beginning with Booth's somewhat ambiguous and open-ended definition, I then move on to seminal critics of narrative theory—Genette, Bal, Prince—and their own responses to Booth and to each other in the context of the implied author, eventually leading to more recent and contemporary approaches. Then, in the context of this historical background, I seek to offer my own take on the subject in relation to its applicability to postmodern narrative techniques and, accordingly, the direct implications these techniques have on understandings of Booth's term. By looking at contemporary narrative texts—and the critical approaches that make up the majority of scholarly attention leveled at them—I hope to create a contemporary defense of the term and the manner in which its existence in our critical lexicon continues to provide fruitful lenses through which these narrative texts gain further critical agency. I see these contemporary texts as being catalysts for further discussion within narrative theory concerning the implied author; this chapter is my entry into such a discussion.

My response to this ongoing discussion about the implied author is buttressed by close readings of texts employing unique metanarrative and meta-diegetic techniques. Specifically Philip Roth, Paul Auster, and Bret Easton Ellis utilize the technique of shared names between author and narrator/character. I borrow Serge Doubrovsky's term autofiction, although I offer my own variations to Doubrovsky's usage. These authors are not the first to use this technique, as many others utilize autofictive elements in various

degrees.[3] What Roth, Auster, and Ellis offer are autofictive texts from authors 1) that are both critically and generally popular, and 2) that are still *alive* and *writing*, which is particularly relevant for this current study. I contend that these contemporary autofictive texts create unique challenges to readers—challenges to our perceptions of the traditional narrative elements author and narrator; i.e. readers are dared to attempt to distinguish between Philip Roth-as-author and Philip Roth-as-character/narrator. Concurrently, challenges to distinguishing between author and narrator create an even more problematic attempt when thinking about the implied author. If notions of the implied author have already shown to be problematic in a traditional, mimetic narrative text, how much more difficult are they in the context of a text in which the author, narrator, and character all share a name, biography, and in many ways personality? Through looking at these postmodern narratives, I propose to offer a theoretically synthetic take on the subject of the implied author and on ways in which this traditional narrative term can perhaps find new relevance for contemporary readers.

The Implied Author

Although certain aspects of Booth's rhetorical approach to fiction and narrative in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* have become outdated and untenable in the face of poststructuralist theoretical approaches, his term "implied author" remains a widely discussed, debated, and used term in narrative studies, as well as literary studies as a whole. Booth's text is an integral cornerstone for narrative studies and narratology; it's a safe bet that almost every critical text related to the field will include *The Rhetoric of Fiction* in its Works Cited or Bibliography. The text covers a wide array of elements of fiction, each of which Booth confronts with his overall aim of tearing down many of the

[3] In my Conclusion chapter, I give an overview of various examples of texts that also incorporate autofiction.

(then) long-standing aspects of traditional and "proper" approaches to fictional texts. In Part I, Booth tackles five of what he terms the "general rules of fiction," to which he offers his own rebuttal. He begins with his well-known exploration of the difference between "telling and showing," eventually showing the futility of a text completely differentiating between the two and asserting that readers "must never forget that though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear" (20). He also discusses topics such as fictional realism; author objectivity or neutrality; the impossible concept of "pure art" that ignores the audience; and the objectivity of the reader. On a large scale, Booth's focus is in defiance of certain critical approaches, namely Formalism and New Criticism, that employ literary criticism on a basis of the "perfect text"; for Booth, this perfect text is in fact an impossibility, and critics are at fault when they ignore the various rhetorical factors that, according to Booth, undoubtedly play a part in the creation (authors) and perception (readers) of fictional narratives.

Within this broad argument about the seemingly undeniable rhetorical nature of fiction, Booth specifically looks at the place of the author in the schematic of critical approaches to fiction. The general rule to which he is responding is that "All authors should be objective" (67). To this, of course, Booth offers a direct refutation. Booth breaks down the term "objective" into three qualities, one of which is neutrality. He defines what it means to be objective or neutral, specifically for an author, and then gives his own take: "It should be unnecessary here to show that no author can ever attain this kind of objectivity" (68). He makes an important clarification from here, pointing out how it is possible—necessary, in fact—for many authors to be "objective" or "neutral" in relation to certain political or religious ideals or topics. This type of neutrality is not the one Booth is denying; instead, he is speaking about formalistic assertions towards a sort of total neutrality in which the author is able to escape all semblances of his personality and his

individuality. Booth's idea of an authorly ability to escape certain aspects of themselves—yet an inability to escape others—is problematic in ways, and this somewhat unrealistic ideal can again be contributed to the balancing act Booth is engaging in in terms of his response to the New Critics. Within this discussion, Booth begins to address the topic of the implied author.

Booth makes it clear that he is not the first person to think about this concept, just as Kindt and Muller point out in *The Implied Author*. He mentions Kathleen Tillotson and her term "second self," which is very similar to the implied author, along with Jessamyn West's idea of the author's creation of the "official scribe" within the text itself, which serves as a representation of the real author. Responding to and synthesizing with these other approaches, Booth's own ideas of the presence of an author within the text are clearly integral to his theory: "Whether we call this implied author an 'official scribe,' or adopt the term recently revived by Kathleen Tillotson—the author's 'second self'—it is clear that the picture the reader gets of this presence is one of the author's most important effects" (71). For Booth, this "second self" of the author is of the utmost importance in terms of the reader's reaction to and understanding of a fictional text. He continues: "However impersonal he 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 towards all values" (71). He explains this second self as being created *within the text* and being different from the actual author; he compares this to writing a personal letter involves the creation of "different versions of oneself" depending on the various relationships with the different correspondents. Similarly, the different versions of the real author depend on the readers of the fictional text; for Booth, these perceptions are the result of readerly interpretations of the implied author.

He talks about some of the work done by readers when trying to interpret a text, along with the terms that are used to describe this work. He mentions “theme,” “meaning,” and “symbolic significance” (73), and while he sees these sorts of terms as useful, he also declares them to be lacking. For Booth, these terms only get at part of the interpretation, and they also are lacking in their ability to cover the large amount of possible meanings that each text supplies. He writes, “But most works worth reading have so many possible ‘themes,’ so many possible mythological or metaphorical or symbolic analogues, that to find any one of them, and to announce it as what the work is *for*, is to do at best a very small part of the critical task” (73). This is where the implied author comes in; according to Booth, the implied author provides a platform on which the “artistic whole” can be addressed: “The chief value to which *this* implied author is committed, regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life, is that which is expressed by the total form” (73-74). Booth’s insistence on an “artistic whole” is clearly a remnant of a more formalistic approach; although he is challenging the New Critics, he still sees value in the idea of the “wholeness” of a text and on the idea of the power of the “total form.” Booth explains that the “total form” he attributes to the implied author involves three important terms: style, tone, and technique. These three elements are all branches of the implied author, according to Booth, and the combination of these terms has crucial implications for readers: “The ‘implied author’ chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices” (74-75). By distinguishing between the real and implied author, we can avoid “pointless” conversations about the author’s *sincerity*; this is another example of Booth’s New Critical hangover here, continuing to avoid the intentional fallacy while also trying to somehow combat this avoidance. By avoiding these “pointless” conversations, we can instead assess the “sincerity” of a text by looking at

whether or not the implied author is “in harmony with himself” (75); i.e. does the text involve a consistency between the values and reliability of the implied author and the “explicit narrative character”? For Booth, the “sincerity” of a text comes through the implied author rather than any sort of perception of the real author’s intentions or personal faults.

Booth illustrates the importance of the term in relation to the reliability of the author in Chapter Eight of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. And he further expands upon his usage in *The Company We Keep* (1988) and his chapter “Resurrection of the Implied Author: Why Bother?” in Phelan and Rabinowitz’s *A Companion to Narrative Theory* (2005). Booth’s introduction and exploration of the term serves as an undeniable foundation for studies focused on the implied author. Yet, interestingly, Booth himself never quite provides an unequivocal, unitary definition of the term. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that Booth’s usage of “implied author” leaves more room for variegated interpretations of the term than it does for a unified approach. Kindt and Muller explain that Booth’s terminology portrays the implied author as either “1) an intentional product of the author in or qua the work or 2) an inference made by the recipient about the author on the basis of the work” (8). Although Booth seems to lean more towards the second option, as evidenced by his words above concerning readerly “constructions” of the implied author based on individualized readerly perceptions, Kindt and Muller maintain that Booth does not go so far as to strictly prescribe how the term needs to be used or specifically what the implied author must be in terms of readerly interaction with the text. While they acknowledge his role in pointing out the important role the implied author plays, they assert that Booth “neither specified the theoretical framework in which the implied author was to be used nor provided a methodology for identifying it in individual cases” (9). They go on to say that the ambiguity surrounding the term—and Booth’s

usage—is a key reason why it has continued to inspire so much debate and discussion, along with a wide range of theoretical applications: “The ambiguity of the term and the theory of which it was a part shows that the concept had a range of potential meanings that extended far beyond the ways in which it was actually used by Booth” (8). This wide range of “potential meanings” is evidenced clearly in the various books, articles, and commentaries published on the topic in the decades since the publication of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*.

In *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*, Brian Richardson provides a rather helpful summation of the tone of debate surrounding the implied author in narrative theory. To put it simply, most of the voices on the topic have either asserted the terms as being useful or worthless; they either find a need for it or see it as superfluous and contrived. Richardson names key names on both sides of the ledger, and eventually situates himself somewhere in the middle. William Nelles similarly depicts the major positions in the debate in the opening paragraphs of his 2011 essay “A Hypothetical Implied Author.” He categorizes the approaches into three “camps”: “Those critics who maintain a version of Wayne Booth’s original author-centered approach, including most prominently James Phelan; those who favor a strictly text-centered approach, chiefly inspired by the work of Ansgar Nunning; and a ‘big-tent’ group of moderates who would locate both of those positions within the pale, as represented by Seymour Chatman” (109). Nelles’s identification of Booth’s approach as being “author-centered” seems troublesome here, especially in light of Booth’s blatant avoidance of the intentional fallacy and his attempts specifically *not* to engage directly with elements of the flesh-and-blood author. In this sense, by “author-centered approach” Nelles is emphasizing the importance of the persona and image of the implied author—a unified narrative *agent*—in comparison to the other approaches’ denial of the existence or need

of this single agent. These three camps correspond with Richardson's depiction with Nelles's addition of the third, "middle ground" position (into which Richardson would fall). I will use the following pages to provide a detailed depiction of each of these "camps" and the major theorists exemplifying the arguments for each. To combat many of the "ambiguities" of Booth's terms, a number of theorists have introduced different wordings; specifically, they have replaced "implied" with terms such as "hypothetical" or "postulated." The importance of clarity in relations to terminology—and the semiological value that we as critics put into specific terms—is an interesting thread of discussion revealed by the implied author debate. For consistency and structural purposes, I will borrow both Richardson's and Nelles's categorical terms to depict each camp.

The Useful Implied Author

While Booth's term has since created quite a long history of debate and contention, there have been a number of narrative theorists who have accepted, adopted, and employed the term in ways according to Booth's prescriptions. I've already discussed the ambiguity of the prescriptions—and will do so again later—but there are fundamental concepts of the implied author which Booth defined and clarified. Booth's sees the implied author being the "second self" of the real author—a product not of the real author's intentions, but of the text itself. The term allows for critical approaches to fictional narratives that continue an escape from the intentional fallacy and that are not dependent upon knowledge and judgments of the flesh-and-blood author; to this end, Booth—and others—saw the implied author as being a quite useful analytical tool. This fundamental definition of the term, in large part, accounts for its continued usage in a number of critical fields. Kindt and Muller describe the lasting quality of the term: "The implied author is one of those concepts—not, one suspects, all that uncommon in the humanities—that have managed to survive intact despite their conceptual anomalies and repeated calls that

they be abolished or replaced" (12). An example of a theorist contributing to the survival of the concept of the implied author is James Phelan.

One of the most important and prolific scholars in narrative theory over the last quarter century, James Phelan's approach to narrative is fundamentally a rhetorical one. It comes as no surprise, then, that he sides in many ways with Booth, the pioneer of the rhetorical approach to fiction. This is not to say that Phelan is in all ways a direct follower of Booth; Phelan's approach to narrative, spread over a large number of essays and books published over the last 25 years, differs in many ways to the approach set forth by Booth. Most notably for this current discussion, Phelan's approach to the implied author is in fact rhetorical in both name and practice, whereas Booth's—as evidence in the preceding paragraphs—is in many ways not. Booth's offerings on the implied author are moving towards being rhetorical, and his clear frustrations with the New Critics are factors in this movement. But Booth's analysis of the implied author falls victim to many of the same formalistic fundamentals against which Booth is working. Where Booth's work is unable to avoid these contradictions, Phelan's work displays awareness of and credence to the many advances of poststructuralist and postmodernist theoretical approaches to texts, allowing for a truly rhetorical approach in comparison to certain parts of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Still, Booth begins the gestures towards these moves, and Phelan stands out as one of the "champions" of the term "implied author"; if not a champion, then at least a defender of its usefulness in narratological inquiry.

His definition of narrative—which I will reference a number of times throughout my study—is as follows: "Telling a particular story to a particular audience in a particular

situation for, presumably, a particular purpose" (*Narrative as Rhetoric*, 4).[4] Phelan's repetitive use of "particular" is telling here: the particularity of the narrative elements (story, audience, situation, and purpose) is fundamentally a question of *rhetoric*. Phelan uses this definition throughout his work, and other theorists often quote it when referencing Phelan's take on any number of narrative discussions. Phelan's work spreads over a wide range of topics, including character narration (*Living to Tell About It*), readerly interpretation and judgments (*Experiencing Fiction*), and narrator reliability ("The Lessons of 'Weymouth'"). At the center of this wide range of work resides Phelan's rhetorical definition of narrative. Accordingly, his approach to the implied author is no exception.

Throughout his work, Phelan displays a fundamental acceptance of Booth's term. In *Living to Tell About It*—his book focused on character narration—Phelan spends a number of pages putting forth his own take on the debate surrounding the implied author. He begins by offering some helpful clarifications of Booth's use of the term. In reference to Booth he explains, "His definition posits a clear continuity between the flesh-and-blood author and the author in the text, while also insisting that flesh-and-blood and textual authors are not identical" (39). This analysis seems to be an attempt by Phelan to "rhetoricize" Booth's assertions concerning the implied author, perhaps offering some clarification which Booth himself does not do in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Phelan goes on to further explicate Booth's term, as well as the various critical opinions and responses about its usefulness. Eventually Phelan arrives at his own opinion, in which he sides with Booth and asserts the term's usefulness. He provides a "redefinition" of the term: "The implied author is a streamlined version of the real author, an actual or purported subset of the real author's capacities, traits, attitudes, beliefs, values, and other properties that play

[4] Interestingly, the one aspect of the situation to which "particular" is not applied is the first one: the telling. I pick up this point in Chapter 5 when I focus on collective/missing narrators.

an active role in the construction of a particular text" (45). This definition is in certain ways aligned with Booth's, particularly in relation to the "continuity" between real and implied author mentioned previously. Yet, as mentioned previously, Phelan is enacting the rhetorical nature of the implied author in ways that Booth's definition falls short. It's as if Phelan is defending Booth's analysis of the term while adding necessary clarifications—additions that are needed in order for the term to actually react against the problems of New Criticism that inspired Booth to introduce the term in the first place. From here, Phelan works specifically to detail and explain the value of the term; for Phelan, the term has value specifically in relation to a rhetorical approach to reading, interpreting, and analyzing narratives. In *Experiencing Fiction*, Phelan references back to his words in *Living to Tell* and again says that the implied author is "a good fit for the rhetorical approach" (3n3); he even goes on to say that when he uses "the author" in *Experiencing Fiction*, he is actually referring to the implied author in terms of the redefinition he provides in *Living to Tell*. When referring to the real author, he instead uses the term "flesh-and-blood author." The term itself plays a major role throughout much of Phelan's work.

Phelan's defense of the term is evident again in *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts & Critical Debates* (2012). This text takes up the main points of contention in narrative theory from four different perspectives: rhetorical (Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz); feminist (Robyn Warhol); cognitive (David Herman); and antimimetic (Brian Richardson). Each "approach" is given a few pages to propose its own take on narrative elements such as narrative time, reception and the reader, character, and authors, narrators, and narration. This last topic contains each approach's opinion on the implied author. Within this section, Phelan further builds his defense of Booth's term. He and Rabinowitz put it quite plainly: "While our most important commitment is to the role of authorial agency in

narrative communication, we also endorse the concept of the implied author that Booth introduced in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*" (31). They again point out the various criticisms of the term, only to side with the others that have found it "very valuable" (31). To explain their defense of the term, Phelan and Rabinowitz provide four specific reasons for its utility. First, they see the term as useful in its ability to engage in "a number of serious social and historical questions that are otherwise hard to navigate" (32). This reason is similar to what Booth talks about in terms of escaping historicism regarding real-life authors, while also taking into account certain unavoidable historical factors. Next: "It gives us a useful way to talk about intention" (32). By this they mean that the implied author gives the rhetorical approach to narrative a way to talk about the intentionality of a text without having to identify the intentions of the flesh-and-blood author. The third reason they value the implied author is "it helps us explain why we often come to know different versions of the same author in different texts" (32). According to Phelan and Rabinowitz, the presence of multiple "authors" in a text is unexplainable without Booth's term. Finally, the implied author provides a way to discuss "texts with problematic authorship" (33). They list ghostwritten or collaboratively written texts as examples of this.

This idea of textual intentional as being something *different* from authorly intentional seems problematic. Rabinowitz and Phelan attempt to explain further: "The aim of the rhetorical approach is not to determine the conscious intention of the actual author (although, if available, that may be one piece of relevant information) but rather to discern the system of intentionality that explains why the text has this particular shape rather than some other one" (32). In certain ways, it seems as if Rabinowitz and Phelan are similarly avoiding the intentional fallacy in much the same way as Booth does. They seem to be simultaneously walking on both sides of an insurmountable gap; they assert that their "most important commitment" is to authorial agency, but they also stringently

cling to the seemingly “arhetorical” view of the implied author. Of course, this is a major reason in why they see the implied author as being so “useful,” although exactly *how* this utility is possible is left in question. Rabinowitz and Phelan do create a space for authorly intention as being “one piece of relevant information,” but they place much more importance on the “system of intentionality” within the text itself. They are somehow trying to be both rhetorical and formalistic, something that comes up in various denunciations of the term “implied author,” and something that I will discuss below.

In each of these texts, Phelan is working to defend and explain the “utility” of the implied author for the same fundamental reason: the term allows for otherwise problematic or unapproachable aspects of narratives to be discussed in productive sound ways (although the theoretical system surrounding the term itself might still involves complications, as mentioned above). Rabinowitz and Phelan maintain that their view of the implied author coheres to their allegiance to authorly agency because they see it “not [as] a textual construct equivalent to one of the characters but rather the agent who constructs the text” (32). Rather than being focused on distinguishing between the actual and the implied author (something that is central to my own readings later in this chapter), they are more invested “in the view that texts are not collections of free-floating signifiers but purposive communicative actions designed by some authorial agent” (*Narrative Theory*, 33). There are gaps that I see needing to be traversed in this definition in order to get past some of the contradictions I mention above. Still, this is a crucial piece of narrative theory for Phelan and others like him, including Rabinowitz and Warhol. This is not to say that they are unaware of the criticisms surrounding it, or the ambiguities of Booth’s definition. Yet, despite these “problems,” the utility of the term is unavoidable for certain approaches to narrative.

The Not-so-Useful Implied Author

While Phelan spends time defending the usefulness of the term, a number of other critics have dedicated large amounts of time asserting quite the opposite. Not long after Booth introduced the term in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, critics began to take issue with "the implied author" and present rather staunch reactions to Booth's usage. Gerard Genette and Mieke Bal present direct reactions to the term in their respective work, and a number contemporary narratologists have continued to work towards a denial of the "utility" of the implied author.

Although he neglected to discuss the term in *Narrative Discourse* (1980), Genette spends substantial time in his subsequent book published three years later: *Narrative Discourse Revisited.* He explains that *Revisited* includes "subjects not dealt with in *Narrative Discourse* but that today seem to me worth examining, if only to justify rejecting them" (9). The implied author resides in this category for Genette; he comments on the topic in the last section of the book, "Implied Author, Implied Reader?" He says it quite plainly: "In my opinion, narratology has no need to go beyond the narrative situation, and the two agents 'implied author' and 'implied reader' are clearly situated in that 'beyond'" (137). Genette's model of narratology is based on analyses of elements in terms of voice, mood, and tense, and he introduces the term "focalization" in replacement of point-of-view (this model is laid out in detail in *Narrative Discourse*). This system relies on a specific view of the "narrative situation," which—for Genette—has no need for the "implied" existences of the author or reader. He references Booth and also Chatman, explaining how he sees these critics using the implied author as the bridge between real author and narrator. But Genette asks the question: "Is this *implied author* a necessary and (therefore) valid agent between the narrator and the real author?" For Genette, on the "real" level the answer to this question is clearly no. He says that there is nothing

actually between the author and the narrator. Therefore, Genette's problem with the term is its fundamentally "imaginary" quality. He does concede that the term serves an "essentially ideological" purpose as an "ideal agent" (140); i.e. he sees it as potentially serving a theoretical purpose. But this existence remains theoretical or hypothetical, and does not carry over into the "real" narrative situation for Genette.

In *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1985)—her own "systematic" approach to narrative—Mieke Bal presents a similar reaction to Booth's term. It is important to note that Bal's study is based on a specific definition of "narrative text" which she introduces early on. This definition varies in certain ways from other narrative theorists—including Genette—and therefore somewhat helps to clarify and contextualize her thoughts on the implied author. Bal also makes it a point to situate her approach to narrative with an awareness of and allegiance to the theoretical progressions of deconstruction and postmodern critics such as Bakhtin and Derrida (13). With this context set, she moves into the first section of her approach, "The Narrator," in which she provides her commentary on the implied author. She points out three specific problems she has with Booth's term: "1) The implied author is the *result* of the investigation of the meaning of a text, and not the *source* of that meaning . . . 2) The term mystifies and overwrites the reader's input and is easily recuperated to grant the interpretation of one person . . . the authority of knowing 'what the author meant to say'" (17). Her first reason is somewhat similar to Genette's point about the "imaginary" or contrived nature of the term. Bal is adamant that the implied author is not an active creator of meaning; instead, critics use the term to somehow explain his or her own interpretation of the text under the guise of narrative study. This criticism seems to echo with some of the contradictions and confusions mentioned above in relation to the simultaneously rhetorical/formalist approaches of Booth and Phelan. Her second reason connects with a larger point she

makes earlier about her approach to narrative: “The theory presented here is an instrument for making descriptions, and hence interpretations, discussable. *That,* not objectivity or certainty, ‘being right’ or ‘proving wrong,’ is the point” (12). Bal is clearly against approaches that somehow give individual readers the “authority” to be “right” about a text, and for her the implied author is a tool through which many readers and critics are able to do this. Her final reason is that the notion of the implied author can be applied to any text, not just narrative texts; therefore, Bal does not see the term as being specific to narratology.

While both Genette and Bal see specific theoretical problems with Booth’s term, they do not go as far as to condemn or flat out decry any shadow of its usage. But certain theorists have done just this, including Ansgar Nunning and David Herman. In “A Hypothetical Implied Author” Nelles classifies Nunning’s position as an “unequivocal rejection of the implied author” (111). Nunning’s essay “Deconstructing and Reconceptualizing the Implied Author” is often cited as one of the more staunch rejections of Booth’s term, which Nelles describes as being a “text-centered approach,” which relates to the discussion of the role that knowledge of the author should play in narrative interpretation, along with the discussion of the implications of historical matters in readerly perception. David Herman has his own unique problems with the term according to his own approach to narrative. In *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts & Debates*, Herman represents the “mind-oriented” approach to narrative, other times referred to as the cognitive approach. This approach sees narrative as a communicative act, and thus his focus is on communicative action and thus “the reasons for acting” (44). After setting up his “narrative communicative diagram,” Herman points out what he calls the “misplaced concreteness” of implied authors and readers. He borrows this term from Alfred North Whitehead, and he basically means that theorists place existence or agency

in the figure of the implied author where, in fact, this "concreteness" does not actually exist. This echoes Genette's point about the "imaginary" nature the term (Bal uses the term "residual"). Herman eventually presents his own two-part argument against the implied author: "The first part is that the idea of the implied author arises from efforts to accommodate an anti-intentionalist position . . . The second, related part of the argument is that talk of implied authors entails a reification or hypostatization of what is better characterized as a stage in an inferential process" (50). Herman's disavowal of the "anti-intentionalist" (or New Critical) position is at the heart of his entire cognitive, communicative-act approach to narrative, and therefore it plays a large part in his disagreement with the usage of the implied author.

Situated between proponents like Booth and Phelan and detractors such as Genette, Bal, Nunning and Herman, many narrative theorists fall into the "middle ground" described by Nelles. In other words, amidst the decades or back-and-forth debate surrounding the term, many critics have chosen to fall somewhere in the middle, acknowledging both the usefulness of the term as well as its problematic nature. Nelles refers to this camp as the "'big-tent' group of moderates," exemplified by theorists such as Seymour Chatman, Brian Richardson, and Susan Lanser. In *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (1990), Chatman undertakes a broad look at "the terms of narratology and of text theory in general" (1). Basically, Chatman's goal is to look at the key terms of narratology and explore them and what they mean, using examples from fiction and film to explore and complicate definitions of said terms. The second section of the book focuses on controversial terms within narratology; Chapters 5 and 6 look at the implied author. He portrays the heritage of debate surrounding the term: "Few reject the distinction between real author and narrator, but some wonder why a third, seemingly 'ghostly' being should be situated between the two" (74). He

acknowledges the ambiguity and problematic nature of the term, but eventually asserts its importance and the need for it. Chatman's insistence on the term relies upon his almost New Critical approach to the narratologist's agenda: he stresses the ultimate importance of the text itself rather than the "real author"; accordingly, the implied author allows for this (this is clearly in contention with Phelan's interpretation of the continuity between implied and flesh-and-blood author). But he also adds clarifications to the term. On one hand, the implied author for Chatman is the "source of a narrative text's whole structure of meaning" (75); at the same time, he concedes that the implied author is not in fact "doing" anything—the "doing" is the job of the real author. He writes, "The implied author has no 'voice.' The implied author only empowers others to 'speak.' The implied author (unlike the delegated speaker, the narrator) is a silent source of information" (85). He also classifies himself as residing between the poststructuralist positions that deny the existence of any textual agency, and the position of Booth who sees the implied author as a friend and guide. Nelle's similarly classifies Chatman as a "moderate" in the implied author debate because of his insistence on not being insistent when it comes to the "precise details about how one imagines the implied author" (Nelles, 109). Chatman's hesitance towards dogmatism does not overshadow his important—and helpful—additions to an understanding of and approach to the implied author.

Richardson also proposes a balanced approach to the implied author by recognizing its problematic elements without denying its utility. As mentioned above, Richardson proposes his own take on the term in a later chapter in *Unnatural Voices*. Richardson—and unnatural narratology as a whole—builds his approach to narrative with an awareness of the mimetic bias of classical narratology. This mimetic bias functions quite well for many traditional texts, but it also fails rather starkly when used to approach a number of problematic and extreme narrative texts (extreme in the sense of the non-

traditional and anti-mimetic narrative techniques they use). Richardson's analysis of unique works of modern and contemporary fiction through his anti-mimetic lens provides important strategies for a number of areas of narrative inquiry, many of which will be used later in this study. He specifically talks about the implied author in Chapter 7. He sums up his main view on the topic quite clearly: "I argue that we can find a number of cases where its use in indispensable, though we will also find cases where it is not necessary at all. This paradoxical concept is thus often but not always essential" (115). Given the seemingly endless back-and-forth in the discussion of the implied author, Richardson provides a rather fresh take: it's useful for some texts, while for others it's rather unnecessary. He also provides what he calls a "streamlined" definition of Booth's term: "The implied author is the figure constructed by the reader of the person who produced the narrative, and who may differ significantly from the actual flesh-and-blood author" (115). He then maps out some of the ways in which real authors and implied authors differ from each other, eventually providing a qualified defense of the term: "The notion of the implied author is a coherent and useful one for a wide range of critical practices, and there is no reason to discard the concept, which, as we have seen, cannot be reduced to other authorial or textual functions" (121). He then immediately insists that there must be qualifications, and he bluntly states the construct of the implied author is not, in fact, necessary for the analysis of every fictional work (121). He eventually goes on to talk about the career implied author (introduced by Booth and also discussed by Chatman and others), and makes a very interesting point about the possibility for real authors to actually have the ability to speak within a narrative text. Richardson's qualified approach to the implied author is helpful in an attempt to approach the topic within the "moderate" framework described by Nelles. Richardson provides a way in which the implied author maintains relevance and utility—two elements stressed by critics such as Booth and

Phelan—without having to ignore the fact that the term also reeks of theoretical contrivance and vapidity for many texts.

In “Historical and Implied Authors and Readers” (1993), Nelles provides further helpful clarifications of the implied author. Nelles uses the term “historical author” instead of “real author,” thus emphasizing the same sense of historical importance in terms of the author’s impact on readerly perception as mentioned by Phelan and Rabinowitz. Nelles provides a rather simple yet productive statement about the separation between historical author, implied author, and narrator (along with the readerly counterparts of each): “The historical author writes, the historical reader reads; the implied author means, the implied reader interprets; the narrator speaks, the narratee hears” (22). Nelles quickly points out that these three levels—on a practical level—sometimes involve “a certain degree of overlapping”; but this is not the case on the theoretical level, as Nelles asserts that they can be distinctly defined and distinguished (22). And, similarly to critics such as Booth, Chatman, and Phelan, Nelles stresses the importance of the implied author in terms of textual meaning: “The implied author’s implicit intentions, not those expressed by the historical author or narrator, are the definitive source of meaning in a work” (22). He goes on to discuss the implied author and gender, making interesting points about the lack of need for a gendered implied author, preferring to use the pronoun “it” rather than “he” or “she” (24-25). He provides his own definition of the implied author in terms of how it differs from the historical author (26), eventually positing that the implied author “can play different roles in different narratives” (42). Later, in “A Hypothetical Implied Author,” Nelles re-orients his view of the implied author using the principles of “hypothetical intentionalism,” saying, “The utility of this approach lies in its explicit admission of contextual evidence to supplement textual evidence, combined with a careful delimitation of those contexts relevant for interpretation” (114). In other words, Nelles adopts tenets of

hypothetical intentionalism in an attempt to bridge the gap between all-out intentionalism, in which all meaning is attributed to the historical author's intentions, and complete formalism, which seeks to "escape the trap of anthropomorphism" and disregard any authorial intention. For Nelles, the hypothetical implied author resides somewhere in the middle, allowing the narratologist to find productive crossroads in between.

This concept of "hypothetical intentionalism" is particularly helpful in relation to the contradictions and problematic elements of the definitions of the implied author put forth by Booth, Phelan, and Rabinowitz, and it also helps to alleviate some of the criticisms levied at the concept by scholars such as Genette and Bal. These definitions are further clarified—and the criticisms further addressed—when thinking about Richardson's more open definition of the term mentioned above; perhaps the deciding factor in the discussion of whether or not there is a continuity between real and implied author depends upon the individual readerly experience. If, in fact, the implied author—the author's "second self"—is reliant upon a *reader's* construction of said implied author, then perhaps the previously mentioned contradictions arise or dissolve depending on each reader's interaction with the text. This, mixed with the idea of a "hypothetical intentionalism" that seeks to avoid the poles of all-out intentionalism and complete formalism, help provide a way to sift through these various approaches to the usefulness of the implied author. The work of Susan S. Lanser even further helps to find a somewhat manageable approach to the topic.

Rather than continue to perpetuate the decades-long conversations about whether or not the implied is in fact a useful and theoretically sound term to be used, scholars like Nelles and Lanser attempt to change the conversation; they accept the fact that the term is here to stay and are determined to figure out how exactly it can be used in productive ways. Lanser's work exemplifies this forward-thinking approach to the topic.

Her 2001 essay “(Im)plying the Author,” published in *Narrative*, takes a rather novel approach to the discussion: “Although theorists have tried repeatedly to put the term to rest, the author keeps getting ‘implied’ even in essays that question it. My hope is less to resolve the debate than to suggest why we cannot resolve it, and to propose that moving beyond singular concepts of implied authorship might shift the conversation onto different if not less controversial ground” (153). She points out how despite deconstructionist challenges from Foucault and Barthes, authorship has retained a central point in literary study. She then provides a view of authorship in terms of tautology, showing how “the implied author is not—and by definition cannot be—a specific textual entity” (154). Instead, questions surrounding the implied author are in fact a “matter of belief” (155). She asserts that the implied author debate cannot and will not be settled because the existence—or nonexistence—of an implied author depends upon reading practices and individual reading experiences. For Lanser, this does not negate the conversation; instead, she focuses on diagnosing exactly what it is that dictates or signifies an implied author for certain readers. According to Lanser, the implied author will always be “associated with the persona(e) occupying the text’s highest level(s) of authority” (155); Lanser defines this authority as either diegetic or mimetic. She also goes on to complicate the traditional view of the implied author as being “unified” in a text, instead proposing “that implied authors can be—and perhaps more often are—multiple personalities” (157). Eventually, Lanser suggests that traditional views of the implied author—and the debate surrounding it—have been too limited and small, functioning on the tautological view of authorship she described earlier. Accordingly, “we might figure the implied author not as a body but as the clothes the body wears—clothes that can be altered, discarded, tried on, changed before or behind our eyes” (158). This broader view

of the implied author, according to Lanser, provides opportunities for more fruitful questions about readerly interaction with questions of authorship.

A decade later Lanser goes to new lengths in her re-orientation of the implied author. In "The Implied Author: An Agnostic Manifesto," Lanser says it quite plainly; when referring to statements she had been making at various conferences, she says, "I believed that the longstanding debates about the implied author had reached a point of diminishing returns" (153). She refers to the implied author as a "non-entity," and then offers that she doesn't see the term and its debate as being unimportant, "just stuck" (153). The point of her essay, then, is to provide a way in which the debate can become unstuck; Lanser is attempting to reinvigorate the conversation. To do so, she provides what she calls her agnostic manifesto; she uses "agnostic" to describe her own stance on the topic and also in hope that her propositions will "speak to theorists on both sides of the IA divide" (153). Her "manifesto" consists of eight propositions; collectively, they represent Lanser's desire for an approach that will allow scholars to "learn more about implied authorship by testing out how readers process a sense of the author than by continued debate" (158). Like in "(Im)plying the Author," Lanser's focus remains on getting to the heart of readerly perceptions of and interactions with questions of authorship. Within her propositions, Lanser again defines the implied author as a non-entity, therefore making it "necessarily a *reading effect*" (154). She also sees the IA's usefulness in its bridging capability: "The concept of implied author may then be a useful way to affirm the gap between declared authorial intentions and realized textual effects" (156); this is similar to what Nelles says and reaffirms the fundamental effort of these theorists to find places for the implied author that escape some of the polarizing approaches of earlier theorists. Her last proposition is perhaps the most useful in terms of accomplishing her goal of finding applicability for the implied author. She writes, "If the

concept of ‘implied author’ is to be meaningful for hermeneutics, then we should be able to show effective differences in interpretation between those who accept and those who reject the idea of an ‘implied author’” (158). For Lanser, this approach allows for a way to show how a reader’s approach to the implied “actually matters.”

This rather lengthy and detailed portrayal of narratology’s decades-long relationship with the implied author is necessary for two reasons: 1) to demonstrate the ageless nature of the term itself, and how the history of the term speaks to the undeniable relevance in narrative theory of attempts to figure out ways to somehow balance between the real author and the narrator; and 2) create a dialogical paradigm in which I will be able to use particular postmodern works of fiction to create an original synthesis of both the utility and ambiguity of the implied author. Specifically, I propose to show that the contradictions at play in the conversations mentioned above—and the textual implications that certain approaches to the topic entail—are exemplified through postmodern narrative texts. Specifically, recent works of autofiction create a unique situation for the narratologist attempting to approach questions surrounding the implied author, thus offering a testing ground upon which the decades-long debate in narrative theory surrounding the implied author can find new traction. Three novels by Paul Auster, Philip Roth, and Bret Eason Ellis serve as examples of texts further complicating efforts to either: 1) assert the usefulness of the implied author when trying to differentiate between real author and narrator; and 2) argue for the dismissal of the term itself. In either case, these examples of autofiction deny firm arguments for both sides of the debate. Instead, they lend towards an inclusive view of the term, similar to that advocated by Richardson and Nelles, and one that perhaps allows for opportunities to accomplish some of the as-yet-unaccomplished feats proposed by Susan Lanser. Thinking specifically about Lanser’s manifesto and her point about the actual importance of the

implied author, I hope to present a reading of these texts that demonstrates the impact that specific interpretations of the implied author have on textual meaning.

Autofiction and the Implied Author

Though by no means are they the first or only authors to do so, Auster, Roth, and Ellis have produced novels that include protagonists that share a name with the flesh-and-blood author.[5] These works serve as examples of autofiction, a term introduced by Serge Doubrovsky. Doubrovsky's definition and exploration of autofiction has been studied by a number of critics. Similarly, the novels of Auster, Roth, and Ellis are no strangers to critical attention; they are perhaps three of the more critically known American novelists of the past few decades. Although *Deception*—the novel focused on in this study—is one of Roth's lesser-known novels, Auster's *The New York Trilogy* and Ellis's *Lunar Park* have received significant critical attention. Yet while both autofiction and these novels have been given due attention, little has been done with the novels in terms of how their autofictional elements complicate and problematize readings of the novel, and at this point even less has been done to demonstrate how these works of autofiction pose specific problems in terms of narratological approaches to the novels. Specifically, I propose that these autofictional novels provide new insights into discussion of the implied author, challenging traditional views of the term and readerly attempts to differentiate between historical and implied authors—or whether or not this differentiation is possible in the first place.

Rather than simply coining the term autofiction in his critical works, Serge Doubrovsky actually chose to exemplify the term in his own fiction. In "Serge Doubrovsky:

[5] In my Conclusion chapter, I point out other historical examples of autofiction, ranging from Dante to Proust to Somerset Maugham. Auster, Roth, and Ellis are not the first authors to incorporate autofiction, but the fact that they are still *alive* and *writing* makes them especially relevant for my current discussion of the autofiction and the implied author.

Life, Writing, Legacy," Elizabeth H. Jones provides a biographical sketch of Doubrovsky, along with a look at the manner in which his writing eventually metamorphosed into a collective example of autofiction. Doubrovsky's writing career began in 1963, but his most significant publication was *Fils* in 1977 for "its role in the emergence of the notion of *autofiction*" (2). According to Jones, Doubrovsky realized that his writing did not fit neatly into the "model of life-writing genres that Philippe Lejeune had theorised" (2). Doubrovsky knew that his text was autobiographical, but he also knew that it incorporated significant fictional elements. This "blurring of the boundaries of truth and fiction" (3) became a staple of Doubrovsky's writing. Jones attributes this blurring of lines to Doubrovsky's personal sense of "cultural dispossession and divided identity" (3), and he himself considered his work to be "unworthy" of the genre of classical autobiography. This is not to say, though, that Doubrovsky saw this as a failing; in fact, autofiction allowed him to "produce texts that are not truer, but richer" (3). Jones credits Doubrovsky with expanding the scope of autobiography and of critical approaches to the topic through his innovation of autofiction. She points out the various reactions to the term—both negative and positive. She writes, "The complex relations of the real, truth, and fiction are again highlighted, and the centrality of the relationship with the other in narrating the self is confirmed" (6). For Jones, autofiction accentuates the theoretical implications involved in all forms of autobiographical writing. Doubrovsky's "desire to strip away convention and assumptions" (6) manifests itself in autofiction, as demonstrated by other texts employing the technique.

Similar to the implied author, the term autofiction has been the subject of a fair amount of debate and disagreement since its coinage by Doubrovsky. Armine Kotin Mortimer describes this lack of agreement in her essay "Autofiction as Allofiction: Doubrovsky's *L'Apres-vivre*." She writes, "A consensus definition of autofiction has

become virtually impossible" (22); she also proposes that this lack of consensus is in fact encouraged: "There seems to be a collective will to blur the boundaries of the genre as much as possible: the more fluid the definition, the happier the collective thinking is" (22). Kotin Mortimer describes the spectrum of definitions, from the general—Lejeune's definition of the intermediate space between fiction and autobiography—to the more complicated or criteria-specific. Also like Booth's term, autofiction has encountered a number of strong counterarguments. Vincent Colonna—a former student of Genette—argues strongly against Doubrovsky's term in his Genette-directed thesis and also his full-length book on the topic, and refers to works of autofiction as being "deceitful." Despite the controversy, the term has picked up widespread theoretical and scholarly momentum, and it is "front and center right now and shows no signs of giving up its ostentatious primacy, both among creative writers and critical and interpretive theorists" (22), according to Kotin Mortimer.

Although he doesn't mention Doubrovsky, Genette also comments on autofiction and narrative texts in which authors share names with narrators and/or characters in *Fiction & Diction*. Within the section entitled "Voice," Genette discusses in details elements of "the relations between narrator and author" (69). He refers to Lejeune (like Doubrovsky) and his structural analyses of autobiography; for Lejeune, first-person autobiography entails a mimetic relationship between author, narrator, and character, with variations in instances of third-person autobiography (69). From here, Genette expands on Lejeune's structure and provides a diagram of five different possibilities of the scheme between author (A), narrator (N), and character (C) (73). For Genette this schematic is instrumental in distinguishing between factual and fictional narratives. Although there are exceptions, Genette asserts that when A=N, the narrative is factual; inversely, when A does not equal N, the narrative is fictional. He then looks at instances

of “the functional dissociation between author and narrator” (75), which he sees as a “special case,” and mentions Borges’s stories “El Aleph.” Genette claims that Borges the author is not “functionally identical” to Borges the narrator and character (75-76), and then comments specifically on autofiction. According to Genette’s model, if A=N and A=C, then logically N=C. Except this is not the case in works of autofiction. Autofictional texts are contradictory and are in essence textual representations of the following: “It is I and it is not I” (77). Along with pointing out the logical fallacy of such examples, Genette observes that “the equals sign, used here in an obviously metaphorical way, does not have precisely the same value on all three sides of the triangle” (77). This statement is helpful in terms of perhaps explaining the contradictory nature of Genette’s model of autofiction, but it also provides an interesting angle of conversation in terms of discussing the relationships between A, N, and C: the lines between each will vary in terms of importance and degree, something that has not been noted in such terms by other critics.

Genette’s structural approach is helpful in its usage of the letters A, N, and C—these letters will be used for my upcoming analyses. Furthermore, for the sake of consistency and practicality, I will borrow Henrik Skov Nielsen’s definition presented in his essay “Natural Authors, Unnatural Narration.” In the sense of Doubrovsky, Nielsen defines a work of autofiction as “a novel labeled as fiction whose protagonist has the same name as the author” (291). This definition works particularly well for this current study because the primary texts are all novels, and each of the autofictive characters—i.e. the textual figures sharing a name with the historical authors—are protagonists. Although particularly helpful for these reasons, Nielsen’s simplified definition does not and should not stand for *all* works of autofiction; my usage is in no way a claim to have found *the* definition that supersedes the “blurred boundaries” and “fluid definitions” of the term mentioned by Kotin Mortimer. Nevertheless, *City of Glass*, *Deception*, and *Lunar*

Park exemplify this basic definition of autofiction and continue the convention-defying and assumption-challenging process at the heart of Doubrovsky's work.

In "Autofiction: A Brief History of a Neologism," Jones addresses autofiction outside the narrow scope of Doubrovsky. In the article, Jones again traces the origins of the term to Doubrovsky and the work of Lejeune, asserting that it has now "developed into a fully-fledged literary critical tool" (174). Still, scholars debate the term (much like the implied author) concerning its utility and "validity" (Colonna and also Philippe Gasparini, for example). This is odd for Jones, who sees the term as being especially appropriate for our current paradigm. She writes, "Autofiction, as opposed to autobiography, then, is highly attuned with an age in which the subject is no longer accepted to be a unified, simple whole" (177). According to Jones, the term is particularly relevant for our postmodern, deconstructionist theoretical framework. She continues: "Autofiction thus represents a way of acknowledging the constructed nature of selfhood, particularly those selfhoods which have undergone the twentieth-century experience of psychoanalysis" (180). With this in mind, Doubrovsky's term gains significant traction in relation to the nature in which postmodern texts—including those from Auster, Roth, and Ellis—textually enact postmodernity. Autofiction also resonates with thinly-fictionalized autobiographies, such as Diaz's *Drown* and *This is How You Lose Her*. The fictional Yunior—and his close relationship to real author Junot—is perhaps a sort of hybrid case of autofiction. While they do not share exact names, overlaps clearly occur between the two, thus raising similar questions about biographical identity in the context of fictional creations. This is just one example, and while I focus specifically on autofiction in relation to narratological concerns, the term has larger applicability for the postmodern paradigm in general, including questions of identity, the self, and autobiography.

Published in 1987, Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy* is a collection of three short novels: *City of Glass*; *Ghosts*; and *The Locked Room*. Although each novella focuses on different protagonists with differing plots, the three are closely related in structure and themes. Together, *The New York Trilogy*—although his first work of fiction in a long and productive career—remains Auster's signature work, garnering the most critical attention and perhaps the widest readership. The collection is commonly discussed in critical discussions of detective fiction; specifically, Auster's three novellas exemplify the idea of the anti-detective novel in that they subvert conventions of traditional detective stories. Alison Russell uses the term "anti-detective fiction" in her essay "Deconstructing *The New York Trilogy*: Paul Auster's Anti-Detective Fiction"; Russell asserts that the stories "[explode] the centering and unifying conventions of detective stories" (72). Similarly, Norma Rowen refers to the book as a "metaphysical detective story" (224) in which "clues no longer point to anything certain; signifiers have drifted away from what they signify" (225). The collection is also often cited as a prime example of postmodern fiction, displaying techniques such as intertextuality, supremacy of chance and coincidence, deconstruction of language, and other postmodern motifs common in much of Auster's subsequent work. And particularly with *City of Glass*, critics have taken note of the interesting authorly choice of having a multiplicity of "Paul Austers" existing within the text itself. The novella is a postmodern detective story in which the protagonist assumes the name "Paul Auster" by coincidence, and quickly finds himself a private investigator in the middle of a case full of continuously expanding riddles. Along the way he crosses paths with another Paul Auster, a successful author living in New York. These various "Paul Austers" present problems for readers trying to differentiate between the narrating agents; furthermore, these mirrored images of the same person

wreak havoc for the narratologist attempting to apply the analytical device of the implied author to the text.

Like Auster, Philip Roth presents his reader with a rather confusing recipe of multiple "Philip Roths" in his 1990 novel *Deception*. One of the critically lesser-noticed of Roth's works, the short novel consists wholly of dialogue—every line is situated between quotation marks—between the protagonist, Philip Roth[6], and various other people with whom he has a range of relationships. These scenes of dialogue read almost like interviews between Roth and these various people, who refer to him as Dr., thus creating an almost psychiatrist-office type of tone for some of the scenes. Roth the narrator[7] is clearly a successful and popular author living in England, and the majority of the book is Roth recounting conversations between himself and two women (both of which he has seemingly had a sexual relationship with). Various topics of conversation are covered, from politics to Jewishness, and along the way Roth makes metacommentary on his role as author and the implicit reality of what he "does" when he writes down these conversations. In "Textualizing the Self: Adultery, Blatant Fiction, and Jewishness in Philip Roth's *Deception*," G. Neelakantan relates PR's narrative play with the theme of adultery, along with Philip's sense of isolation due to his Jewishness. Neelakantan writes, "To commit adultery and to write fiction, both, in effect, mean a sanction for deception" (41). The theme of writerly deception is noted by a number of critics, and it comes to the forefront when the narrative takes a sharp during a scene in which Roth is arguing with his wife about a "notebook" she has read—this "notebook," we soon realize, is the very

[6] For the sake of clarity, when referring to the characters I will use Paul Auster, Philip Roth, and Bret Easton Ellis, or just the last names. When referring to the real, historical authors, I'll use the initials PA, PR, and BEE.

[7] This dialogue-centric aspect of *Deception* is part of the discussion concerning missing/implicit narrators in Chapter 5 below. In that chapter, I challenge the idea of a narrator presence in the novel, which I take for granted in this chapter.

novel, *Deception*, we readers have been reading. In other words, within the narrative, PR presents a metalepsis in which Roth breaks away from the narrative level of the "notebook" and reveals that it is in fact a novel that he is writing. Roth describes this as "Me *ventriloquizing* myself" (190). This metalepsis eventually breaks *back* into the original narrative level, creating even more confusion for the reader. Like in *City of Glass*, this problematic bi- and tri-furcation of the identities of the "Philip Roths" in the novel—and the narrative roles they play—creates unique challenges to discussions of author, narrator, and implied author.

Finally, Bret Easton Ellis employs similar autofictive techniques in *Lunar Park* (2005). From the opening line of the novel—"You do an awfully good impression of yourself" (3)—it is clear that Ellis is purposefully playing with all sorts of genre- and rule-bending techniques. Like Auster and Roth, a major part of this narrative play is the fact that the protagonist is a famous author by the name of Bret Easton Ellis. Although the novel received somewhat mundane reviews at the time of its publication (as compared to the popularity and critical appeal of *Less than Zero* or *American Psycho*), *Lunar Park* has garnered a fair amount of critical attention in regards to BEE's direct subversions of the genre of autobiographical writing. Similar to what Doubrovsky did to the genre in his own work, BEE creates a novel in which it is seemingly impossible to cleanly categorize the text—at least the first 40 pages—in terms of fiction or non-fiction; to put it simply, there are direct examples of both—something BEE undoubtedly does on purpose. *Lunar Park* has also been noted for its postmodern elements of mirroring and metafiction, along with the intertextual elements signature of Ellis's writing. Characters from a number of BEE's previous novels appear in *Lunar Park* and interact with Ellis directly, while others end up enacting some of the events described in previous novels (i.e. Patrick Bateman [*American Psycho*] as serial killer). The novel is also a work of horror fiction, similar in

many ways to certain Stephen King novels, and many critics have focused on BEE's use of this genre's conventions. These approaches aside, the novel has more to offer in terms of the challenge BEE presents to narratology's insistence in distinguishing between narrating individuals, as well as to discussions of autofiction.

To begin, each of these novels contain characters/protagonists that share a name with the historical author: Philip Roth in *Deception*; Bret Easton Ellis in *Lunar Park*; and Paul Auster in *City of Glass*. Along with sharing names, each of these characters shares certain substantial biographical details with his historical author. In *Deception* and *Lunar Park*, both are successful authors whose novels and characters are mentioned by name—names that correlate with the novels and characters of the real Roth. In *Deception*, Roth mentions his character Nathan Zuckerman, who is of course a central character in a number of PR novels. Similarly, Ellis's success in *Lunar Park* is due to the successful publication of his novels *Less than Zero*, *Rules of Attraction*, and *American Psycho*—the same novels for which BEE gained fame and success. As mentioned earlier, Patrick Bateman makes an appearance in *Lunar Park*, along with fellow authors like Jay McInerney—friends of the actual BEE. In *City of Glass*, the actual protagonist is an author named Quinn, but within a few pages he assumes the identity of Paul Auster, a private detective. PA plays with this autofictive layering: "Since he was technically Paul Auster, that was the name he had to protect. Anything else, even the truth, would be an invention, a mask to hide behind and keep him safe" (89). This layering goes even further later in the novel when Quinn-as-Auster encounters a man named Paul Auster, a writer living in Manhattan. This Paul Auster is clearly not the Paul Auster (the private detective) whose identity Quinn assumes; instead, he more resembles the real PA writing *City of Glass*. At one point this second Paul Auster says, "The fact that my name has been mixed up in this. I don't understand it at all" (114). Like PR and BEE, PA is clearly

playing with readerly expectations of authors, narrators, and characters, blending the three in unique ways to create a narrative experience in which these sorts of distinctions lead to dead ends. Within the novels, each of these authors creates particularly interesting depictions of these types of narrative anomalies.

Throughout *Deception*, PR—through the writings of Philip Roth—continuously makes metacommentary on the idea of what it actually means to write words on the page: what sort of action is he performing when writing these stories? What does this process do in terms of his identity as a writer? And for the identities of the people about whom he writes? During one discussion, a refugee named Ivan criticizes the writer for what he's doing to the people he's interviewing: "What is stirring is not necessarily in the stories but in their urge to *make* the stories . . . Life before the narrative takes over *is* life. They try to fill with their words the enormous chasm between the act itself and the narrativizing of it. And you listen and rush to write it down and then you ruin it with your rotten fictionalizing" (94). This is particularly interesting considering this is a conversation being *invented* by PR—a conversation in which a character condemns Roth for "narrativizing" the lives of "real" people. Later, after the narrative breakthrough in which we realize that what we have read to this point is a "notebook" of a novel being written by Philip Roth, he comments specifically on the complicated nature of this writing and readerly reactions: "They generally don't [understand], so what difference does that make? I write fiction and I'm told it's autobiography, I write autobiography and I'm told it's fiction, so since I'm so dim and they're so smart, let *them* decide what it is or it isn't" (190). Interestingly, this seems to correspond with the larger message PR is making with *Deception* regarding categorization of the text based on terms like fiction or autobiography.

Earlier in the novel, PR creates a scene that is particularly challenging in terms of traditional approaches to distinguishing between narrating agents. In this scene, Roth is talking to the older woman about his recurring character Nathan Zuckerman and a fictional biographer's problematic attempts to recapitulate Zuckerman's life. Roth tells the woman to imagine that she is the biographer and that he is Zuckerman; she asks, "Who are you?" and he responds, "I am myself." She asks how, and he responds, "Don't ask me how. I'll worry about how'" (101). Her response is important: "Is this really the book you want to be writing? Because it doesn't seem to me like a very good idea, to have, in the same narrative, you *and* Zuckerman—" (101). PR is working on multiple levels here. First, PR has his narrator—Philip Roth—talking to a character. Within this conversation, Roth tells the woman to imagine a situation in which she is a biographer talking to Roth about his character Zuckerman. In response, she asks Roth if this is really a good idea—if it makes sense to have both Roth and Zuckerman present in the same narrative. Considering the first narrative level, we have PR creating a character that is questioning Philip Roth's narrative decisions on grounds of confusion and contrived mimicry. In other words, the female character's questioning of Roth's choice of narrative structure seemingly represents PR's questioning of the narrative structure of *Deception*. This nuanced technique of layered self-reflection functions in the novel through PR's use of autofictive metafiction, in which PR purposefully creates a situation in which PR and Philip Roth blend together in essentially indistinguishable ways, leaving the narratologist in a rather difficult spot in terms of separating the two.

While the novel as a whole received unremarkable reviews at the time of publication, the first 40 pages of *Lunar Park* have since garnered the majority of critical attention on the novel. This first section, "1. the beginnings," sets the autofictional context for the rest of the novel; it is also within this section where BEE poses his own challenges

to narrative conventions. As mentioned earlier, the first lines of the novel set the identity-mirroring tone: “You do an awfully good impression of yourself” (3). This line is in quotation marks and is immediately followed with “This is the first line of *Lunar Park* and in its brevity and simplicity it was supposed to be a return to form, an echo, of the opening line from my debut novel, *Less than Zero*.” Apart from being a textbook case of metafictional writing—a writer writing about the first line of a novel, which he himself has just written and the reader has just read—this sentence also indicates the identity of the narrator—Bret Easton Ellis—because of its use of the possessive pronoun in reference to *Less than Zero*. This is, of course, the first novel of the historical author BEE, which did in fact possess a style of “brevity and simplicity,” and which catapulted BEE into literary fame in 1985. The narrator continues with a subsequent discussion of the first lines of each of his novels, from *Rules of Attraction* to *Glamorama*; again, these are the titles of the novels written by BEE. Timothy Baker asserts rather bluntly, “Bret Easton Ellis the protagonist should be equated with Bret Easton Ellis the novelist” (492).

Ellis writes, “And if fiction inadvertently reveals a writer’s inner life” (5). Judging by the opening pages of *Lunar Park*, BEE’s fiction is doing just this, minus the “inadvertently.” But directly after this line and after a page break, the narrator reflects back on his time as a student at Camden College. This line begins a bifurcation between Bret Easton Ellis the narrator and BEE the author. As many critics have noted previously, a large number of biographical elements of the narrator’s life are simply wrong when compared to BEE’s, starting with the fact that BEE attended Bennington College in Vermont, not the fictional Camden College. Nielsen writes, “There are also numerous elements that are not in accordance with the biography of the real author” (292). For many critics like Nielsen, BEE’s employment of the autofictive techniques—although they refrain from using the term—correlates with a critique of postmodern American society. In

Bret Easton Ellis: Underwriting the Contemporary, Georgina Colby focuses on the gothic elements of *Lunar Park* and on Ellis's narrative in the context of other post-9/11 American novels. According to Colby, Ellis is "[performing] a critique that similarly questions the ethic of self-censorship" (134) while representing the discourse of 9/11 "within a figurative gothic discourse that enable an understanding of the debates the attacks precipitated" (135). In the context of her 9/11 focus, Colby addresses the novel's autofictional elements in terms of critical reactions to the book. For Colby, "Many critics then failed to realize that the narrator of *Lunar Park* is a creation of their own moralistic interpretations and misapprehensions of Ellis's work" (136). In other words, BEE uses himself as narrator in order to satirically present the version of Bret Easton Ellis created by various critics. Similar to Colby, Baker uses the term "caricature" to describe the depiction of Bret Easton Ellis presented in the novel; he writes, "Ellis the protagonist may not be an accurate representation of Ellis the author—the reader cannot tell—but he certainly accords with Ellis's public image" (493). This satirical or caricaturistic nature of the protagonist, according to Colby and Baker, accounts for the biographical "mistakes" in the first section, such as Ellis being married with a child or living in a quiet suburban town.

After going through a comprehensive biographical sketch of his life, the narrator Ellis arrives at his comments on his current book, *Lunar Park*. He says, "Retelling this story has taught me that *Lunar Park* could have happened anywhere. These events were inevitable, and would have occurred no matter where I was at the particular moment in my life" (40). This sense of inevitability is rather haunting, and Ellis is setting an ominous tone for the narrative to follow. He continues: "Regardless of how horrible the events described here might seem, there's one thing you must remember as you hold this book in your hands: all of it really happened, every word is true" (40). Along with continuing the ominous foreshadowing, this line also presents the reader with a challenge, because he

or she of course knows that the following items of course did *not* actually happen, and that every word is in fact *not* true. Readers know this because of the clearly fictionalized version of Bret Easton Ellis presented in the previous pages, along with the categorical label "Fiction" on the back cover of the book. Much has been written on the problems of the terms fiction and non-fiction, specifically in the marketing and categorization of texts; considering the autofictive elements BEE employs, it seems fair to argue that *Lunar Park* is his own Doubrovsky-like contribution to this discussion. To complete the meta- and autofictional circle of the first section, the second chapter begins as follows: "You do an awfully good impression of yourself" (41).

Auster's *City of Glass* stands out from *Deception* and *Lunar Park* because the protagonist of the novel is actually not named Paul Auster. With this in mind, the term autofiction seems problematic, at least according to the definition I borrowed earlier from Nielsen. Quinn, not Paul Auster, is the protagonist of *City of Glass*, and therefore the narrator and author do not share the same moniker. Despite this, I contend that the novel qualifies as autofiction due to the fact that Quinn assumes the name Paul Auster within the first ten pages of the text, and throughout the story he comments on his assumption of Auster's identity and his forfeiture of the name Quinn. At one point during a conversation with his client Virginia Stillman, Quinn apologizes to her for his lack of progress in the case. She says, "No one can watch a person twenty-four hours a day. It's impossible. You'd have to be inside his skin." Quinn replies, "That's just the trouble. I thought I was" (108). This thought of being inside someone else's skin correlates with many aspects of the novel, specifically with Quinn's assumption of Auster's identity. With this in mind, *City of Glass* actually serves as a unique example of postmodern autofiction in that Auster's text almost plays as a subversion of the technique through its layered usage. We have the protagonist Quinn who quickly assumes the identity of Paul Auster,

all of which is being coordinated and constructed by PA. And, as mentioned earlier, Quinn-as-Auster eventually meets and has a long conversation with another Paul Auster, a successful author living in Manhattan. During this conversation, Quinn-as-Auster and Paul Auster discuss the metafictional structure of *Don Quixote*, pointing towards PA's motivations for his narrative structure and layering. At one point, Paul Auster tells Quinn, "If I had been in your place, I probably would have done the same thing" (113). This line further points towards the meshing of identities and blurring of identifying lines by hypothetically putting Paul Auster in the shoes of Quinn-as-Auster, thus creating an Auster-as-Auster scenario. Towards the end of their conversation we learn that Paul Auster has a son named Daniel—the same first name as Quinn. Quinn remarks to young Daniel, "I'm you, and you're me" (122). As Quinn leaves the apartment, Daniel exclaims, "Good-bye myself!" (122). These lines come quickly, and PA's text seems to be working blatantly to confuse the reader in terms of his or her perception of who is who and who *isn't* who.

The playful elements of these novels raise even more questions when considered in relation to the theoretical approaches to the implied author mentioned in the early pages of this chapter. Again, thinking about Booth's introductory reference to the implied author as the "second self" of the real author—a "self" that is *distinct* and *separate* from the historical author—an attempt to clarify or identify the implied author in the novels from PA, PR, and BEE seems difficult to say the least. In his seminal *Dictionary of Narratology*, Gerald Prince contributes the following in his definition of the term: "The implied author of a text must be distinguished from its real author" (42). Even in subsequent reactions and responses to critics like Booth and Prince, supporters and detractors of the term alike function their responses on a fundamental acceptance of the necessity to differentiate between implied and real author. Supporters use this to assert

the term's usefulness, while detractors employ this impetus in order to build their arguments against the term. In both cases, it seems understood that the implied author depends upon an act of distinction between specific narrative agents. As Nelles says: the author writes, the implied author means, and the narrator speaks. Genette breaks it down to constituent terms: A (author), N (narrator), and C (character). The lines between these three agents—lines based on difference or sameness—dictate a narrative text's status as fiction or non-fiction. But what happens when the author, narrator, and character are to a large extent the same person, but the text itself is clearly fictional? If the historical author writing the narrative depicts a speaking narrator with whom he shares an unavoidable amount of biographical information, how is the reader supposed to differentiate between the two? Or, to put it more specifically, how is the narratologist to identify the implied author as a *distinct* narrative agent in situations in which all of the parties involve seemingly overlap into each other?

This question of the implied author correlates at its core with questions of categorical terms such as fiction, non-fiction, and autobiography. For all three novels, critics have situated aspects of their readings of the novels along these lines. In "Ventriloquism in Philip Roth's *Deception* and Its Polish Translation," Jerzy Jarniewicz presents a fascinating exposition of the difficulty of translating Roth's novel in Polish, a highly-gendered language, due to the fact that Roth presents a number of pieces of dialogue without any indication of who exactly is speaking, thus leaving the decision up to Jarniewicz. Within the essay, Jarniewicz comments on PR's narrative agenda: "Philip Roth the author, as well as Philip the adulterous character, complicate the simple distinction between reality and fiction, wishing to leave it indeterminate" (328). Colby says something similar about *Lunar Park*: "The guiding structural principle of *Lunar Park* is the complex interplay of fiction and reality and the problematics engendered by the blurring of

these two states. Bret's narrative stands poised on the boundary between fiction and the claim to reality, shifting between the two state and erasing the boundary" (139). Finally, Russell asserts the following about *City of Glass*: "The narrator is a self-undermining linguistic agent, offering truth and then subverting the possibility of truth, continually denying his readers an one locus of meaning" (75). Russell's analysis, along with that of Colby and Jarniewicz, could be interchanged successfully to describe each of these texts. This subversion of "the possibility of truth" is, of course, a trademark of postmodern fiction—something each of these novels is commonly referred to as. And as these and other critics have shown, these novels enact this challenge to the possibility of truth through their unique narrative strategies, such as their employment of autofiction. I want to launch this analysis one step further, arguing that these blurred boundaries between truth and fiction, and the readerly challenges they create, are closely related to the challenges these texts raise to approaches to the implied author.

In his section on the implied author in *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts & Critical Debates*, Richardson relates the discussion to postmodern fiction in general: "Postmodern and other antimimetic authors, however, delight in collapsing established categories, and the triad of author, implied author, and narrator too has been a source of that delight, as the distinctions essential to modernism are exploded by postmodernism" (52). Again, it is widely understood that "collapsing established categories" is at the heart of postmodern fiction, and these novels from PA, PR, and BEE are undoubtedly situated within this category. But, as Richardson shows, this postmodern impetus towards "exploding" distinctions can be further explicated beyond the umbrella categorization of postmodernism; specifically, part of what makes these texts postmodern is the manner in which they break down particular narrative conventions, i.e. distinctions between author, implied author, and narrator. Alford explains it in this way in his discussion of *City of*

Glass: “But the connections between author, narrator, character (and the character’s relation with other characters, as well as the relation between these entities and the reader) are not as simple as a string of binary associations” (19). To say that these relationships are not simple is perhaps an understatement considering the great lengths PR goes to in layering and doubling himself in *Deception*, or the blatant Doubrovsky-like “deception” used in the first section of *Lunar Park*. In each of these examples, as Alford explains, without these “binary associations” between the narrative agents, an attempt to cleanly explain the text in terms of author, implied author, and narrator is perhaps unwarranted; to a certain extent, PA, PR, and BEE seem to be denying any attempt to do so.

Thinking about Lanser’s argument that the implied author is a “matter of belief,” what can be gained or lost in a reading of these novels depending on “belief” in the implied author? Lanser asserts that the implied author “is neither an identifiable textual voice nor a demonstrable material being” (“Manifesto” 153). If this is the case, considering the multiplicity of voices present in each of these novels, a number of potential candidates for the implied author must be ruled out based on this criterion. None of the Paul Austers, Philip Roths, or Bret Easton Ellises can qualify as the implied author given they are “demonstrable” figures in each of the novels. Then who, exactly, can the implied author be? If it can’t be Auster, Roth, or Ellis, can a valid argument be made for a “second self” of these authors that is acting to produce “unity of vision” and “cohesion” to these texts? Thinking back to Genette’s structural diagram, if A (Roth) = N (Roth) = C (Roth), is it viable to propose a separate entity, the IA, that is *not* Roth? In other words, A = N = C but neither A, N, or C can equal IA. This seems problematic, first and foremost because in my reading this does not match up with the way the texts presents themselves for reading. Instead, I argue that the very nature of these texts and their

autofictive and self-mirroring elements beg discussion in terms of the implied author rather than denying its existence. I grant that trying to identify an implied author—a narrating agent responsible for "the artistic whole" (Booth) or "the whole structure of meaning" (Chatman)—for these texts raises multiple problems and contradictions. But this does not mean that these conversations are not worthwhile, or that these texts do not have important contributions to make. Instead, these postmodern, antimimetic narratives add further evidence to the ways in which narrative distinctions play crucial roles in readerly experiences of interpretation and meaning-construction.

Nielsen introduces a helpful metaphor for this discussion in his chapter "What's in a Name? Double Exposures in *Lunar Park*" in the collection *Bret Easton Ellis: American Psycho, Glamorama, Lunar Park*. Nielsen contextualizes his analysis in the context of questions raised by the text about fiction and nonfiction, and about characters, narrators, and authors. He explains, "This chapter examines these questions and problems in *Lunar Park* through the literary genre that has come to be known as 'autofiction'" (129). Nielsen's central point is a metaphor he creates between autofiction and the photographic term "double exposures." For Nielsen, the concept of double exposures is particularly helpful when thinking about what takes place in autofiction: "Double exposure has often been used as a technique to visually portray ghosts and haunting. In *Lunar Park* double exposure works on a narrative level: fiction is superimposed on nonfiction and characters are superimposed on authors" (129-30). This act of "superimposing" could quickly be applied to *Deception* and *City of Glass* as well; each of these texts enacts a series of doublings and meshings between its various narrating agents. After spending time talking specifically about autofiction and its problems in terms of classical narratology, Nielsen then makes further comments about autofiction and double exposures. He writes, "In any autofiction, then, the reader sees the sum of two pictures or

two narratives superimposed over each other and haunting each other. One is the ghost of the other" (136). Not only are there narratives acting as "ghosts" for other narratives, but also within these narratives, there are authors, narrators, and characters acting as "ghosts" for each other, resulting in multiple forms of narrative "hauntings." Nielsen's analysis of autofiction in terms of double exposure further works towards explaining in narrative terms the postmodern tendencies of these novels.

With the idea of double exposure in mind, along with the various approaches to and explications of the implied author, these three autofictive novels offer unique depictions of "haunting" relationships between narrating agents within a narrative text. Although it is tempting to do so, much is lost if the idea of the implied author is denied when reading these texts. Genette asserts that there is "no need to go beyond the narrative situation," thus pointing out that the implied author is not a *necessary* narratological term. But this relies upon a clean and concise narrative situation—something these specific novels do not possess. Bal says that the implied author "mystifies" the input of the reader—is this necessarily an argument *against* the implied author in the case of these novels? In my reading, it seems as if a *mystification*, or at least disruption, of the readerly interaction with these texts is part of what the authors are trying to do. Again, I am not arguing that a clean, easily identifiable implied author exists in these texts. Instead, I contend that employing the implied author in discussions of these texts results in fruitful analyses. Thinking about *Deception*, *City of Glass*, and *Lunar Park* in terms of the implied author provides further methods of discussing and explaining the various thematic elements of the texts. The complicated nature of the implied author provides another way in which to explain the ways in which PR's act of "self-ventriloquism" functions in *Deception*, or how his critique of categorical approaches to writing manifests itself in deliberately "indeterminate" (Jarniewicz 328) depictions of the

work of an author. Similarly, the anti-detective elements of *City of Glass* are further complicated through an assessment of how the difficulty involved in approaching narrative distinction between author, implied author, and narrator directly affects readerly assumptions of detective conventions, thus resulting in "endless doublings and mirror images" (Russell 74). Finally, discussions of the implied author and its fundamental debate of authorly intention as opposed to textual evidence creates a platform on which BEE's autofictive maneuvering in *Lunar Park* gains even more theoretical ground. Colonna criticizes autofiction for being "deceitful"; similarly, Genette describes the situation as an author saying, "It is I and it is not I." Perhaps deceit and contradiction is exactly what BEE is going for, and thinking about the elusiveness of the implied author of *Lunar Park* helps to explicate this paradox.

While PA, PR, and BEE seem to work diligently and rather frustratingly to thwart attempts to do so, approaching these three texts in terms distinguishing between author and implied author, between narrator and character, or between fact and fiction, offers various threads of inquiry that would otherwise be overlooked. In reference to *Lunar Park*, Baker writes, "Ellis and the reader are both forced into a position where the nature of reality must be constantly reevaluated, where they are always unsure about how many of the events taking place are in any sense 'real'" (508). This reevaluation of reality, along with its subsequent challenges to readers, is tied closely with the autofictional elements of the novel. Like *Deception* and *City of Glass*, *Lunar Park* achieves its postmodern goals of questioning realities and blending identities, in large part due to the narrative techniques it employs. These texts are postmodern, and critical approaches that point out their tendencies towards genre subversion, linguistic deconstruction, and antimimetic exposition are theoretically appropriate. But these approaches have something to gain when they consider narrative-specific aspects of these texts. In particular, these texts

present unique challenges to narrative distinctions between narrating agents through their use of autofiction and their subsequent problematizing of the implied author. Nelles asserts that the author writes, the implied author means, and the narrator speaks; but what if Philip Roth writes, Philip Roth means, and Philip Roth speaks? Autofiction adds another element to the implied author discussion, and the presence of this autofictive double exposure in these novels further explicates their postmodern elements. Rather than pointing towards a unified, clean definition of the implied author, these postmodern texts instead serve as examples of ways in which considerations of distinctions between narrative agents, including the implied author, can supplement and add to broader discussions of the texts themselves. I do not argue that *every* narrative text benefits from a similar reading of the implied author, and I maintain that the years of debate and contradiction surrounding the term, which I point out in the first half of this chapter, indicate a fluid nature of the "usefulness" of the term. This "usefulness" is inextricably linked to the *experience* of reading a text, and the particular novels I mention above create reading experiences that, for me, beg questions related to the concept of the implied author—questions that are reflections of the strong disagreements between previous theoretical approaches to the topic. With this in mind, these autofictive novels perhaps provide an opportunity for pragmatic, fruitful discussions of the hermeneutical implications of the implied author.

Chapter 4

Non-Translation, Code-Switching, and the Reader-as-Translator

Throughout Francis Ford Coppola's film *The Godfather* (1972), characters speak both English and Italian in numerous scenes. In the majority of these scenes, Coppola includes English subtitles when the characters speak Italian in order for the audience (presumably English-speaking) to understand what's being said. But there is an exception to this structure in one of the most important scenes of the film. Around midway through the film, after attempts on his father's life have been made, Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) decides to arrange a meeting with two of the main antagonists: Solozzo (the mobster who arranged the hit on Michael's father), and the corrupt police captain, McCluskey. During the meeting, Solozzo informs McCluskey that he and Michael are going to speak in Italian, thus leaving the captain left out of the conversation. Solozzo and Michael begin speaking, and the audience realizes that McCluskey is not the only one left out: they too are excluded, because in this instance Coppola does not provide subtitles for the conversation. Why does Coppola deny subtitles in this one scene? Is he purposefully excluding his audience, just as Solozzo is purposefully excluding McCluskey? What are we to make of this withholding of translation?

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Like narrative theory, translation studies boasts a heritage of important critical inquiries and theoretical implications. And like all fields of theoretical study, translation studies involves a depth of debate, ever-changing understandings, and always-elusive analytical agreements. In other words, translation studies is yet another field of theory whose history is one of transformation and perennial questioning. The act of translation simultaneously exists as a multitude of other acts: transcription; interpretation; narration. And this complicated set of activities within the term "translation" undoubtedly involves

rather serious theoretical and cultural implications for the text, the translator, and the reader. Since translation theorists began writing on the topic, translation—and the critical discussions surrounding it—has inevitably involved discussions of power, capital, and appropriation. Similar discussions resonate in the field of linguistics, including bilingualism—or bilingual studies—specifically. Alongside the rise in attention towards multiculturalism in the past two to three decades of critical theory, numerous linguists have shown increased scholarly attention towards matters concerning linguistic plurality. In American culture in particular, the presence of multiple languages besides English has been fodder for critical discussions in various fields.

In this chapter, I seek to take an interdisciplinary approach combining recent trends in both translation and bilingual studies; specifically, I focus on American authors and texts that implement code-switching, a term most commonly used in linguistics. I posit that code-switching in these texts is more than a linguistic element; instead, I see it as a powerful narrative device used to enact crucial rhetorical, cultural, and epistemological implications on these narratives and—more prominently—on the reading experiences they afford. The texts I have chosen share one element in common: code-switching between English and Spanish. But they vary greatly in terms of the identities of their authors and the manner in which this code-switching takes places. I utilize certain fundamental narrative conceptions to facilitate the bridge building I seek to achieve between the various approaches I reference from the fields of translation and bilingual studies. Ultimately, I argue that these code-switching texts create unique experiences and positions for their readers. On one hand, mono- and bilingual readers alike are faced with the effects—both negative and positive—of the authorly motivations behind these instances of code-switching. I borrow from the work of previous linguists and scholars in my discussion of these motivations and in my own close readings of these texts. On the

other hand, the unmarked, untranslated portions of these narratives afford a unique role for the reader: he or she *becomes* the translator. Various scholars have pointed out the inherent power—and also conflict—that comes with the act of translation, and the reader-as-translator has access to forms of narrative power that other texts simply do not offer. These code-switching texts present situations in which readers are forced to navigate between these various factors, and my analysis seeks to highlight the ways in which these factors take shape within the texts themselves, and how these different fields of study offer fresh approaches to these narrative texts.

The Texts

Before looking specifically at theoretical approaches to code-switching, I feel it will be helpful to introduce my primary texts. For a narrative to include multiple languages within a single text is by no means a recent phenomenon, and examples of bilingualism and code-switching are not unique to contemporary texts. The corpus of narratives including multiple languages is undoubtedly large, and the scope of my project necessarily constrains my particular emphasis. That being said, the texts I choose to focus on in this chapter are unique in relation to the larger corpus of bilingual literature in that they include untranslated, unmarked instances of code-switching. These two characteristics involve their own implications on textual meaning and readerly experience—something I argue explicitly in this chapter. Many scholars of translation and bilingualism have covered the spectrum of grammatical, structural, and rhetorical elements of code-switching texts, which I will borrow from extensively in this chapter. But the extent to which unmarked, non-translated passages impact a text and its readers has not received as much attention, especially for the authors I cover here. With that in mind, I need to first introduce said texts, which I will use throughout the chapter as ongoing examples to exemplify and guide my analyses.

The texts I choose to cover range in terms of the extent to which non-translated code-switching is utilized, as well as the biographical aspects of their authors. In my attempt to ultimately propose ways that these texts speak towards certain realities of the contemporary American experience, I seek to address texts that cover diverse areas of American culture. I do not contend that non-translated bilingualism *only* takes place in contemporary American texts, or that the authors I have chosen are the *only* American authors to employ this device. Instead, I hone in on these authors and texts specifically in an effort to propose alternate ways in which code-switching can be viewed from a narratological perspective—ways that can applied to similar texts outside the scope of this current project. For example, although I only address three novels from Cormac McCarthy, he is by no means the only Anglo-American author of the past three decades to employ unmarked bilingualism. The same can be said for Junot Diaz and Helena Viramontes and Latino/a authors, or Gloria Anzaldua and Chicano/a authors. These are not the *only* authors from these areas to use unmarked code-switching, and my analyses are not intended to imply the opposite. They are intended, rather, to further promote ongoing conversations of how contemporary authors and their narratives correlate with the multicultural, multilingual, and multifaceted nature of contemporary American culture.

That being said, the text themselves. First is Helena Maria Viramontes's novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995). Viramontes's novel follows a Latin American family of migrant workers living and working in the grape fields of California. Most examples of code-switching in the novel are specific words or short phrases mixed in with English. For example:

> Petra pulled the broom out of the station wagon. She watched Estrella's long legs leap over the tall blades of wild mustard grass, her own legs shackled by varicose veins. She called for Estrella and raised a broom as a threat, screamed to her children:
> —Get back this minute, huercos fregados, who do you think you are, corriendo sin zapatos? Te van a comer los ninos de tierra! Without so

> much as putting on your shoes, huerquitos fregados! But her words netted in the rustle of the trees. (8-9)

This is one of many examples of code-switching in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, and while I will refer to others beyond this one, I feel that this is a fair representation of the type of unmarked, untranslated bilingualism employed by Viramontes.

Junot Diaz, another Latin American author, also employs this type of code-switching. Diaz code-switches in all of his published work, including his two collections of stories, *Drown* (1996) and *This is How You Lose Her* (2012). I will be referencing passages from both of these collections, as well as his acclaimed novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). The following example comes from the latter:

> All the other boys his age avoided the girls like they were a bad case of Captain Trip. Not Oscar. The little guy loved himself the females, had "girlfriends" galore. (He was a stout kid, heading straight to fat, but his mother kept him nice in haircuts and clothes, and before the proportions of his head hanged he'd had these lovely flashing eyes and these cute-ass cheeks, visible in all his pictures.) The girls—his sister Lola's friends, his mother's friends, even their neighbor, Mari Colon, a thirty-something postal employee who wore red on her lips and walked like she had a bell for an ass—all purportedly fell for him. Ese muchacho esta bueno! (Did it hurt that he was earnest and clearly attention-deprived? Not at all!) In the DR during summer visits to his family digs in Bani he was the worst, would stand in front of Nena Inca's house and call out to passing women—Tu eres guapa! Tu eres guapa!—until a Seventh-day Adventist complained to his grandmother and she shut down the hit parade lickety-split. Muchacho del Diablo! This is not a cabaret! (12-13)

Bilingual code-switching is not limited to ethnic or minority literatures, and Cormac McCarthy represents an Anglo-American author who implements similar types of unmarked non-translations in many of his texts. He does so in *No Country for Old Men* (2005), but I focus solely on his Border Trilogy. Although somewhat minimal in comparison to the overall lengths of the texts themselves, McCarthy employs unmarked and untranslated code-switching in these three novels in often more extensive ways than do Viramontes and Diaz. Partly due to the added fact that he never uses quotation marks, the code-switching elements of McCarthy's dialogues in the novels commonly

result in particularly difficult-to-follow sections of dialogue. Although the following example is not one of these difficult-to-follow passages, it nevertheless serves as an apt representation of the type of bilingualism employed throughout each narrative. It comes from *The Crossing* (1994), the second novel in the Trilogy.

> Sientate, the old man said.
> He sat gingerly on the edge of the thin pad that covered the springs of the bed.
> The old man did not turn loose of his hand.
> What is your name?
> Parham. Billy Parham.
> The old man said the name in silence to himself. Te conozco?
> No senor. Estamos a las Charcas.
> La Chara.
> Si.
> Hay una historia alla.
> Historia?
> Si, said the old man. He lay holding the boy's hand and staring up at the kindglingwood latillas of the ceiling. Una historia desgraciada. De obras desalmadas. (43-44).

Passages like this abound in all three texts of the Border Trilogy, which comes as no surprise considering each novel centers on journeys the protagonists take back and forth between Texas and Mexico and the various encounters they have on both sides of the border.

Although not a traditional fictional narrative, I will also be referencing Gloria Anzaldua's seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987). Along with providing insightful and helpful commentary on the experience of living a life on the borders of language, Anzaldua's text itself incorporates the type of code-switching on which I am focusing, as evidenced by the title. *Borderlands/La Frontera* speaks to what it means to live on the border, including the border between two or more languages. Anzaldua's personal experiences, along with her astute scholarly approach to the topic, provide insight into the very experiences addressed in the primary texts introduced above. Thus, I utilize

Anzaldua's language of the borderlands as a sort of guiding principle as I discuss my own readings of these fictional narratives.

Code-Switching

Many scholars from diverse fields have addressed code-switching, and my own approach to the topic is indebted to the work from these previous scholars. Although not exhaustive, the following is a survey of what I see as some of the more seminal and helpful works on the topic—helpful, of course, in relation to helping me understand the topic and build my own approach to code-switching in American fiction. I begin with general, systematic approaches to code-switching as a whole, and then move into studies geared specifically towards fictional narratives.

Much of the work done on code-switching comes from bilingual studies, a specific thread of contemporary linguistics. Laura Callahan's *Spanish/English Codeswitching in a Written Corpus* (2004) and Penelope Gardner-Chloros's *Code-Switching* (2009) are two examples of book-length works dedicated to the topic. Rakesh M. Bhatt and Agnes Bolonyai's article "Code-Switching and the Optimal Grammar of Bilingual Use" (2011) approaches code-switching from a sociolinguistic and socio-cognitive perspective, using scientific methods of experimentation to explain and differentiate examples of code-switching. Although these texts go in diverse directions in terms of focus and critical aim, they provide seminal definitions of the term "code-switching" (from here on referred to as CS) and guiding principles for approaches to the topic.

In the opening chapter of *Code-Switching*, Gardner-Chloros provides a rather simple definition of CS after introducing examples from three different languages (French, Greek, and Creole): "Such varied combinations of two or more linguistic varieties occur in countless bilingual societies and communities, and are known as code-switching (CS). It

refers to the use of several languages or dialects in the same conversation or sentence by bilingual people" (4). This idea of the commonality of CS in many different cultures is echoed in many other studies on the topic. Callahan also provides a working definition of CS in the opening lines of her text: "Codeswitching is the use of words and structures from more than one language or linguistic variety by the same speaker within the same speech situation, conversation or utterance" (5). These two straightforward definitions of the term correlate with most of the others I found, and there does not seem to be much critical debate on exactly what CS is. Many scholars do afford time to distinguishing CS between similar linguistic modes, including borrowing (Callahan, 5-6) and code-mixing (Gardner-Chloros, 12-13). Scholars point out that the lines between these various terms are often drawn in different places, but they seem to universally agree that CS "is the one which has gained the widest currency" (Gardner-Chloros, 13) due to the deliberate nature of its usage and its wide array of potential effects. This does not mean, of course, that CS is a simple linguistic construct, or that its usage is without various threads of critical disagreement. The body of scholarly work on CS speaks to the nature in which it inspires various interpretations and analyses from scholars in a wide variety of fields.

Yet, the majority of this attention has focused on CS in conversational/oral rather than written contexts. Callahan addresses this explicitly: "During the initial phase of research for this book, I discovered that, in contrast to the large body of literature available on oral codeswitching, little had been published on codeswitching in writing" (1). Cecilia Montes-Alcala, in her article "Code-Switching in US-Latino Novels," notes the same lack of attention towards written CS, pointing out that it "has often been erroneously attributed to illiteracy and poor linguistic competence" (68). Montes-Alcala's article was published in 2012, and she does note the fact that scholarship on written CS has gained notable traction since Callahan's 2004 text. Still, much of the seminal work on CS

focuses on oral communication rather than written. Many of the tenets of this work on oral CS correlate smoothly into approaches to written CS, while others do not.

Gardner-Chloros's book, along with Bhatt and Bolonyai's "Code-Switching and the Optimal Grammar of Bilingual Language Use," serve as examples of approaches based on oral, conversational CS. Both texts approach CS through a linguistic lens, focusing on the grammatical and systematic aspects of CS, and its linguistic implications. Bhatt and Bolonyai's piece, published in *Bilingual Studies* in 2011, utilizes empirical evidence to make claims about the implications of CS. They base their study on a specific assumption: "There is a system—a sociolinguistic grammar—underlying all bilingual use. A sociolinguistic grammar, in our view, is a set of principles that mobilize the most effective means of communication of meaning in any interactional (bilingual) context" (522). Bhatt and Bolonyai are clearly taking a systematic, empirical approach to CS, basing their research on a set of guiding principles. Specifically, they identify what they see as the five principles of CS usage: faith, power, solidarity, face, and perspective. According to Bhatt and Bolonyai, these five principles "span over basic aspects of meaning such as conceptual, relational-interpersonal, and discourse-presentational meanings that are always available, if not always present, in bilingual communication" (522). In other words, they see these five principles as the all-encompassing contextual elements leading to occurrences of oral CS. They focus on "inter-community" variations of CS, and the study is based on a simple question: Why do bilingual speakers code-switch?

To answer this question, Bhatt and Bolonyai look at various examples of CS taken from observations and studies of multiple conversations in different cultures and linguistic contexts. They use these CS examples as they work through explanations of their five guiding principles of CS, which makes up the majority of the article. Along with

the seminal question of *why* people code-switch, the study is also "premised on the theoretical assumption of optimization" (524). The concept of optimization asserts that speakers select from a set of "plausible linguistic expressions" according to the context of a situation, ultimately picking the "optimal output." In simple terms, bilingual speakers decide what to say based on what will work best in the given context. This is one point in which approaches to oral CS, in my opinion, diverge from those towards written CS—a point I will draw out much further later in this chapter. Still, the optimization premise functions clearly in Bhatt and Bolonyai's approach. They refer to the necessity for "common knowledge" between community members in order for CS to function properly (524), a point made by other scholars of both oral and written CS. Ultimately, by participating in a specific bilingual discourse community, "individuals come to develop an awareness and a shared grammar of locally meaningful uses of two or more normatively organized codes" (524).

From here, Bhatt and Bolonyai walk through their five principles of CS. Although each section of their exposition of these principles is quite fascinating, I will only focus on the first three: faith, power, and solidarity. The first—the principle of interpretive faithfulness—relates to the usage of CS by speakers in an effort to "maximize informativity with respect to specificity of meaning and economy of expression" (526). This relates specifically to the concept of optimization, and speakers use CS in order to be more exact and accurate with a message (526-27). They write, "CS takes place when actors perceive the monolingual alternative as insufficient or inefficient to faithfully capture the intended meaning—whether in terms of its lexico-conceptual content, sematic-pragmatic entailments, or social, cultural, historical, political or ideological inflections and/or indexicalities" (526). Bhatt and Bolonyai use examples from a conversation between Spanish-German bilinguals to illustrate this principle. Along with

optimization, they also mention how CS is used to “recall and rebuild cultural memory” (526)—something I will also pick up on later in this chapter.

The next two principles, power and solidarity, are grouped together as principles of relational frames. According to the principle of domination (power), “Social actors switch to another language if it enables them to maximize symbolic dominance and/or social distance in relational practice” (528). Interestingly, Bhatt and Bolonyai assert that certain languages do not inherently have more power than others, although this is something I will contest later in my discussion of Latino/a authors. Related to power, the principle of social concurrence (solidarity) declares that “social actors switch to another language if it enables them to maximize social affiliation and solidarity in relational practice” (530). Basically, speakers use CS in order to create connection with other members of their community; CS decisions are made in order to choose the “language of belonging.” This principle deals with opposing forces of power and creating solidarity amongst certain social actors—solidarity in the form of linguistic choices. According to Bhatt and Bolonyai, this principle of CS often outweighs others, and their research shows that speakers will often use CS in order to maintain solidarity even at the expense of the other principles, including power. They use examples of CS between Hindi and English to illustrate the principle of power, and between Hindi and Kashmiri for solidarity. The other two principles are face and perspective. Actors use CS in order to save face in social settings, and in order to maximize clarity of perspective, such as when telling a story in which multiple characters are speaking.

Bhatt and Bolonyai’s focus is on presenting a systematic approach to oral CS based on these five principles. They assert, “The principles we have introduced and discussed above encode the linguistically significant generalization that CS is constrained, systematic, and predictable” (535). They then spend the latter half of the

article mapping out and designing grammatical structures of specific CS communities according to the importance of certain principles in each community. Ultimately, they contend that although each example of CS is "community-specific" and depends upon contextual constraints, there are trends and limits to how, when, and why CS is used. While I agree with the five principles they identify as being motivational factors of using CS in both oral and written contexts, I disagree that these principles are all-encompassing, or that CS is a "predictable" linguistic tool. Other scholars disagree, too, including Gardner-Chloros in *Code-switching.*

Similar to Bhatt and Bolonyai, Gardner-Chloros focuses mainly on oral/conversational CS. *Code-switching* focuses on grammatical and structural principles as well, although Gardner-Chloros does give certain attention to written CS, including numerous visual examples of advertisements from various cultures. She echoes Blatt and Bolonyai—and many other CS scholars—in her discussion of the necessity of "insider knowledge of the community and the circumstances where [CS] is displayed" (3-4), and she also points out that from an outsider's perspective, the significance of linguistic shifts might not be clear. Both of these points will be important for later discussion in this chapter. Gardner-Chloros mentions common words or phrases associated with CS, such as Tex-Mex, Grenglish (Greek English), and Spanglish (4); these terms are mentioned in numerous other studies as well. *Code-Switching* approaches CS from multiple perspectives, first and foremost being the linguistic, grammatical foundation on which she bases her answer to the question of *why* people code-switch. Gardner-Chloros asserts that her study is different than others focused on CS due to her "common-sense approach" (7); she writes, "CS is taken at face value, rather than with a particular theory as the point of departure. It is important that CS be considered as the multifaceted phenomenon it is, rather than purely as a means of

testing theoretical positions" (7). Rather than honing in specifically on one systematic approach to CS—as Bhatt and Bolonyai do—Gardner-Chloros instead brings a wider lens to the topic, allowing for a multiplicity of theoretical assessments.

This "common-sense" and practical approach leads to a much more open analysis of how CS functions in a variety of contexts. Rather than limit herself to one of the common approaches to CS (which she lists in detail, 9-10), she devotes chapters to each, including sociolinguistic descriptions of CS, conversation analytical approaches, and grammatical analyses (10). One of the more interesting aspects of *Code-switching* is the attention given to the perspectives on CS from the speakers/actors themselves. She points out three common reactions from CS speakers: 1) they often attribute CS to laziness; 2) many claim to disapprove of CS when specifically asked; and 3) most are not fully aware of the extent to which they use it (14-15). These speaker insights are fascinating and insightful; Gardner-Chloros explains, "What the speakers' own views about CS do point to, is a dissociation between how they *use* their linguistic competence . . . and what they *know* or *think they know* about it" (16). She also introduces the idea of CS between more than two languages (16-17), mentioning the term "tri/pluralinguals." An extra language adds an entire new level to the CS grammatical structure, and although this is beyond the scope of my specific study, an evaluation of texts incorporating CS between three or more languages would prove interesting to say the least.

As mentioned previously, Gardner-Chloros does approach forms of CS beyond conversational/oral; in fact, even Bhatt and Bolonyai mention written texts in the theoretical setup of their article, although barely any attention is actually given to written CS in their study. Nevertheless, the clear focus on oral CS in both of these studies exemplifies the majority of work done in CS studies, although certain scholars have worked to direct much-needed attention to written CS. Callahan's *Spanish/English*

Codeswitching in a Written Corpus, along with Montes-Alcala's "Code-Switching in US-Latino Novels," are two examples of studies geared specifically towards written CS. Callahan's study focuses on a corpus of thirty texts, including novels, short stories, and poetry, that include CS. Each text was published from 1970-2000, and they each include CS between Spanish and English. The specificity of Callahan's study allows her to make focused arguments on this one cultural genre of CS—something that other studies differ from in terms of scope. Montes-Alcala sets a similar scope in her article; her study is based on "a selection of contemporary bilingual novels from Mexican-American, Nuyorican and Cuban-American writers where Spanish and English alternate" (69). The focused scope of these written CS studies perhaps speaks towards the fact that written CS usually takes place in fictional narratives—texts that naturally resist large-scale categorizations and groupings. Rather than present an all-inclusive, "here's how written CS works" approach, these scholars instead focus on narrow groupings of texts and authors, allowing themselves the opportunity to make contextually- and textually-specific arguments about how written CS functions.

Although focused on a specific selection of texts incorporating written CS, Callahan's study is similar to Bhatt and Bolonyai's and Gardner-Chloros' in that she too structures her analysis on a grammatical system. For Callahan, the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model serves as the structural foundation of her study. According to the MLF model utilized by Callahan, CS involves a relationship between the matrix language (ML) and the embedded language (EL) (11-12); the ML is the primary language of a text—in my case, English—while EL is the secondary language that is switched to at certain times (Spanish). Based on this model, Callahan points out three potential constituent CS types: 1) ML + EL constituents, which include sentences and phrases including both ML and EL; 2) ML islands, which only include ML constituents; and 3) EL

islands, which only include EL constituents (12-13). Clearly, Callahan's usage of the MLF model sets a highly grammatical tone to her study, and although the structural elements of her study are clearly different, there are resounding echoes of the structural approach of Bhatt and Bolonyai mentioned above.

Callahan utilizes this grammatical approach to propose certain broader arguments about the nature of CS, at least in relation to her specific corpus of texts. She provides a detailed look of the sociolinguistic functions of CS, including the sociopragmatic reasons and motivations for written CS. First, written CS acts as a "cue to listeners to make conversational inferences" (17). This creates a heightened readerly interaction, which I will discuss later. Basically, CS often disturbs expected norms of a text, which pushes readers to make inferences beyond the surface-level meaning. Another function of written CS is its use in terms of ethnic identification. This is not a new analysis, and Callahan mentions multiple studies that speak towards this aspect of CS. Still, it is a fundamental aspect of CS, both oral and written. Callahan writes, "Emblematic or etiquette switching refers to the use of switching to signal membership in and solidarity with other members of a speech community or ethnic group" (18). There are clear echoes here with Gardner-Chloros, and both written and oral CS share in this sense of solidarity. The other function of written CS mentioned by Callahan relates to Myers-Scotton's Markedness model, which concerns the nature in which speakers make decisions based on interpersonal relationships. Relationships between speakers, and contextual elements of specific communities, are factors in the linguistic choices speakers make, and Callahan extends the Markedness model to the written texts in her corpus, asserting that authorly choices of CS are also influenced by relationships and contextual elements—both textual and paratextual.

The three types of CS based on the MLF model are exemplified in the three passages from Viramontes, Diaz, and McCarthy. Each text includes Matrix Language islands; this is an obvious statement, as they are all English language novels. But they also include Embedded Language islands. Two examples: “Te van a comer los ninos de tierra!” (*Under the Feet of Jesus*, 9); “Hay una historia alla” (*The Crossing*, 43). Although these novels are written in English, they each include ample examples like this of EL islands in which the Spanish language encompasses the entire sentence or passage. And, finally, these texts include numerous examples of phrases and sentences with both ML and EL constituents. An example from Diaz: “In the DR during summer visits to his family digs in Bani he was the worst, would stand in front of Nena Inca’s house and call out to passing women—Tu eres guapa! Tue res guapa!—until a Seventh-day Adventist complained to his grandmother and she shut down the hit parade lickety-split” (*The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 13). The grammatical approach of the MLF model correlates with these narrative texts, as asserted by Callahan in her study.

Similarly, the grammatical and structural approaches to oral CS from scholars like Bhatt and Bolonyai find traction in these fictional narratives. Specifically, Bhatt and Bolonyai’s emphasis on optimization being the fundamental impetus beneath examples of CS is particularly relevant when looking at CS in fictional texts. To put it plainly, I agree with Bhatt and Bolonyai’s analysis, and I contend that the idea of optimization is, in many cases, the guiding principle behind authorly decisions to incorporate CS. Where I depart, though, is in my interpretation—or my configuration—of what exactly is being optimized, or upon whom exactly this “optimal output” is based. In their study, Bhatt and Bolonyai utilize a theoretical assumption of optimization calibrated around optimal outputs depending on communal, contextual factors. In other words, CS is used in order for messages to gain optimal outcomes. These outcomes are tied in with the five principles

mentioned earlier, and they argue that the nature of CS depends upon which principle is more socially-relevant in the specific case. I agree with Bhatt and Bolonyai's analysis, and I forward their assertions on optimization to written CS. But the question that written CS raises is who exactly benefits from this CS optimization? Or, who does the author have in mind when he or she decides which output is optimal? These are questions I will take up later in this chapter.

Also, the five principles of Bhatt and Bolonyai's study, including faith, solidarity, power, face, and perspective, do in fact correlate with certain motivating factors for written CS, specifically for the authorly choices to do so. For example, McCarthy's unmarked, untranslated switches between English and Spanish—as difficult as they sometimes are to follow—do undoubtedly indicate switches between perspectives, or "discourse-interactional orientations" (524) as Bhatt and Bolonyai propose for oral CS. The CS in *The Crossing*, which almost exclusively occurs in dialogue, is clearly a device of perspective; readers of McCarthy (who refrains from using quotations marks in all of his texts) often are able to distinguish between speakers in his Border Trilogy—and also *No Country for Old Men*—simply by assessing which language is being spoken. This too is exemplified in the extended passage included above from *The Crossing* in the exchange between Billy and Don Arnulfo.

But beyond the five principles outlined by Bhatt and Bolonyai, I contend that there are further factors that apply to written CS. Although still geared towards optimization, these "principles" of written CS are unique; to put it another way, written CS offers unique types of CS given that the very nature of written texts involves more levels of textual interaction than does oral CS, namely the traditional levels of narrative: author, implied author, narrator, narratee, implied reader, and reader. Not only do written texts afford opportunities for discussions of why speakers (characters) decide to use CS, but

they also expand the conversation one level wider, addressing motivations behind why authors decide to have characters use CS—or why they (the authors) themselves switch between languages—and how these various types of CS directly impact the reading experience. This added level of analysis has direct implications for previous studies of CS, as well as on the novels themselves and on how they shed light on contemporary American experiences—experiences deeply ingrained in the political and social effects of a culture that consists of diverse linguistic experiences. A number of scholars have worked specifically in this area, proposing further "principles" of CS that get to the motivating factors—and the readerly affects—of these bilingual contemporary texts. I seek to join this conversation through my own reading of authors like Viramontes, Diaz, and McCarthy, but my eventual assertions depend heavily on an incorporation of another field of inquiry: translation studies. Not only do these texts switch between languages: they also purposefully and explicitly do so in unmarked, untranslated ways. This is a crucial aspect of the CS texts, and one that I see as being just as important as the switches themselves. In my analysis, these American code-switching novels need to be considered through both a linguistic and translation lens. The former has been the focus of this current section; the latter will be the focus of the next.

Translation

In his important critical work, *The Invention of Native American Literature* (2003), Robert Dale Parker offers a fascinating approach to the concept of translation. In the fourth chapter, "Text, Lines, and Videotape: Reinventing Oral Stories as Written Poems," Parker approaches traditional translation studies questions such as whether or not texts should be translated, who is allowed to do the translating, and the ways in which the process(es) of translation involve cultural appropriation and an exchange of power. Parker provides a detailed analysis of the history behind the translation of Native

American oral narratives into poems; within this analysis, Parker approaches a number of quintessential topics within the larger field of translation studies through a lens aimed specifically at Native American literature. Parker's chapter is important for many reasons, and his unique scope shines much-needed light on these topics. Like Parker, Martha J. Cutter also relies heavily on the relationship between translation and appropriation in her work, *Lost & Found in Translation* (2005). In the opening pages, Cutter asserts:

> Although most of their texts are written in English and the ethnic language is most often transcribed into English words, ethnic American writers maintain a constant preoccupation with questions of cultural translation: Who can be a translator? What can be translated? When a second- or third- generation child no longer speaks the parent's ethnic tongue, what gets "lost" in translation? And what might be "found" in translation? (1)

Although Cutter's textual scope of "ethnic literature" is much more broad than that of Parker, her text similarly deals with issues of cultural appropriation and the exchange of power at play in translation. Both texts are guided by an effort to expose and explicate these systems of exchange through their close readings.

As evidenced in her title, Cutter's primary theoretical agenda is to find a middle ground between the wholly-positive and wholly-negative views of translation—views she sees as prevalent in other approaches to the topic. Instead of leaning towards one side or the other, Cutter's literary analyses of a large number of diverse texts situate her argument as a testament to the diverse theoretical and cultural implications at play when translation plays a role in literary texts. In her Introduction, Cutter provides helpful contextual backgrounds for the various discussions she joins throughout the book; first and foremost, her text is a joint entry into the fields of translation and literary studies. And, through her synthetic mix of theoretical purposes, Cutter is able to develop a central argument: "This book examines the simultaneous loss and gain of translation" (2). At the heart of this "loss and gain" is what she calls the "trope of translation," which involves

"transcoding ethnicity, transmigrating the ethnic tongue into the English language, and renovating the language of hegemony" (2). Cutter's purpose is clearly to break boundaries; she is intent upon moving beyond previous discussions involving translation and literature, with a hope of finding a way in which translation can be seen for what it really is (according to Cutter, at least). But there is more at stake here than simply interpretation or literary analysis; Cutter leaves no doubt that the potential price of translation involves serious cultural capital, as evidenced by her use of "hegemony" early on.

For Cutter, the "trope of translation" has numerous potential effects, both positive and negative. These positive and negative effects have, in the past, created the binary views mentioned before in terms of the fundamental nature of translation. Cutter sees translation as involving a "continual negotiation and renegotiation between languages and an ongoing struggle between conflicting and often clashing cultures and ideologies" (6). Her use of words is telling here: in many cases, translation is a platform for (linguistic and literary) violence, a place of conflict.[8] Other critics take up this relationship between cultural violence and translation, such as Mona Baker in *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (2006). For Baker, translation and conflict go hand-in-hand; she sees the world as a conflict-ridden place, with translation as a powerful tool of legitimization and justification used on behalf of all sides involved. In her Introduction, Baker explains the purpose of her text as being an attempt "to explore how the discursive negotiation of

[8] To clarify this type of conflict, an example—however simple—might help. A situation in which a translator purposefully mistranslates a certain word, or phrase, or even an entire passage, for the purpose of enacting some form of personal, political, or social agenda, may stand as a functioning example of this relationship between translation and conflict. The act of translating is an empowering act, and any form or power—as years and years of cultural criticism have shown—brings with it the potential for a misuse of this power. In addition to purposeful mistranslations, there are also cases in which direct translation is simply impossible due to a lack of equivalent words between languages. Thus, consequences of "misrepresentations" via translation are often unavoidable.

conflictual and competing narratives is realized in and through acts of translation and interpreting" (1). If the act of translation is the battleground for conflict and negotiation, then for Baker the translator stands as the central figure directing the exchange of power. She asserts that translators have the chance to "strengthen or undermine particular aspects of the narratives they mediate, explicitly or implicitly" (105), and that this opportunity allows for specific instances of power creation—and the enactment of this power. Baker stands as an example of one of the approaches to translation identified by Cutter, and although not all views of translation are quite as conflict-centered as Baker's, the implicit relationship between translation and conflict persists quite broadly.

While Cutter's text points out broad commonalities between approaches to translation, both positive and negative, and then seeks to find a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to the topic, Parker's chapter in *The Invention of Native American Literature* is much more particular in its scope and purpose. On the whole, Parker seeks to study the various ways in which the field of "Native American literature" has been "invented." Parker's text is an attempt to look beneath the surface of the field of Native American literature and identify the motivations behind the "boom" of Native American literature; and, according to Parker, these "motivations" are rarely what they might seem to be. His first sentence makes his purpose quite clear: "This book proposes an interpretive history of the ways that Indian writers drew on Indian and literary traditions to invent a Native American literature" (1). For his fourth chapter, "Text, Lines, and Videotape: Reinventing Oral Stories as Written Poems," Parker provides an equally clear thesis:

> Picking up on that notion of orality as a lever for the invention of Native American literature, this chapter looks historically at the transcription of traditional Indian oral stories and the cultural translation of transcribed, translated stories into Indian "poetry"—an invention of an "Indian literature" that happens not to be written by Indians yet remains

> foundational to many non-Indians' imagination of what Indian writing might be. (80)

As he says above, Parker is focused on revealing the truth behind the genre of Native American poetry, which he sees as another manifestation of the "invention" of Native American literature. His analysis of historical "translators" of Native American oral stories provides a helpful exemplification of the inherent nature of the exchange of power at stake within the act of translation.

Parker uses close analyses of two historical figures in the process of translating Native American oral narratives, Dell Hymes and Dennis Tedlock. While he acknowledges the positive and productive aspects of the practices used by translators like Hymes and Tedlock, Parker's essential view of their work is clear: "As a canonical practice or an interpretation of narrative orality, it causes serious problems" (81). Specifically, Parker is focused on the process of translating Native American oral narratives into poetry, which he traces back to the 18th century, and which came to be known as "ethnopoetics" during the boom in activity during the 1960s and 70s. Although Hymes and Tedlock by no means "invented" the process of ethnopoetics, Parker sees them a collective center of the movement. The turning point of Parker's criticism of the work done by Hyme and Tedlock, among others, is what he sees as a key difference between discovery and interpretation. The difference in meanings between these words—and the theoretical, cultural, and political implications of these differences—forms the foundation upon which Parker makes his case against ethnopoetics.

He begins with Hymes, looking at a passage from Hymes's article, "Discovering Oral Performance and Measured Verse in American Indian Narrative." Parker takes issue with Hymes's use of the term "discovery," asserting that "the rhetoric of discovery so pervasively runs away with the ongoing argument and practice of Hymes and his followers" (85-86). Essentially, by "discovering" the "verse" of Native American oral

stories, Hymes is necessarily applying divisions within the verse: “Once Hymes and his followers decide that a narrative divides into acts, scenes, stanzas, verses . . . and line, then the mere process of figuring out where to make all of those divisions takes over the discussion” (86). In other words, rather than being inherent in the oral narrative—rather than being *discovered* by Hymes—these divisions are actually the results of decisions made by the translators themselves. Parker’s main point is that what Hymes is actually doing here is saying that the narrative *is* verse rather than claiming that it *can be translated as such*. Parker explicates his critique further: “Different methods of reading produce the perception of different forms, even in the same text. That is the difference between interpretation and discovery. Hymes piles elaborate details upon detail, as if that could prove the system he purports to discover” (88). According to Parker, Hymes is not *discovering* Native American verse; instead, he is *interpreting* these oral narratives *as* verse.

Parker seems to be more accepting of the work done by Tedlock; he praises the inventive strategies used by Tedlock for “transcribing the event-specific characteristics of a particular performance” (90), including elements such as audience reactions, pitch and volume changes, and others.[9] He also points out how Tedlock explicitly works to create translations of individual, specific performances rather than all-encompassing “translations” of the stories being orated. This specificity of scope and awareness of context has positive outcomes: “By highlighting the contingency of his text, Tedlock provokes a sharper attention to how any text is a freeze-frame of textuality in process” (91). At the same time, Parker similarly critiques Tedlock (as he did with Hymes) for the

[9] Parker later discusses the concept of “Red English,” which he refers to as a “red herring” (97) in terms of whether or not the concept helps make decisions between transcriptions of either prose of poetry. From here he moves on to a discussion of capturing oral performances on video, and the remaining element of mediation. I discuss this towards the end of the current chapter.

manner in which sees these oral narratives as being poetry. Parker writes, “When Tedlock transcribes oral narrative as ‘poetry,’ and when Hymes transcribes it as ‘verse,’ their transcriptions are verse and poetry. But the stories they transcribe are oral narratives, whereas verse, poetry, and prose, when defined by the presence or absence of line breaks, are characteristics of written language” (92). Like Hymes, Tedlock’s presentation of these oral narratives in poetic form is an implicit argument of discovery rather than a presentation of interpretation.

Along with what he sees as their misrepresentation of the distinction between discovery and interpretation, Parker’s other main problem with the work of these “ethnopoeticians” is the inherently canonical—and condescending—reasons for their efforts. On one hand, referring to these oral stories as verse/poetry is condescending to the storytellers themselves in that by referring to his “discoveries” as “obvious” and “inevitable,” as Hymes does, he is simultaneously assuming that the tellers of these stories are unaware of these poetic categories. To put it another way, in order for Hymes’s work to be a “discovery,” the storytellers themselves must be unaware of the poetical nature of their stories, thus leaving these poetic attributes in need of discovery in the first place. Along with this condescending nature, Parker sees the efforts of both Hymes and Tedlock as canonizing—the choice to see these oral stories as verse/poetry is essentially a conscious choice based on the intellectual standing of poetry as opposed to that of oral stories. Parker makes this point multiple times within the chapter. In reference to Hymes, Parker explains, “Why make such divisions? Because the visual alignments, Hymes explains, are ‘more attractive’ and hence make the work more accessible” (86). He goes on to solidify this point in reference to both translators later: “The argument for transcribing oral narrative as poetry, therefore, comes not from any discovery that it is poetry so much as from the polemical and canonizing effect of reading

it as if it were poetry. Scholars and canonizers need a legitimation strategy for themselves and for the materials they study" (94). Thinking back to Cutter and her analysis of the relationship between translation and appropriation, this idea of a "legitimation strategy" proposed by Parker similarly involves an exchange of power: "The claims for oral story as poetry, ostensibly truth claims about oral story, are actually bids for cultural capital" (94). Parker acknowledges that this "legitimation strategy" has "worked" in terms of gaining more readers and more cultural recognition, but at what cost? "If the emergent cultural value of Native oral story . . . is made to hinge on the already dominant cultural value of poetry, then, as in an eclipse, the value attributed to poetry will screen out the value we are trying to attribute to oral story" (95).

At the end of his chapter, Parker makes one final call towards what he sees as the work of transcribers/translators of Native American oral narratives:

> If we are going to enlarge the audience for oral story—traditional Native American and other kinds—then let us draw people to the orality of the stories even when we have to or choose to represent it in written form. The task of transcribers and translators is not to discover. Rather, like the task of storytellers, it is to narrate and to interpret. (100)

This call to action on the part of translators rests upon specific definitions of what the act of translating is, what it can be, and what is should be. Similar to Cutter, Parker clearly sees translation as more than a simple transcription of words. Instead, translation is inextricably linked with interpretation; he asserts, "Translations are constructions rather than discoveries" (89).

With this view of translation in mind, how can narratological aspects enlighten the essential questions at the heart of both Cutter and Parker in relation to narrative texts that incorporate unmarked, untranslated passages of multiple languages? In these texts, I see the role of translator being performed by multiple people, including the author, the narrator, and even the reader. In the quote above, Parker equates the work done by

translators with that done by storytellers and narrators; if this is the case, how are these various translating individuals—authors, narrators, and readers—to deal with the inherently powerful nature of the process of translation? And what implications does this have on a narrative and, more importantly, on the experience of reading it? Translation studies, including texts such as Parker's and Cutter's, consistently deal with ideas of legitimacy and sincerity in relation to translations, and on appropriateness in relation to the *person doing the translating*. Considering these untranslated, code-switching narrative texts, questions about whether or not readers have the ability—or the *right*—to translate certain passages lead to unique analyses of these texts and the effects they potentially have on readers. In what remains of this chapter, I will attempt to work through these various theoretical implications from the linguistic and translation studies referenced above from a narratological perspective, through close readings of the previously-referenced narratives, in order to propose analyses of how unmarked, untranslated, and code-switching texts enact unique rhetorical and cultural effects on the reception and interpretation of said texts.

Translating the Untranslated: Reader-as-Translator

Although the early portions of this chapter provide a detailed review of studies done on CS, I want to now take a look at studies geared specifically at CS in written texts—CS in texts similar to the ones I address. In her essay "In the Contact Zone: Code-Switching Strategies by Latino/a Writers," Lourdes Torres provides a brief introduction of CS in the context of Latino/a literature. She explains, "Much of the Latino/a literature written in English in the US incorporates Spanish at some level. Code-switching, the alternation of two languages in a verbal or written text, is often featured in poetry, drama, and performance art" (76). She continues: "Using Spanish in an English language text serves to legitimize the much-maligned practice of mixing codes in vernacular speech"

(76). Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien's central argument about the ways ethnic American authors are constantly "weirding English" also entails a discussion of code-switching in her chapter focused on Diaz, entitled "'The Shit That's Other': Unintelligible Languages." Ch'ien sees the mixing of various languages within English language texts as an important aspect of the "weirding" of English, and she refers to Diaz as a prime example of an author doing so. She describes Diaz's mix of languages, which is simultaneously another depiction of code-switching: "His fiction allows for the convergence of diverse linguistic worlds, each populated by a different language: (1) homogenous or standard Spanish; (2) Dominican Spanish; (3) street-speak English; (4) Spanglish; (5) nerd-speak" (203). These analyses focused on the code-switching elements of these American narratives are among others that see major implications at play in texts in which authors incorporate multiple languages in diverse ways.

Like all narrative techniques, there are various types and degrees of code-switching employed by these authors. Torres outlines specific ways in which Latino/a authors employ code-switching, the most common of which "is to include only those Spanish words whose meaning is obvious from the context" (77). These usually include items such as food, common nouns, places, and so on. Although the words are clearly from another language, "the general meanings of these items are easily understood and assimilated by readers with little or no knowledge of Spanish" (78) because of the extent to which they are used in popular culture. The second type of code-switching involves Spanish words followed immediately by English translations (78). These first two options, according to Torres, are easier for the monolingual reader in that they don't necessarily alienate the reader that doesn't know Spanish; on the other hand, the last two types of code-switching enact just this type of alienation. Torres writes, "In contrast, a less used option occurs when Spanish appears with no translation, and the terms are not italicized,

or marked as foreign in any way" (78). The last option mentioned by Torres is what she calls a "calque," "which are creative English renditions of Spanish words and phrases translated literally or figuratively" (78); calquing this is a notable feature of Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Unlike the first two options, these last two do not offer "help" to the monolingual reader. As Torres suggest, "Writers who favor the last two strategies (untranslated Spanish and word or phrasal calques) seem to prioritize the bilingual reader and may cause instances of discomfort or annoyance to the monolingual reader" (78). While they do have minimal examples of the first two options, the authors of the passages introduced above most clearly fall into this latter category outlined by Torres; looking at their uses of bilingual-prioritizing code-switching will help illuminate the narratological implications these linguistic variations involve.

Throughout her essay, Torres continually argues that authorly decisions to employ code-switching involve implications beyond the literary sphere, asserting that code-switching in texts represents the cultural reality of the diverse, multilingual American society. Furthermore, Torres proposes, "A writer's linguistic choice can be a political act" (77); this is usually the case with the latter two options in that these instances usually imply that the author purposefully uses languages in ways that serve to alienate—or at least affect in a significantly uncomfortable way—the monolingual reader. Interviews with Viramontes and Diaz reveal these authorly intentions. In a 1994 interview with Bridget Kevane and Juanita Heredia, Viramontes speaks about her use of Spanish and English in her (then) newly-completed novel, *Under the Feet of Jesus*. The interviewers ask Viramontes, "Some characters speak in Spanish. You use much more Spanish than you previously have. What is your goal in doing this?" (150). In response, Viramontes reveals that her use of Spanish is a conscious, deliberate decision—one that she does not take lightly. She begins by referencing McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses*, his inclusion of long

passages of Spanish, and the lack of scholar- and reviewer-questions about his usage of Spanish. In contrast, Viramontes exclaims, “If a Spanish-surnamed writer uses Spanish, it becomes an issue. Readers feel purposefully excluded, like, why are you keeping this from me? Well, I’m sorry. How could I not give integrity to the characters?” (150). For Viramontes, the decision to incorporate Spanish into the text is a decision based on remaining loyal and true to her characters; they speak Spanish, so why should she not having them speaking Spanish in her text? She continues: “There was a question shortly after the novel went into press whether Spanish should be italicized. I said, ‘Absolutely not.’ I don’t want to call attention to the text . . . I would never, never jeopardize the voices of these characters. How could I possibly?” (151).

Diaz speaks similarly to Viramontes when asked about his use of Spanish in his first collection of short stories, *Drown*. Within an interview titled “Fiction is the Poor Man’s Cinema” and conducted by Diogenes Cespedes and Silvio Torres-Saillant, Diaz responds to similar questions answered by Viramontes above. From the early portions of the interview, Diaz sets a serious tone when talking about thematic elements of *Drown* and his own experiences in America; when talking about his experiences of moving to the United States from the Dominican Republic at the age of seven, Diaz asserts, “You come to the United States and the United States begins immediately, systematically, to erase you in every way, to suppress those things which it considers not digestible. You spend a lot of time being colonized” (896). This sense of being colonized plays into his use of code-switching, as evidenced later in the interview when he is asked to explain his use of Spanish in his texts. Diaz responds:

> For me, allowing the Spanish to exist in my text without the benefit of italics or quotation marks was a very important political move. Spanish is not a minority language. Not in this hemisphere, not in the United States, not in the world inside my head. So why treat it like one? Why ‘other’ it? Why denormalize it? By keeping the Spanish as normative in a predominantly English text, I wanted to remind readers of the fluidity of

> languages, the mutability of languages. And to mark how steadily English is transforming Spanish and Spanish is transforming English. (904)

Diaz is clear in his purpose, and he even blatantly refers to his choice as being of a political nature. His response is similar to Viramontes in that they both assert a sort of "allegiance" to their characters; specifically, they both focus on being sincere in their depictions of the people they are writing about, and since the Spanish language is an undeniable part of these people, then they are not going to deny its place in their depictions.

These statements from Viramontes and Diaz make clear that the incorporation of Spanish in their texts is much more than a simple linguistic decision. Their use of CS correlates with the principles of power and solidarity introduced by Bhatt and Bolonyai above. On one hand, both authors convey a sense of asserting their own form of "power" over the English language through their decisions to include unmarked, untranslated Spanish. On the other hand, they also are clearly portraying feelings of solidarity—solidarity in the face of the colonizing elements of American culture. Rather than be controlled and dominated by the English language, Viramontes and Diaz use CS almost as a form of fraternity for Spanish speakers. Their comments also echo with the principle of faith, as Viramontes declares that her use of Spanish correlates with how her characters would actually speak; in order to be faithful to the reality of her characters, she has no choice but to use the Spanish language in the text.

At the same time, both responses from Viramontes and Diaz also seem to involve a certain amount of purposeful alienation of the monolingual reader, as explained by Torres. Early in her response, Viramontes seems to almost mock the monolingual reader who feels "purposefully excluded," to whom she responds flippantly, "Well, I'm sorry." Eugenia Casielles-Suarez, in her article "Radical Code-Switching in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*," further describes authors that employ this type of code-

switching: “Authors who want to gratify the bilingual reader and who value moments of unintelligibility, and are consciously trying not to ‘other’ Spanish, as Diaz is, do not translate or mark Spanish words in any way” (478). This idea of “valuing unintelligibility” seems to be at play in what Viramontes and Diaz are doing; rather than “being sorry” for “excluding” her monolingual reader, perhaps it would be more accurate to describe what Viramontes is doing in terms of purposefully disrupting the reading experience. This has a defamiliarizing effect, to use the term introduced by the Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky. In his seminal essay, “Art as Device” (1917), Shklovsky introduces his treatise on what he calls “defamiliarization” or “estrangement”; for Shklovsky, the point of art is to disrupt the effects of “automatization,” which is the normal, habitual, and degenerative everyday routine of life. Shklovsky writes, “Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony” (qtd. in Stacy, 34). By disrupting the automatic, defamiliarizing art has the ability to create new, sincere experiences for the one who encounters it. This is purposeful on the part of the artist, and this is similar in ways to this type of purposeful, difficult code-switching taking place in these texts by Viramontes and Diaz.

But beyond this sense of purposeful defamiliarization, a more political action is taking place, closely related to the inherently political or violent nature at play in many views of translation and language mentioned earlier. In the quote referenced above, there is a clear amount of passion and determination in Diaz’s response to the question about his use of Spanish. It is no small decision on his part to include Spanish in his text, and his reasons for doing so are based on his own experiences with the colonizing effects of language. After the quote above, Diaz proceeds to further explain his purpose, resulting in one of the most-often quoted lines in later scholarly work on Diaz. He exclaims, “And by forcing Spanish back onto English, forcing it to deal with the language it tried to

exterminate in me, I've tried to represent a mirror-image of that violence on the page. Call it my revenge on English" (904). This takes code-switching to a whole new level, past a sense of "purposeful unintelligibility" or defamiliarization; Caseilles-Suarez refers to Diaz's usage as "radical code-switching." She describes Diaz's text as "more interested in flouting the rules in order to create powerful, disjunctive, linguistic hybrids," a process that involves a sense of "linguistic violence" (482). This sense of violence and "revenge," to use Diaz's term, creates further implications for this type of code-switching.

To combat the violence he experienced as a colonized Spanish-speaking youth in the United States, Diaz "forces Spanish onto English" in a sort of vengeful linguistic maneuver, thus enacting his revenge on the English language itself. But what effect does this linguistic revenge have on the reader of Diaz's text? How exactly is a monolingual reader—one that only speaks English—supposed to handle these sections of unmarked and non-translated Spanish text? Torres proposes that in these situations, "Sometimes [readers] must resort to a dictionary" (83). Does this mean that these authors expect readers to have a Spanish/English dictionary handy at all times while reading these texts? This would undoubtedly be a defamiliarizing reading experience: flipping back-and-forth between *Under the Feet of Jesus* and a Spanish/English dictionary, looking up words and trying to maintain the correct page in each book. But is this really the type of reading experience these authors want? Other times, according to Torres, "no reference book will help" (83). As she says later, "These texts, which cannot be translated into either Spanish or English without losing the essence of the intercultural message, are not easily decipherable by monolinguals" (90). This creates even further problems for the reader of these code-switching texts, and raises the question of whether or not these passages of other languages are even meant to serve a purpose beyond the defamiliarizing and political effects mentioned above. In other words, the question arises

about whether or not these authors intend for these words and passages to be translated or understood by their monolingual readers, or if the non-translation is the point (similar to the viewing experience of *The Godfather* mentioned above in which subtitles are purposefully withheld). To a certain degree, this type of non-translation is enacting a reading experience of exclusion—similar to the exclusion felt by mono- and bilingual Spanish speakers confronted with English language texts. This is at the heart of what Diaz says above in terms of his linguistic "revenge," and the narrative choice to code-switch in this way is a direct catalyst for this thematic emphasis. As Torres asks, "Are writers, by signaling otherness through their language choice, consciously trying to exclude some readers?" (90). Are monolingual readers left out of the conversation on purpose, relegated to the margins like McCluskey in *The Godfather*?

This sense of purposeful unintelligibility and perhaps intentional alienation of readers strikes a chord with Gloria Anzaldua's seminal work, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987). At the heart of Anzaldua's book is an exploration of an existence in what she sees as the Borderlands: "The Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (Preface). Anzaldua spends the first portion of her text exploring and explicating these Borderlands, describing "unnatural boundaries" between these various cultures, and eventually turns to language. She focuses on Chicano Spanish as being a border tongue (77), and she also discusses what she sees as linguistic terrorism: "So, if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language" (81). This deeply-felt importance of language and its part in identity correlates with the responses above from Viramontes and Diaz, yet rather than seek to create a sense of "mestizo

consciousness"—which is central in Anzaldua's text—these authors seem to be actually seeking to solidify these borders between cultures, with the point of separation being experienced on behalf of the reader as he or she encounters these bilingual passages.

Within this specific point of discussion concerning the interpretation—or translation—of these code-switching texts is a crossroads between studies by scholars like Ch'ien, Torres, and Casielles-Suarez, and those conducted within the field of narrative theory. The occasion of code-switching in these narrative texts raises unique and theoretically-important questions about the role and function of the reader; specifically, in these instances of unmarked, non-translated, bilingual narrative texts, it seems as if the role of translator is relegated to the reader. These code-switching texts create a unique situation of reader-as-translator, which similarly brings into question the reliability of the reader in terms of his or her ability to perform this role of translator, variations among reader-translators, and implications these readerly-translations have on textual meaning.

In "Narrative, Being, and the Dialogic Novel: The Problem of Discourse and Language in Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing*," Alan Noble presents a fascinating analysis of McCarthy's use of bilingualism and multiple voices in the text. Noble situates his analysis according to Bakhtin's treatises on "dialogic and polyphonic narratives" (237). The essay focuses on the passages of *The Crossing* that display the prophetic, "vatic" voice that is often noted in many of McCarthy's texts, most notably *Blood Meridian* (1985). According to Noble's reading, while *The Crossing* contains many examples of these vatic speeches, they are all rendered in a similar voice; for Noble, this voice is the voice of the narrator (238). Noble describes the text as an example of "heteroglossia" (239), and he notes the constant translating being done by the narrator: "Sometimes from Spanish to English, other times simply from their voice to his" (238). Yet, the problem—or

at least the crux of Noble's argument—results from the fact that the narrator's role as translator actually works to destroy this sense of heteroglossia:

> In *The Crossing*, McCarthy presents a heteroglot and dialogic world in that there are many dialects, social languages, and national languages that he artistically renders, yet in the very passages which are most dialogic—those passages which define the polyphonic aspects of the text—the language of the characters are translated into the voice of the narrator, thereby losing their distinctive and autonomous voices. (240)

The polyphonic nature of the text is forfeited for the single voice, creating a "privileged, or monologic, voice" (240) for the narrator.

As Noble unpacks his argument and presents various close readings of passages from McCarthy's text, he also works through some of the acts of translation that take place on behalf of the narrator. Using a passage involving a conversation between Billy and Don Arnulfo (immediately following the passage I quoted previously), Noble identifies differences in the tone/voice of the text according to whether or not the translating is being done by the narrator or by the character. Specifically, when McCarthy leaves Don Arnulfo's words in Spanish, the sense of heteroglossia remains and his voice "is autonomous from the narrator" (243). Soon after, though, the narrator translates Don Arnulfo's subsequent words; according to Noble's reading, this translation entails an insertion of the narrator's voice and "therefore a distinctly different worldview" (243). Noble sees this as a problem in terms of whether or not McCarthy's text should be referred to as polyphonic, and he sees at work here a system of domination and ownership by the narrator of voices such as those of Don Arnulfo. Of course, Don Arnulfo's voice is still there, and Noble points out that the narrator translation does not completely eliminate Don Arnulfo; Noble sees a sort of "double-voicing" going on in passages like this, which does allow for Don Arnulfo's voice to be heard, but only through the mediation of the narrator.

Noble's analysis is yet another example of views of translation that involve forces of domination and appropriation. Considering this recurring trend and thinking in particular about Noble's reading of the "dominating" effects of the narrator-as-translator in *The Crossing*, what implications does this have for readers of these non-translated bilingual texts? In relation to Diaz, Ch'ien writes, "The concept of translation is crafted by a dominant culture; in practice, translation is erasure" (209). If this is the case, how is a monolingual English reader of a text such as *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* or *Under the Feet of Jesus* supposed to approach the various instances of non-translated Spanish? If translation is "erasure" and is a process closely linked with hegemony and domination, does this necessarily mean that a reader is a participant in this domination if he or she attempts to translate said passages? Furthermore, if translation is attempted by the reader-turned-translator, how exactly is he or she supposed to go about it? Is there a "correct" translation of the text that is "better" than other translations? Is one reader-turned-translator more reliable than the other?

Perhaps there are occasions in which authors use bilingualism to create certain effects on the reading experience—effects that supersede authorly intentions for monolingual readers performing translations of these bilingual passages. Thinking back to the interviews with both Viramontes and Diaz on their use of unmarked and non-translated Spanish, while they do not say that they do not want their monolingual English readers translating the Spanish spoken by their characters, their focus is clearly far removed from whether or not this happens. Instead, their focus is directed at topics of sincerity to characters and representing the reality of the multilingualism that exists in their characters' lives and in the social climate of the United States. This again echoes Bhatt and Bolonyai's assertions about faith and solidarity, as well as their comment on how CS has the power to recall "cultural memory." Viramontes and Diaz are focused on

giving the appropriate agency to the Spanish language—an agency that works against the forces of linguistic colonialism responsible for the questions about their (Viramontes and Diaz) use of Spanish in the first place.

At the same time, it would be inaccurate to assume that monolingual English readers will not—or to assert that they should not—attempt to perform some form of translation of these bilingual texts. If anything, the readerly need for translation implies readerly participation and enjoyment with the text itself. Callahan proposes that instances of CS serve as a "cue to listeners to make conversational inferences," thus leading to further participation. An enhanced sense of readerly participation is, presumably, a positive outcome—something that most authors would encourage. If a monolingual reader was to simply pass over the bilingual passages in these texts—texts that employ a significantly large amount of bilingualism—without giving any effort at translation, it seems reasonable that this lack of attempt involves a lack of interest, something these authors most certainly do not want. Therefore, the question now turns to how exactly the reader-turned-translator is supposed to go about his or her task, and in what ways does this unique readerly role impact the meaning of these bilingual texts.

There is a need for translation in these texts for many reasons, not the least of which is readerly comprehension and textual cohesion. For example, within his analysis of McCarthy's dominant narrator voice, Noble himself is reliant upon translations of *The Crossing*. After including a lengthy quote from Don Arnulfo in the original Spanish, Noble includes a bracketed English translation with a footnote. According to the note, "All translations provides are from Lt. Jim Campbell's 'A Translation of Spanish Passages in The Crossing'" (256). This translation is located on the website of the Cormac McCarthy Society; from the limited information given, it seems as if Lt. Jim Campbell is associated with the U.S. Naval Academy Language Department. Whether or not Lt. Campbell is an

authority on Spanish translations is perhaps debatable, although his inclusion on the McCarthy website undoubtedly lends a certain amount of credibility. Still, as evidenced in the various views from translation studies mentioned earlier, translation is anything but an exact science, and the role of the translator is more than simply transcribing between languages. With this in mind, Noble's reliance on Lt. Campbell's translations adds yet another level to the analysis of McCarthy's bilingualism. Noble's analysis functions on a reading of the manner in which the narrator's voice—through the act of translation—demolishes the polyphonic nature of the text and creates a unitary, "vatic" tone to the passages. Can the same be said for the act of translation being performed by Lt. Campbell? Is it not possible that Campbell's fifteen pages of translations of the Spanish words in *The Crossing* enact a similar form of voice unification? From the document included on the website—the one referenced in Noble's Works Cited—Lt. Campbell does not provide any information about how he went about making these translations. He doesn't indicate whether or not he is a native speaker of Spanish translating based on his own knowledge of the language; there are no notes about dictionaries used or tools of translation; in fact, there are no notes of any kind in the document beyond the translations themselves.

By no means am I intending to criticize the work of Lt. Campbell in his translation of McCarthy's text, nor am I condemning any other attempts made by scholars or translators to create similar "language guides" to assist readers of these bilingual texts. Instead, my point is that if we take the seminal points of discussion in translation studies mentioned above—about what translation *is* and what it *is not*—then we must also consider the implications these "language guides" have in our—whether we are bilingual, monolingual English, or even monolingual Spanish—attempts to access these bilingual texts. I have no reason to doubt whether or not Lt. Campbell's translation of the Spanish

words in *The Crossing* contains anything beyond the literal translations of the words on the page. But, as has been discussed, there is more to translation than the words on the page. A "reliable" translation is one that correlates with the norms of the text, which involves consistency in tone and voice and thematic emphasis. Noble utilizes Lt. Campbell's translations to form his argument, and therefore it seems as if the translations are reliable in this sense. But without this sort of reliable "guide," the reader is left with the responsibility to perform similarly reliable translations of the texts.

Late in her introduction, Cutter briefly touches on the idea of reader-turned-translator: "But some of these writers . . . call on notions of translation that show characters speaking two (or more) languages at once or that force the reader to become a translator. This form of radical bilingualism dismantles the line between the translator and the reader, between the dominant language and the 'disempowered' one(s)" (25). This idea of *forcing* the reader to become a translator is exactly what I see at play in texts like those by Viramontes, Diaz, and McCarthy. And, as Cutter says, this bilingualism deconstructs traditional lines between the reader and the translator, creating a hybrid reader-as-translator. Yet I see this line-blurring going a step further. As mentioned above, the roles of translator and narrator are corollary in specific ways, and I go so far as to blend the two. Therefore, if the reader becomes the translator in these bilingual texts, I contend that he or she also becomes—to a certain extent—the narrator.

For instance, take the following brief passage from McCarthy's *Cities on the Plain*, the third book of McCarthy's Border Trilogy:

> The old woman came down the hall at a tottering run crying out. He caught her as she went past and pulled her around. She threw up her hands and closed her good eye. Aiee, she cried. Aiee. He gripped her wrists and shook her. Donde esta mi companero? he said.
> Aiee, she cried. She tried to pull away to go to the pimp lying in the floor.
> Digame. Donde esta mi cuate?
> No se. No se. Por Dios, no se nada.
> Donde esta la muchacha? Magdalena? Donde esta Magdalena?

> Jesus Maria y Jose ten compassion no esta. No esta.
> Donde esta Eduardo?
> No esta. No esta.
> Aint a damn soul esta, is there? (238)

This passage comes at a very important moment in the novel in which Billy Parham (the protagonist of *The Crossing*) has returned to Mexico in search of his buddy John Grady Cole (the protagonist of the first book in the trilogy, *All the Pretty Horses*). I personally have a working knowledge of Spanish, and therefore when I read this passage I use my own knowledge to perform the translation. For example, I know that when Billy says, "Donde esta mi companero?" he's asking the lady where John Grady is; and I know that the lady exclaims that she knows nothing and that neither Magdalena nor Eduardo are there. At the same time, I'm not *exactly* sure what every word means, and the phrase "Jesus Maria y Jose ten compassion" is foreign to me. Do I have to know exactly what this means? I would argue that I don't. But is my reading of the passage different than other readings? This is undoubtedly possible.

Turning to the "language guide" to *Cities on the Plain* (also completed by Lt. Campbell and found on the Cormac McCarthy Society website), I find that Lt. Campbell translates the "Donde esta me companero?" question as "Where is my friend/colleague?" This is by no means *vastly different* from my own reading, but I definitely wouldn't have associated the word "colleague" in my reading. As far as the next phrase goes, Lt. Campbell translates it as "Jesus, Mary and Joseph have compassion. She's not here." Seeing this, I realize that the "ten compassion" portion is not actually part of the phrase; in my first reading, I thought that it went with the Jesus, Mary and Joseph in a sort of idiomatic expression. Again, the difference isn't drastic, but this is an example that shows how differences between translations undoubtedly exist, and it is not hard to imagine how sometimes these differences could involve rather important variations in textual meanings.

As a reader of the passage above from *Cities on the Plain*, I also find myself becoming the translator of the text. It is up to me how I want to read/translate words like "companero," and I have the ability to dictate the text in ways that I don't have in strictly English narratives. In this sense, I also become the narrator of the text. When I read long passages of Spanish—of which there are many in McCarthy's Border Trilogy—I am allowed to make decisions about whether or not I am going to translate every word, or simply look for the "gist" of the passages. At the same time, I also am making decisions about the voices of the characters, and in these instances there are times in which the character voices are forfeited for my own voice as I attempt to make these translations. In this regard, there are instances of disruption and defamiliarization in my reading—there are moments in which my "automatized" reading process is disrupted as I am forced to perform these various roles of reader, translator, and narrator.

Conversely, I do not necessarily have the same experience as a reader of texts such as *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, or Diaz's other texts like *Drown* and *This is How You Lose Her*. I can vividly recall many instances in my readings of these texts in which I simply glossed over the Spanish language portions. This is perhaps partly due to the pacing of Diaz's text; unlike McCarthy, Diaz seems to create a much more hybridized "Spanglish" in his texts (something noted extensively in Casielles-Suarez's essay) involving very fast-paced dialogue and reading. What I mean by this is that there are times in which Spanish words are interspersed so commonly and so quickly that I find myself overlooking them in hopes that I can comprehend the sentence without having to perform any translating. This is dangerous, of course, as there are times in which these words should not be overlooked and a hope for comprehension-without-translation is setting myself (the reader) up for a loss of meaning. But, judging by Diaz's own words about his bilingualism, perhaps this loss of meaning is part of what Diaz intends for me.

He says he is hoping to enact his “revenge” on the English language, and that through his texts he hopes to create a similar sense of alienation and “othering” for his readers as those he dealt with in his own experiences with English. Rather than break down the linguistic Borderlands between English and Spanish (thinking back to Anzaldua), Diaz is perhaps solidifying them. Ch’ien declares, “Diaz eschews the position of interpreter or translator for that of producer of diverse linguistic registers” (203). A reading of Diaz’s texts lends credence to Ch’ien’s description, as Diaz is clearly producing “diverse linguistic registers.” This forfeiture of interpretation and translation seems to carry over to the readerly experience: if Diaz does not seek to be the translator, then perhaps the reader should do the same.

These differences I see in the experiences of reading these bilingual texts from authors like Viramontes and Diaz to those of someone like McCarthy are perhaps reflective of the unavoidable influence of biographical elements of the authors themselves. Viramontes herself comments on this disparity when she mentions McCarthy’s use of Spanish in the quote mentioned earlier; she questions why McCarthy’s Spanish is not held to the same scrutiny as her own, and my explication of my own reading experience lends validity to Viramontes’s question. Nevertheless, each of these authors employs bilingualism in ways that create unique reading experiences. Specifically, the presence of unmarked, non-translated Spanish in these texts produce situations in which traditional readerly roles are challenged and expanded upon, resulting in readers acting as translators and, perhaps to a certain extent, narrators. Of course, all acts of reading are simultaneously acts of a certain type of translation, and variations in readerly interpretations exist in all texts, whether they code-switch or not. With this in mind, these specific instances of bilingual code-switching provide more obvious exemplifications of the manner in which translation—whether of language or of

meaning—plays a role in the act of reading. These bilingual texts make clearer the nature in which mediation is involved in all reading experiences.

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The reading experiences afforded by these code-switching texts involve similar effects as the scene from *The Godfather* mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Michael and Solozzo exemplify the bilingual characters and authors of these texts, able to maneuver fluidly between two languages without missing a beat. This ease of shift between languages is also perhaps indicative of the reading experiences of bilingual individuals reading the novels mentioned above. In this regard, the idea of optimization stands strong; the shifting between the two languages correlates with the linguistic realities of numerous cultural contexts, and the simultaneous presences of English and Spanish is, indeed, the optimal output, just as Solozzo's decision to speak in Italian to Michael is the most appropriate choice. But this idea of optimization breaks down when considering a monolingual reader. Rather than fully grasping the "intended" meaning of the words being said, monolingual readers are instead confronted by linguistic dissonance. This dissonance implies that decisions must be made on behalf of the reader—decisions that necessarily involve serious implications on textual meaning.

The presence of multiple languages is not a prerequisite for readers to have to make interpretive decisions. Late in his chapter, Parker discusses video in terms of "translating" oral performances and "Red English." After critiquing the work done in ethnopoetics and the colonizing influences of translators like Hymes and Tedlock, Parker refers to video as "a promising alternative," which certain viewers see as "somehow truer than written texts" (97). But even video involves mediation, which Parker refers to as "its own structure of remediation" (97). Even if an oral performance is captured on video—which would seem to be the most "accurate" of all representations of such a

performance—"we never get a performance in 'all its fullness,' nor can we" (98). Ultimately, Parker affirms that mediation is *always* part of the process of translation, regardless of the form it takes: "Video does not de-mediate. It re-mediates" (98). This type of "remediation" is at work in the confrontation between reader and untranslated prose in the texts mentioned above, and Parker's analysis affirms the implicit nature of mediation at work in all texts—and their invitations for interpretation.

These monolingual readers—and bilingual readers as well—are given unique power in these texts: power that supersedes the normal amount of agency a reader has in terms of textual meaning. All texts afford readers with the opportunity to participate in interpretation (which inherently involves mediation, as Parker points out), but I argue that these untranslated, code-switching texts take this power a step further. Readers are given the opportunity to fulfill several roles, including translator and, to a degree, narrator; in serving these roles, readers are forced to deal with a constant "negotiation and renegotiation" of language and meaning, as Cutter asserts. As translator, the reader has the power to either "strengthen or undermine" aspects of the narrative being translated (Baker). And as narrator, the reader must balance between the inevitable "double-voicing" that takes place when he or she performs the act of translation, as Noble points out. In *Code-Switching*, Gardner-Chloros claim that most code-switching speakers display a fundamental disconnect in their understanding of the extent to which they use CS, relating that they are usually unaware of the extent to which they employ CS and often ignorant of the role in plays in their linguistic choices. This sense of disconnect and ignorance is wholly devoid in the linguistic choices of these authors; they know exactly how much they code-switch in their texts, and they do so in purposeful, intentional ways.

Ch'ien includes this type of code-switching within her discussion of the "weirding" of English that takes place in contemporary American literature—"weirding" that

correlates exactly with the ever-growing multiculturalism of American culture. I agree with Ch'ien that these literary, linguistic elements parallel the nature of American society, but I feel that there's much more to these code-switching texts than simply multiculturalism. The unmarked, untranslated aspects of these novels change the nature of the reader position, involving readerly potentialities that, in my estimation, no other texts do. While the extent to which these potentialities materialize in each reading experience is a matter of a case-by-case basis, the prospective experiences and implications of these texts are particularly insightful. Parker asserts, "The task of transcribers and translators is not to discover. Rather, like the task of storytellers, it is to narrate and to interpret" (100). These code-switching texts present these opportunities for storytelling, narrating, and interpreting directly to the reader in ways that other texts simply do not, and it is up to each reader to decide the degree to which he or she will partake in these activities.

Chapter 5

"It could have been any of us": Collective and Missing Narrators

In the most basic understandings of the term, the narrator is a single individual. This is not to say that there aren't exceptions, because there certainly are. Many scholars and much time have been devoted in narrative theory to looking at exceptions to the fundamental, solitary narrator presence, and this current chapter will be another entry into this thread. But this attention pales in comparison to the common, fundamental approach to the narrator: a single agent responsible for the telling of the narrative; or, to use narratological terms: a single *narrator* tasked with *narrating* the *narrated*. This basic narratological concept manifests itself in general approaches to literary texts. Who is the narrator? is a question often easily answered: Ishmael, or Humbert Humbert, or Holden Caulfield. These individuals are clearly the tellers of the stories in these texts, and readers presumably accept them as so without question.

Of course, the idea of a traditional narrator is something that has been challenged and subverted for centuries; this is no contemporary phenomenon. And the manners in which authors and texts go about this subversion are multifarious. Many texts, while sticking to traditional structures of narration, involve multiple narrating individuals. Rather than one voice doing the narrating, these texts have a plethora of individuals contributing their unique perspective on the narrated. William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930) is a classic—although just one—example of such a text, exemplifying a sort of explicit form of narrative heteroglossia. Much has been written in literary theory, and narrative theory in particular, concerning the presence of multiple narrators. Narrative scholars have proposed at length the various rhetorical and epistemological effects of multiple narrators within a single narrative.

Critics have also paid notable attention to another, less-often used form of non-traditional narrator agencies. Closely related to multiple narrators, the plural, first-person narrator position—the "we-narrator"—has garnered considerable attention from narrative theorists for its unique stylistic attributes and, more interestingly, its particular rhetorical effects on a text. There are relatively plenty of literary examples incorporating the first-person plural narrator position, each of which speaks to specific attributes of how the we-narrator functions on both a diegetic and readerly level. Certain narrative scholars have proposed systematic approaches to how we-narrators can and do function in narrative texts, identifying trends and asserting limitations. But there are holes in these approaches, as there are in any systematic approach to basically all elements of narrative inquiry. Specifically, two contemporary we-narratives, Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides* (1993) and Joshua Ferris's *Then We Came to the End* (2007), challenge previous assertions about *how* we-narratives can and do function. I argue that these texts, among others, further expand the nature of first-person plural narrators, leading to reading experiences that simultaneously include and exclude readers from certain narrative levels.

Along with the challenges of we-narrators, I also take on another narratological peculiarity: narratives that seem to be without a narrating agent, be it a single individual, a group, or a we-narrator. The argument about the necessity for a narrator is one of contentious debate within fields of philosophy, aesthetics, and literary studies. Over the last two decades, a specific group of scholars within these fields has proposed various positions in the question of the necessity of a narrating presence; phrases such as "elusive, effaced narrators," "implicit narrators," and "the ubiquity of narrators" have permeated these discussions, leading to a variety of ontological, philosophical, and narratological arguments on both sides. I seek to join this debate, only through a look at

texts previously untouched in this area. Specifically, I look at novels—texts that I deem to be narratives—that overtly defy a narrator presence. This defiance comes in the form of dialogue-saturated texts, leaving barely any—and sometimes none—material outside of character dialogue. Looking at texts from Cormac McCarthy, Philip Roth, and Dave Eggers, I seek to further the discussion concerning implicit, missing narrators through my reading of these texts and an analysis of the manner in which either accepting or denying a narrator presence has significant implications for the reading experience.

This chapter joins two already ongoing conversations within narrative theory: those concerning we-narrators, and those concerning elusive and "effaced" narrators. Although distinct in certain respects, I contend that each of these conversations—and the additions made to them by these unique American texts—ultimately exemplify the means by which narratives continue to defy any sort of traditional structure of textual perception. Within the context of classical narratology, this chapter highlights specific challenges raised by these texts in terms of the author/reader, narrator/narratee relationships. Furthermore, I contend that these complex narrator positions are further avenues through which these texts are able to enact their various rhetorical and thematic implications.

We-Narrators

In *Narrative As Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology* (1996), James Phelan introduces the rhetorical definition of narrative that permeates all of his work since. The book takes a straightforward method at presenting Phelan's approach to narrative as rhetoric, clearly resonating with Booth's seminal *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). Scholars of narrative theory are most likely familiar with Phelan's definition, as he is wont to repeat it throughout his texts. According to Phelan, a narrative is defined as follows: "Telling a particular story to a particular audience in a particular situation for, presumably, a particular purpose" (4). I mention this definition in an earlier chapter,

pointing out the key component as being the repetition of the word “particular” throughout the definition; it is in the *particular* narrative aspects of a text where the rhetorical nature presents itself, as pointed out by Phelan throughout his work. In relation to the present discussion of narrators, what’s interesting about Phelan’s definition is the clear lack of an articulation of who exactly does the telling. There is a *particular* story, audience, situation, and purpose, but there is not a *particular* teller. This is not to say that Phelan does not address elements of narration throughout his work, because he most certainly does; for example *Living to Tell about It* (2007) is dedicated entirely to character narration. Nor do I contend that Phelan denies a narrator presence or necessity; my discussion in this chapter aims at other scholars beyond Phelan, and my particular argument does not contest with his. But the lack of a *particular* narrator doing the telling in Phelan’s definition provides an appropriate context for a detailed discussion of perhaps the most unique and complex of all narrator positions: the first-person plural.

As mentioned earlier, traditional approaches to narrators typically focus on single individuals, with varying degrees of distance from the narrated events. In *A Dictionary of Narratology,* Prince defines the narrator simply as “the one who narrates, as inscribed in the text” (65). He goes on to describe the narrator as “immanent to the narrative,” and asserts that “[the narrator] must be distinguished from the real or concrete author” and “from the implied author” (65-66). In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Booth clearly works off of a similar, simplified view of the narrator throughout the text; for example, “Narrator’ is usually taken to mean the ‘I’ of a work, but the ‘I’ is seldom is ever identical with the implied image of the artist” (73). Booth is mostly concerned with matters apart from the narrator, but this simplification of the term is representative of many: *most* narratives involve a *single* individual responsible for the presentation of the narrative.

Many of these traditional approaches do, though, acknowledge the fact that many narratives actually have multiple narrators, including both Prince and Booth. In *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (1982), Prince says, "There is at least one narrator in any narrative and this narrator may or may not be explicitly designated by an 'I'" (8); he continues later in the chapter: "There are many narratives with more than one narrator; indeed, in a given narrative, there may be an indefinite number of narrators (two, three, ten, etc.)" (15). Prince's words are echoed in any number of other texts in narrative theory and, of course, in countless narrative texts themselves. The presence of multiple narrating voices within a single text is by no means a rare thing. But this scholarly acknowledgement of multiple narrators is still fundamentally in line with Prince's above definition in that, although there may be various individuals serving as narrator at different points in a text, each narrating instance is still told from a singular perspective. For example, in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, various members of the Bundren family serve as narrators throughout the text, with each chapter's title being the name of that particular individual narrator. All "Cash" chapters are narrated by Cash Bundren, the "Darl" ones by Darl, and so on. But, within each chapter, the narrative voice remains the same; Darl-as-narrator does not carry over into a "Cash" chapter, and vice versa. This is the case for a majority of texts that incorporate multiple narrators: although there is a plethora of narrating voices, rarely are these voices heard simultaneously or in conjunction with one another.

It is here where the case of the first-person plural narrator becomes particularly unique. Scholars such as Uri Margolin and Brian Richardson have offered systematic and detailed perspectives on the nature of we-narrators, their inherent logistical and structural elements, and their rhetorical implications. With Margolin, Richardson, and others as representatives of the most prominent approaches to we-narrators, I will use two

contemporary novels to both support and complicate these other scholars. The we-narrators in Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides* and Joshua Ferris's *Then We Came to the End* both exemplify and extend the potentialities of we-narrators proposed in previous studies.

Margolin's essay, "Telling Our Story: 'We' Literary Narratives," published in 1996 in *Language and Literature*, is a seminal piece in discussions of first-person plural narrators. Margolin's piece is based upon a systematic, grammatical approach to the topic. Early on he writes, "Several innovative writers, especially in our own age, have opted for the highly marked 'you' and 'we' forms, forms with necessitate a corresponding enlargement and/or modification of traditional models, as well as raising the question of their possible aesthetic and cognitive motivation" (115). Margolin is quick to point out that we-narratives are not necessarily rare in spectrums outside of literary narratives, asserting that they "form a significant part or our general non-literary discourse" (116); nevertheless, the occasion of literary narrative with we-narrators is, according to Margolin, a "relative rarity," thus pointing to the subsequent lack of critical attention. From here, Margolin moves into his grammatical approach to the rare case. He goes through a detailed and complex explication of the constituent linguistic elements of potential narrator positions, including I, you, and we. He strongly denies assertions of the we-narrator being simply a multiplication of the "I," proposing instead, "'we' occupies in fact an intermediate position between the sender role (I), and those of the second and third person (not-I)" (117). Elements of Margolin's approach are rather dense and beyond the scope of my current discussion, but his eventual taxonomy of potential cases and features of we-narrators is of particular relevance and importance.

He maps out four "conceivable" cases of first-person plural narrators in speech situations, each of which I will quickly describe. The first case is one in which each

member of the reference class—or each constituent member of the "we"—simultaneously delivers the discourse. He refers to collective prayers and hymns found in Psalms as an example. The second case involves a "proper subset (at least two individuals) of a wider class utters a token of 'we' in unison to refer to the whole class" (118). Margolin's literary example for this case is a chorus group on stage in Greek tragedy, speaking together and on behalf of the entire citizenry. The remaining two cases are more prevalent in contemporary narratives. First, "several or all members of the class utter tokens of 'we' individually, in succession or alternately, to refer to the whole class" (118). He references John Barth's *Sabbatical* as an example in which two members of a couple alternately speak about their joint experiences in the "we" class. Finally, the last case involves a single member of the we-group speaking in the we-perspective throughout a text as a representative of that group. In this case, although only one individual speaks, he or she uses the we-voice in order to represent the collective experience of the group.

With these four cases mapped out, Margolin then moves on to delineating what he sees as the "distinctive features of literary 'we' narration" (119). He points out that the list is tentative, limited, and open for revision, thus anticipating certain criticisms. Still, certain features beg for further explanation and coverage, while others stand in contrast to textual examples of we-narrators beyond his particular corpus of considered texts. For example, Margolin's first feature is as follows: "There is always a single 'we' sayer on the highest level of textual embedding" (119). This is not the case, in my reading, of texts such as *The Virgin Suicides*, as the "single" we sayer never becomes clear in the text and, therefore, doesn't exist apart from the "we." There are other features mapped out in Margolin's taxonomy that inspire discussion in the context of Ferris and Eugenides, which I will take up shortly. First, let me turn to a more recent approach to we-narrators.

As he does with most elements of narration discussed in this dissertation, Brian Richardson covers first-person plural narrators in *Unnatural Voices* (2006). His chapter, "Class and Consciousness: 'We' Narration from Conrad to Postcolonial Fiction," provides a helpful historiography of we-narrators, along with important analyses of exactly how authors employ we-narrators to enact specific thematic and rhetorical effects. Richardson points out the lack of critical attention to the topic, mentioning the few exceptions, including Margolin. This is by no means a new technique in written texts and, according to Richardson, Conrad introduced the practice in his 1899 novel, *The Nigger of Narcissus.* As he goes through a survey of Conrad's novel and a number of early-20th century texts employing first person plural narrators, eventually reaching contemporary texts, Richardson provides own analyses about we-narrators and how they function in narrative texts.

Richardson's chapter approaches we-narrators from a predominantly textual perspective, meaning that he is less concerned with how readers interact with we-narrators and more concerned with how exactly these narrators appear on the page and, more importantly, enact and enhance textual, thematic concerns. He mentions many texts in the chapter, ranging widely in subject matter, cultural origin, and publication date, but he uses this spectrum of texts to make rather narrow, focused claims about the case of first person plural narrators. Richardson points out the often politically motivated nature of we-narrators, specifically in the case of postcolonial and "gynocentric fiction" (50). In these instances, the we-narrators are used to "express [the] struggles against the imperial powers" (46), and they also represent the "'we' of solidarity" (52). Underlying these unique cases is a fundamental analysis based on collective experience and solidarity on the part of Richardson; throughout the chapter and his readings of various texts, a common thread materializes: Richardson ultimately presents we-narrators in

terms of how authors employ them in order to create depictions of shared, collective experiences. This is, of course, no great achievement of analysis on my part, as any simple approach to the concept of "we" lends quickly to the recognition of a shared experience. But the important aspect of Richardson's analysis—important in terms of my own particular study—is the emphasis on the author- and text-centered side of the coin. In other words, Richardson does not speak as to the implications these we-narrators have on the other side of the narratological spectrum, such as the narratee and the actual reader.

Still, Richardson's chapter, in addition to Margolin's essay, provides crucial building blocks on which an approach to we-narrators can and should be based. Accordingly, as I trace my own readings of two recent first person plural novels, I will continuously situate my analyses and my critiques in the context of the work done by Margolin, Richardson, and select others. Rather than "disprove" these previous approaches, I instead intend to extend the work done by these scholars in accordance with what I see as an unavoidable aspect of narrative inquiry: the never-ending production of fresh, unique, and narratologically-challenging texts inevitably requires a similarly never-ending progression of theoretical approaches to said texts. Thus, while many aspects of Margolin and Richardson undoubtedly speak accurately to what takes place in these texts, many others beg for revision; it is on these points of departure where I intend to focus the remainder of this section.

In his 1997 essay "Ayi Kwei Armah's Epic We-Narrator," Lief Lorentzon makes what in my estimation seems to be a rather shortsighted statement: "Outside of African literature I have found no full-length novels with consistent we-narrating" (221). He stresses this again shortly after: "Although there exist more examples of plural narrative voice than these texts, particularly among short stories, there is, not surprisingly, very

little we-narrating in Western prose" (222). Why, exactly, Lorentzon claims this lack of Western we-narrators—and, more interestingly, why this lack is "not surprising"—is a valid question, especially considering the vast amount of texts pointed out by Richardson. Lorentzon's essay similarly functions off of an analysis of the way that we-narrators are purposefully used in African literature "based on the contemporary political, social, and cultural context" (232), and he provides rather interesting analysis of specific African texts. I agree with elements of his analysis, although I strongly disagree with his opening statement about a lack of consistent we-narrating in Western texts. My first example is Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides*.

At the 2012 Louisiana Literature Festival, Jeffrey Eugenides participated in an interview alongside Jonathan Safran Foer, author of *Everything is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. During the interview, Eugenides and Foer are asked to discuss the difficulties and challenges of writing realistically. During this discussion, Eugenides speaks about how fiction allows writers to write in impossible voices; he then speaks directly about *The Virgin Suicides*. He says:

> When I have this first person plural voice, you don't actually know who's actually the narrator and where the voice is coming from, but it allowed me to really tell a story that I think is realistic about a town with a voice that is completely impossible and unrealistic. So sometimes you have to adopt an impossible means in order to actually get to the heart of your subject.

This "impossible means" about which he speaks is the we-narrator of the text. Interestingly, Eugenides claims that this impossible narrator actually, in a counterintuitive way, functions as a tool of realism in the novel. This idea of realism is unique in the context of previous studies of we-narrators.

Eugenides's first novel, *The Virgin Suicides* is the story of the joint suicides of the Lisbon girls, five teenage sisters living in quiet Grosse Pointe, Michigan during the 1970s. The story is told from the perspective of a group of grown men looking back on their

experiences as teenage boys—a group infatuated, haunted, and ultimately perplexed by the Lisbon sisters. The story revolves around a collection of memories beginning with the suicide of the first sister, Cecilia, and ending with the joint suicides of the remaining four sisters. The text does not involve suspense or plot-driven narrative; the first paragraph of the opening page—along with the title of the book itself—makes it clear that the girls kill themselves. There is no surprise ending. Instead, the power of the text comes in the haunting way in which Eugenides depicts the actions of personal encounter and adolescent longing, and the inherent faultiness of trying to associate or define these experiences with singular scenes or relics, all through a translucent, nostalgic form of memory. This sense of memory and this process of looking back is even further complicated by the fact that it is a collective rather than individual perspective.

The first person plural perspective is introduced in the first paragraph of the text, directly after the blunt revelation of the final Lisbon girl suicide. In describing the paramedics Eugenides writes, "They got out of the EMS truck, as usual moving too slowly in our opinion, and the fat one said under his breath, 'This ain't TV, folks, this is how fast we go'" (1). The possessive pronoun is notably plural: it isn't *my* or *his* opinion—it is "our opinion." This "our" continues on the next page: "We've tried to arrange the photographs chronologically, though the passage of so many years has made it difficult" (2-3). This is the first clarification of the narrative leveling going on, indicating not only that there are multiple individuals collectively telling the story, but that this group—this "we"—is going to be speaking about events that happened in the past, along with efforts and experiences happening in the diegetic present.

Along with the diegetic leveling, this line also reveals the subjective nature of the we-narrating. By subjective I mean that this "we-narrator" is privy to more than just facts and events; instead, this "we" has access to feelings, emotions, motivations, and other

elements of psychology and individual experience. This continues throughout the entirety of the novel, and this is one of the more salient elements of debate amongst scholars of we-narrators. The question of the epistemological reliability of a we-narrator—and the degree to which any we-narrator has access to the thoughts and feelings of other members of the we-group—is prominent throughout the scholarship. In his response to Margolin's question about "the narrators' access of others' minds," Richardson asserts that this is only a problem "if we insist on postulating a mimetic framework for the text" (56). This, of course, reflects back to the fundamental premise of Richardson's book and of unnatural narratology as a whole, which is a re-calibration of narrative theory *away from* a mimetic bias. Rather than focusing specifically on mimetically aligned approaches to texts, Richardson and others make way for assessments that go beyond questions dependent upon textual correlations with real-life storytelling situations. In this sense, the idea of "we-narrators" having access to their other "we" counterparts is essentially unproblematic, regardless of its impossible or unrealistic nature. As Eugenides says above, sometimes it takes "impossible means" in order to get to the reality being sought.

This reading of reality-through-impossibility, specifically in the context of the we-narrator, correlates with Safran Foer's reading of *The Virgin Suicides*. Directly after Eugenides finishes his delivery above about getting to "the heart of your subject," Foer responds:

> And to get to the heart of the reader. I mean that was what was so successful about that voice, I think, is that it was—despite being totally impossible—it was entirely believable. When I read it I never once, I actually didn't wonder where it was coming from or how it could be. It was very—I was just immersed in it. But, also, it was a really really good way of making the reader complicit. Like, it's kind of like the anonymity of it and also that it was a plural narrator. It just made it impossible to stand apart from it; you know, to not be somehow involved in the telling of the story.

But how, exactly, does this impossible we-narrator make the text more realistic or, in terms of the reader, more believable, as Foer says? The second portion of his response hints towards the answer to this question when Foer brings up the idea of reader complicity. This concept of bringing the reader in and making him or her involved in the telling of the story is, according to Foer, a direct result of the impossible we-narrator. It is not that the reader is unsure of who is telling the story or directing the narrative; he or she does, in fact, know the names of the boys—introduced sporadically throughout the text—and there are clearly real (in the diegetic sense) people relaying authentic memories and reactions to the events. Instead, this we-narrator finds a way to somehow gain authority through its anonymity. The fact that the we-narrator speaks collectively for the group lends toward the fact that "we" are *authorized* to tell the story, or that "we" are in a position to tell the story and frame the memories in the way they are supposed to be told. Rather than having to assess the reliability of a specific narrating individual, the reader is given the chance to take the we-narrator at its word, so to speak.

But this is problematic, as pointed out by scholars in their various approaches to we-narrators and questions of reliability. The idea of reader complicity and inherent we-narrator authority is, according to Debra Shostak, one of the more interesting narrative subversions enacted in the text. In her fascinating essay "'A Story We Could Live With': Narrative Voice, the Reader, and Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides*," Shostak provides an insightful analysis of the we-narrator presence in the novel and confronts this idea of reliability. According to Shostak, Eugenides's decision to incorporate the we-narrator serves as "a rich resource to probe cultural conditions, psychological effects, and the reading process" (808). She refers to the we-narrator as enacting "a kind of perspectival vertigo" (809) in that although it seems to offer a more reliable, collective voice, it actually "exacerbates the indeterminacy in the text" (809). Her essay then

provides a particularly strong analysis of the text in terms of the boys'—the members of the "we"—mythologizing views of the Lisbon girls and their eventual failure to "see past their solipsistic and objectifying visions of the sisters" (824). Shostak argues that although there are multiple boys contained within the "we," they are ultimately still constrained to their own desires—desires that fundamentally dictate the nature of their account. Therefore, to see the "we" as being essentially more reliable than other narrator positions is, according to Shostak, to fall victim to the same mistake as the narrating "we": "To be implicated, that is, in the inevitability of [the Lisbon girls'] objectification" (827).

As astute as Shostak's analysis is—and I see it to be both textually and theoretically strong—it does not negate the reality-through-impossibility mentioned above. For, as Shostak and many other critical responses to the novel suggest, the thematic *reality* of the text is Eugenides's depiction of the masculine objectification of the Lisbon sisters. In this sense, the we-narrator does in fact lend towards this ultimate realism through its role in the enactment of this thematic element, as pointed out by Shostak. The first person plural narrator stresses the failure of the "we" to see the girls as more than objects—and also the overall failure of the "we" to understand the girls at all—and therefore "we" functions as a tool of the central thematic concern of the text. One of the "realities" of Eugenides's novel is the boys' experience with a supreme lack of understanding of these girls, and this lack is crystalized to the extent that it is due to the fact that it is not simply one boy doing the telling, or one man doing the remembering. Throughout the text, the collective we is continuously pursuing outlets for comprehension of the girls, the suicides, and their own (the boys') relationship to both. The "we" is constantly looking at pictures and knickknacks, or talking to people connected to the story, or searching for some shred of explanation. But these efforts get the "we" no closer to the Lisbon girls than it was when the girls were alive: "In the end we had pieces of the

puzzle, but no matter how we put them together, gaps remained, oddly shaped emptinesses mapped by what surrounded them, like countries we couldn't name" (241). Apart from being rather beautifully written metaphors, these images conjure up the ultimate failure of comprehension, and this failure is heightened by the fact that it is not simply one individual's failure, but an entire group's.

In an interview with James Schiff in 2006, Eugenides speaks about the collective voice of *The Virgin Suicides*. After recounting the difficulty he had choosing a narrative voice when beginning the novel, he offers that the choice for the collective was the result of the fact that the strength of his earlier drafts—which did not contain a we-narrator—came in the sections in which he was "in the consciousness of the teenaged boys, or the middle-aged men who were remembering their adolescent experience" (104). From here, he made the decision to narrow it down to this perspective; in his words, "It was because I felt that it was the right engine to tell the story. It opened my imagination so that I could tell the story" (112). For Eugenides, the we-voice is a mechanism of enablement; it "allowed" him to tell the story he wanted to tell it—to tell it in a way that worked in accordance with how he felt it needed to be told. This enablement also happens on the textual level, as mentioned above: the we-narrator enables the thematic concerns of the novel to be heightened in that it forces the reader, whether he or she sees the we-narrator as particularly reliable or unreliable, to assess the thematic concerns themselves rather than the mediation of those concerns. Rather than having the reader concerned with who in particular is telling the story, the we-narrator instead has the reader thinking in terms of the collective experience of things such as loss and tragedy, how groups of people deal with these elements of the human experience, and how individuals situate themselves within and without this collective, shared experience. These are some of the

more pivotal thematic concerns of the novel, and the first person plural narrator enables them to be amplified in ways that other narrator presences would perhaps not.

Another contemporary text employing the we-narrator is Joshua Ferris's *Then We Came to the End* (2007). Like *The Virgin Suicides*, Ferris's novel received substantial critical and popular acclaim when it was published. But, unlike Eugenides's text, hardly any attention has been given to the text's we-narrator orientation. The first-person plural perspective, apart from being part of the title, is introduced in the first line: "We were fractious and overpaid" (3). In fact, the first paragraph sets the narrator frame for the rest of the text. Like in *The Virgin Suicides*, this "we" has access to the feelings, opinions, and desires of the entire group: "Most of us liked everyone, a few of us hated specific individuals, one or two people loved everyone and everything" (3). Also like *The Virgin Suicides*, this "we" is not a group of anonymous individuals; various names and descriptions are provided throughout the text, and the reader quite quickly gets a fair idea of which characters are part of the "we," and which are not.

Ferris's novel is an often comical, sometimes dark depiction of 9-to-5 working life in contemporary America. Told from the first-person plural perspective, the text is a detailed, sprawling presentation of the daily monotony of 21st century white collar America, from lunch breaks, to deadlines, to mundane conversations intended to kill as much time as possible. Ferris himself spent time working a desk job before publishing *Then We Came to the End*, and the book reads—and was praised—as being a particularly frank and accurate depiction of an underrepresented aspect of most people's lives: work. The arc of the text revolves around the constant threat of layoffs, and sporadically certain members of the "we" are fired, or "walk Spanish" to use the term from the text, and subsequently disappear.

Interestingly, and unlike *The Virgin Suicides*, there are inconsistencies in the narrator position. For example the middle section of the novel, entitled "The Thing to Do and the Place to Be," is told from a third-person omniscient perspective; the "we" disappears, and instead this poignantly written section focuses on Lynn Mason—the boss—and her struggle to deal with her recently diagnosed breast cancer. Within this section the narrator has access to Lynn's emotions and thoughts—something that does not happen with her in the rest of the text. Outside of this one section, Lynn is clearly *not* a part of the "we." And there are no indications within the section that a member of the "we" is also this third-person narrator; for all intents and purposes, this section is quite clearly a separate piece of narration.

Along with the break in narrator perspective during this offshoot section, there are also complex elements within the we-narration. For example, within the "we" there are clear divisions and groupings. Ferris writes, "Most days we let human foibles run right off of us, as Jesus commanded. 'Let he that is without sin cast the first stone,' for we had among us our fair share of believers. We had a Bible study group. They met for lunch every Thursday in the cafeteria" (92). The shift in pronouns is telling: while the Bible group is portrayed as part of "us," the use of "they" indicates that not all of "us" are part of the group. This shift between "us" and "they" continues throughout the passage: "The Word was the source that brought us all together"; "The sight of a dozen Bibles open on a cafeteria table and the familiar heads now bowed in a wild transformation of our long-established expectations of who they were shook us a little"; and "Was it a surprise that most of us did not join in at Bible study?" (92). From a narratological perspective, this is a bit tricky. On one hand, it appears as if members of "we"—members of the narrator perspective—are part of the Bible group, but on the other hand the majority of the passage reads in a way that refers to the Bible group in an objective, "they" sense.

Instances like this of bifurcation and delineation amongst the group abound in the text, and many questions arise as to who exactly is included in the "we." And the nature of group mentality and group membership is one of the thematic concerns of the novel, at least in relation to how these elements play a role in office life. At one point, the we-narrator discusses Joe Pope, a superior in the office and one of the non-"we"s alongside Lynn Mason. The "we" criticizes Joe for being "aloof, that he held himself apart" (254). In a conversation with Lynn, Joe explains why he does not join in the group—the collective Lynn refers to as "they," which is in fact the we-narrator group. In response to Joe's explanation, the we-narrator criticizes Joe: "Didn't like groups—well, what did he think he was doing working at an advertising agency? We had news for him. He was one of us whether he liked it or not" (261). This last line stresses one of the central concerns of the novel, which is the manner in which office dynamics seemingly force the group mentality amongst coworkers and, subsequently, how individuality is lost. Thus, the "we" feels threatened by those that assert their individuality and deny their status as part of the "we." The dichotomy between "we" and "they" throughout the text is further heightened by elements of race and gender as well, as the diversity of the group members sporadically causes breaks from the anonymity of the we-narrators and instead enhances individual differences. The interplay of race, gender, and collective perspectives in the novel would prove to be an important point of inquiry for the text, but it is beyond my current interest.

Eventually, the complexities of understanding the we-narrator in *This is How We Came to the End* coalesce towards the end of the text. The book jumps five years ahead—five years in which most of the we-group has moved on to other jobs and companies. In celebration of the publication of one of the member's novels—which interestingly turns out to include the section mentioned earlier, "The Thing to Do and the Place to Be," thus creating a sort of meta-, circular element to the text—the group

reconvenes and decides to get drinks. As they sit and reminisce, one by one the members depart for the evening. As an individual leaves, they are referred to by name: Jim Jackers, Carl Garbedian, Benny and Marcia, and so on. These individual names are those that have made up the we-group for the entirety of the text. After they have all left, the novel then presents its most challenging lines in terms of figuring out the narrator: "And with that, we'd get in our cars and open the windows and drive off, tapping the horn a final time. But for the moment, it was nice to just sit there together. We were the only two left. Just the two of us, you and me" (385).

This is the first time in the novel, apart from sections of dialogue, in which the first-person singular pronoun is used. Interestingly it is the last word of the novel, whereas "we" serves as the first word. The inclusion of this "me," and its pairing with the second-person "you" raises a number of questions. The second-person address appears sporadically throughout the text, and there is a certain sense in which there is a particular narratee—the "you"—to which the we-narrator is speaking. For example, "If Karen couldn't go, they went without her. That is to say, *we* went without her. You see, everyone was talking about it. It wasn't something you could afford to miss" (131). There is a discernible "you" presence throughout the text, but the final line drastically changes the dynamic between the narrator and "you." And, of course, the fact that the we-narrator shifts into a singular perspective—"me"—completely challenges the narrator presence in the previous 384 pages. If at the end of the novel, after the various characters have departed and the we then transitions into a singular I, then is Ferris encouraging a game in which the reader traces back through the text and the various names introduced—the various members of "we"—and, through a process of elimination, arrives at a singular character that is this "me"? Furthermore, does this shift from we-to-me work in conjunction with the second-person address in a way that directly addresses the reader

and brings them into the fold of the story? In other words, does this last line create a diegetic relationship in which the first-person narrator, now an individual, is directly addressing the reader?

In reference to the first question, the text does not read in a way that implies Ferris is encouraging his readers to attempt an identification of the "me." Instead, I argue that this last line only further complicates the game that Ferris plays throughout the text in terms of the narrator presence. Shostak asserts that Eugenides's we-narrator "exacerbates the indeterminacy of the text" (809), and I contend that the last line of *Then We Came to the End* is the last straw in the same sense of indeterminacy in Ferris's novel. By indeterminacy I mean that it is not important to identify the particular speaker or narrator; perhaps it is better said as being particularly important that the reader does not know who speaks. This is the indeterminacy created in the narrator inconsistencies mentioned above, and this indeterminacy is solidified in the final line. Early in the novel, Ferris describes the we-narrator response to a common question: "'What are you up to?' he'd ask. *It could have been any of us*. 'Working' was the usual reply" (7, emphasis added). The italicized lines stress the simultaneous anonymity and inclusionary nature of the we-narrator: it could be any individual giving the response, just as it could be any individual left as the "me" at the end of the text. The experience of working among the same people day after day creates a loss of individuality, and the consistently inconsistent narrator presence—and the fluctuations between first-person plural, third-person, and eventually first-person singular perspectives—amplifies this thematic focus of the novel. A consistent, singular perspective on 21st century office life would perhaps contain many of the same anecdotes and observations, but the nature in which Ferris plays with narrator conventions only further exemplifies the ways in which elements of identity and individuality are at stake in this particular cubicle of everyday life.

Overall, both *The Virgin Suicides* and *Then We Came to the End* serve as examples of the manner in which we-narrators can and do add thematic and structural complexity to narrative texts. The first-person plural narrators of these two novels exemplify how multiple voices simultaneously narrating a story—although perhaps an "impossible" form of narration—create avenues of textual interaction not possible through more traditional narrator forms. We-narrators somehow find ways to add legitimacy to speakers through an overall depiction of a group's failure to understand, and they are also ironically able to comment on individuality through a complex depiction of group mentality. These are central thematic concerns of these novels, and the presence of we-narrators serves as avenues through which readers are able to confront and interact with these concerns in complex ways. But this is not the only type of narrator complexity that serves this purpose; whereas the above texts involve multiple voices speaking in tandem, many texts seemingly involve a complete lack of voice or, in narratological terms, an empty narrator position.

Missing / Absent Narrators

Whereas in the texts mentioned above there exists a multitude of voices partaking in the narrating process, other narratives present a situation quite the opposite: the narrator presence is, for all intents and purposes, missing. The concept of implicit or missing narrators has been fodder within narrative theory, as well as in the field of philosophy, and many scholars have engaged in debates surrounding the question about the necessity of a discernible narrator. Here I join this ongoing conversation about the either ubiquitous or implicit nature of narrator presences, although I contend that certain texts—to this point uncovered in relation to this debate—further complicate the conversation. Specifically, I argue that dialogue-centric novels from Cormac McCarthy, Philip Roth, and Dave Eggers present perfect grounds on which to pursue the question of

the necessity of a narrator. These texts, although structurally and logistically closer to plays, assert themselves as novels according to their authors and their paratextual presentation. Thus, they inspire the following questions: Is a discernible, identifiable narrator necessary in order for a text to be a narrative? If so, are these novels in fact narratives? Or if not, then what are the constituent components of a narrative? I seek to approach these questions in the context of previous narrative scholarship and close readings of these contemporary (narrative?) texts.

Before turning to theoretical stances on the topic, I want to first look at the strange case of Cormac McCarthy's *The Sunset Limited* (2006). Published the same year as his Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Road*, *The Sunset Limited* is a bit of a departure for McCarthy in its length and format. At just under 150 pages, the text is short in comparison to the majority of McCarthy's novels; more significant is the sparse prose. Beginning with *No Country for Old Men* (2005), McCarthy began to adopt a minimalistic style, much different than his earlier works; a reader of *Blood Meridian*, for example, would presumably find a much different reading experience on the syntactical level with *The Road*. Still, *The Sunset Limited* is a departure even from his then-recent move to minimalism in that, for all intents and purposes, it reads as a play. The text begins with a description of the setting, and then moves into dialogue between the two protagonists, Black and White. This dialogue is the entirety of the text, with the exchanges being presented on the page in traditional dramatic format. Interspersed throughout the dialogue are expository notes, always in italics. Here's an exemplifying passage (with spaces/tabs added for clarity):

White Why cant you people just accept it that some people dont even *want* to believe in God.
Black I accept that.
White You do?
Black Sure I do. Meanin that I believe it to be a fact. I'm looking at it ever day. I better accept it.

White Then why cant you leave us alone?
Black To do your own thing.
White Yes.
Black Hanging from steampipes and all.
White If that's what we want to do, yes.
Black Cause he said not to. It's in here (*Holding up the book*)
The professor shakes his head.
Black I guess you dont want to be happy. (53-54)

This exchange is typical of the entire text, reading quite clearly as a play. And, in fact, *The Sunset Limited* premiered as a production of the Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago in May 2006, and was also adapted by HBO into a screen production starring Tommy Lee Jones and Samuel L. Jackson.

Interestingly, questions of analysis arise concerning *The Sunset Limited* due to its purposeful, problematic subtitle: "A Novel in Dramatic Form." Asserting its existence as a novel is perhaps merely a matter of classification and genre, two areas replete with their own extensive histories of debate. And whether or not a reader reads *The Sunset Limited* as a play, or a novel, or a hybrid of the two is perhaps not of particular importance to said reader, or to many McCarthy scholars. But in terms of approaching the narrative conventions of the text, classifying *The Sunset Limited* as a novel raises questions about its narrative structure. If it is, in fact, a novel, and therefore a narrative, then is the narrator found in the italicized, expository passages? Perhaps a more interesting question takes one step backward: is a novel *necessarily* a narrative? If so, does a novel—deemed a narrative—require a narrating presence? These questions, in my estimation, can be approached from the perspective of the reading experience. Does a reader of *The Sunset Limited* necessarily experience the text on the page in the framework of a story being told for a particular purpose (to think of Phelan's definition)? In broader terms, does a viewer of a play or film *necessarily* approach the viewing experience with an ontological calibration based on levels of interaction between story, teller, and viewer? Or, are these structural levels unimportant to actual viewers? Fully

encapsulating and hypothesizing the mindsets of viewers is an inevitably faulty enterprise, but these questions about novels, narratives, and narrators have implications for fundamental approaches to texts such as these—and their textual meaning and perception.

As mentioned above, debates surrounding the necessity of the narrator have been going on for more than two decades in various fields. Scholars such as George Wilson have continuously argued for the necessary presence of narrators in fictional texts, which has basically been a "fundamental assumption" (Walsh, 495) in traditional narratology; others have directly disagreed with the ubiquity argument. Many of these scholars focus on both literature and film, and they come from a variety of fields, including philosophy, art criticism, and literary studies.

Along with Seymour Chatman and Jerrod Levinson, George Wilson stands as one of the most prominent proponents of the ubiquitous narrator argument. Wilson's essay "*Le Grand Imagier* Steps Out: On the Primitive Basis of Film Narration," published in 1997 in *Philosophical Topics*, introduces his seminal argument about the existence of the narrator presence specifically in fictional films. He expands on this argument in his more recent (2007) piece, "Elusive Narrators in Literature and Film." Here he directly responds to the other side of the argument, represented by Andrew Kania, Richard Walsh, and others. After quickly depicting the debate in the context of fictional film, Wilson then turns to literary texts and an articulation of his own stance. He situates his claims in response to the major figures, including Chatman and Kania, and the seminal points of debate, including ontological and epistemological aspects.

The ontological element revolves around the relationship between the narrator and the narrated based on the idea of fictionality. To put it simply, in order for a narrator to tell a story, he or she must be on the same ontological—or fictional—level as the

characters and events of said story. This is the argument of Jerrold Levinson, as outlined clearly in Kania's essay discussed below. Wilson actually disagrees with Levinson's ontological argument, instead saying that fictional narratives inherently involve a "game of make believe" (80) in which the reader participates. The question of the relationship between the narrator and the narrated is therefore moot, since the reader simply accepts the "game": "Therefore, we must posit that it is fictional in the work that there is someone (who cannot be the author) who has such access and is reporting the history to us" (80). The key, though, according to Wilson, is that the reader participates in this "game" with a fundamental understanding of the fictional nature of the telling; thus, the presence of the narrator is required. Without the narrator, the element of fictionality—the element that makes it the "game"—instead becomes problematic. Wilson proposes, "My arguments rest on the putative facts about what we imagine and are supposed to imagine in our normal games of make believe with works of literary fiction" (83). Wilson refers to his Fictional Showing Hypothesis, which embodies this idea of the readerly interaction with the "game" of literary fiction, and the nature in which the presence of the narrator is inherently a part of this system.

Richard Walsh takes a strong opposite stance in "Who is the Narrator?" He acknowledges the common acceptance of narrator ubiquity, claiming that this acceptance is based upon a fundamental desire to see narrative discourse "as report rather than invention" (496). Seeing a narrative this way "[cancels] its fictionality, [negotiates] a mode of complicity with representation, and [finds] a rationale for suspension of disbelief" (496). In other words, Walsh relegates an insistence on narrator ubiquity to a place alongside other systematic, mimetically biased, and formalistic elements of traditional narratology. He reinforces this point later: "The function of the narrator is to allow the narrative to be read as something known rather than something imagined, something reported as fact

rather than something told as fiction" (499). To combat this, Walsh rejects the concept of the narrator, which allows for a break in the otherwise "impassable barrier" between the creative and informative elements of a fictional text. Walsh bases his rejection of the narrator based on what he sees as the structural nature of fictional texts themselves. He asserts, "There is nothing about the internal logic of fictional representation that demands a qualitative distinction between narrators and characters" (498). Basically, Walsh rejects the notion that a narrator needs to be clarified in order for appropriate analysis to take place.

Walsh spends time directly responding to Genette and elements such as fictionality (similar to Wilson's points above) and New Critical concepts of authorly intent. Eventually, he arrives at the answer to his initial question about the identity of the narrator. He proposes, "The narrator is always either a character who narrates or the author. There is no intermediate position. The author of a fiction can adopt one of two strategies: to narrate a representation or to represent a narration" (505). Walsh is by no means denying the existence of a narrator; instead, he is declaring exactly who the narrator can be. This is particularly relevant in what he calls "impersonal narratives," a term referring to texts with non-traditional narrator presences, which are the same texts that other critics in the debate are mostly concerned with. There are many traditional narratives with clearly defined and identified narrators, and Walsh is not claiming that these narrators are in fact *not* narrators. But in the case of unique, "impersonal narratives," Walsh is clear in his assertions that conjuring a narrator presence is an unnecessarily false effort, similar to Mieke Bal's dissention in relation to the *contrived* nature of the implied author. Rather, why not take these texts as incorporating "authorial narration" (506)? Or, why not attribute certain acts of narration to the author?

This is similar to Andrew Kania's stance in "Against the Ubiquity of Fictional Narrators." Kania specifically challenges two features normally attributed to fictional narrators: agency and fictionality. Kania addresses Levinson's ontological argument for a narrator, as well as Chatman's analytical argument, ultimately siding with Walsh in that he sees fictional examples in which fictional telling does not actually take place. He uses Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* as a running example through his essay, asserting that the text "is simply not fictionally narrated" (50). He then refers back to the ontological argument, saying that there is no "bridge" between the real level (author and reader) and the fictional one (characters and events). But the traditional solution to this, which is an acceptance of another entity (the narrator), only adds another fictional element to the mix. Kania then asks the question, "How does this help us?" (51). This is an interesting point, raising logistical questions about how a fictional narrator is supposed to actually bridge this ontological gap. In response, Kania—like Walsh—proposes that we instead see texts as *real*, as "part of our world" (51), and their authors as the *real* agents presenting these fictional worlds to us.

Ultimately, Kania takes a straightforward, simplified approach to the debate. He writes, "Since these are stories, there must be someone telling them, but unless there is some particular reason for thinking otherwise, I see no problem with the intuitive view that the person telling the story is the one who made it up—the author" (53). Thomas E. Wartenberg makes the same argument under the same pretenses. He too refers to "impersonal narratives" and situates his argument among critics like Wilson, and he actually explicitly asks the same questions in his piece as Kania does. And his answer is quite the same: "I suggest that we treat such impersonal fictions as the products of their actual (or postulated) authors without adding additional entities to our ontology, even if

they only augment the ontology of the fictional universes created by literary narratives" (94).

These assertions may seem quite simple to Walsh, Kania, and Wartenberg, but they have rather significant implications for narratology. It is important to note that both Kania and Wartenberg write from perspectives apart from literary studies. Kania's piece is from *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, while Wartenberg's comes from a Colloquium in Philosophy at Oberlin College and is published in *Philosophical Studies.* And, apart from references to Seymour Chatman, neither of the two essays is situated in the context of narrative theory, which perhaps is illusory in terms of the manner in which they are able to quite blatantly pose such large-scale questions about the narrator—one of the most fundamental concepts of narrative inquiry. Regardless of whatever theoretical biases may or may not exist, the questions raised within this debate over narrator ubiquity are of particular importance for narratology. If, in fact, the narrator is *not* a necessary component, what implications does this have on traditional approaches to these "impersonal" narratives? Inversely, if a narrator is present to some degree in every fictional text, how exactly does this presence manifest itself in texts that seem to purposefully deny any narrating agent? This last question will be the focus in what follows, as I take a close look at Philip Roth's *Deception* and Dave Eggers's *Your Fathers, Where are They? And the Prophets, Do They Live Forever?*, two novels seemingly void of any narrator—or narrating—at all.

In a previous chapter I look at Roth's *Deception* in terms of the challenges it raises in relation to the concept of the implied author. The text enacts a complex play of identity, consistently layering and complicating the persons of Philip Roth as author, Philip Roth as character, and Nathan Zuckerman as avatar for Philip Roth as author *and* character. To classify *Deception* as a metacommentary on writing is a drastic

understatement, as the text instead seems to be multifariously *meta*; in fact, it's hard to point to any textual aspects that could not in some way be classified as a once-removed depiction of the writing process, or love, or sexuality. The novel is complicated to say the least, presenting an array of defamiliarizing narrative elements. One of these elements is especially prevalent in relation to the current discussion: the entire text essentially consists of only dialogue, and there is an almost complete lack of expository material.

To demonstrate the style, here are the opening lines of the novel (I include quotation marks for the sake of clarity):

> "I'll write them down. You begin."
> "What's it called?"
> "I don't know. What do we call it?"
> "The Dreaming-About-Running-Away-Together Questionnaire."
> "The Lovers-Dreaming-About-Running-Away-Together Questionnaire."
> "The Middle-Aged-Lovers-Dreaming-About-Running-Away-Together Questionnaire."
> "You're not middle-aged."
> "I certainly am."
> "You seem young to me." (9-10)

This back-and-forth exchange continues for two more pages before the first page break occurs. There are no names, and there is a complete lack of expository information. There are no indications of who is speaking, just as there are no indications of where these speakers (assumedly more than one) are located, what they are doing while they speak, or for what purpose. Over the following pages a reader realizes that this is a conversation between a man and a woman (the middle-aged lovers referenced in the hypothetical questionnaire from the passage), and that they have a sexual relationship. But this information is only inferred through the dialogue; there is no narrator presence indicating this relationship.

The first case of exposition occurs a few pages later: "'Oh, I see. This is a preemptive strike. Okay. Whatever you want.' *Laughing*. 'Well, I think that's best. I think that you put yourself very neatly when you said it was driving you nuts'" (15, emphasis

added). This one word, “Laughing,” is the only word in the entire first chapter that is not a part of character dialogue; thus, this is the only exposition the reader gets. The nearly complete lack of exposition continues throughout the entire text. It usually consists of only one word, with “Laughing” being the most common example. There are a few cases in which short phrases are used, such as “Undressing him” (45) “Sets it down” (154), and “Kisses her. She laughs” (177). In all, there are fewer than 25 instances of these expository interjections in the dialogue, more than half of which are either “Laughing” or “Laughter.” Combined, this expository material makes up no more than a typical paragraph; in the context of a 208-page novel, this expository presence is miniscule at most.

According to traditional views of narration, the narrator role, at the fundamental level, is responsible for the exposition of a text. Even within the various articles mentioned above in which scholars debate the necessity of narrators, there is an implied agreement concerning the activity of the narrator, which is the *telling of the story*. Scholars such as Wilson and Kania disagree about the extent to which narrators do or do not exist in texts, but they seem to agree that the narrator role is one of telling. And, to a certain extent, there is a discernible *telling* taking place in *Deception*, as evidenced in the handful of non-dialogue text in the novel. Since it’s not part of the character dialogue, there must be *someone* indicating the existence of this laughter, or the action of the man undressing the woman, or the tears at the end. The very fact that these words and phrases are not contained within quotation marks makes them stand out amongst the rest of the text, bringing attention to their status as non-dialogue—a very sparse thing in *Deception*. The rare inclusion of these expository elements is undoubtedly purposeful by Roth, thus raising questions about this highly minimal narrator presence.

The question remains: who exactly is this *someone* that assumes the narrator function, albeit minimal? Or, perhaps the assumption on which this question is based is unfounded; maybe a more appropriate question is whether or not there is *necessarily* someone responsible for these moments of exposition? Of course someone is responsible for the words on the page—Philip Roth the real author makes the decision to include them. But within the text—within the diegetic level of the fictional narrative—is it necessary to have an agent to which these words can be attributed? According to scholars like Walsh, Kania, and Wartenberg, the answer is no. Why must these rare moments of exposition warrant the existence of a fictional narrator? Instead, this exposition can be attributed to either Roth-the-author, or Roth-the-character. Walsh explains, "This covert narrator, wholly uncharacterized, is exactly the kind of pure narrative agent I am trying to eradicate" (507). Attributing the handful of "laughing"s and "crying"s to a particular fictional narrator is an act of unnecessary narrativizing; to do so would be to instill the type of covert, uncharacterized narrator that Walsh is trying to avoid.

At the same time, associating the exposition to Roth-the0author or to Roth-the-character is problematic in certain ways. For the former, connecting Roth-as-author with the narrator presence in the text—however minimal—further complicates the layering of identities taking place in *Deception*, as discussed in my earlier chapter on the implied author. There I discuss the nature in which the existence of multiple Philip Roths muddies the waters in terms of distinguishing between author, implied author, and narrator. Applying Walsh's view to the text only further stirs these waters. Problems also arise when the narrator role is credited to Roth-the-character due to the fact that the expository remarks are, without exception, objectively and impersonally conveyed, and they often refer to Roth-the-character. The following two examples appear in succession in the text:

"*Undressing him*. 'This is a new belt.' *After he comes*. *Softly*. 'Are you all right?' 'Sweet girl'" (45, emphasis added). These expository lines, which I put in italics, clearly refer to Roth-the-character as an object; in other words, the exposition is not delivered from the perspective of Roth-the-character. Thus, it seems troublesome to declare Roth—either as author or character—as performing the limited narrator role in *Deception.*

Perhaps, then, the question then turns as to whether or not there is any *telling* going on in *Deception*. Or, is the text actually a narrative to begin with? If telling is a necessary aspect of a narrative, then what are we to make of texts that thwart reasonable semblances of telling? This problem is exacerbated further in Dave Eggers's *Your Fathers, Where Are They Now? And the Prophets, Do They Live Forever?* (referred to hereafter as *Your Fathers*); whereas Roth's text has a very minimal narrator presence, Eggers's is wholly void of any sort of exposition. The novel compounds the above questions concerning the definition of narrator and narrative.

Eggers is no stranger to producing texts that challenge conventions. Although some of his novels, including *Hologram for the King* (2012) or *The Circle* (2013), follow classical traditions of narrative storytelling, others do not. For example, *What is the What?* (2006), clearly and consistently presented as a novel, is subtitled as "The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng"; it even includes a Preface written by the real-life Deng, which begins with the following words: "*What is the What* is the soulful account of my life" (xiii). Eggers is not the first to perform this sort of feaux-autobiography, as the technique was made famous by Gertrude Stein. Still, the presence of the Preface from Deng is interesting, as the text is clearly a novel written by Eggers, and this raises serious questions regarding the definition of "autobiography." Conversely, Eggers's *Zeitoun* (2009), a biographical account of a man's experience in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, is referred to as nonfiction although the text itself seems to read as a

fictionalized—to a certain degree—account of Zeitoun's experiences. This book, along with his successful memoir *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000), are two exemplifying texts of the ever-growing field of creative nonfiction—and the genre implications of such texts.

But even in a career as genre spanning as Eggers, who has also written screenplays, edited collections, and created non-profit tutoring centers, *Your Fathers* stands out. It is perhaps unsurprising that the text gained minimal critical attention; in fact, the marketing and lead-up to the book was all-but-nonexistent. *Your Fathers* came not long after *The Hologram for the King* (2012) and *The Circle* (2013), the former of which was a finalist for the National Book Award. *Your Fathers* seemingly came out of nowhere in both its release and its content. Considering the fact that Eggers is commonly acknowledged for his frank, often humoristic, and generally realistic style, *Your Fathers* pales in terms of its essential lack of any sort of exposition. Whereas his previous work is renowned for the manner in which it depicts situations, scenes, and elements of the contemporary experience, in *Your Fathers* Eggers simply presents a protagonist, Thomas, and the conversations he has with the various individuals he kidnaps and detains at an abandoned military base on the California coast. There are no descriptions, and there is no exposition.

The entirety of the text consists of the conversations between Thomas and his various detainees. Among them are a NASA astronaut named Kevin, whom Thomas went to college with; a congressman disabled during Vietnam; his elderly mother; and one of Thomas's former middle-school teachers, who was accused of child molestation. Beginning with the kidnapping of Kevin the astronaut, Thomas eventually kidnaps seven people, each of which has one or more conversations with Thomas—conversations that serve as the whole of the text. The novel is short (barely over 200 pages), and it reads

very quickly due to the nature of the dialogue. Although ultimately a depiction of the workings of an emotionally and mentally unstable individual, the book breaches a number of rather contentious issues along the way.

But in terms of the its narrative structure, *Your Fathers* raises more questions than it answers, at least in relation to the current discussion of the narrator role. As pointed out above, the text does not include even the minimal level of exposition included in *Deception*. Interestingly, Eggers finds a way to embed the exposition within the dialogue. For example, the text begins as follows:

> -- I did it. You're really here. An astronaut. Jesus.
> -- Who's that?
> -- You probably have a headache. From the chloroform.
> -- What? Where am I? Where is this place? Who the fuck are you?
> -- You don't recognize me?
> -- What? No. What is this?
> -- That? It's a chain. It's attached to that post. Don't pull on it.
> -- Holy shit. Holy shit. (3)

In these brief lines, Eggers finds a way to provide descriptions of the scene without including any sort of non-character exposition. A reader immediately knows that the first speaker has used chloroform on the other one, an astronaut, and that this astronaut is chained to a post. Where exactly this post is, or why exactly chloroform is involved is still unclear, which leaves a large amount of room in which a reader can create the scene in whichever way he or she sees fit. This is consistent throughout the entire text: certain logistical details are conveyed within the exchanges between Thomas and his detainees to the extent that these details offer the necessary amount of explanation of how exactly these individuals were kidnapped, their relation to Thomas and his plans, and so forth. But beyond these logistical elements, the visual and aesthetic elements of the scenes are left open to invention and interpretation. There is no narrator presence offering descriptions of scenes or characters, and there also is no insight into the thoughts or feelings of Thomas or the kidnapped individuals. Other than the title of each chapter

indicating the building (“Building 52,” “Building 57”), all the reader gets are the words being said. Perhaps these chapter titles indicating the specific buildings can be classified as exposition in the same way as the few instances of “Laughing” in *Deception*. And even the long, connotation-loaded title of the novel can, in certain ways, perhaps be attributed to a *narrating* presence. But this would be another case of unnecessary narrativizing, which again falls into the criticism pointed out earlier by Walsh. “Building 52” does provide a certain amount of exposition, but using this to construct a clarified narrator seems unlikely.

In this sense, the lack of exposition seems to lend towards a more objective textual presence. By this I mean that the events of the novel seem to escape the mediation of a particular perspective; rather than being *told* through the lens of a narrator, the exchanges between Thomas and his temporary prisoners simply exist (in a diegetic sense). The reader reads the lines, and it is up to each individual to decide how he or she chooses to interpret the material. For example, in the scene in which Thomas speaks with his former teacher, Mr. Hansen (“Building 54”), a rather intense conversation takes place in which Mr. Hansen explains himself and his self-proclaimed “inappropriate” sexual tendencies. The difficult aspect of this particular exchange is that on one hand we have Thomas, a clearly unstable individual who kidnaps people and brings them to an abandoned military base in an attempt to have them answer a wide variety of questions, and on the other hand we have Mr. Hansen, a man accused of molesting adolescent boys. And, by the time the exchange is over, it is reasonable to see Mr. Hansen as the logical, thoughtful, and rational individual, rather than the protagonist Thomas. This is troublesome to a certain degree, and the lack of the interpretive presence of a narrator reinforces the fact that the reader is responsible for evaluating what is taking place.

Along with creating this sense of an unmediated presentation of the "facts" of the story, the lack of a narrator presence in *Your Fathers* raises the same questions posed above: is anyone *telling* this story? A story undoubtedly takes place in the text. Gerald Prince's definition of a narrative revolves around the existence of a time sequence of events, and this exists in *Your Fathers*; there is a clear sequence to the kidnappings, and there is a progression of events from the beginning to the end. But is the story of Thomas and his kidnappings *told* in the text, or does it seemingly just exist? This question echoes to the seminal difference between telling and showing at the heart of a large portion of Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. While Booth ultimately sides with the telling aspect of narratives, *Your Fathers* perhaps stands as an example of a narrative that employs *showing*.

Seeing texts like *Your Fathers* and *Deception* as showing does not resolve the debate, though, because the same question can be asked about who does the showing? But it is here, in my view, where the idea of authorly narration finds traction. Rather than necessarily seeing the act of narrating as being one of telling, if one allows for narrating to potentially be showing, then in texts such as Eggers's and Roth's, the narrative showing can be attributed to the authors themselves. This does not mean that these authors exist ontologically on the same level as the fictional events; I agree with the likes of Kania and Walsh in that the ontological gap between the text and the author is one that is simply accepted and understood by the actual reader. Instead, I contend that in order to see these narrator-less texts as narratives, we must view them in a similar sense to how one views a play or, to a certain extent, films[10]. Rather than being told, these stories

[10] I acknowledge the seminal differences between film and written texts, and I mention "viewing" the stories of these texts with this difference in mind. I mention viewing only to the extent that it applies to Booth's term "showing," and I do not mean to imply that

are shown. And this variation between telling and showing has important implications for the nature in which readers are able to interact with and glean meaning from these narrative texts—implications that I see as similar to those raised by texts involving we-narrators.

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To a certain extent, the two types of narrator presences discussed above seem to be polar opposites. Whereas we-narrators involve multiple, simultaneous voices participating in the narration of the story, texts such as *Deception* and *Your Fathers* incorporate an apparent lack of any narrating voice at all. In a text such as *Then We Came to the End*, the reader encounters a wide array of names that make up the "we": Genevieve Latko-Devine, Benny Shassburger, Karen Woo, Larry and Dan Wisdom, and others. The same goes for *The Virgin Suicides*: readers know the boys' names, including Peter Sissen, Chase Buell, Tom Burke, and others. These names are introduced periodically throughout both texts, and the narration pointedly makes an effort to give identities and faces to the we-narrators. Conversely, the only names the reader encounters in Roth's *Deception* are those of the protagonist (Philip) and the various people he sleeps with and/or interviews, such as Olina and Ivan—and even these names are only introduced secondarily towards the end of the text, long after the scenes involving these characters have passed. Eggers does the same: the only names the reader learns are those of Thomas and his kidnapees. But there are no names referring to the tellers of these stories because, really, there are no clear tellers to be named. There are no faces to which to attach names, just as there are no voices to which words can be attributed.

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reading these texts—or reading any narratives at all—is a process ontologically or experientially equivalent to viewing a film.

In the sense of the nature in which the narration presents itself on the page, perhaps we-narrators and missing narrators could not be more different. But I contend that the two are similar in their mutual subversions of narrative conventions and, more importantly, the common challenges—and opportunities—they present to readers. In both cases, the authors explicitly depart from traditional methods of narration. This departure is purposeful, and the decision to do so enables various effects otherwise unavailable. For Jeffrey Eugenides, the we-narrator makes *The Virgin Suicides* possible; as he says, the collective voice is simply the "right engine" for the story. The we-narrator of *Then We Came to the End* heightens Ferris's depiction of the loss of individuality and the experience of forming relationships among coworkers and the often-serious implications this has on the individual psyche. Similarly, the lack of a narrator in *Deception* further enacts the various *meta* elements at play, submerging the reader even deeper into the "perspectival vertigo" at the heart of Roth's text. Finally, the presentation of the events of *Your Fathers* as being *shown* rather than *told* enables Eggers to raise various political and psychological questions in the text without falling victim to the mediating presence of a narrator, leaving the chore of interpretation wholly on the shoulders of his readers.

I see both of these unique narrator positions as sides of the same coin: a coin intended to stray away from the traditions of storytelling—and standard narrator mediation—in order to ultimately enhance the story itself. Amongst the scholarship mentioned above, there are points of correlation between first person plural and absent narrators. For example, Richardson and Lorentzon stress the political nature of many we-narrated texts, speaking about the nature in which narrator collectivity correlates with joint experiences of social injustice and struggle. I see the same opportunity at play in texts with missing narrators, such as *Your Fathers*: the narrator void allows for the textual material—including political and social concerns—to be taken up in direct, tangible ways

by readers. Rather than having to consider the "reliability" or identity of a narrator, these texts let readers assess the material for themselves. This is not the only scholarly overlap between collective and missing narrators. Foer talks about reader complicity in reference to the we-narrator of *The Virgin Suicides*, and how this "impossible" voice somehow creates a position in which readers are involved in the telling of the story. This amplified readerly role in the telling of the story similarly manifests in texts such as *Deception*. Without the expository material normally provided by a narrator, the text instead calls upon the reader to create his or her own depictions of the various scenes and encounters of the novel. Thus, rather than a narrator describing a voice, or the color of a room's walls, or the expression on a character's face, the narrator-less text empowers each individual reader to *create* these elements in whatever way he or she sees fit. In this sense, the reader becomes involved in the creation of the story—is drawn into the *telling*—and ultimately becomes complicit (as Foer says in relation to *The Virgin Suicides*) in whatever meaning results.

But beyond these overlaps between previous scholarship, I contend that both of these complicated narrator forms ultimately pose broad questions about stories, how they are told, and the ways in which individuals understand them. This chapter began with an exposition of the traditional understanding of narrators as being predominately focused on individual, singular tellers of stories. A specific narrator tells a story to a specific audience, for a particular purpose and in a particular way. As I have hopefully evidenced here, this is clearly not the only way that stories are told, especially in written contexts. Some stories are told by many tellers, which may or may not be groups of people speaking simultaneously and through a collective perspective. Others are seemingly not even told at all; instead, they seem to be direct products of real authors—direct in the sense of directly going from an author to the diegetic level of the text. This lack of clear,

uniform narration subsequently raises questions about what, exactly, a narrative is. If the first part of the traditional narrative equation—the narrator—is seemingly full of unknowns or question marks, how does this affect the rest of the equation? Furthermore, without a clear sense of telling taking place, does a text still qualify as a narrative? These questions lead to larger questions outside of the scope of narrative theory, concerning concepts like genre, canonization, and literary classification. And, despite decades of debate surrounding the nature of such concepts, these terms and taxonomies undoubtedly *matter*. Referring to *The Sunset Limited* as a "novel in dramatic form" *matters* in terms of how readers encounter the text, just as questions about the ubiquity of narrators *matter* to scholars attempting to define exactly what qualifies as a narrative. The few texts mentioned above perhaps do not stand as unanimous proofs of certain answers to these questions; nevertheless, the subversions they enact and the challenges they raise exemplify the nature in which contemporary narratives—like the narratives that preceded them—continue to serve as testing grounds on which these questions gain textual materiality; in other words, these texts provide on-the-page contexts for these large-scale inquiries.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The Stories of Our World: Narrative Theory and Contemporary Experience

"We tell ourselves stories in order to live."

- Joan Didion, *The White Album*

The preceding chapters demonstrate specific ways that texts continue to challenge conventions and exceed taxonomies of *how narratives work*. These are not the only narrative complications present in these texts, nor are these authors the only ones to enact this type of postclassical narratology. Furthermore, it is important to point out that "unnatural" narrative is by no means limited to contemporary fiction. Far from it. For centuries, authors and texts have employed antimimetic, defamiliarizing narrative strategies, many of which correlate with the specific elements discussed above. Although direct attention to these elements is perhaps limited to the past half-century, textual examples can undoubtedly be found in most periods and genres of fictional prose. This heritage of multifaceted manifestations of elements such as narrator, or diegetic framing, or readerly roles in the interpretation of texts lends credence to the central argument of this study: the narratological elements of any given narrative have immediate implications on the critical, cultural, and theoretical concerns of said text. Thus, recognizing these implications involves an attention to these narrative elements—an attention that both strengthens other theoretical approaches to, and enhances readerly interpretation of these narratives.

As stated earlier, this dissertation is an entry into the ongoing efforts of narratology to challenge the systematic approaches of classical narrative theory. Seminal studies by scholars such as Booth, Genette, and Prince basically created the field of narrative theory, setting up a framework through which texts can be studied through a

theoretical lens based on narrative. This framework arrived in the context of New Criticism and structuralist linguistics at around the same time deconstructionist methodologies began to take hold in critical theory. Scholars such as Mikhail Bakhtin (*The Dialogic Imagination*), Paul Ricoeur (*Time and Narrative*), and other major theorists afforded significant attention to theoretical narrative elements. Thus, the approaches of scholars such like Genette (in his later works) and also Mieke Bal somehow sought to find paths amongst these combatting theoretical paradigms, resulting in the more than three bountiful decades of narrative theory since.

But, although they were written amongst the historical context of poststructuralism, these texts of traditional narrative theory are fundamentally based on systematic approaches to narrative texts. As stated above, they seek to answer the question of *how narratives work*. And, as with most structuralist theoretical approaches, scholars immediately responded with a motivating assertion of their own: *here's* other *ways that narratives work*. Although a clear over-simplification, this assertion accurately embodies the majority of work done in narrative theory in the past three decades—work that directly responds the taxonomies offered by Booth, Genette, and Prince. This postclassical narrative theory is calibrated around many of the seminal theoretical tendencies and motivations of poststructuralist critical theory at large, resulting in an interdisciplinary theoretical landscape of narrative.

The interdisciplinary momentum of narrative theory is also not a novel concept, as scholars in the field have taken note of narratology's wide applicability for decades. For example, in "Narratology's Centrifugal Force: A Literary Perspective on the Extensions of Narrative Theory," Jackson G. Barry gives an extensive account of how narrative theory has reached beyond the literature classroom. Published in *Poetics Today* in 1990, Barry's essay spends the majority of its time tracing narrative theory's "outward

movement" to various other fields, including psychology and science. The expansion of narratology of which he speaks centers in the 1980s, and the underlying thread to this "centrifugal force" is the idea of narrative (or stories) being a seminal way to approach various aspects of the human experience.[11] Barry is not the only scholar to note the expanding applicability of narrative theory; Mieke Bal does the same in "The Point of Narratology" (1990). But this burgeoning nature of narrative approaches in the 1980s was not necessarily seen as a positive thing, as Barry makes clear. Throughout his essay he points to places where narratology had been applied inappropriately, and his ultimate point is that with this expansion came a forfeiture of certain fundamentals. He ends his essay as follows: "The centrifugal force of narratology in the 1980s might, as suggested above, need some return to and correction at its roots in literary study. In the 1990s will the invaded fields revise and return, in their own terms, a more sophisticated narratology to literature?" (305).

Barry's essay points towards what he sees as a dismissal of the fundamental elements of narrative inquiry: its root in literary study. With his final question in mind, this dissertation is an attempt to fulfill Barry's call for a return of a "more sophisticated narratology to literature." In essence, I seek a reconstitution of the literary framework of narrative theory. Although this might seem to imply a dismissal of narratology from the various fields within which it has found traction—the fields pointed out by scholars like Barry and Bal—I instead contend the opposite. By a "reconstitution of the literary framework" I mean a sort of re-introduction of narrative theory to the texts from which the field first spawned: fictional narratives. This re-introduction does not necessitate a removal of narratological inquiries in fields such as science, or psychology, or history. These fields continue to benefit from narrative theoretical implications, just as narrative

[11] I take up this idea of story's role in individual experience later in this Conclusion.

theory benefits from the various theoretical paradigms of fields apart from literary studies. But while narratology continues to find wider applicability 25 years after Barry and Bal's articles, it must also continue to maintain presence within literary study.

This is not to say that narrative theory has wholly neglected literature, because it most certainly has not. Narratologists have continuously produced notable, important work in this area. And this needs to continue to be the case, especially in relation to the recent tendency in literary studies towards new theoretical fields. Many areas of postmodern critical theory have been adopted in literary studies in ways that seem to almost ignore actual literary texts themselves. This is something that I have personally noticed in my own experiences in the field: theoretical paradigms that seem to be *so* theoretical as to supersede the textual embodiments of said paradigms. This is important work, and it is work that is shaping various aspects of the contemporary individual experience. But this supremely theoretical nature of current critical inquiry should not usher in a dismissal of the *text on the page*, and this dissertation is an attempt to avoid this very thing. It is an effort to accentuate the *literary* nature of narrative theory, and the *textual* presences of the various postmodern theoretical implications of our current intellectual epoch. It is an endeavor to fulfill Barry's call in a way that also continues the important work done in narrative theory over the past quarter century to enact poststructuralist efforts on the systematic approaches of classical narrative theory.

This deconstructive tint to contemporary narratology permeates my current study, and the analyses I offer above are but a sampling of the ways in which a narratological frame offers unique avenues into lines of textual inquiry. This study is clearly limited in scope, particularly in its range of primary texts. The novels and collections covered in the above chapters are all written in the last thirty years (with the exception of *Child of God*, 1971); they are all written in English (except, of course, the Spanish passages mentioned

in Chapter Four); and they are all products of the United States. I offer an explanation for these limitations and parameters in my Introduction, and I recognize that any study of this type will necessarily be limited. Yet, I want to take time here to acknowledge texts outside of my own scope that implement similar narrative elements to those I discuss in my chapters above. Along with enacting these techniques and antimimetic elements, these texts also provide further opportunities for an expanded approach to the topics at the heart of my study—an expansion that I hope to tackle in future projects.

Narratological attention to second-person narration is a relatively recent phenomenon, as I point out above, but the presence of the narrative "you" is not unique to contemporary narratives. For example, Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* is an instructional text on love, teaching relationship skills and techniques. The text incorporates second-person address, and the "how to" nature echoes immediately with the texts from Lorrie Moore and Junot Diaz mentioned above. In this sense, Ovid's text is a precursor for this type of "you" address to the individual reader. Similarly, in terms of the narrative "you" referencing an intradiegetic character in a story, Mexican author Carlos Fuentes's *Aura* stands as another seminal example, along with wide-ranging of texts from authors such as Ernest Hemingway to Gunter Grass (*Cat and Mouse*, 1961). Finally, a common trope of detective stories involves the detective telling a suspect what he or she did, usually in the form of second-person address. This type of scene abounds in detective novels, stories, television shows, and movies, with Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1929) serving as an apt exemplar. There are other examples of second-person narration, and this varied grouping of texts exemplify the presence of the narrative "you" throughout the spectrum of narrative fiction and the diverse manners in which the "strange case" bears on textual interpretation.

The incorporation of autofictive elements is a choice that authors have been making for centuries, with an archetypal example being Dante's *Divine Comedy*, where Dante-as-author depicts Dante-as-character as he moves through the various levels of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. I mention Borges's *El Aleph* above, but another example from the Argentinian author is his story "Borges y Yo." This story is particularly relevant in relation to my discussion of the implied author in Chapter Three above, as the overlap between real author, narrator, character, and narratee is at the heart of the story. Although barely more than a paragraph, the story accentuates questions concerning the self and epistemology—questions that are made more clear through Borges's autofictive choices. W. Somerset Maugham's British novel *The Razor's Edge* (1944) includes an intermittent character by the same name, raising similar questions to texts by Auster, Roth, and Ellis. Along with these autofictive examples, a broader argument could be made concerning thinly-fictionalized autobiographies, such as Dickens's *David Copperfield* or Joyce's *The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. Although neither text enacts autofiction specifically, many of the same narrative challenges are present concerning distinctions between narrative agents and narrating identities. I point out this wide group of texts to demonstrate the fact that autofictive challenges to narrative conventions is not unique to contemporary American authors.

Finally, the same can be said for radical code-switching and problematic narrator presences, the foci of Chapters 4 and 5 above. Switching between multiple languages without any sort of assistance to the reader commonly occurs in classic Russian novels, including Tolstoy. For example, *War and Peace* (1869) includes passages of untranslated, unmarked French. An earlier example comes again from Dante: in Canto 26 of *Purgatorio*, when the poet Arnaut Daniel responds to Dante in Old Occitan (Old Provencal)—a response unaccompanied by a translation. Modernist poets such as Ezra

Pound and T.S. Eliot employ code-switching at times, and various texts in Native American or other indigenous literatures include untranslated passages. The "we" narrator position is implicitly present in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* (1872), and it also narrates the opening lines of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), although the "we" basically disappears after the opening lines. In terms of the missing or implicit narrator, textual examples abound considering the nature in which extremely impersonal styles closely resemble the non-expository contemporary texts I mentioned in Chapter 5. The idea of the "shown" text—and its relation to cinematic techniques—has been employed and discussed for various texts, including Belgian author Georges Simenon and also American Raymond Carver. These preceding examples are different in many ways from the two texts from Roth and Eggers, but the theoretical—and narratological—implications on the readerly experience with these texts are related in kind.

This brief survey hopefully demonstrates this study's acknowledgement of two important clarifications: 1) The narrative complexities at the heart of the above study are not unique to or original in contemporary, postmodern literature; 2) Nor are they unique to or original in fictional American texts. While specific attention to the manner in which they are employed—and the effects they have—is a relatively recent occurrence, authors have been employing "postclassical" or "unnatural" narrative techniques for centuries. Rather than argue that the chapters above point out textual elements that are wholly original, I instead contend that this specific grouping of American narratives serves as a test case for the broader ways in which narrative components and authorly diegetic choices are tools through which thematic concerns and emphases are compounded. In my particular scope, complicated uses of elements such as the narrative "you" or code-switching are direct avenues through which these novels and short stories exacerbate cultural commentaries. These themes are the focus of most of the critical attention

directed towards these texts, and pinpointing further ways in which they play out textually provides a wider glimpse into the fundamental analyses of *what these texts do* and, accordingly, *how readers confront them*.

To elaborate further on the ways these narrative elements exacerbate broad thematic concerns, let me return quickly to my primary texts in relation to recent ideas about the "state" of American literature. Scholars point out the turn in American literature away from the "everyman"—texts that correspond with the general American experience. Nancy Armstrong hones in on this idea in "The Affective Turn in Contemporary Fiction," in which she proposes what I see to be an important assessment of the nature of contemporary novels, specifically in relation to "traditional" texts. Referencing similar statements from Benedict Anderson, Armstrong describes the standard nature of the novel in the past two centuries: "Novels featuring protagonists that mirrored their readers' norms and values . . . to elicit sympathy from mass readerships in one nation after another" (441). This approach boasts "an impressive record," yet Armstrong asserts that contemporary novels "abandon" this component of "sympathy from mass readerships." Instead, many novelists "offer us protagonists that might more accurately be called human 'extremophiles'" (441). In Armstrong's usage, this term refers to characters that supersede normal human experience, both anatomically and emotionally. None of the texts assessed in the chapters above focus on such characters, but I feel as if Armstrong's comments correlate with many of the thematic concerns of the novels mentioned above. Specifically, rather than seeking to connect with "mass readerships" and resonate with the average (as problematic as that term might be) American experience, I see texts such as Diaz's collections, or Eggers's *Your Fathers*, far more concerned with readerly observations of "extreme" or "defamiliarized" American experiences. Armstrong describes the dilemma readers confront when reading these

"extremophile" texts: "The novel grants us access to a world that we would not otherwise experience. By so doing, the novel only tells us that, as sympathetic readers, we have exceeded our capacity to form the person-to-person attachments and antagonisms in which novels have traditionally involved us; it also elicits feelings for which it provides no successful model but only botched attempts" (444).

Again, Armstrong's argument is clearly separate from my own agenda in important ways, and I do not mean to equate the protagonists of Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (one of her primary examples) with those in Diaz or Eggers. But the theoretical implications are correlative, and I see similar dilemmas manifested for readers of these texts through the nature in which these narratological complications enact defamiliarizing reading experiences. Through his use of multifaceted and complex second-person narration, Diaz enacts a form of linguistic colonialism in his narratives. Rather than *including* readers in his experience, his use of "you" instead *excludes* them, building a closed circuit of narration in which the only active participant is Diaz himself. This is heightened with his use of radical code-switching, which enacts a tangible form of textual "othering" for certain readers. Other readings of his use of "you" or his bilingual choices are undoubtedly possible, but the functioning of these narrative choices in conjunction with his own thematic concerns (immigrant experience; linguistic colonialism) is hard to deny. The all-but-missing narrator presence in *Your Fathers* encourages a direct challenge to readerly sympathy or empathy with the mentally unstable protagonist. The lack of exposition or narrator insight into the character's motivations leaves the responsibility of judgment solely on the shoulders of the individual reader. These judgments, of course, are unpredictably dependent on individual reading experiences, and to posit one particular way a reader will evaluate the protagonist's actions would be a fleeting exercise. But the nature in which Eggers constructs the telling—or showing, in my

reading—of the story in *Your Fathers* encourages this variegated readerly interpretation, leaving the narrator role seemingly absent.

Armstrong offers, “These brief descriptions should suggest that their utter commonness is about the only quality these protagonists have in common. In every other respect, I find them memorably singular in comparison to the countless normative protagonists with whom novels invite us to sympathize” (463). The protagonists she references are ones that push the limits on the definition of the human, thus leading her analysis into areas that are beyond my own. But the idea of contemporary texts pushing readers away from “normative” protagonists—protagonists that easily invite sympathy and connection—is what I see happening on a *narrative* level in my texts above. The nature of contemporary literature, and American literature in particular, is different from previous periods on the axes of narrator and character, and the meeting point of these two axes is the place where the contemporary reader confronts the epistemological and hermeneutical implications of these differences. Armstrong proposes, “By forcing us to feel beyond the present limits of personhood, for all we know, contemporary novels may be developing a generation of readers with an emotional repertoire more attuned to the demands of our time” (464). I piggyback off of Armstrong’s analysis, but instead of the “limits of personhood,” I see my particular grouping of texts challenging readers to confront the *limits of narrative*; being pushed to consider challenges to how we traditionally think about stories, how they are told, and how we confront them creates readers that are more attuned with the contemporary cultural climate in the United States—a climate of individual experience, national identity, and the tug-of-war between the two.

Not all of the primary texts covered in my chapters above enact this sense of strained readerly sympathy for protagonists. But to a certain degree, I see each of them

enacting a form of “extremophile” narrative in the manner in which they stretch the limits of how narrating agents (narrator, implied author) figure into the process of narration (diegesis), and how historical actors (authors, readers) construct and confront these narrative systems. “Extreme” narrative elements are not unique to these contemporary texts, as I stated earlier. But the cultural environment of contemporary America is unique in relation to previous American epochs, and contemporary authors exemplify this uniqueness through their purposeful narratological challenges.

In this context, my dissertation and its narratological analyses of contemporary texts have direct implications on approaches to these texts and, more broadly, on pedagogical approaches to contemporary literature. Considering that a crucial strand of my fundamental contention throughout this study is that the narrative devices of my primary texts are direct, textual catalysts for the various cultural and thematic emphases of said texts, my collateral argument is that pedagogical structures of approaches to these texts will necessarily also be affected by this narrative lens.

For example, in Chapter Two I introduce the term “colloquial ‘you’” within my discussion of second-person narration, arguing that this form of “you” is replete within all forms of storytelling, including conversational and written. This “you” can be traced throughout a wide expanse of literary genres, including various generations of American literature, and it can in certain ways be seen as a replacement for the stilted, stuffy use of the pronoun “one.” Rather than using “one” as a sort of escape from first- or third-person address, I argue in Chapter 2 many authors instead use “you” as a form of non-address. This “you” is able to somehow avoid a specific personal reference, while also escaping the stuffiness and contrived nature of “one.” Considering the nature in which this type of “you” is used—and an acknowledgment of its place in many texts—can add various layers to discussions of a wide array of texts. For example, Hemingway uses the

colloquial “you” intermittently throughout *The Sun Also Rises*. The novel is not a second-person novel, even though there is a “you” presence in multiple places in the text. Pinpointing these “yous” and discussing potential reasons for Hemingway’s decision to include the second-person pronoun—a conscious, deliberate decision—would provide ways to talk about the text that perhaps are not usually broached. *The Sun Also Rises* is one of the most widely taught American novels, and finding any sort of fresh form of analysis of the novel is an exciting potentiality.

A similar example of pedagogical opportunities facilitated by my dissertation arises when considering Native American texts and their incorporation of indigenous languages. For example, authors such as Leslie Marmon Silko or N. Scott Momaday sometimes include words, phrases, songs, or poems written in their own native tongues. While these inclusions are sometimes accompanied by translations (either direct or contextually-evident), they often times do not, resulting in the type of unmarked, untranslated code-switching covered in Chapter Four above. I know firsthand that these instances of code-switching and bilingualism often lead to conversations about translation, or representational accuracy, or authorly attempts at solidarity (similar to elements discussed in Chapter Four). But discussions of these instances can gain depth and freshness through a consideration of the narrative qualities of these bilingual texts—and the implications they have on the reading experience. Pedagogically, considering the ways in which readers are confronted with questions about their own role in the translation and, to a certain degree, narration of these passages opens up an intellectually rich avenue of questions to pose to students. Furthermore, looking at these elements through a narrative lens also creates points of intersection between fields such as translation studies, bilingual studies, and literary theory, allowing for in-class

manifestations of the interdisciplinary, cross-campus connections about which we so often speak.

These are just two examples of ways in which I see current work in narrative theory (for which this dissertation stands as a representative) having fruitful pedagogical implications for literary studies. Scholars and teachers of literature are always (or at least they *should* be) searching for original ways to approach their materials, which in this case are fictional narratives, and narrative theory points towards critical intersections into texts that are often overlooked or, to a certain degree, disregarded. Traditional narrative theory provides the terms through which the components of a narrative can be discussed, and postclassical narrative theory offers theoretically synthetic frameworks that take into account the progressions of poststructuralist critical theory while maintaining an allegiance to textual elements. This is the essence of what Bal says in relation to what narrative theory offers ethnographers: "Narratologists can provide the means to theorize this problem as a textual one" ("The Point of Narratology," 732). This impetus informs my own dissertation, and it has broader implications for the reading and teaching of a wide array of texts.

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In *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, Mark Currie prefaces his particular study by conveying large-scale contextualizations for narrative theory. Early in his book he writes, "If there is a contemporary narratological cliché it is exactly this claim that narratives are everywhere" (6). The idea that stories are omnipresent in our world is at the heart of a decades-long attempt to affirm the viability and value of narrative theory. And while Currie refers to this as a cliché, he stands firm in its accuracy. Narratives *are* everywhere, and they continue to permeate our experience with all aspects of our world. This idea is not limited to literary studies: "In more academic contexts, there has been a recognition that

narrative is central to the representation of identity, in personal memory and self-representation or in the collective identities of groups based in regions, nations, race or gender" (6). Daniel Punday echoes Currie in *Narrative After Deconstruction*: "Narrative is equated with the production of historical, literary, cultural, and even scientific knowledge" (1). These scholars seek to affirm the broad applicability of concepts of narrative—something I have sought to do in the chapters above.

If we grant that narratives are indeed "everywhere," then it seems, in my estimation, that theoretical frameworks based on understanding the nature of *how narratives work* are inherently valuable. This is the impetus for the classical narratology of scholars like Booth, Prince, and Genette, and it continues to guide studies like mine. As Currie points out, "The idea that the early achievements of narratology are still with us, and are still the basis of much of what we know about narrative is easily illustrated in contemporary narratology" (18). Where postclassical narratology differentiates itself is through its recognition of the limitless number of exceptions and additions to any attempt at narrative systematization. Beyond this difference, the fundamental focus on *narrative* elements, how they exist *on the page*, and how they ultimately impact *textual meaning* remains.

In "The Point of Narratology," Bal asserts the usefulness of narrative theory through an extensive explication of the terms under which it must in fact maintain this viability. As mentioned above, Bal confirms narratology's ability to put theoretical questions into *textual* terms—something that she sees as particularly helpful for various fields. But she goes further, later describing what she sees as the essentially fruitful nature of narrative: "Narrative is a kind of language . . . a system, but is not ahistorical, collective but not unchangeable, regulated by abstract rules but not uninformed by concrete uses and adaptations of those rules" (737). These couplings of contradictory

attributes somehow embody the seemingly contradictory nature at the heart of much of the guiding principles of narrative theory, with postclassical narratology (including this dissertation) in particular. The mix of the concrete and the abstract, the systematic and ahistorical, resonates with various points of emphasis within the last four decades of narrative theory, such as the systematic approach to non-systematization (Unnatural Narratology) or the idea of a New Critical solution (the implied author) to the gap between real author and narrator. Narrative theory functions within poles such as these, ultimately seeking textual presences for elements of experience that seem to defy textual representation.

With this in mind, the efforts of contemporary narrative theory must differ in terms of outcomes rather than methods. In her comprehensive study of metalepsis, Debra Malina speaks about the need for narratology to focus on "energetics" rather than "geometrics."[12] These terms resonate with the move from systematic to anti-systematic approaches to narrative, in which scholars investigate the nature of individual narratives and their intricacies rather than large-scale summations of certain tropes. Andrew Gibson says something similar in *Towards a Postmodern Theory of Narrative*: "In this respect, a postmodern theory of narrative might hope, not only to be more resigned to the limits of critique, but to grow more playful in its approach to them" (79). Gibson is speaking specifically of narrative theory's "abandonment" of "total description or technique." Gibson attributes this abandonment to narratology's attempt to escape representation, which he asserts as being a fleeting attempt. Instead of escaping it, Gibson proposes that narrative theory instead "inhabit" the contradictions that representation presents. Both Malina and Gibson are speaking towards an approach to narrative that better relates to the

[12] Malina borrows these terms from Derrida, "Force and Signification," from *Writing and Difference* (1978).

consistently challenging, contradictory, and ultimately unsummarizable nature of narrative potentiality.

Malina offers this description for contemporary narratology:

> Narrative itself might be studied more fruitfully, especially in light of constructionism, not as an inert product, nor even simply as the process that produces the product, but as that which is constantly producing and *un*producing and being produced and *un*produced in turn. An applied, deconstructive narratology might lead to an explosive—or evolutionary—new mode of understanding for both the narratives contained within the boundaries of books and the narrative by through, and in which we live. (138)

This idea of narrative as simultaneously producing and unproducing, of being produced and unproduced, resonates with the antimimetic approaches of unnatural narratology and the various contemporary scholars that acknowledge the complex attempt to approach the never-ending supply of fictional narratives in any sort of comprehensive way. While a large portion of existing narratives is quite straightforward and mimetic in nature, an equally large portion is written in antimimetic, almost "playful" ways (to use Gibson's term). With this in mind, contemporary approaches to these narratives must be performed with a recognition of—and appreciation for—these "unnatural" elements.

This view of narrative and narratology is at the heart of this current study. The primary texts discussed above, and the close readings and analyses offered, exemplify a view of narrative that simultaneously acknowledges the indispensable contributions of classical narratology as well as the always-increasing supply of unique, challenging narratives. Traditional narrative theory provides a lexicon through which narrative elements can be discussed, as well as a system of tools by which narratives can be thrown under the microscope. And the ongoing supply of narratives offer never-ending opportunities for ways to utilize these tools and, in turn, investigate the ways in which these textual choices offer commentary on the larger roles stories play in our everyday existence. To mimic Malina's (via Derrida) words, this study is an activity of *energetics*

rather than *geometrics*. Rather than being an activity of closing narrative doors and applying clear theoretical labels, this is instead an activity of constantly finding new doors to open and explore, leading to more and more avenues of inquiry, because this opportunity for new threads of exploration is, essentially, what fictional narratives offer.

In particular, this dissertation fills gaps in two categories. First, it introduces narratological attention to texts that previously received essentially none. As mentioned before, the primary texts discussed above have received ample critical attention from a variety of theoretical perspectives. The authors are highly awarded and widely mentioned in various strata of literary spheres; their texts have received Pulitzer Prizes and National Book Awards, and they themselves have received Guggenheim Fellowships and lifetime achievement awards. The texts have been taught at various levels and garnered widespread acclaim and popularity. Yet, for some of them, no attention has been given to what I see as overt, explicit narratological subversions, some of which are actually present in their titles (*This is How You Lose Her*; *Then We Came to the End*). The work has been done in narrative theory to point out the long history of a critical overlooking of narrative aspects, and this dissertation is a direct attempt to continue to shine relevant light on these narratological concerns. Where I find separation from similar scholars in my field is in my choice of popular, canonical authors and texts that—for the most part—have been subjected to ample critical attention. This choice is purposeful, in that it accentuates the critical gap in terms of addressing elements such as narrator, narratee, and others.

The second gap is one that I see in narrative theory itself. Specifically, this dissertation is written with the guiding idea—as mentioned earlier—from Jackson G. Barry's 1990 article: that narrative theory return again to *narrative texts*. Again, I do not claim that I am the only contemporary narratologist to do so. But the focus of each chapter is on the textual presences of various narrative techniques, and how these

narrative choices directly impact broader interpretations of the texts themselves. There is a place for strictly theoretical inquiry in all areas of critical theory, including narratology. And much of the work done in this dissertation results from my own reading of the theoretical approaches of scholars such as Bal, Richardson, Chatman, and others. But there is also great value in the process of reading texts with a lens for the manner in which the narrative choices of those texts (choices made both consciously and unconsciously by their authors) impact that reading. These narrative choices heighten thematic concerns, and they also provide a locus to which readers and scholars can point when talking about said concerns.

I do not claim to have fully filled these two gaps; this dissertation is assuredly a small step in that direction. Nevertheless, I see benefits from taking these steps in relation to how we read, discuss, and teach fictional narratives. These benefits occur at various levels and to shifting degrees depending on the extent to which individual readers and thinkers pursue narratological questions, and acquiring the advantages that come from this type of analysis ultimately occurs on a case-by-case basis. But surely there is a place alongside other major schools of critical theory for one that seeks an approach to the nature in which stories are made, told, and received. As Didion says in the quote above, stories are integral to the way we live. With this in mind, making sense of these stories—as narrative theory seeks to do—is essentially making sense of our lives, and our own everyday experience.

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