FROM MAJOR TO MINOR: PARADIGMS OF LITERARY VALUE AND THE CASE OF DOROTHY PARKER

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts,
March 1992

(c) 1992 Erika Watters

Erika Watters
Dept. of English
McGill University
Montreal, Canada

ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a reevaluation of selected short stories by Dorothy Parker. Although receptions of Parker's work have been predominantly negative, this is not seen as cause for lament, but rather for a revision of literary valuing practices and the canonical paradigms they support. Traditional assumptions about the status of so-called "minor" literature and its subservient relation to canonical works are rejected in favour of a revised appreciation of the qualities specific to minor modes of writing.

RESUME

Cette thèse presente une revaluation des contes de Dorothy Parker. Quoique la plupart des commentaires sur son oeuvre soient négatifs, ce n'apparait pas comme une occasion pour lamentation, mais pour une révision des pratiques d'évaluations et les modèles canonique qu'elles soutiennent. Les assomptions traditionelles informant la statut de la litérature dit "mineure" et sa position inférieure vis-à-vis des oeuvres canonisés, sont rejetés en faveur d'une appréciation nouvelle des qualitées spécifique aux modes mineures.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....1

CHAPTER ONE.....3

CHAPTER TWO.....26

CHAPTER THREE.. 83

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....108

INTRODUCTION

My primary intention in writing this thesis is to bring a new perspective to bear on the work of the critically marginalized American short story writer Dorothy Parker. When I initially undertook this project, I did not foresee having to address many of the issues I subsequently believed to be essential to such an undertaking. Surveying Parker's reception history led me to reconsider some of the theoretical premises and cultural preoccupations which have traditionally informed the practice of aesthetic evaluation, particularly within the context of the development of an American literary canon.

This thesis is motivated, in part, by a dissatisfaction with the criteria by which Parker's work has been largely dismissed. However, rather than suggesting that Parker's work ought to occupy a higher position on that ascending scale of minor-to-major writers, I have chosen to offer an analysis of Parker's work which accepts that minor status as inevitable, given the criteria by which majorness and minorness have traditionally been determined. That is to say, Parker's minor status will be read as positive; not merely as a sign of "failure" to realize a set of canonical norms, but as a register of the extent to which her work constitutes a meaningful departure from, and hence refusal of, those norms.

Chapter one presents a sampling of the kinds of interpretive frameworks through which her work has been judged deficient. The aim of this chapter is to outline the horizon of expectations directing these analyses, in order both to highlight the dominant matrix of concerns constitutive of canonical approaches to literature, and to elaborate their conceptual limitations as

applied to Parker's work. I will equally dispute the position taken by those critics who argue for Parker's inclusion in the canon, inasmuch as such an enlistment entails granting efficacy or normative status to the very tenets of aesthetic value which ought themselves to be the object of critical debate.

Chapter two presents a reading of selected stories by Parker, focusing on those stories which both thematically and structurally problematize orthodox approaches to narrative in conjunction with issues related to the politics of gender and class. Summarily viewed, Parker's stories may be read as enactments of the struggle among social groups for the power and authority to narrate their own experience and that of others. As I will argue, Parker's critics have misidentified her stories as critically limited or impotent narratives, when they might more accurately be understood as narratives about impotence.

Chapter three presents a necessarily compressed trajectory of American literary canon formation, as part of an attempt to intervene in larger debates concerning the relationship between interpretive communities and the practice of literary evaluation. The interaction between these will be elaborated in the context of American political and cultural nationalism, in order to more fully account for Parker's effacement from American literary history. This analysis involves making explicit the connections between a discourse which inherently privileges the nation as the locus of cultural authentication or legitimation, and larger issues of class, race and gender inscribed in the construction of a hegemonic American cultural identity.

CHAPTER ONE

When asked about the subject of my thesis by friends, fellow students or other acquaintances, the answer, "Dorothy Parker" almost invariably elicits the response, "Oh, yes, I've heard of her, but I've never read anything she has written." The disparity between Parker's near-celebrity status as a figure of popular culture and the widespread ignorance of her actual work has significantly influenced my thinking about the extent to the which the construction of an author's "personality" figures in the production of literary value, both within, and beyond the confines of formalized critical discussion.

The subject of four unauthorized biographies to date, Parker's life has been recounted in considerable detail, outweighing, on a per-page basis, what is traditionally referred to as "scholarly work", by about 10 to 1. While two of her biographers do engage in some critical analyses of her work, they frame these analyses according to certain events in her life and assume the stories to be largely autobiographical in nature Parker's critics' predilection for conflating her life and her work finds its apotheosis in Jane Helen Pearl's 1982 Psychology dissertation, Dorothy Parker, Herself. A Psycho-Biography of the Literary Artist. In an attempt to "understand her life and creative literary works", Pearl applies "Freud's formulations about pathological narcissism among women" (1). Pearl plainly states that the material for her study was chosen "on the basis of neither its literary merit, nor its medium", but for "its autobiographical relevance" (47-8). Although Pearl's separation of "literary merit" and "autobiographical relevance" is justified in one sense, (i.e they are not identical), what constitutes "autobiographical

relevance" is not, as Pearl implies, an impartial or impersonal guide to the stories. That is to say, Parker's biographies are not simply unmediated accounts of past life events, rather they are highly selective representations of those events, told from a particular perspective. Parker's past, in other words, has itself been evaluated and interpreted in a particular way. Her life story is not merely an immovable "background" to the stories, something to which we have immediate access, or an objective context from which to extrapolate the meaning or relevance of her texts. Indeed, as will become apparent in surveying Parker's critical reception, her life story has itself become a text, shaped by the many interpretations enacted upon it.

While Parker remains relatively obscure in academic circles, her work continues to go into new editions. In fact, her publishing history is somewhat exceptional. Her first book of poems, Enough Rope (1926) was a national best-seller, ran to eight printings, and hit a record high for U.S. poetry sales (Lauerbach 589). Her three short-story collections, Laments for the Living (1930), After Such Pleasures (1933), and Here Lies (1939) were published with few omissions in one volume in The Portable Dorothy Parker (1944). According to the "Publisher's Note" in the 1976 edition, "of the first ten Portables, seven have been dropped or replaced by new editions; only Shakespeare, The World Bible, and Dorothy Parker have remained continuously in print and selling steadily through time and change" ("Publisher's Note"). Her short story "Big Blonde" (1929), received the O. Henry Prize for the best short story of that year. If anything, the popularity of Parker's work seems to have inhibited its positive reception in academic circles. This phenomenon is, of course, not unique to Parker's case: the commercial success of a work has not infrequently been inversely proportional to the degree of literary value it is said to possess.

Although the short story is a genre often said to be the most definitively American, it is equally true that it has traditionally been considered a minor genre. This may in part be explained by the fact that short stories generally appear in magazines, thereby placing them in a notoriously transient and commercial mass culture context. A related assumption informing the minor status of short stories is the perception that writers produce such short works as a means of supporting themselves financially, "in between novels". Such a display of pecuniary interestedness runs counter to the dominant, art-for-art's-sake tradition of bourgeois aesthetics. Although few critics would suggest that writing short stories is inherently less demanding than writing novels, and many canonized American writers have produced critically-acclaimed short stories, the overwhelming majority of these canonized writers are seen to have merited that distinction by virtue of the quality of their novels alone.

Parker's critical reception has undergone some changes since her stories were first reviewed in literary magazines of the 1930s. These reviews of her short story collections are extremely brief, as are the very occasional and often negative references to her work in surveys of the American short story from the 1930s through to the 1980s. Two critical biographies were published in the 1970s, but these are primarily concerned with her biography and pay only passing attention to the stories. At approximately the same time, however, a few articles on her short stories began to appear in literary journals, and in the early 1980s four dissertations were published on Parker. Another biography was published in 1984, as was yet another, more recently, in 1988.

Overall, Parker's work has generated very little interest, and what scholarly work there is tells us that she has not achieved anything remotely approaching canonical status. The

question this chapter implicitly addresses, is that posed by Stuart Hall:

> Why is it that the text, the many texts, the many signifying practices which are present in any social formation have yielded as the administered curriculum of literary studies, these ten books up to the top; then these twenty books with a question above them; then those fifty books which we know about but which we only need to read very quickly; and then those hundreds of thousands of texts nobody ever reads? (26)

If we were to locate Dorothy Parker somewhere in the distribution of texts Hall outlines, her work would probably fall into the "those books we know about but only need to read very quickly" category. It would probably be more accurate to qualify that further by adding "if at all." In short, Parker is a minor writer. While her reception history provides some answers to the question of why that is so; it also tells us a good deal about what minor status implies about an author's work.

To argue that Parker's minorness is the result of previous critics' failure to recognize what is properly a 'major' writer, is to presume that majorness is inherently more desirable, and means aligning oneself in advance with categories that are themselves in need of critical reevaluation. Rather than suggesting that Parker's work ought to occupy a higher position on that ascending scale of lesser-greater writers, I have elected to offer an analysis of Parker's work which accepts that minor status as inevitable, given the criteria by which majorness and minorness have traditionally been determined. At the same time, however, I want to reject the supposition that so-called "minor" works can only be accounted for in terms of projected but unrealized canonical norms and suggest a revised evaluation of the prescriptive discourse underwriting received notions about the minor/major relationship.

Much of the criticism of a minor writer such as Parker is instructive insofar as it reveals just how impoverished the discourse supporting the pantheon of major writers would be, were

if not for the existence of an adjacent discourse maintaining its underside, the province of minor or popular writers. Summarily viewed, Parker's reception history offers an emblematic study of how minorness is typically defined negatively, that is, only in relation to its obverse, whose qualities are supposed to have already been established. In the absence of any reference point beyond the canonical paradigm, itself the product of socially-contingent valuing practices, the pre-eminence of canonical texts is eternally reinstated and made to serve as the uncontested ideal against which subsequent work may be measured.

The effects of those critical and institutional practices are apparent in Parker's reception history which spans approximately 50 years, from 1930 to 1984. Just as literary criticism has not developed in an uninterrupted line over that period, Parker's critics do not progress in a particularly linear fashion. In many ways, some of the later critics seem to owe a great deal to earlier moments in the history of criticism. Consequently, I have organized the critics thematically, according, as much as possible, to the concerns and assumptions informing their evaluations. The object of this analysis is to consider in detail the ways in which Parker's status has been constituted by the procedures of criticism enacted upon her work. In this respect, my primary concern is not to debate the merits of Parker's work, but rather to foreground the various methodological strategies adopted by her critics in order to elaborate the biases implicit in their operation.

The first set of critics may be loosely referred to as biographical critics. Although some of these critics would undoubtedly not have elected to call their approach biographical per se, there remains an important biographical element in their formulation of what constitutes the text. The tendency toward biographical criticism, while not unique to the reception of a minor writer

such as Parker, is significant in Parker's case in terms of how it conceptualizes her authority. The fact of Parker's gender repeatedly intrudes upon what is allegedly criticism of the work, very often having the effect of attenuating the latter. The question of Parker's "femininity" seems to be a matter of central concern to a number of critics who make, what is in their estimation, a meaningful connection between her life or "personality" and her work.

Within the conventions of biographical criticism, texts that are valued are traditionally seen as products of a valuable life. The facts of Parker's life selected for emphasis have not been those that would provide such an impression. In this sense her reception more closely resembles, although it is not identical to, that commonly enacted on authors of more popular genres. In his work on popular fiction, Tony Bennett has stressed the different form biographical criticism takes when applied to canonical as opposed to non-canonical authors. According to Bennett:

> [B]iographical criticism has articulated the relations between life and work differently as between the two categories: tying life, work and meaning into an indissoluble unity in the case of one, connecting life and work only at the level of miscellaneous anecdote in the case of the other. ("Marxism" 258)

A sample of some of the "miscellaneous anecdotes" proffered by Parker's critics corroborates, to some extent, Bennett's observations.

John Keats' You Might as Well Live: The Life and Times of Dorothy Parker (1974), is considered to be among the definitive texts on Parker, as it is one of only two book-length studies which includes any textual analysis of the stories. Having written such a book, Keats feels authorized to surmise that "to the extent that she was a writer, it was difficult for her to be a lover, a friend, a woman" (147). Keats' comments clearly suggest that authorship and womanhood vied for a place in Parker's life, and yet leave unanswered the question of why or

how that is so. In any case, the two occupations are seen to be mutually exclusive. The final page of his book concludes with a description of Parker as a "tiny, big-eyed, feminine woman with the mind of a man", and quotes an apparently anonymous source who refers to her as ""this sour little girl who went about slashing her wrists and having abortions'" (305).

While conceding that she was an "excellent poet and short story writer" (305), Keats undercuts those accomplishments by suggesting that this was achieved at the expense of, or perhaps even despite, her gender. Keats shares with her other biographers a tendency to foreground the sensational or otherwise scandalous aspects of Parker's life, highlighting her failed marriages and drunken escapades.

In reference to Jonathan Swift, Edward Said argues that "it cannot be necessary each time he is written about to examine the provenance of everything known about his biography or to revise the concept organizing his oeuvre" (180). In the case of Parker, it is precisely that organizing concept, which has consigned the critical treatment of her work to reductive formulations about its auto-biographical nature. While Parker's divorces and suicide attempts may have served as the basis for some of her stories, there is a lesser-known, because less often circulated, side to her life which may equally be seen to have informed her work.

In 1933 Parker was responsible for organizing the Screen Writers Guild in Hollywood, and helped to found the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League in 1936. She acted as national chairman for the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee in the 1930s, overseeing a Spanish relief campaign, and in 1937 she reported the Loyalist cause from Spain for New Masses. For these and other related activities, she was refused a passport as a war correspondent during World War II, having already been rejected for military service. Parker and others who had spoken out against fascism

before the signing of the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact were considered prematurely anti-fascist (PAF), and were subsequently rejected for service. In 1949 she was blacklisted in Hollywood and was subpoenaed to testify before HUAC. In 1955, she was brought before the New York State Legislative Committee, at which time she pleaded the Fifth Amendment. She left her estate, as well as copyrights and royalties, to Martin Luther King Jr. These are now in the possession of the NAACP.

In short, Parker's activities were not confined to lunches at the Algonquin Round Table, nor, as numerous critics insist, was she solely interested in male-female relationships. In many ways Parker's stories have been read as if on a continuum with her life, a life which has itself been read primarily as a sordid melodrama of sex and alcohol. While Parker's biographers may have shaped her life and work into "an indissoluble whole", to borrow Bennett's phrase, its articulation has been deployed in such a way as to effectively restrict rather than enlarge the scope of concerns her work is seen to encompass.

In 1968, one year after Parker's death, William Shanahan continued what had virtually become a tradition in Parker criticism by asserting that Parker "wrote almost exclusively about sex" (26). Although there is no necessary correlation between the range of issues addressed in an author's work and the value of that work, the critical reduction of Parker's material, even at the level of plot description, merits a response, however much such a response may perpetuate the reductionism it seeks to counter. In terms of subject-matter alone Parker's stories include: war ("Soldiers of the Republic"); poverty ("Song of the Shirt 1941"); abortion ("Mr. Durant"); alcoholism ("Big Blonde"); racism ("Arrangement in Black and White"); marriage ("Here We Are"); divorce ("Too Bad"); and adoption ("Little Curtis"). It is not merely inaccurate but almost

incomprehensible that Shanahan would suggest these might be subsumed under the category "sex" alone.

Vernon Loggins adopts a similar position in his survey of American short story writers, I Hear America Singing (1937) which includes a two-page commentary on Parker. Operating from the assumption that Parker "loves nothing better than flowers and a good cry" (299), he concludes that "Dorothy Parker, feminine in her every fiber, has lost all delusions except delusions about beauty and love. These she keeps as her woman's birthright" (302). It would seem extremely unlikely that Vernon actually read either "Horsie" or "Big Blonde". So dominant is the narrative constructed of Parker's personality that it becomes the real text, the stories constituting little more than excerpts which assume their meaning only in relation to her biography's larger thematic structure. In this sense, her signature alone determines the fate of their reception. As Mark Van Doren admits, for Parker's critics there is always "the difficulty of separating the woman one has heard about from the woman one is reading" (536). Historian Estelle Freedman observes a similar pattern in histories of the period. According to Freedman, "Historians' use of the 'sexual revolution' as an explanation for women's history in the 1920s was perhaps an extension of their inability to conceive of women outside of sexual roles" (393). In light of this, we may invert Keats and others' comments and conclude, perhaps more accurately, that to the extent that Parker was a woman it was difficult for critics (like Keats) to see her as a writer.

The second set of critics I wish to discuss share a sense that Parker's characterizations are simply not sufficiently adequate representations of human beings. Although a description of what human beings are really like is never advanced, the tacit assumption is that, while absent

from Parker's work, their nature is discernable in superior works of literature. Moreover, this apparent lack of representativeness is tied to a perception that when the stories refer to situations bound to a specific period in time, their significance is further diminished.

In a 1930 article entitled "Cut-Outs from Life" written for the Saturday Review of Literature, Gladys Graham regrets that "Mr. Durant", "Little Curtis" and "The Wonderful (ll) Gentleman" are "based on types too limited" (1172). They are, she continues, "the sentimental stories of yesterday" (1172). Writing for The Outlook and Independent the same year, Frances Lamont Robbins finds that "[o]f their kind, these sketches and stories are perfect" (269). They are, however " ephemeral in value, journalistic in style, and strictly dated" (269). Philip Stevick's The Lesser Renaissance (1984) is a lengthy and detailed study of the American short story between 1900 and 1940. He confines his remarks on Parker to two short paragraphs. According to Stevick, Parker's characters "lack the full range of human emotions found in human beings" (92) and because they "move about like automatons: they belong in a soap opera" (94). Stevick's allusion to perhaps the most critically degraded form of mass culture and one commonly associated with female audiences is clearly an indictment of the work related to, although separable from, the fact that the stories are primarily concerned with the lives of women.

Each of these analyses operates from a series of commonly held suppositions about the quality of literature which allegedly distinguishes it from lesser forms of writing. Accordingly, a major work should present a portrait of life which is timeless. In contrast, a minor work fails to sustain itself as an historically autonomous artifact, and reveals its temporality. The Oxford Companion to American Literature neatly summarizes the difference. However much one might

want to contest the validity of looking to any of The Oxford Companions for definitive answers to the question of literary value, such texts are instructive insofar as they present prevailing theoretical orthodoxies in a refreshingly direct manner. Under the heading "Best Sellers" James D. Hart provides this definition:

> "[T]erm for books that are remarkably popular, for a brief time or over a period of many years. Seldom of great literary significance, such works are often ephemeral in value and dependent upon temporary tastes and interests. Nevertheless, the best-selling book in the U.S., as in other Christian lands, has been the Bible. (75)

There are at least two striking features to this definition. First, unlike many literary terms, the term "best-sellers" would seem to lend itself to scientific verification, a matter more for the statistician than the lexicographer. Equally odd is the fact that the category should be defined in terms which effectively disqualify the category's most consistent example. What seems to distinguish popular books from great literature is the mere fact that more copies of them have been sold, but this fact alone cannot account for the fact that they are of no "great literary significance". According to Leslie Fiedler, "the struggle of High Art and low, has, moreover, been perceived as a battle of the sexes" (What Was Literature? 29). Although Fiedler's observations rightly acknowledge the privilege accorded to male writers in this respect, they do not acknowledge the at least equally significant fact that while high culture has traditionally been the domain of men, those men have been overwhelming white, middle- or upper-class men.

Nonetheless, there are historical reasons for addressing the high/low distinction in terms of gender. In the 1850s, a group of predominantly white, middle-class, American and British women short story writers began to cultivate a wide and largely female readership by publishing in popular magazines. The most-often quoted man of his generation to respond to that

phenomenon is, of course, Nathaniel Hawthorne. His phrase "damned mob of scribbling women", is however too often removed from its larger context. Hawthorne's comments are part of a letter he wrote to his publisher in 1855 where he proclaims that:

> America is now wholly given over to a damned mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash . . . . Worse they could not be, when they sell by the hundred thousand (Pattee 110).

The works produced by those women writers were largely concerned with what might be called "issues of the day", local, temporal events, whose relevance to the daily lives of many could be readily inferred. Presumably, these works were not valued for what they contributed in the way of 'eternal truths', but for their ability to intersect with the reader's own immediate world of interest.

Since that time, 'popular literature' has come to signify nothing so much as that it is not great literature. It is instructive to remember that the term "literature" only acquired its present exclusive status during the nineteenth century contemporaneous with the consolidation of literary criticism and aesthetics as nominally autonomous, academically entrenched orders of inquiry. Distinguishing between modes of writing emerged as part of an expanding pedagogical apparatus which articulated the relationship between text and society in broadly nationalist terms. The ostensible function of literature in this context is to transcend the regional and historical differences perceived as threatening to the political unity of the nation.

The difference between popular literature and great works of art, then, is not inscribed in the texts themselves, but is rather constituted by the different functions they are expected to perform. One of the central difficulties with this is that within the academically-derived discourse of aesthetics, popular literature can only be accounted for in pejorative terms, that is,

in terms of its recalcitrance to the demands of the dominant aesthetic.

The third group of critics I want to discuss have critiqued Parker's work in terms of this disparity. These critics share a sense that insofar as Parker's work engages with purely local and temporal themes, she fails to achieve major author status.

William Shanahan puts his views succinctly. According to Shanahan, Dorothy Parker "will never be listed among the twentieth century's best authors" (34) because her "intentions and output were too slight" and her "themes and styles too familiar and unpretentious" (34). In his critique of Nancy Hale, Clare Booth Luce and Dorothy Parker in On Second Thought (1946) James Gray regrets that;

> these women have concerned themselves with a tiny fragment of society and with negative themes. While they have attempted to make literature in terms of the gossip of the cocktail hour, their English contemporaries have been energetically turning over whole cultures to find their material (200)

Lynn Z. Bloom claims it was the "shallowness of her admirers" which "led them to exaggerate her early talent and seduced Parker into believing too fervently in the importance of not being earnest" (302). As a result, she argues, "Parker settled too quickly for less-demanding writing. . . rather than dealing more thoughtfully with serious issues that would have fulfilled her potential for being a major writer of enduring distinction" (302).

According to Edmund Wilson, "She is not Emily Bronte or Jane Austen, but she has been at some pains to write well, and she has put into what she has written a state of mind, an era, a few moments of experience that nobody else has conveyed" (171).

In "The English Journal" (1934), Mark Van Doren concludes that "She is not a master. . . . since she does not deal with any very great or significant area of life" (542).

Together these analyses form a consensus about the criteria that distinguish major work

from minor work. These appear in the form of oppositional terms. "Best" versus "familiar", "literature" versus "gossip", "earnest" versus "shallow", "enduring" versus "a few moments", "significant" versus, presumably, "insignificant". If, as Parker's publisher maintains, it is true that Parker's stories continue to sell, then her work has endured. However, just as the endurance or significance of a major writer depends on the continuity that author's circulation within a particular reading community, so Parker's endurance has depended on hers. Evaluative practice then, extends beyond that of ascribing value to certain texts and not others; it equally implies the evaluation of audiences themselves in terms of their estimated ability to evaluate "properly". Apparently, Parker's readers have not been those that literary critics would recognize as being in a position to judge her work accurately.

The institutionalization of literature produces a particular kind of reading formation in accordance with the edicts of its own critical enterprise. Parker's work apparently frustrates that enterprise. For instance, from a New Critical perspective, by emphasizing the referential dimension of verbal operations, "the gossip of the cocktail hour" shamelessly commits "the heresy of paraphrase." From a Bloomian perspective, which preempts the possibility of an anxiety-free literature, one either writes like Jane Austen or one fails to write like Jane Austen. From a nationalist/humanist perspective, Eternal Man cannot survive class-struggle in a Manhattan apartment unscathed, much less hope to do so "without social mediation" (Chase 160).

The fourth group of critics I want to discuss are feminist critics. Although it is not generally accurate to speak of feminist critics as a homogeneous group with a single agenda, those who have written about Parker share a set of assumptions about what constitutes, or rather what should constitute the aims and objectives of female authors in general. In their view,

Parker's work ultimately fails to realize those demands. Their work may be classified as belonging to a particular school of feminist criticism that has come to be called "images of women in fiction". As such, it needs to be prefaced by a brief outline of that tradition's history.

The 1970s mark the beginning of a succession of studies on Parker. This renewed interest in Parker's work is concurrent with the growth of the women's movement, which, for academics, involved an attempt to resuscitate work by female authors and to initiate women's studies programs. In American colleges in the early 1970s, female academics developed a number of courses which centered on the study of female stereotypes in male writing. Images of Women in Fiction, Feminist Perspectives (1972) edited by Susan Koppelman Cornillon, was intended for this new and expanding market. Reprinted several times in rapid succession, Cornillon's text reflects the popularity, at least in academic circles, of this approach to literature. In fact, the "images of women" approach became one of the dominant modes of feminist criticism. Taking Cornillon's text as exemplary, Toril Moi has outlined the overriding effects of that practice:

> As one reads on in Images of Women in Fiction, one quickly becomes aware that to study 'images of women' in fiction is equivalent to studying false images of women in fiction written by both sexes. The 'image' of women in fiction in literature is invariably defined in opposition to the 'real person'. (44)

In this sense, properly feminist works are those which convey a particular image of women. Cheri Register's article, "American Feminist Literary Criticism" (1975), neatly summarizes the guidelines such a work should follow. "A literary work should provide role models, instill a sense of feminine identity by portraying women who are self-actualizing, whose identities are not dependent on men" (47). The influence of this tradition is apparent in a number of studies on Parker.

In an essay entitled "Dorothy Parker, Erica Jong and the New Feminist Humor", which

appears in Regionalism and the Female Imagination (1977), Emily Toth writes, "She seemed to see little possibility for change, neither an androgynous shifting of roles nor strong friendships between women. Her view of the world is female, but not feminist" (74). Toth believes, however, that "had Dorothy Parker lived longer, she might have been able to do more with her anger; she might have been able to create a more feminist vision of what should be rather than what is" (76).

In her dissertation, 20th-Century American Women Humorists (1982), which includes a chapter on Parker, Zita Zatkhin Dresner regrets that Parker's characters "suffer too much for the reader to get pleasure out of identifying with" (101). "In fact", she argues, "none of Parker's characters are women whom we can enjoy without anxiety" (107).

Sondra Roslyn Melzer's dissertation, The Rhetoric of Rage: A Study of the View of Women in Selected Short Stories of Dorothy Parker (1984), cites Cornillon's text on page 1 of her introduction. Melzer states that her own work is intended to contribute to a feminist project which has "repudiated the easy generalizations made about women and [has] beg[un] to mint a clear, truthful image of women to replace the counterfeit currency, the coined stereotypes which ha[ve] so long been passed about" (1). Although she allows that Parker did not have "an explicit feminist viewpoint", she maintains that "[i]n the ten stories discussed, eight take women as protagonists, a fact which itself reflects a feminist concern" (279) In concluding, Melzer hopes that through her study, "students interested in women's studies may be encouraged to participate in the current effort toward transforming a predominantly male literary canon that fully integrates women" (302).

However well-intentioned, these critics have merely substituted a notion of representative

maleness with one of representative femaleness. Like its male counterpart, this feminist aesthetic is based on a universalist model of the subject. While it is important to commend these critics for having foregrounded the position from which they present their claims, the tendency to deduce from their own position a globalized ideal of female subjectivity is highly suspect and indeed has increasingly been rejected as effectively ethnocentric. Moreover, these critics preserve the canonically prescribed determinants of a major literature David Lloyd has outlined the characteristics which underline the function a major literature:

> A major literature is established as such precisely by virtue of its claim to . . . realize the autonomy of the individual subject to such a degree that individual subject becomes universally valid and archetypal. (Nationalism 19)

Their argument with the male-dominated literary canon does not necessitate a reevaluation of its central claims to representative status, but asks only that archetypal woman be added to its cast of characters, amounting in the end to little more than a kind of tit for tat polemic. Rather than problematizing a transhistorical concept of the subject, feminist criticism of this sort propagates the same idealism by privileging autonomy as the essence of the human. By failing to ask how a particular historical and cultural context fashions an ideal subject, or its representation, these analyses make no challenge to the American tradition which enshrines narratives about isolated heroes embarking on Adamic quests unformed by networks of social relations. A feminist project of this sort is not substantially different from the male-centered version, and thus inevitably recuperates its prescriptive narrative paradigm.

The second group of feminist critics organize their analyses according to a similar repertoire of concerns. Paula A. Treichler's article "Verbal Subversions in Dorothy Parker: 'Trapped Like a Trap in a Trap'" (1980) borrows its subtitle from a line in Parker's story "The

Waltz". Although this 14-page article provides a detailed textual analysis of several of the stories, Treichler's premise that "[w]omen's writing is a search for an authentic female voice" (60) assumes a monolithic conception of the category "female". Treichler's article is influenced by the widely-disseminated work of Robin Lakoff whom she cites throughout the essay. Lakoff's seminal text Language and Woman's Place (1975) purports to examine 'the way we customarily talk if we are women" (1). Like Lakoff's, Treichler's study suffers from the assumption that "women" as such, constitute a single speech community, causing her to draw misleading parallels between Parker's very different characters. A decontextualized female speaker is thus seen to vie with an equally decontextualized male speaker in a struggle for "an uncompromised and unique female selfhood" (59).

Suzanne Bunkers article "'I am Outraged Womanhood': Dorothy Parker as Feminist and Social Critic" (1978) also borrows its title from a line in "The Waltz". According to Bunkers, Parker's characters are "victimized not only by an oppressive society but also by their inability to fight back against that society" (25). The stories, according to Bunkers, reveal how society has "created one-dimensional female roles and forced women to fit into them" (26).

What characterizes these studies as a group is their perception of patriarchy as the cross-cultural, transhistorical oppression of women by men. In the absence of a materialist sense in which power operates amidst a network of structural inequalities and discursively cultivated social relations informed by class, race and potentially innumerable other factors, these critics must insist on a victimization thesis which perceives women as passive recipients of a male conspiracy. There are at least two problems which arise from that thesis. For one, it focuses exclusively on the collective subordination of women and tends to ignore the historically-specific

means by which domination, in its many forms, is maintained. Secondly, and no less importantly, this victimization thesis fails to provide an account of the ways in which particular groups and individuals resist or modify these forms within their particular social class. These studies of Parker's work testify to the persistence of that homogenizing tendency, despite the variety of responses to social domination portrayed in her stories. It is, finally, ironic that the critical reception of Parker's work has been governed by the very essentialist categories her stories may be seen to problematize.

In summarizing Parker's reception history, it is possible to identify three basic strategies through which her work has been judged deficient. When compared, either implicitly or explicitly to that of more established writers, her work is considered "limited" in terms of characterization or subject matter. The work of those other writers, we may assume, is more compelling by virtue of having escaped the limitations of their particular time and place, having engaged with issues of greater significance, or having produced characters with whom everyone may identify or otherwise admire. I stated at the beginning of this chapter that my objective was not to prove that Parker ought to be classed among the major authors of American literature, and I would now like to further explicate that position.

To attempt to determine Parker's literary value by weighing her work against a set of celebrated "classics" is not only to assume that the value of those texts is beyond dispute, but, perhaps more critically, to remain within the very horizon of expectations which prohibits developing other criteria of value. It is in no way necessary or even particularly useful to attempt to defend Parker's work on the grounds that she produces characters with whom everyone can identify, or that may serve as role models for women, or that her stories bear no trace of the time

and place in which they were conceived and thus transcend all purely temporal issues. There is, in other words, no real cause to enter Parker in that contest of archetypes, not only because doing so means complying with the set of standards of which those texts are held to be the finest examples, but equally, because such an enterprise entails granting efficacy, or normative status to the very criteria which ought to be the object of critical debate. In short, the question as to whether or not Parker's work is valuable cannot be settled by appealing either to preelaborated standards of excellence or to the word of those who would "disinterestedly" proclaim them. In this sense, it is possible to draw a number of significant parallels between the imperatives implied by a canonically-defined scene of writing, and the kinds of social dynamics Parker sets up in her own writing.

Parker's stories may be read as enactments of the struggle among social groups for the power and authority to narrate their own experience, as well as that of others. Particular groups and individuals are seen to maintain power, in part, by continuing to recognize as valid only those categories that legitimize, or otherwise rationalize their individual or group histories. Parker's stories explore, both thematically and structurally, the problems and complexities of telling one's story when one can only account for one's subjugation in terms which reproduce or otherwise reinforce the very perspective which underwrites that disenfranchisement. Parker's own reception history bears testimony to this predicament, a predicament faced by cultural minorities throughout American history.

It is not enough to take issue with Parker's reception history in terms of the critiques offered of her stories alone; indeed there are very few critiques which engage with the work itself in any significant detail. Most of her critics have either endorsed or helped to construct the

figure of Parker as an emotionally unstable woman; rather than focusing on her social activism or political commitments, it is her abortions, suicide attempts, failed marriages and alleged alcoholism which have been repeatedly cited and woven together to form a narrative that reads like a case study in female hysteria. That is to say, the legend created of Parker is one which effectively dismisses her work before it is even read, by insinuating that she can only be an unreliable witness and that her testimony, as it were, need not be taken seriously.

Ironically, what struck me upon reading the stories is just how keenly Parker herself understood the strategies and mechanisms through which certain kinds of evidence come to be declared inadmissable, particularly when inconsistent with the dominant sensus communis. In Parker's stories, the relatively powerless, those whose experiences and stories are likely to be discrepant with those of subjects equipped with greater power or privilege, are not merely reduced to silence but are, more often, subject to more subtle forms of self-abnegation. Induced, either through their belief in the legitimacy of those who wield power, or merely out of a lack of self-conviction, disenfranchised subjects tend not simply to collaborate in the destruction of their own testimony but to produce utterances respectful of the "truth" of particular discursively defined communities. Rather than implying that truth and falsity may be determined extradiscursively, Parker's stories may be read as ruminations on the ways in which such distinctions, however sanctified, are always the products of particular social formations ("products of" -both in the genitive and the possessive sense).

In this sense, to critique Parker for having "failed" to produce representative characters, male or female, is to radically miss the point, to completely and utterly fail to recognize what her stories are in a central way about; the struggle for self-representation; the ongoing, yet largely

undeclared battle over the power to name, classify, explain and symbolize a particular social order, what Pierre Bourdieu has called, "the symbolic struggle over the production of common sense" ("Social Space" 206).

Parker foregrounds this struggle by foregrounding dialogue. Dialogue has traditionally been treated as a technique largely extrinsic to the thematic concerns of American literature, serving only to further plot, develop character, describe setting or atmosphere, or some combination of these. But language, as Roland Barthes has argued, "is a site with no exterior" (Rustle 114). In a 1956 interview with Marion Capron, Parker says that her stories "make themselves stories by telling themselves through what people say" (84). By stressing the discursivity inherent in social relations, Parker's dialogues accentuate the virtual absence of a singular voice not already engaged in a process of confrontation with other voices, other ways of seeing and speaking about the world. Moreover, her third-person narrators are typically unreliable, and thus serve as a further register of the distortions endemic to totalizing perspectives. By telling stories through the telling of stories, anecdotes and apparent asides, Parker's stories dramatize the ways in which discourse is not only a site, but an effect and an object of ideological struggle.

Parker situates these linguistic exchanges not in domains typically associated with official debates about the future of nations, or major corporations, but in deceptively tranquil spaces such as a family living room, a speakeasy, or a department store. It is precisely in those places where one is presumably able to "let down one's guard" that Parker chooses to disclose the relentlessness of the struggle for power, the inglorious victories and the inconsolable losses that bear the traces of the larger social structures they both express and help to reproduce.

I have limited my analysis to five short stories in which dialogue is a prominent feature. Rather than presenting a more general overview of her stories, I have chosen to present a detailed study of these five stories given that each of them is in some way representative of formal and/or thematic concerns characteristic of her work in general.

CHAPTER TWO

"Little Curtis"

"Little Curtis"(1927), was first published as "Lucky Little Curtis" in Pictorial Review in February of 1927. It tells the story of a 4 year-old boy's adoption into an upper-middle class, suburban home and his subsequent initiation into a capitalist social order by his adoptive parents, the Matsons. The Matson's incapacity to produce children of their own operates symbolically throughout the story, signifying larger difficulties facing a declining upper-middle class. Set in an era of Coolidge prosperity, "Little Curtis" explores the tensions that arise between an older middle-class and an emergent middle class, manifested specifically in their respective modes of consumption, production and self-presentation.

The story is told primarily from a third-person point of view, but we are given greatest access to the thoughts and motives of the domineering Mrs. Matson. The relatively undeveloped characterization of those characters other than Mrs. Matson is clearly thematically motivated. The unequal distribution of time and space given to the representation of these other characters is closely linked to the story's thematic concern with Mrs. Matson's struggle to homogenize or otherwise obscure these disparate voices and maintain a monologic discourse in the face of that diversity. By honouring Mrs. Matson's claim to greater speaking rights, and yet exposing the embattled history of that speech's assertions, Parker is able to at once display, and discredit, Mrs. Matson's authoritative discourse. The centrality of the position Mrs. Matson occupies in the story is thus both a function of, and an expression of the centripetal force she attempts to exert

over the other characters' speech. In contrast to traditional limited third-person narratives, where the protagonist, or "main character" is positioned as the story's moral centre, Parker undermines the validity of her main character's right to occupy that position by portraying the various forms of censorship she employs to achieve her privileged centrality. Mrs. Matson's dominance is in no way naturalized; rather it is shown to be the result of her ignoring, interrupting, denouncing, correcting and even outright instructing the speech of others. In so doing, Parker apprises the reader of the means by which the voices of those characters lurking at the boundaries of the story's narrative are muted out. Mrs. Matson's actions reveal her desire to distance herself from the new middle classes she feels to be encroaching upon the sanctity of the world as she sees it. Similarly, her speech betrays the defensiveness of a woman threatened by the invasion of heterogeneity.

The story opens with Mrs. Matson in the vestibule of G. Fosdick's Sons' Department Store. As with so many of Parker's stories, the first line introduces a whole spectrum of interrelated issues that reverberate throughout the rest of the text. The contradictions held together by "Fosdick's Sons' Department Store" sets up three central thematic concerns: morality, regeneration and mass consumerism. According to Richard Wightman Fox, in the 1920s, Harry Emerson Fosdick was the most influential Protestant moralist in the United States (13). Fosdick identified consumptive restraint with moral strength of character and strongly advised against pecuniary indulgence. By attaching his name to an institution enshrining that indulgence, Parker may be seen to be alluding to the phenomenal success of Bruce Barton, Fosdick's contemporary. Bruce Barton's 1925-26 best-seller The Man that Nobody Knows is perhaps best known for its portrayal of Jesus Christ as the founder of modern business. Barton effectively legitimized big

business both for himself and for his audience by harmonizing the spirit of capitalism and liberal Protestantism. That it is Fosdick's Sons' Department Store, underlines the fact that, traditionally, it is the sons, and not the daughters, that inherit a father's business. Thirdly, as an institution, the department store is a sign of the wide dispersal of consumer goods and their formal display. The emergence of this new form of mass marketing, coupled with the fact that more people than previously could afford to purchase these items, was perceived by the upper-classes as an infringement upon a consumptive practice that had once been their exclusive privilege.

Situated in this social space where people of different social classes gather, Mrs. Matson is "gloriously aloof" to those whose passage she is obstructing.

> She made no answer to the "Oh, I beg your pardons" that bubbled from the lips of the more tender-hearted among them Calm, sure, gloriously aloof, Mrs. Matson stood, opened her book, poised her pencil and wrote in delicate, prettily slanting characters. "4 crepe-paper candy-baskets, $ 28." (339)

> Then with the comfortable air of a duty well done, she passed impressively, and with a strong push, from G. Fosdick's Sons' Department Store by means of a portal which bore a placard with the request, "Please Use Other Door." (339)

Mrs. Matson's violent shove of the door through which she proceeds, despite instructions to the contrary, is a classic Veblenesque comment on class power and the essential barbarism it so thinly disguises. Mrs. Matson refusal to heed the sign's request suggests that she does not recognize as legitimate the credentials of its author and will not take her cues from such an unauthorized source. While she is apparently absorbed in her accounting, and does not respond verbally to those around her, this non-reaction is itself calculated. It is, in other words, part of a larger polemic she is waging against them.

On the one hand, Parker shows us Mrs. Matson's manifest indifference to the crowd. Clearly it is Mrs. Matson who is in the way and yet members of the crowd ask that she excuse

them. The social contract to which these "tender-hearted" would appeal can only ensure any kind of civilized order as long as everyone willingly consents to its terms. Mrs. Matson does not simply fail temporarily to respect the conventions which regulate polite society, she has stationed herself in this doorway as an advertisement of her dissent. Parker allows us to see this desire pronounce her difference from the crowd by bringing us inside the circumscribed space of Mrs. Matson's aloofness where we see that this air of indifference is something she in fact pursues with great interest. In an era of conspicuous consumption, when a multitude of classes are able to participate in the pleasures of consumer culture, Mrs. Matson can only advertise her difference by conspicuously displaying thrift. The irony, of course, is that Mrs. Matson must work hard to convey the impression that she is not a common labourer. By portraying Mrs. Matson's relationship with the crowd in this way, Parker maps the then emergent modes of representing class power. She shows us that as a woman of the older middle-class, Mrs. Matson's position in society is dependent not simply upon the subservience of those around her, but on their spectatorship as well.

The answer to the question of what exactly constitutes Mrs. Matson's "duty well done", is equally related to the position she perceives herself to occupy in the class hierarchy. According to Daniel Horowitz's The Morality of Spending, in the late 19th century, a series of so-called budget experts published studies which focused on how working-class families spent their money. Their expenditures were almost always approached censoriously. Funded by private corporations, these experts were especially critical of money spent on events of a communal nature (51). The same kind of studies were not to be performed on the middle classes until the beginning of the twentieth century. Interest in the consumption patterns of the middle

classes emerged at a time when Americans were experiencing the first sustained escalation of prices since the Civil War (67). Ellen Richards' The Cost of Living as Modified by Sanitary Science, which went through several editions in the early twentieth century, explicitly attacked people like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who were trying to break down the barriers between the individual home and the world around it. Books such as Richards' opposed those who asserted that solutions to inflation required cooperative political efforts, and argued that the responsibility lay with the individual housewife. Richards, according to Horowitz, "cautioned readers to distinguish themselves from 'the mass of people' who 'take both their ordinary life and their pleasures in large groups, after the fashion of 'primitive communities'" (83).

Mrs. Matson's every act is motivated by the desire to distinguish herself from such "primitive communities".

> She found it distinctly lower-class to wear one's new clothes "for every day"; there was an unpleasant suggestion of extravagance and riotous living in the practice. The "working-classes, who, as Mrs. Matson often explained to her friends, went out and bought themselves electric ice-boxes and radios the minute they got a little money, did such things. (340)

In contrast, Mrs. Matson's own clothes are "stained" and "worn" (340). She is not, however, true to the spirit of Fosdick's words, for "snug in her was the thought of the rows of recent garments" (340) in her closet at home. Faithful only to her class image, Mrs. Matson does not abstain from consumption altogether but does so only at calculated moments, most ostentatiously in the presence of her social inferiors, where conspicuous thrift allows her to stand out.

When she encounters a "blind colored woman" selling pencils (340), whose lack of ostentation is clearly not motivated by the desire for invidious distinction, it is Mrs. Matson's "immediate opinion that the woman could see as well as she could. She never bought of the poor

on the streets and was angry if she saw others do so" (340). Mrs. Matson embraces the residual values of Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanac (1732-1758) which constituted the "bourgeois bible" for the majority of businessmen in the 19th century (Palm 384). Combining pious maxims on business, moral conduct and thrift, Franklin insisted that God would help those that helped themselves. Assuming that a "blind colored woman" is poor due to personal failure while Ku Klux Klan membership was on the rise and had already reached over four million (Allen 1978 55), allows Mrs. Matson to rationalize a social order which refuses others a standard of living she enjoys by "virtue" of inheritance. As C. Wright Mills writes:

> Nobody talks more of free enterprise and competition and the best man winning than the man who inherited his father's store or farm. Thus the principle of the self-made man, and the justification of his superior position by the competitive fire through which he has come, require and in turn support, the ideology of free competition. (36)

In public, Mrs. Matson is able to defend herself relatively peaceably against all potentially disruptive manifestations of social diversity. Safely returned to the tranquility of her suburban street, Mrs. Matson's calm is further restored by the solicitous response of her neighbors, to whom she returns "stately bows" "unaccompanied by smile or word of greeting" (341). Up until this point, silence, the refusal to reciprocate verbally, has been Mrs. Matson's strategy for negating the legitimacy of others to initiate dialogue.

She is first incited to speak herself when she finds her adopted son, Curtis, playing with "a furnaceman's child!" (344). She immediately separates the two and instructs the boy never to return. Mrs. Matson is incredulous that Curtis cannot remember how many times she had told him not to play with Georgie. It is patently clear to Mrs. Matson that, as heir to the Matson's fortune, Curtis must distance himself from his social inferiors; "After all, she was Mrs. Albert

Matson; she had been Miss Laura Whitmore of the Drop Forge and Tool Whitmores. One does not lose sight of such things" (341). Evidently however, the innocent Curtis does lose sight of such things as they are not within his field of vision. It is precisely this blindness, what Bakhtin calls the "polemical failure to understand" (Dialogic 404) that ultimately incites Mrs. Matson to violence. As Bakhtin observes, "naive characters resist and also refuse to or cannot understand whole-heartedly the ideology of the other; their naivete remains, and because of this ignorance, not despite it, a struggle emerges" (403). Mrs. Matson fails herself to explain why what he has done is wrong and so resorts to violence, thrashing him with one of her "Kumfy-Toes" slippers Her comfort is thus seen to be directly related to others' pain. We may assume that the same punishment followed Curtis' failure to appreciate the value of private property. In his innocence, Curtis gives a friend his stuffed animal, only to be told that "it isn't a good idea to give things away to people" (349). Curtis' incomprehension is ultimately threatening, forcing the normally hermetic Mrs. Matson to expose her discourse to questioning, interpretation and potentially, to contradiction. There is, however, no real dialogue between them; Mrs. Matson consistently deletes any utterance he produces of his own volition, and demands that he repeat after her. The utterance Curtis resists producing on his own, and the one Mrs. Matson is most anxious for him to internalize, is, of course, "Yes, Mother dear". Although she has the economic capital to adopt him, Curtis refuses to adopt her lexicon; just as her discourse is not natural to him, it is not, so to speak, his mother-tongue, she is not his natural mother.

Curtis, whose natural parents are "clean people - the father was a college man" (349), is adopted "from the best place in New York" (342). Although there had been an exceedingly long waiting list, Mrs. Matson is able to secure Curtis upon her immediate demand. The Matsons

have adopted Curtis because they imagine their own blood-relatives to be "waiting, with a sort of stalking patience, for the prayed-for moment of their death", at which point their relatives would put into effect their "bacchanalian plans" to go through Matson's the money "like Sherman to the sea" (342). Through this somewhat cliched expression, alluding to the destruction General Sherman wreaked upon the Confederacy, Parker shows the reader that what the Matsons feel to be at stake is not simply money, but class privilege, and the power to subjugate based on inherited rights. If the Matson's relatives are identified with Sherman and the Union forces, then the Matsons must identify themselves with an aristocracy under siege. Ironically, while Curtis is not literally a slave, he is clearly enslaved by a system that would make him a master. This is further underscored by the fact that money had to change hands in order for the Matsons to secure immediate ownership of Curtis.

By creating a story in which people are incapable of natural reproduction Parker quite literally defamiliarizes the social order.

> No one, though, ever directly condoled with Mrs. Matson upon her childlessness. In her presence one didn't speak of things like having children. She accepted the fact of babies when they were shown to her; she fastidiously disregarded their mode of arrival. (342)

But Parker does not simply juxtapose the natural and the unnatural, the biological and the social; rather, "Little Curtis" suggests the extent to which their relationship is differently articulated across social classes. Mrs. Matson's "fastidious" disregard for the commonest method of having children is not simply a sign of sexual repression, or even of her apparent inability to generate offspring herself. Rather this fastidiousness suggests Mrs. Matson's desire to affirm and preserve her differential value as part of a socially privileged body. As the details of Curtis' adoption

suggest, hers is a body capable of accessing and employing other technologies, other modes of conceiving, as it were, social relations.

This idea is carried out further in the discussion about literature. Mrs. Kerley's attempt to share with Mrs. Matson her pleasurable experience of a new book, with scenes of "some of those Italian places" (346), is met with Mrs. Matson's censure.

> "I don't know who they think wants to read those kinds of things. I'm sure I don't."
> She paused to let her statements sink deep.
> "'Mr. Matson', she continued - she always spoke of her husband thus; it conveyed an aristocratic sense of aloofness, did away with any sense of carnal intimacy between them - "Mr. Matson isn't any hand for these new books, either. He always says, if he could find another book like David Harum, he'd read it in a minute. I wish," she added longingly, "I had a dollar for every time I heard him say that." (346)

The Matsons' shared preference for the 19th-century novel, David Harum (1898), over "new ones" containing scenes of "Italian places", may be read as an allusion to then existent tensions between the old Protestant middle-classes and the new Catholic middle-classes, especially in their differences vis a vis familial relations. "Little Curtis" was written just three years after the enactment of the National Origins Act of 1924, which imposed severe restrictions on further immigration to the United States, especially from Mediterranean and Eastern European countries. The majority of these new immigrants settled in cities, thus explaining Mrs. Matson's denouncement of Mrs. Swan's decision to live in New York City, rather than in the still dominantly Anglo-Saxon suburbs.

The allusion to David Harum, a novel about the breeding and trading of horses also opens up the multiple meanings associated with the word 'breeding' played upon throughout the story. To breed can mean simply to generate offspring; or to raise or bring up; or to develop a

particular lineage by deliberate selection. Curtis has been both deliberately selected, from "the best place" (347) and, as Mrs. Matson's admits, "she really enjoys training him" (348).At a time when the Protestant upper-middle class was facing a declining birth rate, Parker shows us a social body intent on ensuring its survival through the controlled dissemination of wealth and social privilege. Curtis Matson is not the 'son of Mat', he is his heir - and "he's to go right straight into Mr. Matson's business" (348). As the isolationist Calvin Coolidge himself said in 1925, "The business of America is business." Indeed the Albert Matson-Laura Whitmore marriage does seem rather like a corporate merger. As Mrs. Matson tells Mrs. Swan, "My husband is the Matson Adding Machines" (348).

The Matson's are indeed, calculating. Parker draws this idea out further by telling us that Mrs Matson offers her guests "two triangular sandwiches apiece made from the chopped remnants of last night's chicken, and a cake which was a high favorite with Mrs Matson, for its formula required but one egg" (345). The correlation Parker implicitly draws here between Mrs. Matson's ungivingness and her emotional and physical barrenness is thus made graphically clear.

During the tea, while Mrs. Kerley and Mrs. Swan, compelled by their belief in the legitimacy of Mrs. Matson's authority to determine the truth value of all utterances, clamour to concede that Mrs. Matson is indisputably right about everything, Parker inserts another naive character. In contrast to the parasitic Mrs. Kerley and Mrs. Swan, who display a "determined interest in their hostess" (345), and fall silent when Mrs. Matson demands it of them, Mrs. Cook speaks "suddenly and overloudly in the untrustworthy voice of the deaf" (345) Although it is the authorial voice of the narrator that tells us this about Mrs. Cook, adding that she therefore "didn't count very much", it seems that this is in fact Mrs. Matson's own voice intruding upon

that of the narrator. In the end, of course, it is precisely because Mrs. Cook "doesn't count", that is to say, that she is unaware of the Matson's fortune, that hers is the only trustworthy voice.

After Mrs. Kerley and Mrs. Swan have "vied with each other in paying compliments to the day", Mrs Kerley "reporting" that "the air was just lovely", Mrs. Swan adding, "something so balmy about it", Mrs. Cook's booming voice cries, "Phew, this is a scorcher!", "Something terrible out". Although Mrs. Cooks' observations fail to conform with those of Mrs. Kerley, and Mrs. Swan, and are thus in the minority, Parker's framing of the latter's speech alert us to the fact that it is Mrs. Kerley and Mrs. Swan who are lying. The verb to "vie" comes from the Middle English word avie, which is in turn derived from the French, envier, meaning to envy or outbid. Mrs. Swan's "Not a cloud in the sky" is not merely "said", for instance, but "augmented" (346). These money metaphors embedded in the narration underline the sense that throughout their conversation is not interest-free, but is itself a kind of currency. Mrs. Kerley and Mrs. Swan employ language as a means of negotiating with, betting on, and reacting to, the economic stimulus provided by Mrs. Matson.

We can assume that Mrs. Cook is not bluffing, as it were, because she has no stake in the game Mrs. Kerley and Mrs. Swan are playing. Mrs. Cook's voice is "untrustworthy" because she is "deaf" to the conventions which govern even this perfectly banal conversation about the weather. Like Curtis's failure to understand why he should not play with a furnaceman's child or give things away to people he likes, this very act of not grasping the conventions is itself polemical. What Mrs. Cook fails to grasp is that their discourse is not intended to reflect an extra-verbal "outside"; it is not, in other words a means of accessing reality but is rather a form of doxa itself. What matters is that the women uphold their duty as Mrs. Matson's guests to

pretend that there is no turbulence in the air, be it social or meteorological. In one sense, the extent to which an utterance may be scientifically determined to be true or false is simply not pertinent here. On the other hand, all propositions are not of equal value. Within this hierarchical speech situation, directed and overseen by Mrs. Matson, statements are seen to be true only when authorized by someone in possession of socially-recognized credentials, someone, that is, like Mrs. Matson Mrs Matson's not having read the book recommended by Mrs. Kerley is in no way seen to compromise her ability to judge its value. Moreover, she can even advocate that it be censored. The fact that the judgement has been delivered by Mrs. Matson alone satisfies all the truth conditions, conditions which are themselves both endemic to, and sustained by, the power/authority of her social class.

Parker's story portrays but one moment of freedom from this hierarchical community when Mr. Matson arrives home.

> One of the buttons-of-leisure on his coat sleeve caught in Mrs. Cook's speaking-tube. It fell, with a startling crash, to the floor and writhed about.
> Curtis's control went Peal upon peal of high, helpless laughter came from him. He laughed on, against Mrs. Matson's cry of "Curtis!" against Mr. Matson's frown. He doubled over with his hands on his little brown knees, and laughed mad laughter. (352)

This scene and Curtis's laughter are exemplary of what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "carnival", the "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth" which "marks the suspension of all hierarchical ranks, privilege, norms and prohibitions" (Rabelais 10). By being discourteous, Curtis is momentarily released from the nominalization which constrains him and in this brief moment of agency he effectively disrupts and exposes the precariousness of the delicately constructed world of total artifice. Mrs. Cook's speaking-tube, we are told earlier in the story, "seemed to embarrass people and intimidate them; they could think of nothing better to call into it than

'Getting colder out,'or 'You keeping pretty well?' To hear such things as these she had gone through years of suffering" (345). Curtis's spontaneous laughter upsets the ritualized authoritarian discourse by directing itself at the very sign that registers both its mechanization and its disfunction. Mrs. Cook has "spent uncounted money" on this apparatus in anticipation of two-way communication. She purchased the tube in order to facilitate a dialogue, but this dialogue is never realized. Instead, it only allows her to be subjected to an utterly predictable speech community.

Respite from this monologic discourse is short-lived, both for Mrs. Cook and for Curtis. In an effort to restore order to the situation, Mr. Matson "retrieved the speaking tube, and presented it to Mrs. Cook". The monologue thus continues - "Not at all," he said in anticipation of the thanks which she left unspoken" (353). Clearly Mrs. Cook has nothing to be thankful for. As far as Curtis is concerned, hierarchies will be reinstated, the Matsons ensure their guests, through talk and, as Mrs. Matson insists, physical retribution.

"Peace", however, does not "return to the breast of Mrs. Matson" (353) until Mrs. Kerley assures her that this incident will in no way alter Mrs. Matson's social standing. When Mrs. Kerley says, "I always say I don't know any child that's getting any better bringing up than that young one" (353) she confirms for Mrs. Matson that she is being watched and perhaps even envied from a distance by those excluded from her immediate circle. By reporting the speech she would give to others, Mrs. Kerley's closing remarks promise Mrs. Matson that, as a member of the gaping crowd herself, she will carry on the work of reporting on, and maintaining a captivated audience for the activities of Mrs. Matson's social class.

Like the opening scene, this final scene takes place in a vestibule. But whereas the

vestibule at Fosdick's Sons' is passed through by members of all social classes, the influx of people to Mrs. Matson's home is highly regulated. Through this difference, however, we may perceive a greater similarity. Like the owner of a department store, Mrs. Matson's plays hostess to her guests not out of friendship but because she needs to display her wares . Parker shows us how Mrs. Matson paradoxically thrives on exhibiting herself before a crowd she would rather not see. Although Mrs. Matson shows no sign that she actually enjoys these women's company, she is dependent upon their spectatorship. With social life increasingly moving out of the private dining halls and exclusive ballrooms into more public arenas, Mrs. Matson is compelled to open her home to those she considers beneath her. While the women leaving Mrs. Matson's home, like those in the vestibule of Fosdick's Sons', must be kept at a distance, she cannot afford them to become so distant that they ultimately "lose sight" (341) of her altogether.

"The Wonderful Old Gentleman"

In "The Wonderful Old Gentleman" (1927) Parker foregrounds two socially differentiated discourses by embodying them in characters who occupy different positions in the same family. Although sisters, Allie Bain and Hattie Whittaker have significantly different dispositions toward the world, and their language not only reflects this difference, it helps to constitute it. Mrs Whittaker's speech, for example does not simply mirror a state of affairs, her speech serves to bring about a particular state of affairs. Parker's omniscient narrator gives the most scrupulous attention to Mrs. Whittaker's speech. She renders Mrs. Whittaker's ceremonial language comic and exposes its duplicity by laying bear the motives it seeks to conceal. The distinction between authorial and character's speech is formally ambiguous but we discern two points of view within the body of those ostensibly shared utterances. In other words, there are at least two voices speaking at the same time; one being represented and one doing the representing. We may also discern a third voice which is Parker's own, as she represents her narrator in the act of representing another voice, that of the characters.

The story's opening description of Mr. and Mrs. Bain's living room, a "chamber of horrors modified a bit for family use" (52) encapsulates in one highly compact phrase the story's theme of class warfare within the family. The one thing Allie Bain and Hattie Whittaker have in common is their father. But like the "common language" they speak, their father is something they share, only in a relatively abstract sense. He, like his possessions, gets divided up, and it is this unequal distribution which constitutes the story's plot.

Zeugma is among those devices Parker uses most often for comic effect. She uses it here to illustrate the width of Mrs. Whittaker's expertise and the narrowness of her emotional range.

> She was an authority on where to place monograms on linen, how to instruct working folk, and what to say in letters of condolence. The word "lady" figured largely in her conversation. (56)

Mrs. Whittaker's linguistic dexterity is considerably greater than Mrs. Bain's. This is made possible by virtue of Mrs. Whittaker having married Mr. Whittaker, the owner of the company Mrs. Bain's husband works for. This background information is precisely the kind of thing Parker foregrounds, and in doing so parodies both Mrs. Whittaker, a woman who sees to it that her own background is forever foregrounded, and the literary conventions traditionally employed to convey this information.

> The Bains were poor, and Mrs. Whittaker had, as it is ingenuously called, married well, and none of them ever lost sight of these facts. (54)

While the expression "married well" may not be ingenious, it is it is hardly "ingenuous". If anything is ingenuous, it is the term "poor" and especially so, in contrast to the euphemistic "married well". If Parker had wanted to present a more balanced equation, "poor" would have read "of modest means".

But what does "marrying well" really mean? The expression attributes agency to Mrs. Whittaker and is complimentary. She did something well, as opposed to poorly. In contrast, the Bains condition is static and uninspired. Mrs. Whittaker is thus seen to be the more deserving one, as though she actually merits the compliment and the special attention such a compliment brings. The fact of the matter of course is that neither woman actually earns any money. The men make money, and in order for the women to gain access to that money, they must either marry into or inherit it. Mrs. Whittaker is more adept at directing its flow in her direction and thus is seen to have "done well".

Commensurate with Mrs. Whittaker's ability to steer money her way is her ability to

appear magnanimous about sharing it at precisely those moments when she is being most guarded about it. In the following passage, the narrator apprises the reader of how it is that the "wonderful old gentleman" comes to stay with the Bain's rather than with Mrs. Whittaker. Mrs. Whittaker, we remember, has a much larger house, three servants and no children.

> "You see," she explained, dropping her voice to the tones reserved for not very pretty subjects, "Allie and Lewis are -well, they haven't a great deal." (57)

Mrs. Whittaker's noblesse oblige posturing is particularly useful on two counts. For one it assures that no one ever loses sight of the fact that she is in a position to dispense charity. Charity is at once honorable and a luxury few can afford. By making a display of this, "you see" not only her kindly nature, but also the extent to which this kindly nature has grown out of wealth, that wealth is somehow inherently virtuous. In contrast, not having money, is "not very pretty". The words are formally the narrator's but clearly spoken from Mrs. Whittaker's perspective. The word "ugly" for instance, would be too vulgar a term for a woman of Mrs. Whittaker's delicate sensibilities to employ. Nonetheless, assuming prettiness to be the standard, she reinforces the idea that being poor is unsightly. By "dropping her voice" she suggests that being poor is itself low, something almost unspeakable and certainly shameful. It also further reinforces the sense that to be rich is to be morally upstanding.

The irony, of course, is that Mrs. Whittaker motives are not in the least honorable. She knows, for instance that if the Old Gentleman stays with the Bains, it will be Allie, and not her, who will perform all the, quite literally, thankless tasks his care requires. In short, the Old Gentleman staying with the Bain's will not only make the Bain's poorer in the short term, but more importantly, it will make Mrs. Whittaker richer in the long run.

What Parker seems to be suggesting is that the fact of being "poor" versus the fact of

having "married well" not only comes to be differently represented at a discursive level, but that part of what one achieves by having "married well" is the capacity to appear ingenuous, i.e. "natural", at precisely those moments when one is being least so. Mrs. Whittaker is able to successfully engineer her way into the Old Gentleman's will by appearing "fair-minded" (57). She is able to be convincingly in this precisely because she can draw on the various forms of capital (economic, linguistic etc.) that she acquired by "virtue" of having "married well". This allows her to speak and act in a manner that is perfectly suited to any occasion: "No surroundings, however morbid, could close in on the aristocratic calm of Mrs. Bain's sister, Mrs. Whittaker" (54).

Those "morbid surroundings" refers, of course, to the Bain's living room. The Bain's living room furnishings are catalogued in excruciating detail. It is filled with icons of Christian martyrdom and other surfaces and objects depicting weak species being mercilessly crushed by stronger forces. The room includes a figure of a "peasant-boy" absorbed in the "eternal act of removing a thorn from his chubby toot, his round face realistically wrinkled with the cruel pain"; "a steel-engraving of a chariot-race, the dust flying, the chariots careening wildly, the drivers ferociously lashing their maddened horses caught by the artist the moment before their hearts burst and they dropped in their traces"; "a steel-engraving of the Crucifixion, lavish of ghastly detail; a water-color copy of a 'Mother of Sorrows'; a painting, contributed by the Old Gentleman, of "two lost sheep huddled hopelessly together in the midst of a wild blizzard"; "a colored print, showing a railroad-crossing, with a train flying relentlessly toward it, and a low, red automobile trying to dash across the track before the iron terror shattered it into eternity" (53); and "a savage china kitten about to pounce upon a plump and helpless china mouse", a

wedding gift from the Old Gentleman (54).

At one level it seems obvious that the Bains have merely endorsed the very system which enslaves them. At the same time, however, Parker's unremitting attention to details within the Bain's art work itself, suggests that she is in fact parodying the cumbersome stylistic conventions associated with literary naturalism. In particular, Parker's parody seems directed at naturalism's tendency to represent the modern condition in crudely Darwinian terms, portraying man as a helpless victim of his environment. While the Bains are victimized, their victimization is the result, not of impersonal forces beyond their control, but rather of their failure to perceive the extent to which their subjugation has been humanly engineered.

The Bains are "not in the least oppressed by the decorative scheme" because they too have their desire for ostentation borne of class pretension. In the Bain's estimation, the living room's lack of serviceability, the degree to which the its scheme is purely "decorative", proclaims their ability to afford such wastefulness, and is thus, ostensibly, a sign of their capacity to stand above purely productive labour. Mrs. Bain, for instance, is wont to exclaim of the painting of lost sheep "that the frame was worth she didn't know how much" (53). Indeed she does not. What Mrs. Bain fails to understand is the extent to which lacking apparent utility does not in and of itself make an object valuable. Such objects are prized for their capacity to purvey its owner a further end, one which is not immediately apparent, but real nonetheless. In contrast, Mrs. Whittaker's apparent disinterest in that which is merely practical actually serves a felt need, that is, it advances her social position.

Thorstein Veblen argues in The Theory of the Leisure Class, that the manners of the leisure class can be traced to the age of barbarism when it was necessary to kill and destroy all

competitors. That the leisure class has increasingly dispensed with such overt means of coercion, is, according to Veblen, merely one of the signs of its overwhelming success. Mrs. Whittaker manages to secure her position of dominance not through direct physical attack but in a wholly covert, although no less combative manner. With the poorer Bains in disciplined bondage to the Old Gentleman, Mrs. Whittaker is able to satisfy her essentially barbaric desire for superiority in peaceful invidious distinction. As we are told, Mrs. Whittaker's "dress was always studiously suited to the occasion; thus her bearing always had that calm that only the correctly attired may enjoy" (55). Parker's use of the word "bearing" is evidently multi-accented. Mrs. Whittaker's "bearing" may be understood as her appearance but it may equally refer to the fact that she is fit for battle. She is poised, like the rapacious kitten, ready to pounce. But as their living room attests, the Bain's are able to appreciate violence only in its crudest manifestations, and do not recognize Mrs. Whittaker's impeccable manners as a sign of predatory stealth. On the contrary, they read her deportment as a sign of good breeding, of gentility. She is a member of the gentle class; a gentlewoman. The Wonderful Old Gentleman, we remember, "enjoyed being told she was like him" (57). It is thus, that Mrs. Whittaker displays her filial piety and gains, in return, his "good will".

As the Bains and Mrs. Whittaker sit in the living-room anticipating the Old Gentleman's imminent death, "there was an air of expectancy about them - not unpleasant little nervousness, as of those who wait for a curtain to rise" (54). Of course, there is but one 'heir' who can truly expect anything. Mrs. Whittaker, we remember, "always took great pains with her 'shall's' and 'will's'" (60). Once again, it is precisely at those moments when Mrs. Whittaker appears most indifferent to the demands of utility that she is in fact cautiously in pursuit of something which

will ultimately bring her greater rewards. Mrs. Whittaker is, of course, the only one to have seen the Wonderful Old Gentleman's will.

> "Awfully good," she said. She broke into a little bubbly laugh she used at teas and wedding receptions and fairly formal dinners. "You know," she went on as one sharing a good story, "he's gone and left all that old money to me. 'Why Father!' I said as soon as I'd read that part. But it seems he'd gotten some sort of idea in his head that Clint and I would be able to take care of it better than anybody else, and you know how Father was, once he made up that mind of his. You can just imagine how I felt. I couldn't say a thing." (62)

Like her clothing, Mrs. Whittaker choice of words are always tailored to suit the occasion. Just as she is aware of the expediency of appearing on the day of his death wearing none of her usual accessories and "retaining only her lorgnette on its gold chain, in case there should be any reading to be done", the normally loquacious Mrs. Whittaker knows when to refrain from comment and retain her winnings.

Mrs. Whittaker knows just when to play dumb, as her own mother apparently did. Significantly, Hattie and Allie's mother remains nameless throughout the story. This erasure is further marked by the repeated allusions to her husband as "the Wonderful Old Gentleman". Parker seems to be suggesting that Hattie and Allie's mother lived vicariously through her husband. What Mrs. Bain and Mrs. Whittaker do remember about their mother, is her insistent plea to them : "do for goodness' sake let's all try and keep your father in a good humor" (63). Mrs. Whittaker similarly recognizes the value of "keeping [her] father in a good humor. And like her mother, her own life is made easier by being able to divine his will. For her part, the Old Gentleman's wife cheated at cards "so as to be sure and not win from him". In this sense, "goodness'sake" bears no relation to morality, righteousness, honesty, integrity or any of the other qualities commonly associated with that which is good. Evidently, father's "good humor" is

contingent upon the contrivance of circumstances which allow him to appear to the greatest possible advantage.

Through this and other similar disclosures of his private behaviour, we are able to see that the Wonderful Old Gentleman is neither wonderful nor gentle. Throughout the story the word "wonderful" is virtually synonymous with the word "rich". Given the affinity between Mrs. Whittaker and the Old Gentleman, she is the one who employs the expression most frequently:

> "A wonderful, wonderful life," summarized Mrs. Whittaker.
> "And a wonderful, wonderful old gentleman." (59)

At the time Mrs. Whittaker says this, the old gentleman is still alive. Nonetheless, Mrs. Whittaker is able to "summarize" because not only does she know exactly how much money he has, but she has seen to it that all of it is left to her.

The death scene is represented in similarly ironic terms:

> "Oh, the Old Gentleman! Oh, he's gone. I noticed him kind of stirring and whimpering a little, and he seemed to be trying to make motions at his warm milk, like as if he wanted some. So I put the cup up to his mouth, and he sort of fell over, and just like that he was gone, and the milk all over him. (64)

Canaan is often described as a land "dripping milk and honey" and abundance of milk is one of the signs of prosperity and peace. Perhaps the old gentleman was hoping he could take it with him. Mrs. Whittaker proceeds to deliver her judgement, employing the terms now with renewed enthusiasm: "A lovely death," she pronounced. "A wonderful, wonderful life, and now a beautiful peaceful death. Oh, it's the best thing, Allie, it's the best thing." (64) The final image - "Among them they got Mrs. Bain up the stairs." (64) - further underscores the identification of wealth with a religious sense of power and glory. In biblical terms, ascending steps suggests that one is transcending profane space and entering sacred space. Steps up to an alter traditionally symbolize

a religious leader's having the authority to ascend the steps leading to heaven. Unequal to the task, Mrs. Bain "collapsed" (64). Assuming her rightful position as heir to this throne, Mrs. Whittaker "rose". "God" we remember "had always supplied [Mrs. Whittaker] with the best of service. She could have given him an excellent reference at anytime" (54). This time has come, for clearly Mrs. Whittaker no longer requires his services.

Parker's ironic inversion of the relationship between God and his creation echoes the story's overall bathetic movement. Throughout the story, Hattie speaks in an elevated style, (always careful with her "'shall's" and 'will's'") in order to flaunt her distance from more common usages and hence display her superior class position. By noting Mrs. Whittaker's command of English while playing on the multiple significations of the word "will", Parker underlines the extent to which language serves both as a sign and an instrument of power. At the same time, Mrs. Whittaker wishes to convey the sense that she is a morally upstanding citizen. Her apparent generosity, (i.e her bringing the old man gifts etc.) is intended to affect the sense that she is charitable and self-sacrificing: in short, a good Christian. She is careful to present herself as a person whose actions are not inspired by the desire to gratify her own immediate needs. She is, of course, concerned with conveying the impression that she is above such base behaviour precisely because it will allow her to rise in this world, the only world Hattie actually believes in. For Hattie, wealth is not a sign of virtuous living, or even the reward for having lived virtuously, it is virtue itself.

The "truth" insofar as it can be said to exist at all, is not to be revealed in another world, it is always already embodied in ceremonial discourses about truth, ceremonies referring to nothing other than themselves, concealing only the absence of anything beyond them. As the

wonderful old gentleman's hermetically sealed room suggests, there is nothing to wonder at beyond or behind his "large ash-trays" or his "extra-size bath-towels" (57) that might somehow be made intelligible or lend support to Mrs. Whittaker's alleged faith in a divinely ordered universe. If Mrs. Whittaker wishes to supply God with a reference, it is surely only to recommend herself.

"Mr. Durant"

Unlike most of Parker's stories, "Mr. Durant" (1924) contains very little formally marked dialogue. Although Mr. Durant's inner speech is transmitted by the narrator, its emotional structure belongs to Mr. Durant. Much of Mr. Durant's inner speech relates to us dialogues he has had, or imagines he will have, with other characters in the story. Nevertheless, an ironic narrator presides over the story, distancing herself from what is said. Mr. Durant's language is thus made an object of either scorn or ridicule, and sometimes both of these at the same time In total, there are three kinds of dialogue in the story: dialogue which is formally marked as such, dialogue which takes place in Mr. Durant's mind, and dialogue which is implied to exist between Mr. Durant and the narrator.

Perhaps more than any other of Parker's stories, "Mr. Durant" is explicitly about texts. It is about texts, pretexts, texts unread and texts concealed.

As an assistant manager of the rubber company's credit department, Mr. Durant inhabits a world in which people act on information and information acts on people. His position within the company is such that he "rate[s] a room, a desk and a telephone to himself, but not a stenographer" (37). According to C. Wright Mills, beginning in the 1920s, only senior executives tended to have private secretaries. Stenographers, on the other hand, were increasingly pooled in a centralized area where they might be more closely supervised and thus induced to perform more productively. In this newly rationalized office, the stenographer, a typist who also takes dictation, does not share the status of the private secretary who has an intimate knowledge of one aspect of the office's operation by virtue of close contact with an upper-level executive (208). Such is the case at the rubber company. When Mr. Durant wishes to "give dictation" (37) he

must call around to the other officers to "f[i]nd a girl" (37). Initially Rose comes to Mr. Durant's office because she is "sent up to his office to take some letters for him" (36). As soon as this "correspondence" (38) takes on a sexual dimension, however, Rose's capacity to "take dictation" becomes a mere pretext for their encounters.

Mr. Durant is "amaz[ed] how little lying there was to do" (38). His superiors take his staying after hours to be a sign of company loyalty, finding it "only natural" (38). Telling his wife, who mistakenly believes him to be one of company's officers, that there came a new "rush of business", "only increased his importance" (38). Mr. Durant chooses not to disabuse her of either of these illusions, the first, of course, reinforcing the second, and ultimately causing her to behave even more "solicitously" (38). Throughout the story, Mr. Durant takes credit for things he doesn't do and then, having amassed such credit, exploits others credulity.

Despite the fact that their liaison takes place within his one-room office, the narrator tells us Mr. Durant feels the arrangement with Rose to have "a sort of homelike quality" (39). Given that Rose has, in one sense, become Mr. Durant's "private" secretary, it follows that he might have come to think of her, in the managerial jargon of the day, as his "office wife". An "office wife", according to Mills, is a female secretary or confidential assistant who performs a number of duties which do not appear as part of her official job description, but nonetheless become part of her routine tasks (207). The assumption, of course, is that these wives, as it were, will be females and indeed, in the 1920s, if not in the 1980s, they were. Moreover, according to a 1925-survey reported by Mills, 88 percent of office managers indicated that they required secretaries who "give little promise of rising to an executive status" (206). Not surprisingly, those who are "up-and-coming" (35) at Mr. Durant's office, are overwhelmingly male.

A crisis arises of course when Rose finds herself "'in trouble'" (39). Although dictation had officially ceased between Rose and Mr. Durant, Mr. Durant continues to dictate the terms of their correspondence.

> She was 'in trouble.' Neither then nor in the succeeding days did she and Mr. Durant ever use any less delicate phrase to describe her condition. Even in their thoughts, they referred to it that way. (39)

Rose's sense of propriety keeps her from uttering the word "pregnant" and thus she plays right into the hypocritical discourse that places the onus on her alone. Her statement confirms that it is she who is in jeopardy, not him. In other words, Rose accounts for her state in terms already inflected by the very point of view which has disenfranchised her. It is clearly in Mr. Durant's interest that Rose conceive of the situation in these terms. Significantly, "her condition" is not only spoken of in this manner, it is also the mental representation she carries around with her. Having internalized this image, she effectively shares in a system of evaluation which works against her. This is the only system they are conversant in, or cognizant of, and thus the only intelligible one. Rose, then, really is "in trouble". Meanwhile, Mr. Durant's only concern is that she keep quiet, "for God's sake" (39).

Mr. Durant's own resources fail him when he tries to devise a plan that will rid him of this problem. "A case like this could be what people of the world called "'fixed up'" (39). He consciously borrows the term in an effort to affect an air of sophistication, something he equates with the freedom to be above morality. "New York society women, he understood, thought virtually nothing of it" (39). He prides himself on this "knowledge", believing it to be an important first step toward a solution.

> But knowing a thing or two and putting the knowledge into practice turned out to be vastly different things.Mr. Durant did not know whom to seek for information.

> He pictured himself inquiring of his intimates if they could tell him of "someone that this girl he had heard of could go to." He could hear his voice uttering the words, could hear the nervous laugh that would accompany them, the terrible flatness of them as they left his lips. (40)

The narrator foregrounds the stiltedness of Mr. Durant style by embedding his utterance in her own fluid and eloquent speech. In an attempt to create the impression he is blase about the whole thing, Mr. Durant only betrays his anxiety. Mr. Durant clearly has very little flair for language and is in fact hopelessly maladroit. In short, Mr. Durant strikes this pose of urbane libertine awkwardly and thus appears laughably provincial. Frustrated by his incapacity to adopt the pose of well-travelled sophisticate with appropriate ease, he transfers his self-contempt onto Rose, and assumes a second posture; that of Solid Citizen.

> There daily arose in him an increasing anger that he should be drawn into conniving a way to break the law of his country - probably the law of every country in the world. Certainly of every decent, Christian place. (40)

Mr. Durant is no less affected as a God-fearing Christian. What Mr. Durant really fears is gossip; the talk that circulates freely and ubiquitously, outside the jurisdiction of any one administrator. Ungoverned and unmanaged, such information has the potential to publicly expose his infidelity both to the company and to his wife. Certain his wife would never believe such a thing, Mr. Durant's fears center on the office workers. As secretary to the vice-president of the company, and Rose's roommate, Ruby become a source of great anxiety for him. "It would be pretty, wouldn't it, if she let it out?" (40). But she does not; as a private "secretary", Ruby is well-trained, and knows how much her own job depends on keeping things secret. It is, in fact, Ruby who "ma[k]e[s] it delightfully simple" (40). Not only does she contact "'a woman'" but, without prompting, sends a wire to Rose's sister, telling her Rose has influenza. Acting on

the unspoken assumption that the truth is unspeakable, Ruby lies even to Rose's sister. The last time Mr. Durant sees Rose, he promises "to put in a good word for her whenever she wanted her job back" (41). We know, of course, that in Mr. Durant's vocabulary, promising and lying are virtually synonymous.

Other than "gallantly insist[ing] on giving Rose the money", (41) Mr. Durant really has no hand in facilitating the abortion. Nonetheless, he chooses to take the credit for getting things "all fixed up", and thus reverts to his upper-class posturings.

> It was fine to dwell on the surety that it was all done with. Mr. Durant had somewhere picked up the phrase that seemed ideally suited to the occasion. It was to him an admirably dashing expression. There was something stylish about it; it was the sort of thing you would expect to hear used by men who wore spats and swung canes without self-consciousness He employed it now with satisfaction. (41)

Mr. Durant is, at one level, hopelessly self-conscious and so when he finally says "Well, that's that", he is "not sure that he didn't say it aloud" (41). The words "fine", "admirably", "dashing", and "stylish" coalesce around an image of himself as a man who "wore spats and swung canes". In a parodistic style worthy of Parker herself, Thorstein Veblen aptly summarizes the signification of the walking-stick for men of the leisure class.

> The walking-stick serves the purpose of an advertisement that the bearer's hands are employed otherwise than in useful effort, and it therefore has utility as an evidence of leisure. But it is also a weapon, and it meets a felt needof barbarian man on that ground. The handling of so primitive and tangible a means of offense is very comforting to anyone who is gifted with even a moderate share of ferocity. (176)

Although Mr. Durant is not a man of the leisure class, he clearly has such aspirations. Indeed, it is Parker's comic rendering of his pathetic efforts to achieve that status, which saves the story from being merely a portrait of a cruel and selfish man.

Like the cane-swinging gentlemen he fashions himself after, Mr. Durant wields power but never really "gets his hands dirty". Although he is not as wealthy as he might want to be, in the eyes of his wife, his children and even his co-workers, Mr. Durant has a substantial credit rating. Having a good credit rating means one is able to secure something without having to pay for it, based on the assumption that one possess sufficient capital to cover the cost. Mr. Durant, of course, never really "pays" for anything he does, but exploits the system which gives him credit at every turn. Although he himself works in the credit department, he did not, we remember, "rate" a stenographer (37). Like Rose, Mr. Durant initially finds the dog that "had come to the back door" (43) ingratiatingly respectful of him. Like Rose, who "responded so eagerly to him" (37), he imagines the dog to be telling him "'You are beyond a doubt, the greatest man in America'" (44). Although servile and fawning, the dog's instant bond with Mr. Durant may also be read as a sign indicating to Mr. Durant its willingness to afford play to Mr. Durant's propensity toward mastery. While dogs are notoriously dirty as far as domestic animals are concerned, this may be compensated for, in Mr. Durant's mind, by the fact that dogs are equally known for their readiness to attack people other than their master as a gesture of protectiveness. In this sense, a dog, like a walking-stick, may be considered "very comforting to anyone who is gifted with even a moderate share of ferocity".

Of course, once he learns the dog is female, an unpardonable sin for which Mrs. Durant can find no reasonable excuse, he makes up his mind to have the dog expelled. Mr. Durant's repulsion at the dog's sex echoes the "prickling irritation" (37) he feels toward Rose, once he learns she is pregnant.

Although Mr. Durant has no more intention of keeping the dog than he had of putting in

a good word for Rose, he lies and says, "I said it could stay didn't I? Did you ever know Father to break a promise?" (45). Rhetorical questions are a means to which Mr. Durant's resorts when he feels most besieged by a demand for the truth. He employs this device quite strategically. A rhetorical question awaits no answer, denies the possibility of rebuttal, and enforces consent, all under the guise of solicitousness. Like the administratively-adept "assistant" manager that he is, Mr. Durant perceives that his decision will discredit him with his children in the future, and so, once again, allocates the task to someone else. This time, it is to his literal wife.

As is his custom, Mr. Durant manages his deception through speech, and wordlessly communicates that he wishes "to have a few words with her" (45). Apparently, like Rose, Mrs. Durant is not only accustomed to his lectures, but is herself "'in trouble'". Like his "little office" (38) at work, the "little room" they call "Father's Den", is a storehouse of deception:

> Mr. Durant's books were lined up behind the glass of the bookcase. They were tall, thick books, brightly bound, and they justified his pride in their showing. They were mostly accounts of his favorites of the French court, with a few volumes on odd personal habits of various monarchs, and the adventures of former Russian monks. Mrs. Durant, who never had time to get around to reading, regarded them with awe, and thought of her husband as one of the country's leading bibliophiles. (45)

What Mrs. Durant does not know is that, if her husband is anything, he is a pedophile and that his library is simply a catalogue of his pretensions to leisure-class status.

The suggestion that things as innocuous as "underwear and bathroom articles" (46) merit inclusion in the category "kindred shady topics" (46) and thus demand to be spoken of in a "low voice", is at one level purely comic. But by yoking these things together in Mr Durant's mind, the narrator directs our attention to more than just the society's level of sexual repression. We know, for instance that Rose's abortion is included in the list of "kindred shady topics" too shady

even to pronounce. Mr. Durant has a vested interest in this conspiratorial silence. Low voices and unmentionable acts translate into power for those who, like Mr. Durant, commit "unspeakable" acts The very fact of them being "unspeakable" renders them immune from both public disclosure and debate.

Mr. Durant's longest speech is the one he delivers to his wife on canine mating habits and their inevitable aftermath:

> "You have a female around, and you know what happens. All the males in the neighborhood will be running after her. First thing you know she'd be having puppies -and the way they look after they've had them, and all! That would be nice for the children wouldn't it? I should think you'd think of the children. Fan. No sir, there'll be nothing like that around here, not while I know it. Disgusting!"
>
> "But the children," she said. "They'll be just simply -"
> "Now you just leave that to me," he reassured her (46).

Of course, leaving it to him, means he will tell someone else to do it, namely his wife. It is Mrs. Durant, in her "crapy-smelling black silk" who will have to "get her hands dirty" and "tell them [the children] it ran away" (46).

Although Mr. Durant may not be able to buy his way into the leisure-class per se, he is afforded the luxury of not having to engage in direct battle with his adversaries. Just as he avoided a potential family drama by "gallantly" paying for Rose's abortion, so he is able to avoid one here, by cashing in on the power he holds over his wife. Believing him to be "one of the country's leading bibliophiles" and "one of the officers of the company", Mrs. Durant does not recognize her husband's actions as abusive, but sees them rather as a legitimate use of authority. The borrowed term, "all fixed" enters his vocabulary, once he has apprised Mrs. Durant of the details of her assignment, the borrowed term "all fixed" reenters his vocabulary.

All told, Mr. Durant manages a rather complex network of scripts, perhaps the most

elaborate of which is the one he composes about himself for his own private consumption. As his name implies, Mr. Durant will endure these "little difficult[ies]" (46) and will, moreover, find his endurance "distinctly creditable to himself" (35). Ready for a "fresh start" (46) Mr. Durant is sure to be at the rubber works the following day, giving credit where credit is due, ready to dictate another day's communique.

"Horsie"

In "Horsie", narration and narrative, means and ends are inseparable. Point of view is central both to an understanding of the technical construction of "Horsie", its narration, and to the constitution of the story's plot, or narrative. Throughout most of the story, the narrator's voice and the voice of those characters whose perspective we are most often presented with, are formally at one with one another In most instances, Gerald Cruger's perspective and that of the narrator, are presented as not merely the only perspective, but the only possible perspective. Nonetheless, this ostensibly commonsensical or objective point of view from which the events in the story are told, is occasionally revealed to be but one possible perspective among others, however unarticulated those alternative perspectives might be. At critical moments in the story's narrative development, Parker's authorial voice distances itself from this point of view, thus making an object of this point of view, and thereby apprising the reader of its conceptual limitations. Parker's story is the story, not only of how Gerald Cruger tells stories, but equally, how Parker's narrator, in relating the story, is influenced and at times overwhelmed by, the perceptual framework from which Gerald tells his. In short, pseudo-objective interpretive communities and the categories of perception around which they are organized, operate at once as formal concepts within the story and ultimately, constitute its thematic concerns.

As we saw in "Little Curtis", the failure of naive characters to fully comprehend the authoritative discourse of a given social group is perceived by the dominant group as a kind of insurgency, as a decided refusal to submit to authority. Parker sets up a similar tension in "Horsie", between Miss Wilmarth and her employers, the Crugers. Unlike the struggle that emerges between Curtis and Mrs. Matson, however, the argument the Crugers have with Miss

Wilmarth occurs largely unbeknownst to Miss Wilmarth.

The following passage in many ways typifies the kind of struggles that are played out, within the story's narration, between the Cruger's belief system, and the perspective provided by the official narrator.

> Sometimes, when Miss Wilmarth opened the shiny boxes and carefully grouped the cards, there would come a curious expression upon her face. Playing over shorter features, it might almost of have been one of wistfulness. Upon Miss Wilmarth, it served to perfect the strange resemblance she bore through her years; her face was truly complete with that look of friendly melancholy peculiar to the gentle horse. It was not, of course, Miss Wilmarth's fault that she looked like a horse. Indeed there was no where to assign any blame. [emphasis added; 261]

Although there is no formal demarcation to indicate that more than one point of view is being presented here, there is, nonetheless, evidence to suggest that the concluding remarks are spoken from at least two quite different perspectives. The tone of the statement, "It was not, of course, Miss Wilmarth's fault that she looked like a horse", is clearly defensive. On one reading, the narrator has leaped to defend Miss Wilmarth against us, the reader, lest we had presumed that it was Miss Wilmarth's fault. The defence seems unnecessary. We are more than ready to assume that it is not her fault, and find the insinuation that it might be, completely insupportable, if not utterly absurd.

If we establish that it is not from us that Miss Wilmarth must be defended, then from whom must she be? We ask ourselves then, from within what particular belief system does it make sense to talk about appearances in terms either of their blamelessness or their blameworthiness. If we were to settle that, who, we might then ask, within that belief system, is in a position to judge the trial, and furthermore, on what basis is guilt and innocence determined. The answer to the first question, it seems, is from within Gerald's worldview. It is

Gerald who is outraged at Miss Wilmarth.

> "I love horses, myself," he said to Camilla, who lay all white and languid on her apricot chaise-longue. "I'm a fool for a horse. Ah, what a noble animal, darling! All I say is, nobody has any business to go around looking like a horse and behaving as if it were all right. You don't catch horses going around looking like people do you?" (261)

What infuriates Gerald is that Miss Wilmarth behaves as if it were all right. She does not, in other words, display sufficient remorse for this transgression. From his perspective, not only does she fail to comply with the standards of beauty he believes ought rightly to be upheld, but given that she does not even make the effort to conceal her crime, she is clearly contemptible. Miss Wilmarth's face, we are told "was innocent, indeed ignorant, of cosmetics" (260). Once again, "ignorance" of the rules is perceived as an infraction of the rules. As the narrator tells us, for Gerald, "women who were not softly lovely, were simply not women" (261).

In Carnival, Umberto Eco explains the situation of the misreading fool in this way: "the character is not at fault". "Maybe," he says, "the frame is wrong" (8). While we may be sure that the frame is wrong here, the question is, how wrong?

Thus far, we have assumed there to be only two perspectives; that of a sympathetic narrator, looking out for Miss Wilmarth's best interests, and that of Gerald Cruger, berating and unsympathetic. Moreover, we have assumed an absolute distinction between the two, entrusting the narrator with the responsibility of giving us the right frame. But what remains constant in both frames is that Miss Wilmarth looks like a horse.

If we actually think about Gerald's rhetorical question, "You don't see horses going around looking like people do you?", we realize that not only do you not see horses going around looking like people, but you don't see people going around looking like horses. In our haste to

defend Miss Wilmarth against the charge that it was her fault for looking like a horse, we failed to entertain the possibility that she did not look like a horse at all, or at least only from a particular perspective, and thus betrayed our willingness to grant legitimacy to a seemingly descriptive but ultimately prescriptive noun. We know, for instance, that Miss Wilmarth does not have four legs and a tail, but we were willing to go along with the tenets of a classificatory scheme that calls women who deviate from the prevailing aesthetic of female beauty, "horsie". What we had failed to realize, was the extent to which Parker had had us, not Miss Wilmarth on trial. We may thus reread the initial statement with a new authorial inflection: "It was not, of course, Miss Wilmarth fault that [people such as the Crugers said] she looked like a horse. In other words, "horsieness" is one of Miss Wilmarth's attributes, only insofar as the Crugers have attributed this to her. The narrator, we come to realize, has a limited vocabulary, that is, the narrator remains largely within the bounds of the Cruger's pre-coded discursive worldview.

But the term "horsie" does not originate with the Crugers. We too recognize the trope and are part of an interpretive community in which figures of speech prefigure, disfigure and even account for our apprehension of the world. Thus, the next statement, "Indeed, there was nowhere to attach any blame", becomes newly refracted when we consider the act in question to be the act of naming and not Miss Wilmarth's "expression" (260). There is nowhere to attach any blame because there is no one single "guilty" party. Blame cannot be pinned down because the significance of the term is not born, nor does not reside exclusively within any one individual; rather, it acquires that significance between people, and is contingent upon, and sustained by its circulation within a larger network of mutually-constitutive signs. What then are the conceptual limits of the classificatory scheme that would have Miss Wilmarth "bear" this "expression"? It

is not, in other words, Miss Wilmarth who ought properly to be the object of analysis. Instead, it is the perceptual habits and expectations the Cruger's bring to bear on her which merits scrutiny.

The narrator tells us that Gerald Cruger "did not dislike Miss Wilmarth, he only resented her" (261). While the narrator's tone is apologetic, spoken seemingly in defence of Gerald's character, the statement itself suggests that resenting Miss Wilmarth is more acceptable than disliking her, that resentment is the more moderate emotion when clearly it is not. Miss Wilmarth is not somehow inherently dislikable, Gerald's reaction to her has nothing to do with some inner-essence she might possess. He and Camilla agree she is "Not a Bad Soul" (264). He resents her because she unknowingly wreaks havoc upon the system he has worked out for organizing the world into discrete units. As a "trained nurse" (260), she is neither servant nor social equal to the upper-class Crugers. "Everyone had always heard of trained nurses' bristling insistence that they not be treated as servants" (261). Throughout Miss Wilmarth's stay with the Crugers, the couple anxiously await the return of Nana, "a comfortable woman, easy to have in the house; a servant and knew it" (271). Nana is a "comfortable" woman because she comforts the Cruger with the knowledge that they are masters. She is "easy to have in the house" because she occupies a well marked station; servitude. In contrast, Miss Wilmarth, "made him uncomfortable" (264). She is not easy to have in the house because she disrupts the symmetry of its design. As neither servant nor social equal, Miss Wilmarth throws Gerald's perceptual apparatus into disarray, causing her to appear to him as grotesque. According to Geoffrey Galt Harpham, "[t]he quality of the grotesque arises not so much from the specific contents of the image as from the fact that it refuses to be taken in whole because it embodies a confusion of

type" (6). It is not so much that Miss Wilmarth does not know her place, so to speak, but that the Cruger's are at pains to put her in a place. Like beauty, grotesqueness is in the eye of the beholder.

Given that the taxonomy from which the Crugers customarily operate when dividing up their social field is exceedingly limited, it would seem they would be inclined to encounter the grotesque rather frequently. However, the semantic resources of their language are in large part the product of the social, cultural and economic structures within which these speaker's live and are constituted. That is to say, the Crugers ordinarily circulate within a highly controlled environment and thus in fact rarely come in contact with phenomena that have not already been accounted for within their classificatory scheme. As a physically indelicate woman and a verbally assertive employee, Miss Wilmarth however, constitutes a veritable affront to this scheme, an affront the Crugers do not long tolerate.

Miss Wilmarth's perceived aberrance is utterly dependent upon the co-presence of a socially-sanctioned normative. Whereas Miss Wilmarth's hands are "big, trustworthy, scrubbed and dry, with nails cut short, and so deeply cleaned with some small sharp instrument that the ends stood away from the spatulate fingertips", Camilla's are "limp, fragrant", "like heavy lilies in a languid breeze" (264, 265). When Miss Wilmarth speaks, "her words f[a]ll from her lips clear and separate, sterile as if each had been freshly swabbed with boracic acid solution" (269). In contrast, Camilla 's "lazy voice"(266) her "light insolent drawl" (269) and "low, lazy words" always had "the trick of seeming a little weary of their subject" (264). Miss Wilmarth's hands, like her speech, show visible traces of labour, the very antithesis of Camilla's unsullied skin and leisurely talk.

Although we are told that the Crugers employ three servants in addition to Miss Wilmarth, their speech and appearance are neither compared nor contrasted with those of Mrs. Cruger. They remain but shadowy figures. The extent to which Miss Wilmarth becomes a spectacle in the text is not a result of her own conscious desire for exhibition, but rather of the degree to which she is perceived to be out of bounds. Mary, the maid, resents Miss Wilmarth for being "always in and out of" her pantry (263). She "wished no truck with Miss Wilmarth" (263). Self-righteous in their ontologically-pure servitude, the servants refer to her, we are told, as "that one" (263).

In many ways "Horsie" is about the failure of community. While the servants enjoy a kind of collectivity, albeit a subservient one, Miss Wilmarth is stranded between worlds. Because we are not given access to Miss Wilmarth's thoughts we can only guess at what they might be from her facial expressions. In this sense, Miss Wilmarth is but a surface to the reader as well. A pattern emerges however and we can begin to map Miss Wilmarth's emotions once we realize that Miss Wilmarth's equine resemblance is most striking from Gerald's perspective, a perspective shared most often by the narrator as well, when he witnesses her witnessing her failure to enter into solidarity with other people. Thus, Miss Wilmarth is put in her place, which is no place at all, each time she tries to insert herself in a community. This putting in no place, occurs both at the level of narration, i.e the narrator's/Gerald's failure to classify her expression other than by employing, by default, the non-sensical "horsie", and at the level of narrative, i.e. she is exiled from the group, refused acceptance. Just as neither the narrator nor the people around Miss Wilmarth bother to articulate exactly what Miss Wilmarth is feeling, a truth it would take a long time to express in a verbal way, so she is dismissed from consideration by all parties

within the story.

The largest single gathering occurs when Gerald and his "companions from his college and his clubs" are "grouped about" Mrs. Cruger's chaise-longue.

> Miss Wilmarth pictured her lying there, in golden chiffon and deep lace, her light figure turned always a little away from those about her, so that she must never move her head and speak her slow words over her shoulder to them. The trained nurse's face was astoundingly equine as she looked at the wall that separated them. (266)

Miss Wilmarth implicitly positions herself in relation to those spectators and although they do not see her, the surveyor in herself is male. She has, in other words, interiorized their critical gaze. Just as Miss Wilmarth is made a spectacle by virtue of her perceived lack of beauty, her failure to conform to the demands of a naturalized aesthetic, so Camilla, like the fragile camellia blossom nurtured under glass, is primarily constructed as a sight. Camilla fulfills his aesthetic expectations, and that is all that is expected of her. But if the grotesque is that which cannot be reduced to a single known type and suggests a kind of cross-breeding of genres, what can be made of the innumerable floral metaphors Gerald resorts to when expressing his appreciation of the idealized Camilla? When Gerald "drop[s] to his knees" to worship Camilla, he "murmur[s] of gardenias and lilies and thus exhaust[s] his knowledge of white flowers" (265). His speech is arrested not by virtue of having perceived the category "flowers" to be inadequate, but rather by his inability to exhaust the category itself. He does not, in other words perceive a crisis in paradigm, only a temporary lack of words to fill the category.

However, you don't see people going around looking like flowers any more than you see flowers going around looking like people. In other words, Camilla achieves no greater recognition as a woman-in-herself than Horsie does. It is, finally, only the socio-linguistic

conventions governing our sense of beauty and ugliness that superficially differentiate the two. In this sense, "the wall that separate[s] them" (266) is equally a sign of their imbrication in a shared code.

In Ways of Seeing, John Berger outlines the different ways in which male and female presences have traditionally been perceived and constituted:

> A man's presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you. . . By contrast, a woman's presence expresses her own attitude to herself, and defines what can and cannot be done to her. Her presence is manifest in her gestures, her opinions, expressions, clothes, chosen surroundings, taste - indeed there is nothing she can do which does not contribute to her presence Presence for a woman is so intrinsic to her person that men tend to think of it almost as a physical emanation, a kind of heat or smell or aura. (46)

In contrast to both Miss Wilmarth and Camilla, Gerald is never described in visual terms. We only see him as he himself "gaze[s]," (266) "look[s]," (268) "stare[s]," (262) "watche[s],"(265) and "s[ees]," (263). From Gerald's perspective, Camilla's presence suggests that everything can be done for her and the servants' presence suggests they can be told what to do. Miss Wilmarth's presence, on the other hand, suggests to Gerald not only that there is nothing he can do for her, but moreover, what he cannot do with his wife.

Gerald's sexual frustration causes him to be, despite himself, unusually aware of Miss Wilmarth as a female While he is repulsed by her, his repulsion bears the imprint of desire. The narrator's suggestion that "it was somehow impossible to speculate on her appearance undressed" (260) implies that although unsuccessful, an effort was made. It is Gerald's voice that says perfume would have been "unseemly on her flat bosom" (264). However consistently she may disappoint his expectations, he cannot dispense with them and so he is in effect "tormented" (268) by her.

On the day of Miss Wilmarth's departure, Gerald is, of course elated. He is surprised to learn that she "lived in a place of her own" sometimes and that she "wasn't always disarranging someone else's household" (273). He is nearly incredulous however, to hear that she lives with her mother.

> Oh. Now Gerald had never thought of her having a mother. Then there must have been a father, too, sometime. And Miss Wilmarth existed because two people had once loved and known. It was not a thought to dwell upon. (273)

According to Harpham, when something is perceived to be grotesque, it often suffers a kind of backlash. This backlash, he says, takes the form of "genealogical abuse, with accusations of illegitimacy. bastardry, or hybridization, terms that indicate structural confusion, reproductive irregularity, or topological incoherence" (5). If Miss Wilmarth were seen to occupy the generic category "human being" this would mean that she shared with Gerald, Camilla, Diane and Miss Wilmarth an irrefutable sameness. For Gerald, of course, "It was not a thought to dwell upon" (273). As Harpham argues, "genre, genus, and genitals are linked in language as in our subconscious" (5).

When Miss Wilmarth says, "I'm home, between cases" (273), it is tempting to believe her. When she is home, in the purely literal sense, "its a bit crowded" (273) and she has to sleep on the davenport.

> Even in her leisure, then, Miss Wilmarth was a disruption and a crowd. Never dwelling in a place that had been planned only for her occupancy; no bed, no corner of her own; dressing before other people's mirrors, touching other people's silver, never looking out one window that was hers [emphasis added 273].

Mrs. Cruger's conspicuous leisure mirrors back to Mr.Cruger his social power, his power to afford such wastefulness. These self-portraits, enticing for the spurious image of wholeness they provide, allow the self-possessed Crugers an illusory sense of coherence. But in a world

conversant only in surfaces, it seems the propertyless Miss Wilmarth, moving in and out of other people's houses, will always be at the mercy of her speculators.

Gerald, of course, ultimately gets his revenge on Miss Wilmarth. In full possession of what Bourdieu would call "the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence," (Language 239) he is even able to do so without sending a ripple through the surface of his "beautiful manners" (261). The flowers he gives Miss Wilmarth testify to his joy at her leaving, and indeed were purchased in a state of mind where he was overcome with this emotion. He knows however, that she will properly mistake them as a sign of his approval. Perhaps most importantly, he knows that he, Gerald Cruger, has the power to dispense such approval.

On the way home in the car, Miss Wilmarth remembers the flowers when they slip against her in a "turn of the traffic" (275).

> It would have been all fair then for a chance spectator: Miss Wilmarth's strange resemblance was not apparent, as she looked at her flowers. They were her flowers. A man had given them to her. She had been given flowers. They might not fade maybe for days. And she could keep the box. (275)

This "turn of the traffic" is not complete however. Miss Wilmarth is still on the receiving end of a signification authorized by him. Nor is it "all fair". It is, in fact quite unfair. Miss Wilmarth melancholy is not apparent, no longer bearing the mark of her exclusion. She is clearly enchanted by the gesture, believing as she does that she has been brought into a kind of fellowship with all women who receive flowers from men. Disguised as a token of his generosity, the flowers are in fact a sign of Gerald's utter lack of generosity, of the mercilessly small margin he allows for error. Had "Horsie" been the story of a servant-girl, Miss Wilmarth might have been physically seduced and then expelled. But as an "admirable trained nurse" (260), Miss Wilmarth seduction is enacted purely symbolically. It is her trust, and not her person

which is violated. If we read "Horsie" as testimony of the fact that theory always precedes observation, it is equally true that Miss Wilmarth is pray to such theorizing. One of the preconditions for power to be successfully exercised, is the existence of a tacit but shared belief in the legitimacy of that power structure. Part of Gerald's power is the power to symbolize, to give flowers, assign names, and pass judgement. Miss Wilmarth only endorses that power by receiving it without question. The economy of his gesture, a gesture which ensures her indebtedness, is perfectly encapsulated in the words "keep the box" (275). With it, he is able finally to put her in her place, to encase her polysemic nature into one "square smaller box" (271).

"Big Blonde"

"Big Blonde" (1929), Parker's longest short story, is divided into four sections. The first contains scenes from Hazel Morse's marriage to Herbie Morse, the second recounts the relationships she has subsequent to their divorce, in the third she is unconscious from an overdose of veronal, and the fourth tells of her recovery from that attempt at suicide. Told from the point of view of an ostensibly objective, but periodically intrusive narrator, Parker's story attempts to give voice to the largely unarticulated life of a woman exhausted by a series of verbal defeats. The narrator's distant but critical gaze serves to register the particular forms of consciousness that emerge in a culture of consumption and surveillance which draws all social relations into a vortex of the commodity and the spectacle.

Like so many of Parker's female characters, other characters seldom refer to Hazel by her given name. However, unlike many of Parker's married women characters, Hazel is not typically addressed by her married name either. Instead, Hazel takes on a series of names including: "Haze", "dizzy blonde", "baby", "girl", "doll", "honey" and "good sport". These "improper" names do not attest to the persistence of an authentic legal subject, rather, they are provisional markers of a series of social performances enacted for others. Parker's story does not, however, provide any more solid ground upon which we might construct a more absolute sense of Hazel's identity.

The story is set in a working-class area of New York City in the late 1920s, and is comprised of indoor scenes of apartments, bars, chop-houses, and cabarets. The story takes place during what historian Duncan Aiken refers to as "the age of the good pal in American sex-

relationships" (Critoph 147). Aiken's impressions are representative of a tendency to view this period in social history as the great "revolution in manners and morals". This so-called revolution is said to have inaugurated a radical new era of sexual liberation, freeing women from the confines of Victorian repression. In particular, the relative absence of parental supervision in urban centres is said to have gone a long way towards facilitating the liberation of single working women. In "Big Blonde", Hazel's sexuality is liberated from its regulation within the domestic sphere, only to be reinvested in a new sexual economy no less prescriptive than its residual precursor. Hazel's popularity is initially seen to be due to her ability to meet the requirements of this new social type, the "good sport". According to the Dictionary of American Slang, "sport", when applied to a person, refers to someone "obsessed with creating the impression of being carefree, generous and having fun" (511). As Hazel's story attests, giving this impression exacts a significant price.

The story opens with a detailed physical description of Hazel. The portrait serves to highlight Hazel's internalization of the voices and gazes which encompass her world.

> Hazel Morse was a large, fair woman of the type that incites some men when they use the word "blonde" to click their tongues and wag their heads roguishly. She prided herself upon her small feet and suffered for her vanity, boxing them in snub-toed slippers of the shortest bearable size. The curious things about her were her hands, strange terminations to the flabby white arms splattered with pale tan spots - long quivering hands with deep and convex nails. She should not have disfigured them with little jewels. (187)

Parker's final admonishment seems intentionally ambiguous. On the one hand, it allows her to appear sympathetic to these aesthetic imperatives, reproving of Hazel's decision to wear little jewels simply on the basis that these ultimately did not flatter her hands. On this reading, the advice seems like a compliment -the viewer would be more impressed to see them unadorned.

On the other hand, it draws our attention to the kinds of self-mutilation and self-hatred cultivated by the desire to be desired In either case, the daily ritual of personal disfigurement Hazel undergoes in order to earn the praise of men conveys the extent to which she participates in her own unremitting commodification. Like the synechdochal title by which she is called, Hazel fetishizes certain parts, rather than the whole of her body. Ironically, the thing she prides most about herself, her feet, is that upon which she enacts the greatest violence. By boxing her feet in snub-toed slippers, Hazel effectively incapacitates herself. That is to say, the shoes are not intended to facilitate walking but the clicking of men's tongues. Thus we see that Hazel constructs herself as a sight and is dependent on others for mobility.

Hazel's readiness to box her feet and disfigure her hands is explained by the fact that it is no longer "the day of the big woman". The expression underlines the extent to which fashion is governed by the principle of planned obsolescence and points to the virtual impossibility of a female model sustaining herself for any great length of time in such an industry. She is a model no longer to scale. As a "large" woman, Hazel perceives her body to be excessive and unruly, requiring constant management, discipline and erasure. Hazel not only accepts the laws of the system which has disenfranchised her, she continues to reinvest in its power over her because she has never been otherwise employed.

> Her job was not onerous, and she met numbers of men and spent numbers of evenings with them, laughing at their jokes and telling them she loved their neckties. Men liked her, and she took it for granted that the liking of many men was a desirable thing Popularity seemed to her to be worth all the work that had to be put into its achievement. Men liked you because you were fun, and when they liked you they took you out, and there you were. So, and successfully, she was fun. She was a good sport. Men liked a good sport (187).

"You" in the phrase, "there you were", is both impersonal and depersonalized. The nominate

subject, "you" is compromised by the structure, trapped in its grammatical construction. Where is "there"? As the sentence trails off into obscurity, Parker shows us that Hazel has not really thought this through. The implication is that Hazel's desire is incidental to the equation, a mere adjunct of her highly undifferentiated apprehension of what constitutes male desire. Hazel the individual gradually fades into this non-specific object pronoun, which ultimately gives way to the generic, wholly impersonal "good sport".

Throughout the story, the terms "sport" and "game" recur as metaphors for a number of social experiences. While the proliferation of these may be considered in relation to the larger cultural shift from a work-centered culture to one increasingly interested in the possibilities of play, it is the unevenness of this shift which characterizes many of the contradictions informing Hazel's position in the social order.

Hazel's modelling job, described in terms of a double negative - "not onerous" - is only so in relation to her real occupation, which carries a burden of another kind. As a model, Hazel is expected to represent an ideal form, a seemingly real but admittedly false construction. Insofar as modelling is defined as a job, Hazel is not identified with it absolutely. It is simply a task to be performed, separate from her self, and recognized as such. The burdensome job is the real-life acting out of the role of "good sport". What makes this job truly onerous is that it requires that the labour involved in its achievement be rendered invisible. In order to provide pleasure, all signs of labour must be repressed to the point of imperceptibility. The marketability of this skill is utterly contingent upon it not being perceived as a skill. The good sport is sexualized and experienced as pleasurable only insofar as she stands in symbolic opposition to the rules of the workplace and the socially sanctioned norms of sex within marriage. In this sense her value is

purely compensatory. The good sport does not escape the morality of sexual repression; she is merely its negative analogue.

The men Hazel encounters are themselves part of what C. Wright Mills refers to as the "personality market" (182). In the 1920s, the advertising and public relations expert became an integral part of an increasingly service-oriented economy. This period marks a shift in the demand for manual skills required for production to the art of selling and distributing, where personal or intimate traits of the employee are drawn into the sphere of exchange and become commodities in the labour market. As Mills argues, "each secretly makes an instrument of the other, and in time a full circle is made: one makes an instrument of oneself and is estranged from that too" (188).

Although all of the women in the story have at one time been married, their spouses, drawn largely from this market, are no longer in apparence. Mrs. Martin has "no visible spouse" - "husbands as such played but shadowy part in Mrs. Martin's circle" (193). Similarly, Mrs. Florence Miller, Mrs. Vera Riley, and Mrs. Lilian Block have only "dimmed spouses" (198). With the exception of their names, the only traces that remain of these spouses are the "kodak portraits" (198) the women carry around with them. The world Parker portrays is a world of singular impermanence, a world conversant only in surfaces. While the photographs temporarily suspend this flux, in capturing this image they testify to a loss, of a time gone by. The women are able to keep such souvenirs in part because the photographs are themselves exceedingly portable, and thus amenable to the conditions under which these women live:

> The aim of each was to have one man, permanently, to pay all their bills, in return for which she would have immediately given up other admirers and probably would have become exceedingly fond of him; for the affections of all of them were, by now, unexacting, tranquil, and easily arranged. (199)

The women live in a perpetual present punctuated only by the arrival and departure of strangers. The only stability they can imagine is financial stability. Their perception of the world is depthless, a nonsequential, disintegrated composite of isolated and undifferentiated episodes Parker draws these women as flat characters, not because they merit only superficial treatment, but because their flatness is a function of their world and thereby enhances our appreciation of the dimension and boundaries of that world. These so-called "limited characters" are interesting precisely for their limitations. They are themselves "kodak portraits", and inhabit a similarly petrified structure. Parker presents them as mute figures because they themselves are unable to comment on their own past. Like Hazel, they are incognizant of their history, unable to register the factors that went into making their past and determining their present.

Hazel has no photographs of her own mother, a woman whose death is described as "the deferred death of a hazy widowed mother" (187). It is unclear whether the woman's life was lived in a haze, as Hazel's is, "an imperfect film", or if Hazel, "not a woman given to recollections" (187) simply cannot remember her mother with any clarity. The ambiguity seems intentional, suggesting the degree to which those media which convert histories into manageable units, can eventually substitute for and may ultimately obscure them. Throughout the story, photographs of people are symbolically exchanged. While their presence is always a sign of an absence, they provide a focal centre in an amnesiac world lived out of focus.

Still, even lives lived in limbo leave their vestiges and it is these that Parker's story serves to outline. Like all rooms in Parker's stories, the wedded Morse's apartment holds a key to its occupants' social relations:

> There was a Mission-furnished dining-room with a hanging central light globed in liver-colored glass; in the living room were an "over-stuffed suite," a Boston

> fern, and a reproduction of the Henner "Magdalene" with the red hair and the blue draperies; the bedroom was in gray enamel and old rose, with Herbie's photograph on Hazel's dressing table and Hazel's likeness on Herbie's chest of drawers. (188)

The Morse's apartment is itself apparition-like. In these rented spaces, things are neither known nor valued through years of contact. The apartment is a kind of netherworld, a make-shift arrangement of second-hand mass-produced furnishings, cluttered with the remnants of miscellaneous lives. Hazel and Herbie hardly know each other and lack backgrounds themselves. They are seen to have no family or lasting friendships, only brief encounters with acquaintances, engagements hastily made and soon forgotten.

What immediately seems to hover above this disarray is the reproduction of Mary Magdalene, the harlot Jesus rescues from a life of sin. Appearing relatively early in the story, this image of transcendence would seem to foreshadow Hazel's own imminent demise and her eventual redemption. But this is not the trajectory Hazel's life follows. Nor are Hazel and Mary cleverly inverted images of one another. Mary Magdalene simply makes no figurative sense in Hazel's world and serves only to underline the spuriousness of such identifications. As a religious allegory it has pretensions to universal significance, but, as we shall see, Parker deliberately breaks with the literary convention that would grant it special status. Rather than offering the promise of personal salvation, or providing a model of self realization, the Mary Magdalene reproduction is itself a sign of non-identity, of the loss of origins and cultural authenticity.

Herbie too is derivative, spoken rather than speaking. Hazel is "enormously amused at his fast slurred sentences, his interpolations from vaudeville acts and comic strips" (188). Parker's characterization of Herbie places him within an amusement-oriented world whose underside is

boredom. Initially he finds their "voluntary isolation novel" but within weeks it "palled with a ferocious suddenness" (189) and he quickly begins "seeking entertainment in other women" Like the Morse system of telegraphy, Herbie sends his messages in violent dashes and dots. While Herbie does not speak the langauge of the dominant class, his speech epitomizes the voice which dominates in the subculture he inhabits and embodies a particular type of anti-intellectualism. Presumably Herbie himself never had access to higher education and may perceive the extent to which this has limited his professional opportunities. Lacking significant amounts of economic and cultural capital, Herbie's revolt involves an inversion of high culture values - He boasted, probably not in all truth, that he had never read a book in his life" (190). Given that print-culture in Herbie's world consists of "women's pages" (191) and the novels Hazel borrows from the lending library, Herbie's claim to illiteracy allows him to positions himself in opposition to all that he perceives to be weak and effeminate and thus allows him to reinflect his lack as a strength. While his discourse is not authoritative in terms of the larger society, Herbie is able to asserts his mastery locally by pronouncing his masculinity and accentuating the power he has relative to Hazel.

Herbie's speech reflects the hyperbolic proliferation of argot words for women and serve to identify the obsessive semantic fields within which he thinks. Synonyms for "drunk" and "woman" are greatest in his vocabulary. Although there number is impressive, each of his synonyms for drunk bears a violent connotation and few of those for woman confer a sense of either adulthood or agency. The term he uses most frequently is, of course "good sport". The Morse code is itself commonly referred to as a "game" (American Speech 288) and Herbie becomes increasingly violent when Hazel transgresses its laws by being a "lousy sport". In those

instances when she fails to be a good sport by failing to amuse him, his reproach is directed at her manner of speaking: "Crabbing again. All right, sit here and crab your head off. I'm going out." (190). Hazel's reaction is to deny the legitimacy of her own words and agree to his terms: "Oh, its going to be great now Herb. We'll have swell times. I was a crab. I guess I must have been tired." (192). When this fails and Herbie only becomes more violent, Hazel herself rebels. But even in her rebellion, Hazel remains within the same code. She does not transgress the terms of her confinement and stays within its discursive limits. Popular once again with "The Boys" (194) at Mrs. Martin's, Hazel reclaims her position as "good sport": "Crab was she? Rotten sport, was she? Well, there were some who thought different?" (194). There are, of course, none who truly think differently, and it is Hazel who must bring her thoughts and expressions in line with the facts of her existence, leaving no room for a conceptual critique of those facts. Thus, her hope of establishing a home, becomes merely "thin and wordless" (193).

In exchange for being a "good sport" Hazel is awarded Ed's "proprietorship" (194) He "stakes her" in poker and it is "soon accepted that Ed was her particular friend" (194). In order to establish exclusive ownership of Hazel, Ed gives her [illegible] which symbolically bind her to him.

> Ed had a good year, increased her allowance and gave her a sealskin coat. But she had to be careful of her moods with him. He insisted upon gaiety. He would not listen to her admissions of aches or weariness (199).

Giving in this context is a way of possessing. Under the guise of pure generosity, Ed actually reaps a profit based on the calculation that she cannot respond in kind. That it is a sealskin coat, as opposed some other animal fur suggests not only the performance of a circus-trained seal, but also the act of sealing off or closing. These are the terms of the contract, and when Hazel shows signs of breaking them, Ed buys her another drink.

Poker is yet another game which operates in the story as a metaphor for social relations penetrated by larger cultural contradictions. Of all card games, perhaps poker is the one that is most emblematic of the conditions of commercial competitive life. The object of the game is to secure the other player's capital. Unlike productive labour relations however, poker is a game which produces nothing and is in this sense purely service-oriented. It serves to satisfy a desire for winning, or gaining control over another's capital. Although it is a game usually played among friends, it is a highly individualized game; there are no teams. The winner is often the person who is most adept at lying, either by word or gesture. Ed's relationship with Mrs. Martin and Joe becomes "strained over a dispute at poker" (197) and are never heard of again. Evidently the tenuous balance between friendliness and competitiveness was too tenuous, giving way to the latter.

Each of the games Parker's characters play for pleasure is imbricated with work and is ultimately a clue to their miseries. Hazel, for instance, must "dr[i]nk industriously" (204) in order to appear a "convincingly gay" (202). Similarly, "Ain't We Got Fun?" (1921) is the song Mrs. Martin "play[s] doggedly" (196) on the phonograph. Hazel "had never liked the thing" (196). Parker's contemporaries would undoubtably have been familiar with the song's lyrics. The song's first lines which do not appear in the story, betray the underside of Hazel's superficially gay world.

> Bill collectors gather
> Round and rather
> Haunt the Cottage next door
> Men the butcher and grocer sent
> Men who call for the rent

Exhausted by the world's solicitations, Hazel searches for a means of virtual anonymity. No

longer willing to deliver herself to these men, she elects to kill herself:

> There was no settled, shocked moment when she first thought of killing herself; it seemed to her as if the idea had always been with her. She pounced upon all the accounts of suicides in the newspapers. There was an epidemic of self-killings - or maybe it was just that she searched for the stories so eagerly that she found many. To read of them roused reassurance in her; she felt a cozy solidarity with the big company of the voluntary dead. (201)

For the first time since her early days of marriage with Herbie, Hazel displays interest in the project before her. She seems curiously renewed by her quest for death and we realize just how frustrated Hazel's desire has been. The final words of the passage articulate what this desire has been; the desire for solidarity some form of collective uncompromised by cultural or economic imperatives. She "had never been troubled by religious belief and no vision of an afterlife intimidated her" (201). Hazel fears only that the abstract entity known as "they" (202) will not cooperate. The first drugstore clerk is, of course, "entirely unconcerned" and the second "uninterested" (203).

Standing in front of the mirror, she drinks to her own death. Raising her glass she employs Herbie's expression: "Well, here's mud in your eye" (205). Just as Hazel's coming to consciousness occurs for her in appropriating this discourse, so she uses it in attempt to exorcise that consciousness. After swallowing the last of the tablets, she stands "watching her reflection with deep, impersonal interest, studying the movements of the gulping throat" (205). Utterly estranged from herself, her interest in the matter can only be "vicarious" (205).

Ironically, it is in Hazel's attempt to escape from a life of performance that she becomes "the medium of drama"(207). With her "great breasts, freed from their tight confiner" Hazel is finally unbounded, and for the first time she becomes a spectacle inadvertently. Nettie and the elevator operator hoped "she would not let them down by being awake and normal on their

return" (207). The doctor is merely annoyed: "Now we'll have to pump her out, and all that stuff. Nuisance a thing like that is; that's what it amounts to" (208).

When Hazel regains consciousness, Nettie tells her, "The doctor, he says he could have you arrested doin' a thing like that" (209). While Hazel's universe is clearly a secular one, the doctor's threat of punishment is, nonetheless, authorized by a juridical system which now bears only the administrative traces of what was once a belief in a theologically ordered universe. From her would-be death bed, the only sign she receives is a postcard from Art admonishing her to "Cheer up" (209). For Hazel then, the difference between killing herself and being a good sport seems only to be a matter of getting the dosage right.

Hazel experiences neither the catharsis of classical tragedy nor the rejuvenation of rebirth. Indeed, her plight is wholly unremarkable in these terms. Hazel is no more a part of some universal design than she is the victim of a society which has long plotted her demise. Rather she inhabits a world that is utterly indifferent, a much less exacting and far more insidious kind of malevolence that is not so much immoral as amoral. In a world where mean misery is piled upon mean misery, there are no moments of epiphany, no grand calamities or tragic consolations, only an insistent yet vague dread unconsoled by illusions of cosmic significance.

CHAPTER THREE

Before making any final generalizations about these stories, I would like to address some of the broader theoretical issues that have characterized recent debates concerned with issues of literary value generally. Perhaps the most contested formation in these debates, at least within the context of American literary studies, is the American literary canon. That Parker's work has clearly been excluded from this consecrated body of texts is not, I will argue, due to an oversight. To the contrary, as evidenced by her reception history, Parker's work can have little or no value for the kinds of critical enterprises that have pursued an evaluation of her work thus far. This is not to say, however, that Parker's work is, in the final analysis, valueless; it is only to recognize that her work has not been particularly amenable to the specific kinds of functions it has been called upon to perform.

The practice of evaluating texts, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith has argued, presents one of the most "theoretically significant and pragmatically inescapable set of problems relating to literature" (1). Despite the extent to which questions of literary value remain untheorized, that is, the extent to which the state of evaluative criticism has refrained from evaluating itself, evaluative criticism evidently continues to be practiced, albeit under the guise of ostensibly non-evaluative forms of textual commentary. Choosing not to explicitly address the problematic nature of valuing practices, is not however, equivalent to avoiding its effects. Indeed, as Herrnstein has argued, "one of the major effects of prohibiting or inhibiting explicit evaluation is to forestall the exhibition and obviate the possible acknowledgement of divergent systems of value and thus to ratify, by default, established evaluative authority" (7).

Evaluations are not, of course, performed in a vacuum but are advanced by particular persons or groups of persons who have themselves been deemed valuable evaluators. The conditions under which evaluations are performed are themselves variable, and differently valued. Moreover, there are concomitant hierarchically ordered forms of accreditation or authorization which are ascribed to or denied certain valuing subjects. There are, then, not merely different valuing subjects but differently valued valuing subjects. While the relative merits of texts may be endlessly debated, such debates are not characterized by a commitment to pure relativism, while it may not be possible to determine in the last instance and for all time the value of a given text, the test of the validity of certain value claims have not rested on the text's shoulders alone Rather, certain subjects have been granted the authority by means of certain socially- and institutionally-acquired qualifications to attest to the value of particular texts, to speak as it were, on their behalf. In this sense, evaluative discourse does not simply take as its object the value of this or that text; it simultaneously bespeaks the critic's own value and quality as a discerning subject. This evaluative behaviour performs the dual function of demonstrating the subject's own distinctiveness by displaying the special powers invested in that subject to make such distinctions.

Such acts of distinction are my no means limited to the field of literary valuing practices Indeed there is an increasing body of work interested in pursuing the many similarities discourses of value assume across so-called disciplines and in relation to a wide spectrum of commodity forms. The recent work such as that of Rachel Bowlby, Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, Janice Radway, and Pierre Bourdieu is indicative of a growing interest in the plurality of audience formations and interpretive communities as part of what might be called "the sociology of taste". In general, their work is less concerned with the specificity of literature as a cultural

form than with understanding the relationship between evaluative behaviour and more general mechanisms of group formation and group differentiation. By transforming objects and practices into signs of differentiated social identities, discourses of value function amidst a network of attendant discourses and serve ultimately, according to Bennett, to construct "an ideal of personality, in both its mental and physical aspects, in relation to which the individual is interpellated as valuing, valued and self-valuing subject" (Outside 152).

It is interesting to note here that books function in very much this way within Parker's stories. Mr. Durant, for instance, who has courtier fantasies, proudly displays all his "tall, thick books" (45) behind glass. While his wife, "who never had time to get around to reading", may believe him to be "one of the country's leading bibliophiles", Parker deflates Mr. Durant by revealing the fact that he did not, for instance, inherit the books (which would be a sign of a genuinely upper-class background), but that he purchased them from a mail-order catalogue. As Janice Radway's work on Book-of-the-Month-Club suggests, membership in such an organization would be regarded by true courtiers as repugnantly middlebrow.

Similarly, in "Little Curtis," Mrs Matson rejects Mrs Kerely's choice of reading material, on the grounds that it in no way approximates for her the value of David Harum. Identifying herself with an aristocracy under seige by unruly urban masses, Mrs. Matson defends her husband's taste in literature, his title, as it were, against all would-be intruders.

In "Big Blonde," Herbie Morse is determined to assert his difference from, and fortify himself in relation to, Hazel, who reads romance novels from the lending library. Upon being asked to spend a quiet evening at home with her, Herbie signals his disdain for what he considers effeminate behaviour, as well as his refusal to be domesticated, by claiming never to have read

a book in his life.

The ineffectual, but class-conscious Allie Bain of "The Wonderful Old Gentleman" keeps books for decorative purposes. Her "row of blameless books", kept in place "by the straining shoulder-muscles of two bronze-colored plaster elephants, forever pushing at their tedious toil" (53), are, like the rest of her furniture, part of an overall design intended to affect the trappings of a generic aristocracy, through objects rich in narrative signs suggesting allegorical fantasy and far off places never actually visited

There is, however, an important distinction to be made between what Bennett calls aesthetic discourse and discourses of value. The effects of discourses of value are limited to particular valuing communities and therefore only have purchase with those wanting to fill the position of the valuing subject such discourses unfailingly construct. According to Bennett:

> Aesthetic discourse, by contrast, is the form taken by discourses of value which are hegemonic in ambition, and, correspondingly, universalist in their prescriptive ambit, and which have, as their zone of application, those practices nominated as artistic. The position of universal valuing subject which is necessary to such discourse - and, invariably, such a position is produced by generalizing the attributes of the valuing subject associated with a socially specific discourse of value - can be refused to but not by the individual. (1990 152)

While discourses of value are open to the assertion that they are both informed by and indicative of, identifiable, isolable and socially-specific conditions, aesthetic discourses, on the other hand, seek to deny any and all such contingencies.

As a result, aesthetic discourses tend to conceive of their project in terms which focus on the importance of altering the valuing subject side of the "valuing subject=valued object" equation. In other words, failure to take up the subject position ensconced by aesthetic discourse results, not in a reevaluation of the valued object, but in a critique of the valuing subject as not-

yet fully-formed. The popularity Parker's work enjoyed in Parker's own time, we may recall, was not read as evidence of the value of her work for a particular reading public, but rather as a sign of "the shallowness of her admirers" (Bloom 302).

One of the obvious preconditions for the advancement of aesthetic discourse is the formation of a relatively stable community of homogeneous valuing subjects. Under such conditions, a certain commonality of taste may be demonstrated, making it possible to extrapolate, however inaccurately, the probable tastes of all others. As Herrnstein Smith has observed "a coincidence of contingencies among individual subjects will be interpreted by those subjects as noncontingency" (17). This one condition alone, however, does not provide sufficient grounds for the operation of aesthetic discourse. Aesthetic discourse can only be effectively deployed from within a circumscribed space that is broadly recognized as legitimate, and thus capable of licensing its members to produce such authoritative pronouncements. That these conditions should be seen as those which both produce and affirm the validity of aesthetic discourse is emblematic of its tautological nature The circularity of this arrangement is an effect of the disparity characteristic of aesthetic discourse itself, namely the disparity between its discursive position and its actual socio-economic locus.

The range of institutionally-legitimized valuing subjects has, until quite recently, been a significantly limited one. The so-called "arbiters of taste", professors and literary critics, have traditionally been university-educated, white males of Anglo-Saxon, or Northern European origin. As that professional class has become increasingly heterogeneous, there has been a growing sense that the values once thought to be intrinsic to canonical works are no more universal than the subjects who have traditionally valued them. Indeed, this association has led some critics to

utterly conflate the two, and to thereby wish to exclude all individuals conforming to that profile from participation in current debates.

Nevertheless, it has proven rather difficult to dismantle the existent canon altogether. What has impeded many of the current endeavors to do so inheres in the extent to which critiques of the prevailing canon are themselves prescriptive and thus, however unwittingly, tend to recuperate a canonical paradigm for their own projects. By failing to adequately address the problematic nature of what Bennett has called "the construction of an ideal personality" (Outside 152), those challenges to the present canon that are purely content-based effectively reinvest in a paradigm whose viability subsists on the continued consecration of certain valuing subjects. Thus content-based reevaluations tend to preserve attendant modes of deploying texts which position the critic as moral exemplar for all potential audiences.

The institutional history of the formation of the American literary canon offers a number of valuable insights into the ways in which theories of literary value, rather than occupying an autonomous zone of inquiry, are profoundly imbricated with other valuing practices, practices which are themselves the product of particular material conditions. The relationship between a canon and the historical situation of the institution which establishes it, is close and complex. Tracing a history of the establishment of American literature as a discipline gives support to the idea that, as Frank Kermode has argued, "the formation and control of the secular canon we are now considering are historically related as well as analogous to the forces that have formed and monitored the ecclesiastical canons" (177).

American Literature and Canonical Paradigms

The phrase "American literature" first came into use in the 1780s, and approximately ten years later the first two national literary anthologies were published. Although the literati, the men of letters for whom authorship was of primary professional importance, was a small, socially-privileged group, American literature first became a subject of lectures and instruction at workingmen's and mechanic's institutes and libraries in the 1820s and 30s. As the demand for a literate workforce rose in response to an expanding national economy, literacy itself became a favored vehicle for cultural and political integration. Anticipating what would later be called the "trickle down" theory, the introduction of these classes was founded on the idea that national unity could be promoted, not by a more even distribution of wealth or property, but through the dissemination of a uniform literary culture. At the same time, however, the more traditional universities attended by the upper-classes were offering courses in the Anglo-Saxon classics as part of a curriculum which included rhetoric, elocution and philology.

The disparity between these curricula is related to issues concerning the much-debated international status of American literature at the time. Accounts of this debate, a debate carried out among the so-called men of letters, have typically framed the argument in terms of an opposition between Anglophiles and Americanists. Summarily viewed, the controversy concerned the relative importance of literary and national communities. William Spengemann, who refers to the Anglophiles as the "literary party", provides this account:

> The literary party worried that Americans, removed as they were from the capitals of civilization, might slip into a barbarous vernacular. The Americanists, on the other hand, lamented the dependence of native writers on a European language and European standards of eloquence and encouraged the development of a distinct American idiom. (152)

Spengemann's comments introduce two of the central issues that would characterize the politics of language throughout the 19th century; the growing concern over a language-based distinction between barbarism and civilization, and the importance of establishing the dominance of what Benedict Anderson has called "a national print-language" (47) over the various dialects being spoken within the nation. In order to assess the role American literature would play in larger social movements, it is necessary to consider the connections between the ideology informing programmes for educational reform and the expansion of print-capitalism which accompanied the growth of so-called "capitals of civilization" within the United States.

The emergence of common schools in the 1830s inaugurated a shift from "a religious-literacy framework to a nation-building literacy framework" (Soltow and Stevens 18). Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens have characterized the dilemma educational reformers faced as indicative of larger social contradictions i.e. the desire to promote national unity while preserving education's role as a mechanisms for social stratification. According to Soltow and Stevens, educational reformers had not only a "political concern for social integration, necessitating a shared community of values, but [a] socio-economic concern with the provision for upward social mobility through some system of social differentiation" (20). One of the central tasks reformers conceived for common schools was the dissemination of a shared national language. Borrowing Johann Gottfried Herder's model of nationalism, wherein nationhood rests on cultural, ethnic and linguistic uniformity, educational reform sought to establish linguistic standards to be respected throughout the country.

Educators invariably drew their model for such a standard language from centres of economic power which had established publishing houses and literary societies of various kinds.

The massive growth of the newspaper industry which had begun in the late eighteenth century initially emerged as an appendage to an expanding market economy. Written by and circulated among an elite group of property-owners, these publications constituted an integral part of the process through which such a linguistic community came to be both thought and countenanced. While the dissemination of this so-called "standard" language in common schools failed to prevent sectionalism or abolish all divergent speech styles, it did allow for the hierarchical organization of such linguistic inconsistencies, and, concomitantly, for the accentuation of the significance of different dispositions toward that standard. Speaking in an idiom which remained essentially British, combined with a reverence for a New England-centered national literature that embodied this standard, effectively served to distinguish so-called "civilized" Americans from those who spoke in what the 19th-century critic Edward Fuller would call "the gabble of the imperfectly educated" (203).

The literary representation of various idiolects associated with the so-called "local color" movement effectively reinforced the primacy of this centralist linguistic model. As Roland Barthes has argued in another context;

> the imitation of group languages has been delegated by our novelists to secondary characters, to supernumeraries, responsible for "fixing" social realism, while the hero continues speaking a timeless language whose "transparency" and neutrality are supposed to match the psychological universality of the human soul. (Rustle 112)

Employing so-called "eye-dialect" - the gratuitous phonetical rendering of words i.e. writing "wuz" as opposed to "was" - to monolithically represent the speech of black Americans, effectively served to highlight (legally regulated) levels of illiteracy among them. The antebellum vogue of these so-called "dialect writers" most obviously bears out Barthes

observations and underlines the extent to which discourses of literary value have historically resonated with those of a more explicitly political nature.

American literature did not enter universities until after the Civil War and it did so initially via American history departments. According to Spengemann:

> The study of American literature prospered in this congenial setting, establishing a canon of truly "American books", refining the definition of their Americanness, tracing the historical lines that connected them and eventually producing under the ambiguous rubric of "American Civilization", a number of doctoral theses of a decidedly literary stripe. (119)

Ironically, when that canon moved to literature departments, "refining" Americanness proved to be less a matter of identifying formal attributes of the work than of identifying the ancestral lines of the authors themselves. In the 1870s and 1880s when American professors of literature returned from Germany where they had been trained in German philology, the American works they sought to install as part of the curriculum in English literature were those that, in their estimation, best yielded to German methods of scholarship. The American literary canon thus became established within English departments based on the essentially racial tenets of German philology which held language to be an expression or function of race. The privileging of those texts authored by men from New England was underwritten by a broader consensus among professors of literature that the United States was essentially an Anglo-Saxon country, its exemplary subjects being those of British stock. Departments of English, according to Spengemann, had themselves been founded to "help realize the antique dream of America as the manifest destiny of Anglo-Saxon progress" (16). Esteemed and influential critics such as Barrett Wendell and Richard Grant White maintained that it was their British ancestry that had enabled these venerated Americans to produce great works.

Conflations of cultural and genetic inheritance were by no means limited to the field of literature. Indeed such pronouncements were informed, and even prefigured, by an array of discourses which coalesced around the hierarchical organization of racial difference. Just as the word "class" had been modified by hierarchical adjectives such as "upper", "middle" and "lower" in the eighteenth century, so the word "culture" became subject to those distinctions in the nineteenth century. As Lawrence Levine has noted, the terms "highbrow" and "lowbrow" are derived from the nineteenth-century phrenological practice of determining racial types and judging intelligence based on cranial shapes (221-2). According to Levine, while Caucasians were seen to have higher than average brows, and thus assumed to possess higher intelligence, "the categorization did not end this broadly". As he says:

> [W]ithin the Caucasian circle there were distinctions to be made: the closer to western and northern Europe a people came, the higher their brows extended. From the time of their formulation, such cultural categories were hardly meant to be neutral, descriptive terms; they were openly associated with and designed to preserve, nurture and extend the cultural history and values of a particular group of peoples in a specific historical context. (222-3)

A number of other similar discourses circulated throughout the period. Administrative discourses associated with, for example, the exclusion of women from higher education, the views of social Darwinist Herbert Spencer, and the growth of the eugenics movement, are instances of ideologies related to modalities of social management, any or all of which may be seen to have informed American foreign and domestic policy at the time. What these convergent discourses attest to is the extent to which the nation was internally divided by race, class, gender and region. Despite the absence of a united populace, nationalism and its attendant populist rhetoric continued to characterize the official discourse of defenders of both the country and the canon it allegedly represented. As historians of nationalism such as Eric Hobsbawm have noted,

it is the conceptual indeterminacy of the term "nation" itself which makes it amenable to "programmatic, as distinct from descriptive purposes" (Nations 6).

While "the nation" may defy precise definition, this in no way attenuates the fact that the American literary canon, like all national canons, has been organized around the idea of the nation. Both the idea of a nation, and by extension, the idea of a national literature, are historically-specific ways of thinking about a complex of social relations and cultural practices that have directed the practice of literary history and literary evaluation in ways which have become somewhat naturalized through continued use.

According to Claudio Guillen, literature's coherence as a system was secured, from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, by the traditional authority of Classical ideals of poetics and rhetoric. The emergence of the Romantic movement and the rise of individualism in the late eighteenth century effectively shattered this integrity by asserting, among other things, the primacy of the perceiver in the world he perceived. According to Guillen in Literature as System,

> The main consequence was a serial view of literature as a chronological succession of individual works and writers. To counteract this seriality and compensate for the loss of an independent focus found in poetics . . . The concept of the nation, regarded by definition as an organic whole . . . became the all-embracingprinciple of unity (5).

Guillen's observations underline two common features of the discourse of literary nationalism. One of these is the tendency to consider the nation in monolithic terms; what follows from this first principle is the tendency to then consider the cultural products of that nation in equally monocratic terms. As "an organic whole" a nation produces a literature, expressive of a tradition, defined, perhaps, by its difference from other national literatures, but

ultimately coherent in itself. The privilege accorded the nation in this paradigm rests on a postulated congruence between cultural space and politically-defined borders.

But as historian Ernest Gellner has argued, "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness, it invents nations where they do not exist" (1964 169). The nation, in other words, is what nationalism hopes to call into being, but can only do so by insisting that such an entity already exists in some nascent form, merely awaiting official confirmation. If we apply this conception to the formation of the American canon, we can begin to see how the discourse of literary nationalism similarly operates with the idea of a nascent being, ostensibly buried in all Americans, but having thus far been more fully realized in some than in others. It is no coincidence that those who have realized this seemingly elusive potential have been Caucasian males. We may attribute this either to the fact that the provisions necessary for its realization have been more readily available to those subjects, (i.e. greater access to higher education) or, more damningly, to the fact that this ideal subject has been conceived in racist, and masculinist terms.

Reviewing Paul Laurence Dunbar's poetry in 1896 for Harper's Weekly, William Dean Howell's wrote: "Here, in the artistic effect at last, is white thinking and white feeling in a black man" (630). It was in 1970 that John Keats, one of Dorothy Parker's biographers and critics, in a rare moment of adulation, described her as ' a tiny big-eyed feminine woman with the mind of a man" (305). What becomes apparent is that the discourse which allows the quintessential American subject/author to remain an abstraction, one which does not admit the existence of inassimilable differences, is ultimately predicated on a notion of sameness which does not apply equally to all. Hierarchies of race and gender are thus at once effectively upheld and obviated

by making differences of race or gender appear inessential to precisely those individuals inhibited from ever realizing that ideal on the basis of those very differences.

Underwriting this conception of the subject is the American exceptionalism thesis, one of American literary criticism's oldest. This thesis is governed by an insistence on the absence of objective structural inequalities (juridical equality, social autonomy etc.) and has been practically indispensable to the nationalist project of differentiating Americanness from mere Englishness. In critically surveying the theoretical ground upon which literary greatness has traditionally been judged, Nina Baym has isolated one common feature: "America as a nation must be the ultimate subject of the work. The author must be writing about aspects of experience and character that are American only, setting Americans off from other people and the country from other nations" (127). Following the tenets of the exceptionalist thesis, American criticism has tended to favour those narratives which trace the teleological path of a protagonist from a fledgling state of selfhood, conceived of as existing prior to and autonomous from social relations, through to his eventual mature state where he typically achieves communion with some transcendental signified, be it God or America itself. Lionel Trilling has put the matter this way: "the fact is that American writers of genius have not turned their minds to society" (212). Needless to say, the so-called "American writers of genius" Trilling approves have also been those enabled by social privilege to be far "above the battle".

Based on symbolic interpretations of the subject ranging from the Puritan model of the self as microcosm of the nation, through the Romantic ideal of a "transpersonal consciousness" to the exalted hero of the frontier, the American subject thus conceived is not an inclusive but an exclusive concept. At the same time however, exceptions to the category are assumed on

grounds which cannot be made explicit without undermining the rhetorical and performative efficacy of the idea of representative man so central to the viability of the concept itself. Citing F.O. Matthiessen's American Renaissance (1941) as one of the most "spectacular" instances of this rhetoric, Jane Tompkins' Sensational Designs (1985) addresses the fallaciousness of the idea that these canonized texts are in any way representative of America's literary history Taking the list of writers F.O. Mattheissen declares "'representative of the whole soul of man'", including Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau and Whitman, Thompkins shows just how unrepresentative these men are in terms of their religion, geographical location, and socio-economic status. None of the works concerns itself with issues of abolition or temperance, both of which, as she says "preoccupied the country at the time" (200). She also notes the fact that none of the works on the list achieved great popular success, and that while women virtually dominated the literary marketplace at the time, none of the authors is female. That representative status has been conferred upon such a homogeneous sample of writers suggests the degree to which representativeness has served not as an index of that which is most common, but as a notion of the ideal conceived of at two related but separable levels.

Firstly, the criteria by which literary value has traditionally been ascribed or denied to texts have significantly limited the likelihood that individuals deviating from a pre-elaborated subject profile will produce works conforming to valorized literary norms As Leslie Fiedler has suggested, "the quest which distinguishes our fiction from Brockden Brown and Cooper, through Poe and Melville and Twain, to Faulkner and Hemingway, is the search for an innocent substitute for adulterous passion and marriage alike" (Love and Death 160). Evidently women are not simply excluded from this quest, nor do they figure as the weaker partner in some kind of union

with the men; rather they are positioned as adversaries, a source of potential enslavement, be they virgin or whore.

Annette Kolodny's The Lay of the Land addresses similar built-in biases in theories related to the celebrated Frontier myth, as does Nina Baym's "Melodrama's of Beset Manhood". As Baym has argued, "women are not likely to cast themselves as antagonists in a man's story; they are even less likely to cast themselves as virgin land" (136). As Nathan Huggins has suggested, African-American writers are equally unlikely to embrace what he calls the "dominant Brancroftian myth of the providential destiny of America", that is, the "onward upward, progressive vision" so characteristic of the "classic" American Bildungsroman (163). These mediating factors are not necessarily evidence of a malevolent conspiracy, only of a contingency, too long unacknowledged as such, between valuing subjects and valued objects.

The greater problem arises with the second idealism, that is, the allegedly disinterested assertion that canonical works simply possess value and that this value is self-evident. Such a belief is founded on the regrettable assumption that this evaluation is not only that to which all should aspire, but that this evaluation is that which all would necessarily arrive at themselves, were their cognitive potential or aesthetic sensibilities more fully evolved. In short, rather than recognizing the adequacy of divergent valuing systems the critic implies his own epistemic superiority and passes off his investment in a particular kind of aesthetic training as natural aptitude. This vertiginous arrangement may be attributed to what Bourdieu has called "the circular circulation of inter-legitimation" (Distinction 54) whereby judgments of value both venerate and are venerated by the allegedly "inherently valuable" properties of the object they approve.

While contemporary critics are quick to recognize and discredit the "best self" of Arnoldian aesthetics (Culture 136) as effectively ethnocentric, there has been less explicit dissension regarding the role Arnold postulates for literary criticism in general. According to Arnold, "criticism's most important function is to try books as to the influence which they are calculated to have upon the general culture. . . . Of this culture, literary criticism is the appointed guardian" (Complete 3: 41 120) What has inhibited a full-scale disavowal of the assertion that criticism assume an essentially managerial role vis a vis an allegedly undifferentiated populace, is the extent to which ostensibly oppositional discourses have preserved this idea of a "best self".

While Marxist literary criticism has been sensitive to the class-biases inflected in the Arnoldian case, Marxism, particularly within its more ambitious strains, has failed to dispense with the "model-subject" concept altogether. On the contrary, Marxism has tended to inscribe an equally idealized, monolithically-conceived subject in its place, namely that of the revolutionary proletarian. What facilitates and indeed may be seen to necessitate the inscription of such an ideal subject, is the disparity posited by Marxism's own narrative paradigm between the subject in its present repressed form and its yet-to-be realized revolutionary form.

Thus conceived, the subject himself comes to be thought of as existing in a kind of somnambulist state induced by a generalized cultural lag, itself symptomatic of an as yet unrealized but inevitable, revolution-inspired future. The present repressed subject is typically diagnosed as suffering from existent modes of production, as well as the slings and arrows of Arnold's subject who directly profits from this arrangement. Within this scenario, the Marxist literary critic, who already exists in an enlightened state, assists the subject by leading him through the morass of bourgeois literature, showing up its inherent class-biases and ideological

traps. The subject, thus awakened from his slumber, casts off all previously held illusions, including those about the value of reading most popular genres, and emerges finally, homo erectus, to take on utopia. While such a characterization is in some senses rather gross, the extent to which Marxist literary critics have conceived of themselves as the rightful monitors of this subject's progress can hardly be overstated

Similarly messianic strains may be identified within feminist literary criticism. While American feminist literary criticism has been instrumental in attenuating the dominance of Marxist models which obscure social inequalities with respect to gender, it may equally be seen to prescribe a "best self". As noted in chapter one of the thesis, one of the most predominant currents within American feminist literary theory has been the so-called "images of women" approach to fiction, which conceives of its project in terms of minting an authentic representation of a monolithically-defined female subject.

Governing this feminist aesthetic is the sense that feminist literature, to merit the name, should provide role models for female audiences. Thus conceived, feminist literature is to act as a kind of therapeutic antidote to the so-called "false" images generated for centuries by a male-dominated literary establishment. Underscoring this aesthetic discourse is a conception of patriarchy as a homogeneous and uniformly repressive phenomenon that conspires to conceal women's "true" nature. This victimization thesis effectively precludes the possibility of anyone but female authors conforming to the "images of women" aesthetic, insofar as depictions of dependent females by men are necessarily read as evidence of the author's own patriarchal worldview, while similar portrayals by women writers are assumed to be indictments of this ideology.

However, bona fide feminist literature, literature which is seen to possess the greatest aesthetic value, is not simply work by women writers; it must also delineate a female quest in which the protagonist, posited as the moral, spiritual and psychological superior of men, heroically escapes from the spectre of patriarchy, enters a purified state, undefiled by heterosexual relations. The feminist literary critic is not only thought to be in a position to dispense access to this real "best self" that all women should eventually actualize within themselves, but she is also best able to offer council or administer therapy to any wayward valuing subjects (eg. women who "mistakenly" enjoy low forms such as romance novels).

In general, evaluative practices that construct a quasiuniversalist "best self" tend to operate with an essentially centralist model of deploying texts. In practice, this centralist model intends to affect social change by governing the reader from a position of authority. Rather than accepting the adequacy of localized reading formations and their attendant valuing practices, discourses of aesthetic value are predicated on institutionally-derived modes of structuring interfaces between texts and readers, granting the critic a preponderant position. As opposed to a conception of culture as an area constituted by provisional associations of groups or individuals, any of which might be in a position to dispute or evaluate the others, aesthetic discourse implies a putatively coherent model of cultural relations and preordains the critic to an allegedly extradiscursive position. The critic thus serves an essentially corrective function in his or her role as the one to whom all might appeal in the case of such disputes. While nationalism, Marxism and feminism have differently elaborated their respective hypothetical subjects in accordance with their differently articulated precepts, they have exhibited a shared proclivity towards universalizing their value claims and have, moreover, conceived of the critic as directing

the reform of the subject in a rather proprietorial fashion. Although it is possible to declare preferences with respect to the various personalities so constructed, the manner in which even so-called oppositional aesthetic discourses have mobilized their efforts to effect social change has left entrenched modes of deploying texts in institutional domains substantially unaltered. In this respect, nominally oppositional discourses may not be seen to have radically distinguished themselves from the allegedly disinterested forms of textual commentary associated with New Criticism and its many descendants.

Parker and Literary Value

I stated at the beginning of this chapter that while Parker's work has not been positively valued by the majority of her critics, this is not to say that her work is ultimately valueless. Indeed, as I have argued, works cannot be said to actually possess value, rather they can only be valued for particular reasons. Parker's critical reception history, a history which ends in the early 1980s, presents a series of attempts to engage in an analysis of her work from within a number of frameworks that are ultimately insensitive to its particular qualities.

Summarily viewed, Parker's work has been negatively evaluated in terms of three perceived absences: lack of character development, lack of significant themes, and lack of literary language. While these are the kinds of criticisms that are commonly directed at popular literature, (something which in itself presents a series of problems that I sought to address in chapter one), my immediate concern is the extent to which each of these critiques has fed into, and in some cases has preempted, more detailed readings of the stories themselves. In other words, Parker's critics have not been willing to admit the possibility that these so-called flaws

are thematically motivated, for reasons which are related to, but held to be separate from, the particulars of the critics' narrative expectations.

It has been said, for instance, that Parker's characters are "based on types too limited" (Graham 1172), and that they "lack the full range of emotions found in human beings" (Stevick 92). That her characters assume a rudimentary form has consistently been read as an unintended failure to render adequately representative subjects. Assuming the production of "authentic" characters to have been Parker's projected but unrealized goal, these critics are forced to conclude that Parker herself is simply incompetent.

Feminist critiques of Parker have been similarly disappointed by her stories insofar as they are not seen to offer characters that might serve as female role models. While these critics have been less inclined to dismiss Parker completely, her work has not been seen to fulfill expectations related to this demand for an empathic identification between readers and characters. This demand arises in part from the tendency to conceive of writing as the self-expression of an author defined exclusively in terms of sexual difference.

As noted above, this gynocentric approach to fiction posits the existence of a uniform female consciousness as the antithesis of an equally uniform male consciousness. Because male consciousness has been characterized by the will to repress its opposite, Parker's work, and indeed all writing by women, is evaluated in terms of its capacity to produce narratives of "uncompromised and unique female selfhood" (Treichler 59). Parker's feminist critics have concluded that this "authentic" female self remains too far submerged to offer a faithful, "feminist vision of what should be" ("Dorothy Parker" 76).

What has prevented more positive evaluations of Parker is the tendency endemic to the

totalizing perspectives adopted by her critics to conceive of her work in conjunction with discourses of value that are attendant upon grand and even grandiose meta-narratives of society itself. Not only are the more nuanced qualities of Parker's work obscured by these approaches, when some attention is in fact paid to the intricacies of Parker's stories, her interest in social minutiae, for example, is actually seized upon and negatively valued as evidence of an unequivocal failure to support the paradigms these critics are intent on asserting.

As current trends in American historiography suggest, the idea that there has ever existed a single body that might accurately be said to have been either politically or aesthetically representative of "the American community" is an untenable one, and one that is increasingly rejected as such. But while the vulgarisms associated with American literary nationalism have been extensively chronicled, it is still possible to encounter vulgar Marxism and it is equally possible to encounter something we might call vulgar feminism. What this adjective suggests about particular currents within both of these schools is an overriding emphasis on globalizing theories of how power operates in society. While the nationalist model denies the existence or relevance of power relations and adheres to a theory of artistic autonomy or disinterestedness, the Marxist model locates power exclusively in the hands of the owners of the means of production, and the feminist model locates it in the hands of men in general.

If mainstream literary criticism has neglected to address issues related to class-struggles in Parker's work due to its supposition that America is and always has been a fundamentally classless society, there has been a more conspicuous lack of attention given to Parker's work from a Marxist perspective. This, I suspect, may be attributed to a prevailing sense that Marxism's proper task is the rereading of already consecrated canonical works in order to reveal

the irredeemable bourgeois values there inscribed.

On the other hand, what seems to trouble feminist critics about Parker is a tacitly acknowledged but unspoken recognition that gender is always a socially variable entity within her stories, carrying different compensations and privileges depending upon innumerable factors related, for instance, to class, race, age, and socially-received ideals of physical beauty. In other words, Parker's work cannot be easily articulated to uni-dimensional paradigms of female oppression precisely because her stories consistently engage the complex, shifting, and diffuse power relations which characterize the "mess" of modern experience.

I stated in the introduction that Parker's work might be more positively evaluated if it were to be read in terms of a revised or reevaluated definition of what is commonly referred to as minor literature. Traditionally, minor works have simply been considered lesser versions of canonical works, failures in their apparently ineluctable struggle for majorness. The presupposition of a universally projected but infrequently realized aesthetic has both rationalized and created the need for canonically ordered reading formations. More recently, however, critics as various as David Lloyd, Loius Renza and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, have begun to revise traditional assumptions about minor literature's status.

David Lloyd has proposed a reevaluation of the relationship between major and minor modes of writing in oppositional, rather than complimentary terms. According to Lloyd, "[t]his opposition exceeds mere specularity insofar as the forms of its articulation call into question the very terms in which a canonical literature is defined" (Nationalism 21). For Lloyd, minor literature makes no claim to representative status in an Arnoldian sense and does not shore up the notions of subjectivity that underpin canonical aesthetics. Instead, what minor writers share,

he argues, is a "common perpetuation of non-identity" (Nationalism 22). This refusal of identity, according to Lloyd;

> circulates around an equivalent refusal to ground the possibility of identity on the recovery of origins, a strategy that evokes a critique of that narrative paradigm of major literature, the reproduction of an original or essential identity at a higher and self-conscious level (Nationalism 22).

What is suggestive about this revised model of minor literature is that it not only allows us to think about Parker's work in terms other than as a poor imitation of some other work, it also admits to its own inherently provisional status as a model. That is to say, not only does it refuse the need for an all-embracing model of the subject, or the canon, but it does not seek to somehow get beyond that model and establish itself on some higher, more sacred ground. It only outdoes its predecessor insofar as it implies the evacuation of any rationalist theology of representation that would ensure its pertinence. As a paradigm of crisis, it is, in effect, no paradigm at all and thus entails an end to the relevance of the category "minor literature" itself.

By abandoning the grand claims and the inflated terminology of a canonically defined scene of writing we can begin to re-accent those qualities in Parker's work that have traditionally been devalued. Without recourse to what should constitute literary value, critiquing Parker for "not deal[ing] with any very great or significant area of life" (Van Doren) can be seen as, not simply invalid, but inappropriate, a category mistake. While "the gossip of the cocktail hour" (Gray 200) on a hot afternoon in 1920s Manhattan may not convey eternal truths, it does carry significance for "a tiny fragment of society"(Gray 200). If Parker's stories are "strictly dated" and allude only to "an era, a few moments" there is no reason to assume that that detracts from their quality. Indeed we may begin to see that those works assigned to the category great Literature are not substantially different in this respect.

The continued reverence for a canonical formations rests on the assumption that some works transcend these temporal limits. But where do they then go? If, as Lloyd suggests, minor works "call into question the very terms in which a canonical literature is defined" we may locate that skepticism in Parker's work in the episodic and anecdotal style so central to both her micro-narratives and her minor status. If Parker's work may not be seen to serve as an ideal tract around which to rally support for the cause of American nationalism, the inherent nobility of the proletarian revolutionary, or a feminist Utopia, perhaps it is because her stories focus on the minutiae of modernity, the specific and always localized struggles for power within an increasingly complex and fragmented urban world. Her portraits of social relations may be reduced, but not reductive.

What makes Parker a self-consciously minor writer in the sense Lloyd has outlined is the extent to which her stories foreground rather than hope to conceal the banality of her characters, their triviality, and their limitation, both in terms of their incapacity to stand in for some larger notion of "the human" and in terms of their propensity towards a kind of self-management which effectively precludes them from standing in any way outside of the cramped spaces they inhabit. In fact, the "natural" world as such does not figure in the stories at all. There are no grandiose landscapes beyond these interiors reverberating with pathetic fallacy. That kind of sympathy would be wholly incongruent with the dimensions assumed both by her characters and the worlds that inspire them. Perhaps as Parker herself said, "It's not the tragedies that kill us, it's the messes" (Capron 82).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Franklin P. "Dorothy Parker." In Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews, p.72. ed. Malcolm Cowley. New York: Viking, 1969.

Allen, Fredrick Lewis. The Big Change. New York: Harper, 1952.

---. Only Yesterday. New York: Oxford UP, 1978.

Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread of Nationalism. London: Verso, 1983.

Angoff, Charles. A Literary History of the American People. New York: Knopf, 1931.

---. The Tone of the Twenties and Other Essays. New Brunswick: Barnes, 1966.

Arac, Johnathan. Critical Genealogies New York: Columbia UP, 1987.

Arieli, Yehoshua. Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1964.

Arnold, Matthew. Complete Prose Works. Ed. R.H. Super, 11 vols. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1987.

---. Culture and Anarchy. New York: MacMillan, 1875.

Bakhtin, M.M. The Dialogic Imagination. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.

---. Rabelais and His World. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1968.

Banner, Lois. W. American Beauty. New York: Knopf, 1983.

Barthes, Roland. Mythologies. New York: Hill and Wang, 1987.

---. The Rustle of Language. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill, 1986.

Barton, Bruce. The Man Nobody Knows; A Discovery ofJesus. Indianapolis, Bobbs, 1925.

Baritz, Loren, ed. The Culture of the Twenties. New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1970.

---. "The Culture of Manhattan" Massachusetts Review. Autumn (1981): 403-422.

Baym, Nina. "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors." American Quarterly 33 (1981): 123-39

Beale, Howard K. Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1956.

Beard, Charles. An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States. New York: MacMillan, 1923.

Bennett, Tony "Marxism and Popular Fiction." Popular Fictions: Essays in Literature and History. ed Peter Humm et al. London; New York: Methuen, 1986.

---. Outside Literature. London; New York: Routledge, 1990.

Bennett, Tony and Janet Woollacott. Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Cultural Hero. London: Macmillan, 1987.

Bercovitch, Sacvan and Myra Jehlen, eds. Ideology and Classic American Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.

Berger, John. Ways of Seeing. London: BBC and Penguin, 1972.

Bier, Jesse. The Rise and Fall of American Humor. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

Blair, Walter and Hamlin Hill. America's Humor. New York: Oxford UP, 1978.

---. Horse Sense in American Humor. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1942.

Bone, Martha Denham. "Dorothy Parker and New Yorker Satire. DAI46 (1985): Middle Tennessee State U. 8523970

"Books in Brief" Rev. of Laments for the Living by Dorothy Parker. The Nation 131 (1930): 75. (Jul. 16 no.3393)

Boyer, Paul. Urban Masses and Moral Order 1820-1920. Cambridge:Harvard UP, 1978.

Bourdieu, Pierre. Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984.

---. Language and Symbolic Power. Ed. John B. Thompson. Trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson. Cambridge: Polity P, 1991.

---. "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups." Social Science Information 24 (1985): 2.

195-220

Bowlby, Rachel. "Breakfast in America- Uncle Tom's Cultural Histories." Nation and Narration ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990. 197-212.

Brackbill, Hervey. "Some Telegraph Terms." American Speech 4 (1929): 4. 287-289

Brennan, Timothy. "The National Longing for Form." Nation and Narration. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London and New York. Routledge, 1990.

Brooks, John. Showing Off in America. From Conspicuous Consumption to Parody Display. Boston, Little Brown, 1981.

Brooks, Van Wyck. "On Creating a Usable Past." The Dial 64 (1918) 337-341.

---. The Roots of American Culture and Other Essays. New York: Harcourt, 1942.

Brown, James Mason. "High Spirits in the Twenties." Horizon 4 (1962): 33-40.

Bruere, Mary Bensley and Martha Ritter Beard. Women's Humor in America. New York: Macmillan, 1934.

Bunkers, Suzanne. "'I am outraged Womanhood': Dorothy Parker and Feminist and Social Critic " Regionalism and the Female Imagination 2.4 (1978): 25-34.

Cambell, N.A. "Protection for Our Language." North American Review 149 (1889) 127-128.

Capron, Marion. Writers at Work. The Paris Review Interviews. Ed. Malcolm Cowley. New York: Viking, 1957.

Carter, Ronald and Paul Simpson, eds. Language, Discourse and Literature: An Introductory Reader in Discourse Stylistics. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

Cashman, Sean Dennis. America in the Twenties and Thirties: The Olympian Age of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. New York: New York UP, 1989.

Cerf, Bennett. "Trade Winds " Saturday Review of Literature 25 (1942): 28. (March 7)

Chase, Richard. The American Novel and Its Tradition. Garden City: Doubleday, 1957.

Churchill, Allen. The Literary Decade. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1971.

Clarke, William Bedford. Critical Essays on American Humor. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1984.

Coben, Stanley and Lorman Ratner. The Development of an American Culture. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1970.

Cocks, Joan. The Oppositional Imagination: Feminism, Critique and Political Theory. London: Routledge, 1989.

Cohen, Hennig, ed. Landmarks in American Writing. Washington: Voice of America Series, 1979.

Cooper, Wyatt. "Whatever You Think Dorothy Parker Was Like, She Wasn't." Esquire 70 (1968): 57, 61, 110-114.

Cornillon, Susan Koppelman, ed. Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives. Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1972.

Coward, Rosalind and John Ellis. Language and Materialism:Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject. New York: RKP, 1977.

Cowley, Malcolm Exile's Return. New York: Penguin, 1986.

---. Fitzgerald and the Jazz Age. New York: Scribner's, 1966

---. A Second Flowering: Works and Days of the Lost Generation. New York, Viking, 1973.

---. Think Back on Us London: Southern Illinois P, 1967

Critoph, Gerald E. "The Flapper and Her Critics." "Remember the Ladies" New Perspectives In American History. Carol V R. George ed. New York: Syracuse UP, 1975.

Crunden, Robert M. From Self to Society 1919-1941. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1972.

Dauber, Kenneth. "Criticism of American Literature." Diacritics (7) (1977): 55-66.

Davis, Jerome. Capitalism and Its Culture. New York: Farrar, 1935.

Deegan, Dorothy. The Stereotype of the Single Woman in American Novels. New York: King's Cross P, 1951.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis, U of Minnesota P, 1986.

"Dorothy Parker Recalled as Wit." New York Times, 10 June 1967, p.33.

Douglas, Ann. "Parker, Dorothy Rothschild" Notable American Women: The Modern Period.

eds. B. Sicherman and C. Hurd Green, pp.522-525. Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard P, 1980.

Drennan, Robert E. The Algonquin Wits. New York: Citadel, 1968.

Dresner, Zita Zatkhin. "20th Century American Women Humorists" DAI 43 (1982): 1970A. U. of Maryland. 8226451

Eagles, Charles W. "Urban-Rural Conflict in the 1920's: A Historiographical Assessment" Historian 49 (1986-7) 26-48.

Eagleton, Terry. Against the Grain: Selected Essays. London: Verso, 1986.

---. Criticism and Ideology. London and New York: Verso, 1988.

---. Literary Theory: An Introduction. Minneapolis, U of Minneapolis P. 1983.

Eco, Umberto. Carnival! Ed. Thomas A. Sebeok New York: Mouton Publishers, 1984.

Elshtain, Jean Bethke. Public Man, Private Woman: Woman in Social and Political Thought. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981.

Erenberg, Lewis A Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930. Westport: Greenwood, 1981.

Ewen, Stuart Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976.

Ewen, Elizabeth. "City Lights: Immigrant Women and the Rise of the Movies." Signs 5 no.3.suppl. (1980): 45-65.

Fass, Paula. The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's. New York: Oxford UP, 1971.

Feidelson, Charles, Jr. Symbolism and American Literature. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1953.

Fekete, John The Critical Twilight: Explorations in the Ideology of Anglo-American Literary Theory from Eliot to McLuhan. London; Boston: Routledge, 1977.

Felski, Rita. Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989.

Fetterley, Judith The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978.

Fielder, Leslie A. Love and Death in the American Novel. New York: Stein and Day, 1960.

---. What Was Literature?: Class Culture and Mass Society. New York: Simon, 1982.

Filene, Peter G. Him/Her Self: Sex Roles in Modern America. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1986.

Filler, Louis. A Question of Quality, Popularity and Value in Modern Creative Writing. Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1976.

Fishbein, Leslie. "Dancing Mothers (1926): Flappers, Mothers, Freud and Freedom " Women's Studies 12 (1986): 241-250.

Ford, Corey. The Times of Laughter. Boston: Little Brown, 1967.

Fowler, Roger. Literature as Social Discourse: The Practice of Linguistic Criticism. Bloomington: Indiana UP. 1981.

Fox, Richard Wightman and T.J. Jackson Lears, eds. The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980. New York: Pantheon, 1983.

Franklin, H. Bruce. The Victim as Criminal and Artist. New York: Oxford UP, 1978.

Freedman, Estelle B. "The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920's." Journal of American History 61 (1974): 372-393.

French, Warren. The Thirties Deland: Edwards, 1967.

---. The Twenties Deland: Edwards, 1975.

Frewin, Leslie. The Late Mrs Dorothy Parker. New York: Macmillan, 1986.

Fuller, Edward. "The Criticism of Life." The Bookman 2:3 (1895) 203-205.

Gaines, James R. Wit's End: Days and Nights of the Algonquin Round Table. New York: Harcourt, 1977.

Gates, Robert. The New York Vision: Interpretations of New York City in the American Novel. Lanham: UP of America, 1987.

Geismar, Maxwell. The Last of the Provincials: The American Novel, 1919-1925. London: Secker and Warburg, 1947.

---. Writers in Crisis: The American Novel 1925-1940. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1942.

---. American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity. New York: Hill and Wang, 1958.

Gellner, Ernest. Nations and Nationalism. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.

---. Thought and Change. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1965.

Gill, Brendan. Here at the New Yorker. New York. Random, 1975.

Girgus, Sam B. The American Self: Myth, Ideology and Popular Culture. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1981.

Gossman, Lionel. "Literature and Education." New Literary History XIII (Winter 1982): 341-371.

Graff, Gerald. Professing Literature: An Institutional History. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987.

Graham, Gladys. "Cut Outs from Life." Rev. of Laments for the Living, by Dorothy Parker. Saturday Review of Literature 6 (1930): 1172 (5 July no.50).

Gray, James. On Second Thought. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1946.

Guiles, Fred Lawrence. Hanging On in Paradise. New York: 1975.

Guillen, Claudio. Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971.

Gullason, Thomas H. "The Short Story: An Underrated Art." Studies in Short Fiction 2 (1964-5): 13-31.

Hall, Stuart. "Some Paradigms in Cultural Studies." Annali Anglistica vol xxi, no.3, 1978.

Harpham, Geoffrey. On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982.

Harriman, Margaret Case. The Vicious Circle. New York: Rinehart, 1951.

Hart, James. The Oxford Companion to American Literature. New York: Oxford UP, 1965.

Haskell, Molly. From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987.

Hellman, Lillian. An Unfinished Woman. Boston: Little, 1969.

Hicks, Granville. The Great Tradition. New York: Macmillan, 1933.

Hietala, Thomas R. Manifest Destiny: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981

Higham, John. Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1984.

Hilfer, Anthony Channell. The Revolt From the Village: 1915-1930. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1969.

Hill, Hamlin L. Rev. of The Late Mrs. Dorothy Parker, by Leslie Frewin. American Literature 60 (1988): 149-50.

Hirschkop, Ken and David Shepherd. Bakhtin and Cultural Theory. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989.

Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds. The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 1983.

Hobsbawm, Eric. Nations and Nationalisms Since 1780: Programme, Myth and Reality. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 1990.

Hoekstra, Ellen. "The Pedestal Myth Reinforced. Women's Magazine Fiction, 1900-1920." 43-59. New Dimensions in Popular Culture. Bowling Green: Bowling Green Popular P, 1972.

Hoffman, Fredrick. Freudianism and the Literary Mind. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1945.

---. "Philistine and Puritan in the 1920's." American Quarterly 1 (Fall 1949): 247-263.

---. The Twenties: American Writing in the Post-War Decade. New York: Viking, 1955.

Horowitz, Daniel. The Morality of Spending Attitudes Toward the Consumer Society in America. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1985.

Horton, Rod W. and Herbert W. Edwards. eds Backgrounds of American Literary Thought New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1952

Howells, William Dean. "Life and Letters" Harper's Weekly (June 27, 1896) 630.

Huggins, Nathan A. "Integrating Afro-American History into American History." The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present and Future Ed. Darlene Clarke Hine. Baton

Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1986. 157-68

Inge, Thomas M. Concise Histories of American Popular Culture. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982.

Interrante, Joseph and Carol Lasser "Victims of the Very Songs they Sing; A Critique of Recent Work on Patriarchal Culture and the Social Construction of Gender." Radical History Review 20 (Spring-Summer 1979) 25-40

Jaggar, Alison M and Paula Struhl Rothenberg, eds. Feminist Frameworks: Alternative Accounts of the Relations Between Men and Women. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978.

James, Henry Hawthorne. New York: St Martin's P, 1967.

Jameson, Fredric. The Prison House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972.

---. The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981.

Jehlen, Myra American Incarnation: The Individual, The Nation and the Continent. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986.

Jowett, Garth S. "Flappers, Fords and Films: The Movies in 20's America" Journalism History 2(3) (1975): 72-75, 87.

Keats, John. You Might as Well Live: The Life and Times of Dorothy Parker. New York: Paragon, 1970.

Keefe, Robert. "Literati, Language, and Darwinism." Language and Style. 19.2 (Spring 1986): 123-137.

Kerber, Linda K. "The Revolutionary Generation: Ideology, Politics and Culture in the Early Republic." Ed. Eric Foner. The New American History. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1990. 25-50.

Kermode, Frank. The Art of Telling: Essays on Fiction. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983.

Kimbell, Bobby Ellen. American Short Story Writers:1910-1945. Detroit: Gale, 1989.

Kinney, Aurthur F. Dorothy Parker. Amherst: G.K. Hall, 1978.

Klein, Marcus. Foreigners: The Making of American Literature, 1900-1940. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.

Kolodny, Annette. The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1975.

Labrie, Ross. "Dorothy Parker Revisited." Canadian Review of American Studies. 7 (1976): 48-56.

Lakoff, Robin. Language and Woman's Place. New York: Harper, 1975.

Lawrence, Margaret. The School of Femininity. Toronto: Musson, 1972.

Lauterbach, Richard E. "The Legend of Dorothy Parker." The Esquire Treasury. Arnold Gingrich ed. London: William Heinemann, 1954. 634-641

Leach, Eugene E. "Mastering the Crowd: Collective Behavior and Mass Society in American Social Thought, 1917-1939." American Studies 27 (1986): 99-114.

Leach, William. True Love and Perfect Union: The Feminist Reform of Sex and Society. New York, Basic, 1980

Leacock, Stephen The Greatest Pages of American Humour. London: Methuen, 1936.

Lears, T.J. Jackson. No Place of Grace Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920. New York: Pantheon, 1981

Lemisch, Jesse. "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up." Ed. Barton J. Bernstein. Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History. New York: Pantheon, 1968. 3-45

Lentricchia, Frank Criticism and Social Change. Chicago U of Chicago P, 1985.

Lerner, Max. America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States Today New York Simon, 1957

Leuchtenburg, William E. The Perils of Prosperity 1914-1932. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1958

Levine, Lawrence W. Highbrow/Lowbrow. The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988.

Levine, Rhonda F. Class Struggle and the New Deal: Industrial Capital and the State. Lawrence, UP of Kansas, 1988

Lewis, R.W.B. The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century. Chicago. Chicago UP, 1955.

Loggins, Vernon. I Hear America Singing. New York: Crowell, 1937.

Lloyd, David. "Arnold, Ferguson, Schiller: Aesthetic Culture and the Politics of Aesthetics." Critical Inquiry 11 (1984): 137-163.

---. Nationalism and Minor Literature. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987.

Mair, John. "New Novels" Rev. of Here Lies, by Dorothy Parker. The New Statesman and Nation 18 (1939): 584 (Oct.21)

Margon, Arthur. "Urbanization in Fiction: Changing Models of Heroism in Popular American Novels 1880-1920." American Studies 17 (1976): 71-86.

Marquis, Alice G. Hopes and Ashes: The Birth of Modern Times 1929-1939. New York: Free, 1986.

Marwick, Arthur. Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the U.S.A. Since 1930. New York: Oxford UP, 1980

Masson, Thomas Our American Humorists. New York: Books For Libraries P, 1966.

Matthews, T.S. "Curses Not Loud But Deep." Rev. of Laments for the Living, by Dorothy Parker. The New Republic 64 (1930): 133 (Sept. 17)

---. "Fiction by Young and Old." Rev. of After Such Pleasures, by Dorothy Parker. The New Republic 77 (1933) 24-25 (Nov. 15)

Matthiessen, F.O. American Expression. Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman. New York Oxford UP, 1941.

Maurer, D.W. "Language and the Sex Revolution: World War I Thru World War II." American Speech 51 1-2 (1976): 5-24.

May, Charles. "The Unique Effect of the Short Story: A Reconsideration and an Example." Studies in Short Fiction
13 (1976): 289-297.

May, Elaine Taylor. Great Expectations: Marriage and Divorce in Post-Victorian America. Chicago U of Chicago P., 1980

McCarty, Norma Rev. of Here Lies, by Dorothy Parker. New York Times April 30, 1939. p.6.

McClave, Heather. Women Writers of the Short Story: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1980.

McCormick, John. American Literature 1919-1932: A Comparative History. London: Routledge,

1971.

McKenney, Ruth. "Satire and Tragedy." Rev. of Here Lies, by Dorothy Parker. Saturday Review of Literature 20 (1939): 7. (no. 1 April 29)

Meade, Marion. What Fresh Hell is This? New York: Villard, 1988.

Meese, Elizabeth and Alice Parker, eds. The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory. Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1989.

Melzer, Sondra Rosalyn. The Rhetoric of Rage. A Study of the View of Women in Selected Short Stories of Dorothy Parker. Diss. New York U, 1984. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1984. 8421461.

Meredith, Scott. George S. Kaufman and the Algonquin Round Table. London: Allen, 1977.

Messenger, Christian K. Sport and the Spirit of Play in American Fiction. New York: Columbia UP, 1981.

Miles, Rosalind. The Female Form. London: RKP, 1987.

Miller, Lisa. "Feminist Humor: Rebellious and Self-Affirming." Women's Studies 15 (1988): 271-280.

Mills, C. Wright. White Collar: The American Middle Classes. New York: Oxford UP, 1953.

Mintz, Lawrence E. "American Humor in the 1920's." Thalia 4.1 (1981): 26-32.

Modleski, Tania. Loving with a Vengeance. Hamden: Archon, 1982.

Moi, Toril. Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory. London; New York: Methuen, 1985.

Morson, Gary Saul and Caryl Emerson, eds. Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1989.

Mowry, George E, ed. The Twenties: Fords, Flappers and Fanatics. New Jersey: Prentice, 1963.

Nash, Ogden. "The Pleasure is Ours" Rev. of After Such Pleasures, by Dorothy Parker. Saturday Review of Literature 10 (1933): 231. (no. 16 Nov 4)

Newton, Judith and Deborah Rosenfelt, eds. Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture. New York: Methuen, 1985.

Nye, Russell B. "Saturday Night at the Paradise Ballroom or, Dance Halls in the 20's" Journal of Popular Culture 7.1 (1973): 14-22.

O'Connor, Frank The Lonely Voice. Cleveland: World P, 1963.

Ohmann, Richard Malin. English in America: A Radical View of the Profession. New York: Oxford UP, 1976.

---. Politics of Letters. Middletown, Connecticut: Welsleyan P, 1987.

Palm, Franklin Charles. The Middle Classes Then and Now. New York, Macmillan, 1936.

Parker, Dorothy. The Portable Dorothy Parker. Rev. and enl. ed. New York: Viking, 1977.

Pattee, Fred Lewis. The Feminine Fifties. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co, 1940.

Pearl, Jane Helen. "Dorothy Parker Herself: A Psychobiography of the Literary Artist" DAI 43 (1982): 8225990.

Peden, William. The American Short Story: Continuity and Change. Boston: Houghton, 1975.

---. "The American Short Story During the 20's." Studies in Short Fiction 10 (1973): 367-371.

Peiss, Kathy. Cheap Amusements:Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York. Philadelphia: Temple U.P., 1986.

"The Phoenix Nest" Rev. of Laments for the Living by Dorothy Parker. The Saturday review of Literature 6 (1930): 1152. (no.48 June 21)

Pizer, Donald. Twentieth-Century American Literary Naturalism: An Interpretation. Carbondale: Southern Illinois U.P., 1982.

Plomer, William. "The Parker Probe." Spectator. 163 (1939):708. (Nov. 17)

Poirier, Richard. A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature. New York: Oxford UP, 1966.

Pruette, Lorine. Women and Leisure: A Study of Social Waste. New York: Arno P, 1972.

Radway, Janice. "The Book-of-the-Month Club and the General Reader: On the Uses of 'Serious' Fiction." Literature and Social Practice. ed. Philippe Desan et. al. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989.

Raleigh, John Henry. Matthew Arnold and American Culture. Berkeley: U of California P,

1961.

Register, Cheri. "American Feminist Criticism: A Bibliographical Introduction." Ed. Jesephine Donovan. Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory. Lexington: The University P of Kentucky, 1975. 1-28.

Reising, Russel J. The Unusable Past: Theory and the Study of American Literature. London: Methuen, 1986.

Renza, Louis. "A White Heron" and the Question of Minor Literature. Madison: U of Wisconsin P.

Rev. of After Such Pleasures, by Dorothy Parker. Forum 91 (1934): v. (January)

Rev. of After Such Pleasures, by Dorothy Parker. New York Times October 29, 1933. p.6.

Rev. of Laments for the Living, by Dorothy Parker. The New Statesman 36 (1930): 218. (Nov. 22 #917)

Rev. of Laments for the Living, by Dorothy Parker. New York Times. June 15, 1930. p.7.

Riegel, Robert E., "Women's Clothes and Women's Rights." American Quarterly 15 (1963): 390-401.

Robbins, Frances Lamont. "The Week's Reading." Rev. of Laments for the Living by Dorothy Parker. The Outlook and Independent 155 (1930):268. (no. 7 June 18)

Rodgers, Daniel T. and Sean Wilnetz. "Languages of Class and Power in the United States." Ed. Penelope Corfield. Language, Class and History. Cambridge: B. Blackwell, 1991. 240-263.

Ross, Danforth. The American Short Story. Pamphlets on American Writers Series no. 14. Minneapolis, U of Minnesota P, 1961.

Rothman, Ellan. Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America. New York: Basic, 1984.

Rourke, Constance. American Humor: A Study of the National Character. New York: Doubleday, 1953.

Rubin, Joan Shelley, "'Information Please': Culture and Expertise in the Interwar Period." American Quarterly 35 (1983): 499-517.

Rubin, Louis D. The Comic Imagination in American Literature. Rutgers: Rutgers UP, 1973.

Rufus. "Medium Boiled" Rev. of Here Lies, by Dorothy Parker. The Canadian Forum 19 (1939): 97. (June #221)

Said, Edward. The World, the Text and the Critic. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983.

Salomon, Louis B. "Dorothy Parker's Idle Rich." Rev. of Here Lies, by Dorothy Parker. The Nation 149 (1939):76-77. (July 15, no.3)

Schlesinger, Arthur M. Learning How to Behave: A Historical Study of American Etiquette Books. New York: Macmillan, 1946.

Schmidt, Dolores Barracano. "The Great American Bitch." College English 32 (1971): 900-905.

Schroeder, Fred E.H. "Feminine Hygiene, Fashion and the Emancipation of American Women" American Studies 17(2). (1976): 101-110.

Seldes, Gilbert. The Seven Lively Arts. New York: Sagamore, 1957.

---. Your Money and Your Life: A Manual for the Middle Classes. New York: McGraw, 1938.

Shanahan, William. "Robert Benchley and Dorothy Parker: Punch and Judy Formal Dress." Journal of the Arts and Letters 3.1 (1968): 23-24.

Shapiro, Marianne. "How Narrator's Report Speech" Language and Style. 17 (1) Winter 1984. 67-78.

Shapiro, Michael, ed. Language and Politics. New York: New York UP, 1984.

Shi, David E. The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture. New York; Oxford UP, 1985.

"Shorter Notices." Rev. of After Such Pleasures by Dorothy Parker. The Nation 20 Dec. 1933: 715. (vol.137)

Showalter, Elaine. These Modern Women: Autobiographical Essays from the Twenties. New York: Feminist Press, 1978.

Sicherman, Carol Hurd Green, ed. Notable American Women : The Modern Period. Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1980.

Siltanen, Janet and Michelle Stanworth, eds. Women and the Public Sphere. London: Hutchison, 1984.

Simon, Linda. Rev. of What Fresh Hell is This, by Marion Meade. Tulsa Studies in Women's

Literature 7: (1988): 310-312 (Fall)

Simon, Rita James. ed. As We Saw the Thirties: Essays on Social and Political Movements of a Decade. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1967.

Simpson, David. The Politics of American English, 1776-1850. New York: Oxford UP, 1986.

Slater, Philip, E. The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point. Boston: Beacon, 1970.

Smart, Carol and Barry Smart. Women, Sexuality and Social Control. London: RKP, 1978.

Smith, Bernard. Forces in American Criticism; A Study of the History of American Literary Thought. New York: Harcourt, 1939.

Smith, Herbert F. The Popular American Novel 1865-1920. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980.

Smith, Timothy, L. "Protestant Schooling and American Nationality, 1800-1850." Journal of American History 53 (Mar 1967): 679-95.

Soltow, Lee and Edward Stevens. The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States: A Socio-Economic Analysis to 1870 Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.

Spencer, Benjamin, Townley. Patterns of Nationality: Twentieth-Century Versions of America. New York: B. Franklin, 1981.

---. The Quest for Nationality: An American Literary Campaign. New York: Syracuse, 1957.

Spengemann, William C. A Mirror for Americanists: Reflections on the Idea of American Literature. Hanover: UP of New England, 1989

Spindler, Michael. American Literature and Social Change London: Macmillan, 1983.

Stevick, Phillip, ed. The American Short Story: 1900-1945. Boston: Twayne, 1984.

Stimpson, Catherine. Women, the Arts and the 1920's in Paris and New York. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1982.

Stricker, Frank. "Affluence for Whom?- Another Look at Prosperity and the Working Classes in the 1920's." Labor History 24 (1983). 5-33.

Susman, Warren, ed. Culture and Commitment 1925-1945. New York: Braziller, 1973.

---. Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century. New

York: Pantheon, 1984.

---. "'Personality' and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture." New Directions in American Intellectual History. John Higham and Paul Cokin eds. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1979. 212-226.

Swados, Henry. The American Writer and the Great Depression. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966

Tambling, Jeremy. What is Literary Language?. Philadelphia: Open UP, 1988.

Tompkins, Jane. Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.

Thorp, Willard. American Humorists. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1964.

Toth, Emily. "Dorothy Parker, Erica Jong and New Feminist Humor." Regionalism and the Female Imagination 3 (1977-8): 70-85.

Trachtenberg, Stanley. ed. American Humorists: 1800-1950. Detroit: Gale, 1982.

Treichler, Paula. "Verbal Subversion in Dorothy Parker: 'Trapped Like a Trap in a Trap'" Language and Style 11.4 (1980): 46-61.

Trilling, Lionel. "Introduction" in The Portable Matthew Arnold. pp. 1-36 New York: Viking P, 1949

---. The Liberal Imagination. New York: Doubleday, 1950.

Van Doren, Carl. Many Minds. New York: Knopf, 1926.

Van Doren, Mark. "Dorothy Parker." English Journal vol.XX111 Sept. 1934. 535-43.

Veblen, Thorstein. The Theory of the Leisure Class. New York: Macmillan, 1953.

Volosinov, V.N. Marxism and the Philosophy of Language. Trans. Ladislav Matejika and I.R. Titunik. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1973.

Voss, Arthur. The American Short Story: A Critical Survey. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1973.

Wald, Alan M. The New York Intellectuals. London: U of California P, 1987.

Walker, Nancy. "Do Feminists Ever Laugh?: Women's Humor and Women's Rights." International Journal of Women's Studies 4.1 (1981): 1-9.

---. "Fragile and Dumb: The 'Little Woman' in Women's Humor, 1900-1940." Thalia 8.2 (1985): 24-29.

Waugh, Patricia. Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern. London: Routledge, 1989.

Webster, Noah. A Collection of Papers on Political, Literary and Moral Subjects. New York: 1843.

Weisbuch, Robert. Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson. U of Chicago P, 1986.

Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." American Quarterly 18 (1966): 151-174.

Wentworth, Henry and Stuart Berg Flexner, eds. Dictionary of American Slang. Second Supplemented Edition, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co, 1975.

West, Jane. "The 'New Woman'." Twentieth Century Literature 1 (1955): 55-68.

West, Ray B. The Short Story in America 1900-1950. Chicago. Regnery, 1952.

Westcott, Edward Noyes. David Harum: A Story of American Life. New York: D. Appleton, 1927.

White, Hayden. The Content of Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation. Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1987.

White, Richard Grant. "Words and Their Uses." Galaxy 4 May 1, 1867:103

Whitman, Alden. "Dorothy Parker, 73, Literary Wit, Dies." New York Times, 8 June 1967, p.1.

Williams, Blanche Cotton. Our Short Story Writers. New York: Moffat Yard, 1920.

Williams, Raymond. Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society. London: Fontana, 1976.

---. Marxism and Literature. New York: Oxford UP, 1977.

Wilson. Edmund. Classics and Commercials. New York: Farrar, 1951.

---. Shores of Light. New York: Farrar, 1952.

---. A Literary Chronicle: 1920-1950. New York: Doubleday, 1956.

---."Mr. Benchley's Message to His Age" New Republic 30 (1922): 150 (March 29)

Wilson, Joan Hoff. The Twenties: The Critical Issues. Boston: Little Brown, 1972.

Winn, Janet. "Capote, Mailer and Miss Parker" New Republic 140 (1959): 27-8.

Woollcott, Alexander. While Rome Burns. Middlesex: Penguin, 1938.

Wright, Austin McGiffert. The American Short Story in the Twenties. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Yates, Norris The American Humorist: Conscience of the Twentieth Century.New York: Citadel, 1965.

Yellis, Kenneth A. "Prosperity's Child: Some Thoughts on the Flapper." American Quarterly 21 (1969): 44-64.

Zlotnick, Portrait of an American City: The Novelists' New York. New York: Kennikat P, 1982.

Zuckerman, Michael. "Myth and Method: The Current Crisis in American Historical Writing." The History Teacher 17 (1984): 219-45.