TECHNIQUE AS CHARACTERIZATION:
THE IMPLICATIONS OF NARRATOR UNRELIABILITY FOR MORAL LIABILITY

A Thesis

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Advisor
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For
my husband,
Nils Samuels,
with love
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INTRODUCTION

In Wayne Booth's discussion about types of narration and the numerous varieties of distance (between implied author, characters, narrators, narrates, etc.) that ensue, he coins the terms "reliable narrator" and "unreliable narrator." He calls a narrator *reliable* when he speaks or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), *unreliable* when he does not" (Rhetoric 159). Though Booth implies that he is simply labeling the already-conceived notion of the distance between a "fallible or unreliable narrator and the implied author who carries the reader with him in judging the narrator" (159), his discussion promptly nudged over the emphasis literary critics had placed on point of view and made sitting room for the seemingly more specific question of narrative reliability. Booth's terms have proven quite useful, especially in initiating a lasting discussion in which his terms and notions about narrative reliability have been both focused on and expanded. Seymour Chatman joined that discussion and, adding to some of Booth's distinctions, noted that a "narrator's unreliability may stem from cupidity . . . , cretinism . . . , gullibility . . . , psychological and moral obtuseness . . . , perplexity and lack of information . . . , innocence . . . , or a whole host of other causes, including some 'baffling mixtures'" (233).
In *The Rhetoric of Fiction* Booth also addresses the question of the morality of literature, especially the morality of impersonal narration. Though his discussion focuses on what makes literature moral, and, particularly, the author's role in the production of moral literature, in Booth's earlier discussion on the unreliability of Jason Compson, he speaks not of how we judge the morality of the fiction overall, but of the moral judgment we make on some characters:

What all this [secret communion and collusion with the author behind the narrator's back] amounts to is that on this moral level we discover a kind of collaboration which can be one of the most rewarding of all reading experiences. To collaborate with the author by providing the source of an allusion or by deciphering a pun is one thing. But to collaborate with him by providing mature moral judgment is a far more exhilarating sport (307).

I would like to look more vigorously at the relationship between narrative and morality, not at how we judge the morality of the book in general, but at how narrative reliability and unreliability are used to influence moral liability. I will consider aspects of the various causes of unreliable narration that Chatman mentions, but I will also focus on one of the more "baffling mixtures" that neither he nor Booth attends to—how some narrators, whether intentionally or unintentionally, manipulate their narratives toward the creation or absolution of moral liability for the narrator, the narrator-character, characters, or even for the narratees. In attempting to construct their narratives to absolve themselves of moral liability or to assign it to others, these narrators often betray their unreliability. Thus, in determining reliability and unreliability, we must make judgments about
the narrator's motivations, interests, and purposes in telling the story in that particular way.

I will examine what I consider the three core aspects of narrator reliability: the accuracy of reported or inferred facts, interpretations, and judgments. I will maintain Chatman's distinctions between interpretations and judgments: an interpretation is "any explanation, any relatively value-free attempt to account for something in terms of the story itself without going outside it"; a judgment is an explanation which has a basis in moral evaluation and which deals with values, norms and beliefs. These are closely related because, though narrators offer straightforward explanations as value-free interpretations within the story, we, standing outside the story, often use these interpretations as tools for making judgments about the narrator's morality. Occasionally I will consider what Chatman calls generalizations, which are explanations, often philosophical observations, that compare "an event or existent in the story with real ones in the nonfictional universe," that connect the fictional world with the real one (237-43). Finally, I will consider the aspect of reliability which often is overlooked, how or if the values of the narrator correspond with the values of the implied author.

Identifying the implied authors' values is the most challenging part of identifying narrator reliability. It often entails the identification of some kind of liability—a boundless concept in literature, one we should apply to implied and real readers, to implied and real authors, and to narratees. However, in this paper I will limit my discussion to the liability of narrators and characters. I will
define liability as what the narrators or characters could, should be, or are held morally—not necessarily legally—responsible for. There is no guarantee, of course, that readers will share my moral judgments and agree with my assignment of narrator liability. Indeed, these works are not conducive to clear-cut definitions of liability, which is why they are so fascinating to study in terms of their reliability. However, the works I will explore and their implied authors ask us, if not to share in their actual judgment, at least to share in the identification of what the implied authors' beliefs and judgments are. Finally, since all of the narrators in my study also function as characters, I will sometimes consider the reliability and liability of their separate roles—especially when, as in As I Lay Dying, I make different conclusions about the same figure, depending upon which—character or narrator—I am considering.

With so much to consider, I have chosen works that offer a broad range of ethical situations as well as a variety of narrative styles and structures: "Haircut," The Turn of the Screw, Frankenstein, and As I Lay Dying. These works vary in numerous ways, ranging from straightforward narrative structures to quite complex ones. The complexity is influenced by, among other things: the distinguishability of the narrator and his values; the function and the stability of the narrator (as flat or round, as narrator-character, or as narrator-narratee); the intentions and purposes of the narrator; the existence and depth of narrative embedding; the use of epistolary forms; the length of time between the occurrence of events and the narration of them; the ease or difficulty in determining the implied author's
presence and norms; and the location and role of the narratee. The moral complexities are influenced by, most significantly for this paper, the relationship between the moral responsibility and the narrative, but also by the shared or unshared perceptions of the transgression (by the characters, narrators, and narratees), the ease with which the offense is identified, the reasons why and the ease with which blame is appropriated, and the recipient of the blame and his or her role as narrator, narratee, or character. In general, I will move from those works with the simplest narrative structures to those with more complex structures, although the issues of moral liability will not be so easy to stratify.
CHAPTER I

Collaborative Unreliability:
Whitey as Representative in "Haircut"

All of the major narrators in the works I will cover function as narrator-characters to some extent, which is to say they are somehow implicated by their own story. Whitey, of Ring Lardner's "Haircut," actively participates in the events of his story far less than the narrators of the other works participate in the events of their stories. In most of the events he is a non-participating observer, which raises some interesting moral questions. However, if his relative inactivity in the story as a character creates slack in his role as narrator-character, this slack is tightened by his service as the sole narrator of the events. "Haircut" is the only one of the four stories with truly one narrator—and only one speaker. He tells the newcomer, the single narratee, the story directly and quickly, in first person form, and, although he frequently misuses past and present verb tenses, the events of his story are all neatly in the past. The simple narrative structure of "Haircut" and its accessible narrator make it a natural starting point for my study, which is not to imply that its questions of moral liability and absolution are so clean.

Although Whitey functions as the sole narrator of "Haircut," Lardner could easily have incorporated evidence of Whitey's factual distortion, which would enable us to label Whitey unreliable on the most
basic level of narrative. However, Lardner gives no indication that Whitey has misconstrued the facts. Whitey is a reliable reporter, and Lardner uses the factual credibility of Whitey's tale as the backdrop against which we measure Whitey's interpretive and judgmental unreliability. However, while many of Whitey's interpretations are perfectly reasonable, his judgments are often inadequate. It is the pattern and combination of reliability and unreliability in Whitey's interpretations and judgments which enables us to locate the roots of his unreliability and to assess his own involvement and liability in this tale.

Our narrator has some unusual and significant attributes which facilitate our judgments about his reliability. He is barely aware of his audience, telling his story more to a new set of ears than to a customer, and his awareness weakens as he engages in the recollection of his story. In the first two paragraphs, Whitey's awareness of his customer is evidenced in statements like, "You can see for yourself" and "You're a newcomer, ain't you? I thought I hadn't seen you round before." One of the few deictic points of the story comes here, after Whitey's question, when we presume that the newcomer answers a plain, "yes." There are a few other deictic marks in the story, but most of them occur very early and only two of them ask for responses, simple "yes" or "no" ones at that; the others ask only for a glance in a certain direction, and even the occurrence or lack of the glance makes no difference to how or whether Whitey continues. During the haircut and the story, Whitey asks no service-oriented questions and obliterates the customer so effectively that when we read the final sentence, "Comb
it wet or dry?" (364), its deictic reminder that he is still there jars us out of the place we had taken in the barber's chair.

Whitey's speech shares some of the same characteristics of "writer-based" prose (Flower). As the name implies, the author of such writing betrays a lack of or weakened awareness of the reader (who is replaced here by our unnamed narratee), which often results in confusion for the reader. Whitey's narrative is repetitive and haphazard, making it a bit more challenging for an ignorant listener or a first time reader to follow than typical "reader-based" prose. He often strays from his story, and his transitional devices—if he uses them at all—are often as weak as a "so" or "well." He loses narrative control when he digresses from his characterization of Doc Stair to his own fantasizing about what he could do with the money his customers owe him. He catches himself in that digression, noting, "--but I guess I shouldn't ought to be gossipin'" (355), but he gets off-track again when he discusses the Gloria Swanson movies. Whitey strays most regularly in his character introductions, which obviously betray some awareness of his audience. However, he loses narrative control during these also, frequently and unnecessarily repeating surnames. He also repeats other kinds of information, even whole paragraphs, like this one: "You see, the concern he'd been workin' for was a factory that made canned goods. Over in Carterville. And now Jim said he was canned himself. He certainly was a card!" (352). He is so repetitive that he is pitifully comical, as if he cannot remember what he has already said to this set of ears, so he repeats it to be sure, giving the second dose of
information so soon after the first that we cannot help but wonder about Whitey's intellect.

By creating such a monopolizing, doltish, unself-conscious narrator, Lardner ensures, more so than any other authors in my study, reader consensus about Whitey's character and his unreliability. Were he more self-aware and, thus, less revealing, we might find ourselves in the same kind of predicament we find ourselves in with James's governess--often unsure of just exactly what our narrator says and does, piecing the narrative together like a puzzle. "Haircut" asks us to piece together some links, but it also easily enables us to do so. And even though Whitey seems to disregard his customer, he is somewhat considerate of his listener, producing not an interior monologue (like a real writer-based writer would), but a narrative which holds together, however loosely at times. Instead of confounding us with his writer-based narrative, Whitey's story and character have engaged us so effectively that, by the end of the story, we are almost ready to pull out our billfolds.

Part of the reason for this reader engagement is the interest Whitey has in his own story. He has an investment in it, and he tries to tell it with some authority, even though he has not witnessed all of its events. He repeatedly indicates his doubt with qualifiers like "or nowhere else, I guess" (354), "he must have a tailor take his measure" (354), and "Paul seemed to feel like here was a real friend" (356). Even though the interpretive accuracy of these statements is not much affected by the words I have stressed, the qualifiers, especially given their repetition throughout the story, indicate some sense of Whitey's
doubt. One of the ways Whitey tries to heighten his sense of authority is linguistically, with the abundant use of confident, assured qualifiers, such as "of course," which he uses eight times. But we still have a lone narrator trying to tell us a story that he has not witnessed completely. So he turns what could be a reliability weakness into a reliability asset: he calls the town as participants and witnesses.

Whitey begins "Haircut" by narrating events which he witnesses in his own shop (such as the teasing of Milt Sheppard, Jim's announcement that he'd been "canned"), but he can not sustain this for very long. So he begins to rely on stories that he has heard second hand, perhaps even third hand. He begins the story about the Evans circus with the implication that he is omniscient: "Then he told his wife and two kiddies that he was goin' to take them to the circus." This seems a safe assumption for Whitey to make, and at this point it may not be very important at all that Whitey probably did not hear Jim tell Mrs. Kendall this himself. As Whitey progresses with the telling of that event, he begins to indicate that he has not, in fact, seen all: "Well, it seems, w'ile they was cryin', Doc Stair came along" (354 emphasis added). He sometimes indicates his reliance on others' input, as when he says, "though they tell me he never dunned anybody" (355), but he does this rarely and without method or conscious motive. Whitey is dependent upon many others for essential links of his story, although this dependence is not something he has given much thought to. Whitey does not question his factual authority much, but he never
intentionally tries to distort it, and he relies heavily on others' experiences and views to fill his narrative gaps.

Whitey increases his collaborative authority linguistically by using quotes and by merging his point of view with others. Direct quotes are the only forms which cite the speaker's exact words, and Whitey uses only eight of these. In many of them, there is a misuse of the progressive aspect, often in conjunction with the misuse of the past tense. This is something which Whitey does repeatedly in his first person comments, so there may be cause to wonder if he has juxtaposed his words and voice with the words of the speakers even in their direct quotes. We should not be surprised if this has happened. We do not know how long ago these lines were said, and it may very well be that Whitey cannot remember them or that he just does not prioritize their accuracy. Nevertheless, the direct quotes maintain Whitey's voice. This consistency does a few important things. First, it encourages us to continue traveling closely with Whitey, which maintains or increases our engagement. Second, it blends the voices of the town by giving none of the characters an idiolect, instead, giving them all a shared dialect. Indeed, though we may doubt Whitey's intellectual capacity for remembering quotes, we have no certain disproof of their accuracy. His direct quotes may very well be accurate, manifesting a linguistic homogeneity of the residents on the most surface-structure level—which seems appropriate for a story that relies on much of the town members' input, a story about a group of similar folks--people who share at least the ability to close their eyes to things.
Whitey stops using direct quotes early in the story, and, as he begins to narrate events that he has not witnessed, he comes to rely on tagged and untagged indirect forms. These give no guarantee of the speaker's exact words, instead implying, as Chatman says:

a shade more intervention by a narrator, since we cannot be sure that the words in the report clause are precisely those spoken by the quoted speaker. Of course, they may be. . . . However, there are several other kinds of expressive effects [in addition to changes in style] which suggest that the character's speech or thoughts are being directly quoted. For instance, part of the sentence can be shifted around and elements deleted to give them more prominence, as someone might do in the heat of actual expression: 'John shouted out that how Mary could behave so badly was beyond his comprehension,' (200).

In some of Whitey's indirect tagged quotes, he shifts words out of their usual first person order to more closely resemble the original speaker's wording, for example: "But he said he was expectin' an important long distance call and wouldn't she please forget her manners for once and come to his office. He said they couldn't nothin' hurt her and nobody would see her and he just must talk to her a little while." (361). By changing the normal word order, Whitey adds special emphasis and maintains the sense that the words he quotes indirectly may in fact be the words of the original speakers, which thus implies a stronger familiarity with the quotes and which increases his sense of narrative authority and reliability. Whitey does not acknowledge that "Jim told me he told Julie that he said." Instead, by eliminating the conveyor of the message, the quote is associated with both himself and the original speaker, thereby increasing his sense of familiarity with those words as well as his sense of pseudo-authority in them. And, by maintaining the tags in the indirect quotes which imply original wording (and in the
ones which do not), Whitey does not efface himself as narrator. He does this when he indirectly quotes words that he hears, but, more importantly, also when he quotes words that he probably does not hear: "Then he told his wife and two kiddies that he was goin' to take them to the circus. The day of the circus, he told them he would get the tickets and meet them outside the entrance to the tent" (354). Does Whitey hear Jim say this to Mrs. Kendall, or, more likely, does Jim tell Whitey this is what he said to his family? Probably the latter, but, by eliminating the middle transaction, Whitey does not rule out the possibility that he hears these words when they are first spoken. This suggests he hears them himself, instead of from someone else—which enhances his authority.

Whitey also increases his sense of authority by frequently using indirect untagged forms to convey another character's point of view. It is doubtful that Whitey has much, or even any, interaction with Mrs. Kendall, but at times Whitey's words imply a surprising intimacy with her words and thoughts:

That would set everybody to laughin' because Jim and his wife wasn't on very good terms. She'd of divorced him only they wasn't no chance to get alimony and she didn't have no way to take care of herself and the kids. She couldn't never understand Jim. He was kind of rough, but a good fella at heart (351).

Although Whitey uses similar techniques to bring us closer to the minds of other characters, I quote this comment because Mrs. Kendall seems the character least likely to convey intimate thoughts to Whitey. Yet he uses an interesting blend of Jim's indirect tagged quotes of and of Mrs. Kendall's indirect tagged thoughts to imply a kind of omniscience
regarding the couple. Sure, Jim could have told Whitey what Jim thought Mrs. Kendall was thinking, but, by leaving out the tags in some of the sentences, Whitey implies that this is something he knows for certain.

It is difficult to know if Whitey is using indirect untagged forms here or if he is simply conveying his own assumptions. Chatman says, "[the indirect free form] has a greater degree of autonomy [than the indirect tagged form], and, though ambiguity may persist, the absence of the tag makes it sound more like the character speaking or thinking than a narrator's report" (201). Whitey may be using the indirect form in this way, to emphasize the characters' input, but, at the same time, this enhances his authority as narrator because it illustrates an alleged closeness to the characters. Whitey also may be just assuming a familiarity with people's thoughts and words based on his interpretations of the events and characters. Maybe Jim intends to take the kids to the circus, but is waylaid by the gin. Maybe Julie really likes Paul. Right now, these are not the issues for me. What Whitey's language does is bring us closer to the perspectives and conceptions of other characters in a way that probably is not consistent with Whitey's personality. How can this superficial, obtuse narrator, have the sensitivity to see these things? Maybe he just guesses. Whitey's use of indirect forms to increase his appearance of reliability may not be bothersome, especially given that one of the conventions of first person narratives is that the narrator can occasionally function omnisciently. However, this is an assumption that I think we must question in all narratives. in "Haircut," although we accept Whitey's information about the actions and the characters, in the process of assessing reliability,
we have to examine his sources and his presentation because, as I will discuss shortly, these are directly related to our distribution of moral liability and to Lardner's main theme of the story. Indeed, all of the information Whitey gives us, regardless of its source, seems reliable and accurate. The facts of the story fit in large part because it is the town's story. So, though Whitey may be independently accurate sometimes, his suggested closeness to the other characters may not be authentic; he may be using it (even unintentionally) to get us close to the views of other characters and to increase his reliability—even when he guesses at or assumes those views. This, however subtly, further enhances the collaborative nature of the story. Its telling betrays a frightening consistency which implicates the residents in the story as much as it implicates Whitey: they are all guilty of either moral obtuseness or of looking the other way.

Whitey uses his and other's words to enhance his authority as he tells a story he has not completely witnessed, but he also utilizes what others have done. He uses their experiences and his experiences with them to add credibility to his tale and interpretations: "For a w'ile everybody was wonderin'" (354); "and she didn't know that we was all noticin' how many times she made excuses to go up to his office or pass it"; "I felt sorry for her and so did most other people"; "Meanw'ile everybody in town was wise to Julie's being wild mad over the Doc" (359 emphasis added). This way, instead of allowing narrative gaps to weaken his narrative authority, he uses them to strengthen it by enhancing the collaborative nature of his tale. For some stories, this collaborative effort might very well weaken the narrator's authority.
It certainly does, in some ways, dilute Whitey's role and influence as narrator, especially because, since he is the sole provider, we have nothing against which to test his story except itself. But at the same time this strengthens Whitey's authority because "Haircut" is not Whitey's story, but the town's.

In many ways, "Haircut" is a folktale, one which feeds on a collaborative effort that increases its factual reliability. M. H. Abrams defines folklore as "verbal materials and social rituals that have been handed down solely, or at least primarily, by word of mouth and by example, rather than in written form" (66). Of course, the tale is told orally--by one who participates in one of the town's customary activities by giving post-mortem shaves. Although the story has not been passed down through generations, it is based entirely on the past. We do not know exactly how long ago the events took place, but Whitey says Jim was employed by the canned goods concern "years ago" (352), and most of the story probably occurred in the past year and a half, after, according to Whitey, Doc Stair came to town. And, although Whitey frequently misuses past and present verb tenses when he discusses the events that come later in his discourse, when he talks about the shop and the events which occurred there, he consistently uses the mono and periphrastic modals "would" and "used to," which are used to indicate past habitual activity in a way that suggests ritualistic behavior: "Jim would set there a w'ile . . . and then finally he'd say to me. . . . Jim would say, . . . So I'd say. . . . Then Hod Meyers would say. . . . That would set everybody to laughin'" (351). One of the most "prolific and persistent of all folktales is the set 'joke,' or
comic (often bawdy) anecdote" (Abrams 66), and Whitey uses the would and
used-to modals in his accounts of such anecdotes. The jokes, the
haircuts, and the barber shop are the ritualistic elements in Whitey's
folktale.

"Haircut" itself may not be repeated (though we would expect it to
be, especially by Whitey), but even if the particular episodes Whitey
narrates as occurring habitually in fact did not happen on a regular
basis, there is a sense of repetition here, of stability, and certainly
of fondness for those events and people. This historical fondness and
respect may also be one of the reasons why Whitey reiterates the
characters' names so regularly. He uses them, including Gloria
Swanson's name, in the repetitive way John Henry's name is used in the
folk ballad about the man "dying with a hammer in his hand"—in a way
which marks them in memories. This may be related to his inability to
remember what he has already said, which loosens his narrative.
However, Whitey may do this to heighten his authority, to indicate his
familiarity with the folk—be they "Gloria" or "Doc." He knows them
enough to know their last names, but he also knows them well enough to
imply a first name basis with them.

The collaborative effect in Whitey's story, from what he says to
how he says it, increases the appearance of narrative reliability in the
story by implying that Whitey's values and beliefs are representative of
the town's, which they very well may be. Under a collaborative guise,
Whitey exhibits the assuredness of a historian and the insight of a
judge. But often if the narrator's values merge with those values of
his seemingly reasonable fellow-characters, then his values are less
likely to stand out in the context of the story via a juxtaposition of them against the values of others. This works in "Haircut" because we have other signs with which to measure reliability, and because Lardner is questioning the values of Whitey's backdrop characters as well as of Whitey. But narrative reliability is judged by the successful merging of the values of the implied author and the narrator, regardless of the value systems of the other characters. And to identify the values of the implied author, we need to read into the story beyond what the narrator tells us. Lardner give us a remarkable number of tools with which to do this, some subtle, some explicit, and I need to examine many of them to discuss the extent and source of unreliability--and how Lardner uses it to thematize the story.

This is a story about many characters, but it is also one about Whitey, who is far more concerned with its historical significance than its temporal location. This is Whitey's story of a time when his shop was the town's focal point, a place that was "jam-packed Saturdays, from four o'clock on" (350). It is possible that the town barber shop is still the Saturday evening social center, but now Jim is missing, the fallen hero who, with Hod Meyers, "used to keep [the] town in an uproar" (350), giving the place some sense of esteem, making it the place that had "more laughin' done [in it] than any town its size in America" (350). Whitey's telling us about the time of his shop's acme is his way of preserving it--in the same way that his keeping Jim's mug on the shelf "just the same for old time's sake" is his way of preserving Jim's memory (352). Whitey's personal interest in the story affects how he
tells and interprets it, as well as how he is implicated by it and its characters.

It is clear that Whitey respects Jim, and this respect influences Whitey's ability to evaluate Jim's actions. Whitey introduces the focus of his story, Jim, immediately, neglecting his own introduction until his name comes up in one of Jim's quotes: "Well, Jim would set there a w'ile without openin' his mouth only to spit, and then finally he'd say to me, 'Whitey,'--my right name, that is, my first name, is Dick, but everybody round here calls me Whitey--Jim would say..." (351). He points out Jim's mug, and then unnecessarily and with deference reads Jim's name aloud, "James H. Kendall," and as if to use the mug as proof of Jim's shop connection. Though the shop is the social center of the town, it relies heavily on Jim's connection to the outside world. Whitey says, "He'd drop in here Saturdays and tell his experiences for that week. It was rich" (352). Whitey, the town's narrator-representative in the discourse, vicariously experiences the grand world with Jim and betrays consistent respect for the town's story-ambassador to the rest of the fictional world. So, although Whitey quotes Jim as saying, "I been fired from my job," Whitey more respectfully says, "he lost his position" (352-3 emphasis added). Whitey's esteem for Jim disables him from correctly interpreting the way some folks respond to him. Whitey says, "Whoever had been settin' in that chair, why they'd get up when Jim come in and give it to him" (350), as if this is a gesture of respect, overlooking or ignoring the probability that this is a gesture of tacit fear. He says Mrs. Kendall is "stubborn" because she will not tell Doc Stair about the circus incident. And when he
describes the joke Hod and Jim used to play on Milt, he says that Milt "would force a smile" (351). Whitey does not see there is not much else Milt or the others can do.

Whitey not only respects Jim, he also identifies with him. He tells the canned goods concern story with relish, using the outline of Jim's tricks but filling it with his own imagination: "For instance . . . they'd come to some little town like--well, like--we'll say, like Benton. . . . For instance, they'd be a sign . . . but he'd write on the card, well, somethin' like. . ." (353). Whitey goes beyond reporting here, showing his potential not only to vicariously experience Jim's experiences, but to use them as the bases for his own imaginative concoctions. And, in the next paragraph, Lardner's irony invites collusion between the readers and the implied author. Whitey says, "Of course, he never knew what really come of none of these jokes, but he could picture what probably happened and that was enough." This applies to Whitey as well as to Jim and emphasizes Whitey's identification with his hero.

Whitey's respect for and identification with Jim are also evident in his language. I discuss above how he and Jim share speech characteristics related to grammar and how this merges their voices; they also share a vocabulary. When Whitey introduces Milt, he says, "I don't suppose you've seen Milt. Well, he's got an Adam's apple that looks more like a mushmelon" (351), as if the simile is his own, but soon after we see that Jim and Hod have also teased Milt about the melon stuck in his throat. Later, in his description of Paul, Whitey says, "Jim Kendall used to call him cuckoo; that's a name Jim had for anybody
that was off their head, only he called people's head their bean. That was another of his gags, callin' head bean and callin' crazy people cuckoo" (355). Whitey refers again to "the poor cuckoo, as Jim called him" (362), as if Jim holds the patent for "cuckoo," but shortly thereafter Whitey says, "Jim was here in the shop again, and so was the cuckoo" (362), indicating that he has assimilated Jim's image for Paul. Whitey shows his admiration for Jim when he attributes the use of other descriptive terms to Jim, though the terms are commonly used even today. He says, "[Jim] didn't have no more chance than, well, than a rabbit. That's an expression of Jim himself" (358). But Whitey does not really grasp the use of this metaphor, and later he misuses it to symbolize not death but life: "He wasn't no more dead than, well, than a rabbit" (360). Whitey does not have the intelligence to use Jim's metaphor in new situations, and this is certainly in keeping with the intellectual profile we see of him. Lardner uses wording and imagery to foreshadow the nature of Jim's killing, and Whitey's reversal of the symbols illuminates the theme about the interactions of the weak and the strong, the "fats" and the "leans," the hunters and the hunted—and how those roles are unexpectedly reversed. Jim's and Whitey's linguistic similarities may be commonalities of the entire town, which heightens the town's liability, or they may simply be related to the fact that Whitey may not be able to assume another's voice—which is consistent with his limited intelligence and perspective. Nevertheless, they link Whitey and Jim. And Whitey's perception of Jim exhibits itself more importantly in other ways, ways which more clearly enable us to locate
the values of the implied author, and, therefore, the discrepancy in Whitey's reliability.

The admiration for and identification with Jim that Whitey's language bespeaks is confirmed in his reports about and evaluation of Jim. When Whitey first introduces Jim, he says, "Jim and his wife wasn't on very good terms. She'd of divorced him only they wasn't no chance to get alimony and she didn't have no way to take care of herself and the kids. She couldn't never understand Jim. He was kind of rough, but a good fella at heart" (351). We have not yet seen the extent of Jim's roughness, and we do not know why Mrs. Kendall cannot expect alimony. Perhaps the entire family, including Jim, is impoverished, in which case we might also sympathize with Jim. We also do not know yet why Jim and his wife are not on good terms. Perhaps it is Mrs. Kendall who is the problem. By withholding impugning evidence, Lardner gives us little reason early on to question Whitey's judgment that Jim is comical but a good fellow at heart. Even Whitey's early attempt to demonstrate Jim's roughness, the episode with Milt Sheppard, does not do so. In this case, it is Hod who provokes the bloody image of cutting Milt's throat, and Jim simply suggests that Milt ate a whole cantaloupe—which does not seem too malicious.

After telling us about Jim's attempts to cause familial discord, Whitey discusses Jim's own family conflict. Jim does not work steadily and spends the money he does earn on odd jobs. Mrs. Kendall tries earning money at dressmaking, and it is not surprising that, in this patriarchal town where men spend money on shaves and alcohol and where there are generally wide margins between the empowered and the
powerless, she fails. Then Whitey says, "As I say, she'd of divorced Jim, only she seen that she couldn't support herself and the kids and she was always hopin' that some day Jim would cut out his habits and give her more than two or three dollars a week" (353). Now Mrs. Kendall's condition and Jim's contribution to it are clear. At first it seems that Whitey is approaching a fair and complete interpretation or judgment of Jim. But his comments also imply that he believes Jim is contributing somehow to his family's welfare—even though Whitey says that the "family might have starved if the stores hadn't of carried them along" (353). Whitey says Mrs. Kendall asks Jim's employees to give his pay to her, but he does not see the significance of her attempt to feed her family and that, by taking the money, Jim deprives his family of their sustenance. Whitey calls it "borrowin' most of his pay in advance" (353) and, in what seems to be an indirect tagged quote of Jim's, says, "He told it all round town, how he had outfoxed his Missus." Because of the comma placement, it is unclear whether Jim told the town all about this incident in words that are not quoted here or if he actually said he had outfoxed his wife. Whitey's duplication of the word in a way which suggests that it might be his own betrays a sympathy and respect for Jim that we have seen before. This occurs again in the next paragraph: "But he wasn't satisfied with just outwittin' her." If Whitey defines Jim's actions himself, he manifests an even stronger sympathy for Jim, which coincides with his inability to judge Jim appropriately. This sympathy is confirmed in Whitey's numerous descriptions of Jim as a "caution!" a "card!" (351), and a "character!" (351-2)). Although Whitey has told us twice about Mrs. Kendall's
poverty, he misses the gist of its cause and shows no sympathy for her. Whitey accurately reports the family's circumstances, but he does not relate them to Jim's actions in any real or judgmental way. As the story progresses, Jim's antics get more and more destructive, yet Whitey never questions them, never wonders if Jim has cause to "get even," never sees the maliciousness we see. As the discrepancy between Whitey's interpretation and our interpretation grows, we begin to judge not only Jim, but Whitey also—and we begin to question his however passive role in the events he relates. He already "knows" what we have yet to learn about Jim's behavior, but his interpretations and judgments are remarkably unaffected by that knowledge. He has enough information with which to interpret Jim's actions and their results on the family, but he cannot make the connections which are so evident to us.

Whitey identifies with Jim, not only living vicariously through his fame and actions, but extending his own lack of conscious malice to Jim's actions. Even when Whitey thinks Jim intends to throw Paul overboard, Whitey does not judge Jim as we would, especially when we consider that Jim's actions might be life-threatening to Paul. Even though Jim's stunt with Julie is "raw," it is okay because Jim is all right at heart. Whitey's judgment is curtailed at that crucial point because he does not want to or is unable to imagine his hero or himself as being immoral. If Whitey notes that the characters have hostile intentions, he, by his very inaction, would be their accomplice. If he makes explicit suggestions that Jim's intention are less than playful, he will taint his own image—because either Whitey and his accusations will be rejected as disrespectfully and utterly foolish, or because, if
such accusations are accepted, he will be considered negligent, stupid, or maybe even partly liable.

Whitey’s final comments about Jim are,

Personally I wouldn’t never leave a person shoot a gun in the same boat I was in unless I was sure they knew somethin’ about guns. Jim was a sucker to leave a new beginner have his gun, let alone a half-wit. It probably served Jim right, what he got. But still we miss him round here. He certainly was a card!” (364).

Throughout the story, Whitey neglects to impute Jim, but suddenly he finds Jim liable for being stupid and deems Jim’s death a suitable punishment for it. Whitey, who misinterprets events all along, shocks us not because he also does so here, but because of the degree of his distortion. And, although Whitey lacks compassion for those Jim torments, it seems as though Whitey has invested some fond emotions in Jim. He tumbles our expectations (in the same way Paul does by dramatically taking justice in his own hands) when he reports his hero’s death with amazing heartlessness. But, even though the severity of Whitey’s heartlessness surprises us, it is consistent with his insensitive response to other characters. What really topples us is the direction of Whitey’s judgment: instead of favoring his hero, it condemns him. Whitey’s last comment, "He certainly was a card!" betrays his sustained affection for Jim and, at the same time, reveals just how superficial that affection is. Whitey’s interest in Jim is founded not in his person, but in what Jim, with his diversity and laughter, offered Whitey, the shop, and the town.

The question of moral responsibility also exists for other characters, and along with this we need to address Whitey’s
relationship to them. When Whitey introduces Doc, he does not do so with the blatant pride that he introduces Jim, but he makes it clear that Doc also gains his respect. We first learn about Doc when Whitey discusses the circus incident, during which Doc becomes the family hero. Whitey describes Doc as a "handsome young fella" (354) and then addresses an earlier concern of the town's, why "a young doctor like Doc Stair" would come to set up practice in a town with two established physicians. He tells us there is a story that Doc had come to forget a woman, and that "He said himself that he thought they wasn't nothin' like general practice in a place like ours to fit a man to be all round good doctor. And that's why he came" (355). Whitey accepts Doc's own explanation for his presence over the one told by the residents, the one which characterizes Doc as a reasonable, sacrificing professional--rather than a retreating lover. He tells us all about how Doc is willing to make immediate home visits to examine his mother and Mrs. Gregg, women see the other doctors for years without success, but that Doc Stair prefers office visits so he can make more complete exams. Doc makes "enough to live on" (355), even though, as Whitey says the people say, Doc "never dunned nobody," even in a town where "folks certainly has got the owin' habit." Whitey seems to believe Doc's claim that his efforts to help Paul are fruitful, that Doc just cannot say no--even when it means being "made" to take the low-paying coroner's job. Whitey, who cut Doc's hair during Doc's first week in town, consistently views and portrays Doc as a respectable, generous, successful doctor--which is a reasonable judgment.
When Doc comes into the shop on the morning of the killing, Whitey's plausible interpretation is, "He looked kind of nervous" (363), but he never proposes a cause for Doc's concern. Does Whitey think Doc is worried about Paul's safety? Whitey knows the personal and professional relationship between Paul and Doc. He knows that Paul told Doc "he wouldn't never have no more to do with Jim as long as he lived" and that Paul has overheard Doc say, "anybody that would do a thing like that ought not to be let live" (363). But after the shooting, Whitey never asks why, if Doc was so nervous, he did not go straight to Scott's farm. Whitey has the information in front of him, and, even though his interpretations pull conveniently from much of it, his judgments ignore the fine points that we see. Whitey says, with a surety that is based on his respect for Doc but also on his need to believe this, "Doc examined the body and said they might as well fetch it back to town. They was no use leavin' it there or callin' a jury, as it was a plain case of accidental shootin'" (363). Whitey, incapable of purporting any suspicion of Doc, relies on Doc's professionalism to misconstrue Doc's involvement.

Doc Stair fits the mold Whitey wants him to fit, and Whitey also finds a mold for Paul. When Whitey introduces Paul, he says, "But I was goin' to tell you about a poor boy we got here in town--Paul Dickson. He fell out of a tree when he was about ten years old. Lit on his head and it done somethin' to him and he ain't never been right. No harm in him, but just silly" (355). "No harm in him, but just silly" and Whitey's constant reference to "poor Paul" sound like the town's cliches for describing Paul. Whitey does not have particularly intimate
insights about Paul; instead, he relies on the collaborative image of Paul, the one "we" formulate--one which may once have been accurate. Whitey's interpretation of Paul, "Poor Paul was always kind of suspicious of people, maybe on account of Jim had kept foolin' him" (356), is also acceptable (although at the same time he identifies the cause for Paul's suspicion, he dismisses it by calling Jim's malicious taunting "foolin','" which again conflicts with our interpretation of Jim). But Whitey gets locked into this characterization. Even after Doc, whose competence Whitey trusts, tells Whitey that "he really thought they was times when [Paul] was as bright and sensible as anybody else" (356), Whitey does not adjust his assessment of Paul's ability. Whitey knows Paul told Doc about Jim's harassment of Julie, and he presumes Doc swears revenge, probably in front of Paul. But he never asks why Paul uncharacteristically volunteers to go hunting with the man who repeatedly intimidates him. He sees this as another one of Jim's setups for "poor Paul," and we might accept this ourselves for a while. But Whitey does not utilize what he learns the next morning from Doc, never considering the possibility that Paul may have intentionally shot Jim, never questioning Jim's safety. Whitey's vacuity prevents him, in large part, from making adequate moral judgments. But his insufficient conclusions are also related to his own liability. In his however subconscious attempt to absolve even himself from not recognizing the suspiciousness of Paul's offer to go hunting with Jim, he perpetuates the notion of Paul's harmlessness and incompetence. It is acceptable that Whitey does not try to stop Paul from going hunting because Jim is just going to play another joke on him. Whitey continues to rely on his
and the town's foregone conclusions about Paul's intelligence to deny Paul's participation, regardless of what Doc has said to him. Once again, Whitey initially makes what seems to be a largely accurate interpretation, but then his interpretation gets skewed because he cannot adjust it to accommodate the very information he gives us.

Clearly, Whitey is dull-witted. He does not even realize that he is providing evidence which conflicts with his interpretation—and which, finally, convicts him. However, his inability to make acceptable conclusions is related to more than just his intellectual obtuseness. Whitey believes before the shooting and as he tells the story later that Doc is smart and respectable, that poor Paul is a "half-wit" (364)," "ain't crazy, but just silly" (355), and that Jim is "all right at heart, but just bubblin' over with mischief" (363). In order to maintain stability, Whitey ingrains in himself and his narratee his pre-shooting notions of the characters. He wraps it neatly up by calling on the reputations of Paul and Doc and by relying on what either Doc or Paul or John Scott told somebody—never, of course, questioning their reliability. His reports convict Jim—whom one side of town admires, Doc—whom the other side of town respects, and Paul—whom most of the town thinks is harmless and stupid; but his interpretations continually pardon them—and himself. By never fully considering the question of real liability, he keeps his boat and the town's boat steady. He never realizes his own stupidity, so he never has to face his neglectful role in the events of the story—from the taunting of Milt to the shooting of Jim—and he does not disrupt Jim's fame, Doc's respect, or the shop's association with both of them.
By telling this story, Whitey immortalizes Jim and, more important for Whitey, the fame and laughter that Whitey enjoys through his close association with him. But, in order to enjoy the best of Jim's legacy, Whitey must interpret and report the story in a way which denies its full import—and a way which seemingly protects him from blame. He does this by neglecting, intentionally or unintentionally, the moral issues in his story, but also by standing, in many ways, outside of the story. Whitey simply narrates events which he witnesses but does not participate in. We, however, standing truly outside the story, read Lardner's clues and recognize Whitey's however passive role and liability in the events. While adequately evaluating some of the characters and events, Whitey misjudges and ignores most of them. By creating a narrator who reports but then misinterprets the same clues we interpret correctly, Lardner emphasizes Whitey's moral and intellectual obtuseness and maximizes collusion between himself and his readers.

Finally, how unreliable is Whitey in the most theoretical sense of the word? Sometimes his interpretations, whether self-defined or town-defined, coincide with ours, and, although his moral evaluations are inadequate, some are to a lesser degree than others. This partial reliability prevents us from dismissing the entire story as absurd. But the discrepancy between Whitey's evaluations and Lardner's and our own is clear most of the time—so much so that we do not need the help of a narratee to identify the attitudes the text requires. Lardner may have effaced himself from the story in the strictest sense, but he has embedded it with various indications of his covert presence: strings of animal symbols (rabbits, cuckoo); imagery of hunting, violence, and
inequity (the animals; trying to "land" Julie, "lady-killers," the shave Whitey gives and the joke on Milt, the fats against the leans; ); onomastics (Milt Sheppard, White's garage, Whitey pure but impure); irony (Jim's "affairs of the heart"); and dramatic and symbolic reversals (the rabbit twist, Jim faking the voice of a dead man; Paul's assertion of power and Jim's loss of control). All of these thematize the discrepancy between the weak and the strong, liability and innocence, justice and injustice. In the most theoretical sense of the term, Whitey is very unreliable; his values do not comply with those of "Haircut's" implied author.

What kind of moral responsibility does Lardner assign Whitey in this tale of twisted justice? Lardner gives us an early clue about Whitey's liability: the visual image of Whitey silently holding the shaving knife against Milt's throat while Jim and Hod joke about slicing it open like a melon. Although "Whitey" is naive and pure in the sense that he is unable to make adequate conclusions about his own story and he is not a perpetrator of Jim's violence, his inaction has at least hidden and maybe facilitated some of the unjust events.

But what is the cause of Whitey's unreliability and inaction? Booth says:

Nor is unreliability ordinarily a matter of lying, although deliberately deceptive narrators have been a major resource of some modern novelists. . . . It is most often a matter of what James calls in conscience; the narrator is mistaken, or he believes himself to have qualities which the author denies him" (159).

This is the case with Whitey. He tells a true story and makes some reasonable interpretations, so he believes that he can judge some of the
grander events in the story—but he fails, largely because his stupidity makes him morally obtuse. Can we blame him fully for something he does not even intellectually recognize? Some would say yes, but I think his stupidity, while clearly the cause of his unreliability, lessens his moral responsibility for his inaction. It would be far easier to assign him total liability had he recognized the cruelty and injustices and then turned away. If he were only dumb, it would be easier to exonerate him from the events of the story. However, Whitey's liability is founded in more than stupidity. He is lacking in intelligence, but he has enough to remember the story in detail. He just does not have enough to edit the details which convict the characters that he would like to protect. Deleting such details would decrease his unreliability, thus making the story more ambiguous and weakening the theme about misinterpreting, denying, or ignoring problems. In addition to being stupid, Whitey wants to maintain the status quo, which prevents him from facing his own liability for the way the events unfold. He may be no more conscious of this tendency than he is of his own stupidity, but I think Lardner asks us to judge him more harshly for this than for his limited intelligence—even though they both contribute to his moral obtuseness.

And this is where the collaborative nature of the story becomes important in Lardner's message. Whitey narrates "Haircut," from factual information to interpretative commentary, with the help his neighbors—store owners, a farmer, women, the gang, the marshal, and doctors. Whitey says, "And of course Jim and his gang told everybody in town, everybody but Doc Stair" (361), but very few people did anything about
Jim. The marshal, the person we expect to have the most power to intervene, tells Jim "what would happen" after Jim first harasses Julie, but either it is not a very strong threat or Jim just does not take it seriously. Though Whitey claims everyone but the Doc knows about the stair incident, no one notifies the marshal—-not even Doc, after he finds out—-whether out of fear, disinterest, or impotency, it is impossible to tell. But the only person who actually does anything about Jim is Paul—-in a surprise twist of power and injustice. The town members are, in many ways, like their narrative spokesperson, Whitey—-and they share his moral responsibility for neglecting to contend with the simple and complex issues of maltreatment and injustice.

James Phelan, noting Whitey's attributes as the popular barber whose shop is the center of town and who passes along the town's gossip, also believes Whitey is the town representative. Phelan believes Whitey and his attributes function thematically in ways which reveal Lardner's ideas about the viciousness and stupidity of the American small town (19-20). However, although I share Phelan's feelings about Whitey's representative and thematic functions, I am not convinced Lardner wants us to limit our or his generalizations of "Haircut" to small American towns. There are many reasons why we could do this: we do not know the name of the town, so its smallness is its most distinguishing characteristic; the most important building is Whitey's shop, and the name of the garage is White's garage, both heightening the town's association with their representative. And, small towns are reputedly more conducive to the kind of gossip in "Haircut" than large towns are. However, large towns have neighborhoods, as well as equally vicious and
moral or intellectually obtuse people. Although Lardner sets this in a small American town, Doc, the outsider who frequently visits Chicago and functions in part as the city-representative, does more than tolerate and excuse unacceptable behavior; he uses the guise of his competence and professionalism to distort the behavior when he could have prevented it—including the killing.

If we believe Larder wants to thematically prioritize or limit small- or large-town viciousness and obtuseness, then we cannot consider the city doctor and his attributes—which exclude viciousness and obtuseness—as the primary thematic functions. However, we also cannot label Whitey, who, while stupid, is not vicious, as Lardner's representative thematic function. Again, although Whitey's stupidity is the cause of his unreliability and his liability, I think his stupidity releases him from some moral responsibility. So, who—or what attribute—does Lardner wish us to blame fully? The story, although told by our vacuous narrator, is a collaborative one—which assigns collaborative blame and which must, therefore, thematize collaboratively shared attributes. Although the attributes of stupidity and viciousness are important thematic functions, Lardner uses these and other attributes of the narrator and the characters to reveal a larger problem: the inability or unwillingness of people to confront complex or simple moral problems. Under my collaborative argument, Lardner's primary thematic function is the attribute shared by all of the residents—the tendency, whether unintentional or intentional, to deny or ignore moral dilemmas.
CHAPTER II

From Unreliability toward Reliability: Walton in Frankenstein

In "Haircut," it is relatively easy to locate Whitey's unreliability, and the entertainment is in analyzing what it reveals. In Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, the question of unreliability is complicated by the novel's concentrically embedded perspectives: Walton's letters to Margaret frame Frankenstein's story, which Walton writes from Frankenstein's point of view; and Frankenstein's narration surrounds a long section told by himself but through the monster's perspective. Further complicating my attempt to locate narrator reliability is the fact that, as we learn in Walton's closing frame, Frankenstein "corrected and augmented [Walton's notes] in many places; but principally in giving the life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy" (207). Shelley uses this conflation of narration to enhance her technique of character doubling. Walton, Frankenstein, and the monster, share attributes (such as their insatiable curiosities) and desires (for friends and knowledge), which blends their personalities and reiterates some of Shelley's themes. With all of this embedding and editing, it is difficult--sometimes impossible--to determine which voice is really narrating. But the effort is assisted by Walton's opening and closing frames, where he narrates most directly. The most logical and perhaps telling way of considering this narrative
is to begin at the center of the embedding and work outward, from the monster's perspective narrated by Frankenstein, to Frankenstein's perspective recorded by Walton and himself, then to Walton and his frames—where we also get a more immediate view of the monster's perspective.

The question of the monster's narrative reliability and liability, of course, can only be considered in view of Frankenstein's and Walton's. The reports of his moral responsibility are relatively straightforward. According to Frankenstein, because he refuses to fulfill the monster's desire for a companion, the monster decides to wreck havoc on Frankenstein's life. In the center of the narrative, the monster's perspective is given by Frankenstein and then recorded by Walton in first person perspective and, whether Frankenstein narrates the monster's story in first person point of view or whether Walton recorded it this way, Frankenstein ultimately approves of it. Booth says, "If an author wants intense sympathy for characters who do not have strong virtues to recommend them, then the psychic vividness of prolonged and deep inside views will help him" (Rhetoric 377). By presenting the monster this way, we get a paradoxically distant and intimate view of him. His perspective is filtered through many others, but Frankenstein gives a surprisingly balanced account of the monster, one which seems to fairly reflect the monster's cruelty as well as his torment. He does not delete the monster's initial demands of benevolence and generosity, and he clearly expresses the monster's reasoning behind his request for a companion. However, we should not commend Frankenstein too much for his portrayal because his account must
demonstrate the monster's rhetorical effectiveness so it will endorse
Frankenstein's own actions—especially his consent to create a female
companion and then, after the monster's numerous threats about what will
happen if Frankenstein denies him one, his decision to abort his
attempt.

It is impossible to discuss Frankenstein's reliability without at
once discussing his liability. At the beginning of the story,
Frankenstein says:

You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I
ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be
a serpent to sting you, as mine has been. I do not know that
the relation of my misfortunes will be useful to you, yet
. . . listen to my tale. I believe that the strange incidents
connected with it will afford a view of nature, which may
enlarge your faculties and understanding (24).

This piques Walton's curiosity and gives Frankenstein leeway in
representing and claiming his own liability, which Frankenstein at times
seems unsure about himself. His feelings of responsibility toward the
monster and the neglect of his friends vacillate throughout the book, as
if he is not yet sure how much liability he is willing to accept for
their fates. The telling of his tale enables Frankenstein to decide
what exactly he holds himself accountable for. At the end of the book,
he says, "During these last days I have been occupied in examining my
past conduct; nor do I find it blameable" (214). Frankenstein's tale
is not only one of self-exploration, but of self-affirmation. In order
to win Walton's support and to affirm himself, it is essential that
Frankenstein tell a convincing and absolving story. However,
Frankenstein is after more than moral support from Walton. Under the
guise of his concern for and wisdom about Walton and his situation, he
begins the tale allegedly to teach Walton about the evils of overambition. But he also knows that Walton is the captain of a ship heading in the same direction as the monster, and, by the end of the novel, it is clear that Frankenstein's intentions, which I will discuss more fully later, are to convince Walton to assist his search.

Apart from his reliability, Frankenstein's rhetoric and style are very effective. He capitalizes on Walton's desire to find a friend who will give him sympathy and counsel by telling Walton that they are alike and by asserting that there is an important lesson in his story for Walton. Walton immediately becomes Frankenstein's charmed narratee, writing to Margaret, "his ardent looks, his deep toned voice and powerful eloquence entrance me with delight" (23). Frankenstein makes an early assertion of his truthfulness in a way which, ironically, whets the very curiosity in Walton that Frankenstein is criticizing: "You will hear of powers and occurrences, such as you have been accustomed to believe impossible: but I do not doubt that my tale conveys in its series internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed" (24), and he interjects similar claims throughout the book. Walton's recording such statements indicates, at least in part, that he is receptive to them. And, when in his letter to Margaret he uses Safie's and Felix's letters as proof of the credibility of his story, it is clear that they have also given credence to the monster's and Frankenstein's tales. (Of course, the only thing they really support is Safie's and Felix's story.) After having asserted the honesty of his tale verbally and dramatically, Frankenstein sees that Walton is spellbound: "I see by your eagerness, and the wonder and hope which your
eyes express, my friend, that you expect to be informed of the secret with which I am acquainted" (48). Walton is exactly the adoring, supportive, potentially helpful listener Frankenstein needs.

Frankenstein has the advantage of telling his tale retrospectively, which enables him to manipulate it to his benefit. There are no indications that his facts conflict, so he seems reliable in the most elementary way. However, Frankenstein skews his tale in ways which do not necessarily rely on factual distortion. Even before the tale officially begins, Frankenstein calls the monster a "daemon" (21). By repeatedly saying such things as, "its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy daemon to whom I had given life" (71), Frankenstein biases Walton against the monster. Frankenstein enhances his authority by claiming that he was certain the monster killed William before the monster admits it, and his understanding and judgments of the monster, supported by his reports of the monster's cruelty, seem reliable. Yet Frankenstein forgets or ignores this understanding of his creation's motives and warnings before Henry and Elizabeth are killed, which threatens his reliability in the readers' eyes, if not in Walton's.

Similarly, Frankenstein seems interpretively reliable when he says of his father: "If, instead of this remark, my father had taken the pains to explain to me, that the principles of Agrippa had been entirely exploded, and that a modern system of science had been introduced . . . I should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside, and . . . probably have applied myself to the more rational theory of chemistry. . . . It is
even possible, that the train of my ideas would never have received the fatal impulse that led to my ruin" (32). Although we may not agree with Frankenstein about the certainty of the results of his father's influence, we can agree that Mr. Frankenstein's response may have affected his son. But Frankenstein's interpretation is inconsistent, opportunist, and shortsighted. He first praises his father for allowing the children educational freedom, and then he criticizes him for it, nearly blaming his father's educational neglect for his own hamartia. He also does not see how his speculations about his father's disregard conflict with his reports about Professors Krempe and Waldman, who discourage him from reading the likes of Agrippa and who encourage him to study modern chemistry. Even with their advice, Frankenstein pursues his search for the "elixir of life" (42).

Frankenstein also does not seem to fully understand his relationship with his friends and family. He repeatedly proclaims love and concern for them, which is certain to impress Walton, but his accounts betray his consistent and gross neglect of them. He leaves them for six years, hardly ever writing and returning only because of William's death. Although he says, "I, not in deed, but in effect, was the true murderer" (89), he does not come to Justine's defense because his "declaration would have been considered the ravings of a madman" (76). He says of her trial, "I could not sustain the horror of my situation . . . I rushed out of the court in agony. The tortures of the accused did not equal mine; she was sustained by innocence, but the pangs of remorse tore my bosom" (80). He feels his suffering is worse than hers, and he does not attempt to prevent her execution, although he
is the only one who can. This same selfish egocentrism contributes to
Henry's death. When Frankenstein has left Henry, again preferring
solitude to fellowship, Frankenstein assures himself that the monster
will not kill Henry because he is awaiting his companion. But after
Frankenstein destroys the female, he does not consider Henry's safety
until he hears that the murdered young man has the monster's mark of
black fingerprints around his neck.

Frankenstein's most frequent, blatant, and unrecognized
misinterpretation of his behavior is evident in his treatment of
Elizabeth, who addresses his neglect of her in a letter to Walton.
Although he declares his love for her, he never demonstrates it. When,
after being gone for six years, his father proposes that Elizabeth and
Frankenstein marry, Frankenstein is speechless. He tells Walton his
desire to finish constructing Frankenstein's partner prompts him to
suggest to his father that he take a two year long trip to supposedly
rid himself of the "deadly weight" on his neck (149). Once again, he
leaves his beloved Elizabeth, and his reasons seem acceptable. He does
not mention her again until, after his destruction of the female
monster, he recalls the monster's warning that he will be with
Frankenstein on his wedding night, and he is certain his own life is in
danger. He imagines killing the monster and equates himself to a
peasant who is liberated when his cottage and lands have been ruined and
"his family have been massacred before his eyes" (186), strongly
suggesting that such liberation would be pleasing: "Alas! what freedom?
... homeless, penniless, and alone, but free." Although he again
immediately calls Elizabeth his "treasure," our implied author suggests
that he finds his family and Elizabeth burdensome, which results in his neglect of them rather than in his loving protection of them. Nevertheless, he follows his mother's dying wish and marries Elizabeth. On their wedding night he sends her to bed with no hint of tenderness, unconcerned with her safety, and occupied by thoughts of his confrontation with the monster—even though the monster has never threatened Frankenstein's life but has sworn he will make Frankenstein "so wretched that the light of day will be hateful" (165) to him. When he hears her first screams he is shocked into an immobility that, however brief, does not seize him when he brings the monster to life. But on his wedding night his self-protective immobility delays his confronting the monster, as well as his rescue of Elizabeth. She screams again and he rushes to her, but she is dead.

In the middle of the book, Frankenstein presents his alternating feelings toward the monster and his resolution of them vividly and sincerely. He is also factually reliable, as far as we can tell. And Shelley would not disagree with Frankenstein's judgments of the monster's cruel behavior. However, Frankenstein's initial judgment of the monster is one that our implied author questions. Frankenstein works for almost two years "for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body" (52), but when he succeeds he is surprisingly repulsed by the ugliness of the thing he has been watching and constructing for so long. Frankenstein says, "the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room" (53). It is the monster's appearance that his own creator judges him
immediately for and that is the root of the monster's rejection, loneliness, and cruelty. Even though Frankenstein knows there is more to his creation than his appearance, physical ugliness supplants attractive attributes: "His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him, and sometimes felt a wish to console him; but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred" (143).

Frankenstein reliably represents the characters' prevailing attitudes regarding physiognomy. The De Lacey children are repulsed by the monster, terminating their blind father's attempt to befriend him—an attempt begun because of the monster's sincerity. Young William calls the monster an "ugly wretch" (130). The respected Elizabeth uses it in her characterizations. Even the monster endorses physiognomy when he describes Safie's "countenance of angelic beauty and expression" (112) and when he finds his own looks repulsive. But, although Shelley reiterates the emphasis on appearance, she also addresses the inadequacy of it. As Walton notes, Justine's beauty fails her: "for all the kindness which her beauty might otherwise have excited, was obliterated in the minds of the spectators by the imagination of the enormity she was supposed to have committed" (77). And, though Frankenstein says, "no mortal could support the horror of [the monster's] countenance" (53), Walton already has supported it from a distance and will again at close range. Though Frankenstein reflects the societal valuing of appearance, Shelley criticizes this belief and Frankenstein is thus unreliable.
Frankenstein unilaterally represents his personal relationships and his responsibility for the outcome of the story. He misconstrues many of his egocentric actions in ways which diminish his role in the deaths of his family members and friends. He supposedly accepts responsibility for their deaths, but he does not do anything to prevent them. He waits until after William, Justine, Henry, Elizabeth and his father are dead to go to the magistrate, claiming the reason he does not go is that he will be dismissed as mad. The magistrate's reaction is a mix of belief and disbelief, but he insists that he believes Frankenstein and will do what he can to seize the monster. This response conflicts with Frankenstein's reasons for not telling the magistrate earlier, so instead of acknowledging his deadly and selfish error in not reporting the monster earlier, Frankenstein does not believe the magistrate and decides to pursue the monster himself. Walton has heard Frankenstein accept responsibility for his creation and believes in Frankenstein's torn feelings of duty toward the monster and humanity. Walton believes that Frankenstein's torment is real, as we do, and that it revolves around the question of Frankenstein's moral obligation to the monster. Frankenstein's torment is not necessarily feigned, but it is self-serving in a way which diminishes its reliability. This becomes clear in the closing frame of the novel, where we see Frankenstein when he is most revelatory, before his death and when he can no longer edit Walton's notes.

Walton writes in an early letter, "He has asked me many questions concerning my design... He appears pleased with the confidence, and suggested several alterations in my plan, which I shall find exceedingly
useful" (22). Frankenstein appears to want to be helpful in the opening frame, guiding Walton in the direction both he and Walton want to go—north. But, in the closing frame, it is clear that Frankenstein's goal is not to help Walton reach his destination, but to guide Walton to the monster. Although he has begun the story apparently to warn Walton about the dangers of overambition, Frankenstein's true motives for telling the tale become evident when he learns that the ship's trip may be curtailed. When the sailors ask Walton to turn back if a free passage opens, Walton writes to Margaret that, although the request disturbs him, it is one he, "in justice" (211), cannot refuse. He remains silent, and Frankenstein, with a "momentary vigour" (212), delivers a moving speech in which he tells the crew that their expedition is glorious because of its danger, that it will benefit mankind, and they should continue it: "Be steady to your purposes, and firm as a rock" (212). This is remarkably incongruous with his early lecture to Walton: "Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow" (48). Frankenstein completely contradicts the lesson which supposedly instigates and propells the telling of his tale.

Frankenstein does this because he is obsessed with killing the monster. When he is pulled on the ship, he has destroyed his oars and is near death. He has no choice but to end his chase; however he is still insanely engrossed with it and says he will continue it somehow. His chase has changed from a pursuit to ensure the safety of mankind to
a crazed attempt to retaliate. He has called on the spirits of the dead and the "wandering ministers of vengeance" to aid him in his effort to "Let the cursed and hellish monster drink deep of agony; let him feel the despair that now torments me" (200). Before the sailors make their request, Frankenstein says to Walton, "when I am dead, if he should appear; if the ministers of vengeance should conduct him to you, swear that he shall not live. . . . He is eloquent and persuasive . . . but trust him not. His soul is as hellish as his form" (206). Even though Frankenstein purports that his task is one "enjoined by heaven" (202), Walton does not reply. After Walton tells him he has consented to turn the ship back, Frankenstein makes another attempt to convince Walton to assume the responsibility for the monster's death:

I feel myself justified in desiring the death of my adversary. During these last days I have been occupied in examining my past conduct; nor do I find it blamable. In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature, and was bound towards him, to assure, as was in my power, his happiness and wellbeing. This was my duty; but there was another still paramount to that. My duties towards my fellow creatures had greater claims to my attention (214).

As his story shows, Frankenstein does not much care about his fellows, and it is not surprising that he makes no expressions of sorrow and responsibility for his friends' deaths at the end of the book. Regardless of his stated duty to man, he wants the sailors and Walton to risk their lives not only by continuing their dangerous travels to find the monster, but then to confront him. But Walton does not agree to continue northward, so in a last attempt to convince Walton to forge on, Frankenstein says, "When actuated by selfish and vicious motives, I asked you to undertake my unfinished work; and I renew this request now,
when I am induced only by virtue" (215). Frankenstein has appealed to
heaven, reason, and vengeance in his attempt to elicit Walton's help in
either continuing north or in assuming responsibility for killing the
monster after Frankenstein dies--revealing motives quite different from
his those he claims earlier.

Frankenstein begins the novel with what appears to be an
appropriate, truthful, genuinely-inspired tale to help a fellow man, but
he gradually betrays his inadequacies and unreliabilities as a teacher,
story-teller, creator, and friend--as well as his unwillingness to
assume moral liability. During his tale he intermittently claims
responsibility for the monster's creation and the results of the
monster's behavior. But, although he accepts the onus of killing the
monster, he ultimately does not find fault with his own conduct--his
interest and its result, his deadly egotism which results in the
creation of the monster and then the death of his family and friends.
During a speech about the value of domestic affections and the
harmfulness of man's pursuits, when Frankenstein's hypocrisy is at the
greatest risk of being discovered by Walton, he calls upon Walton's
alleged looks to justify his abrupt ending: "But I forget that I am
moralizing in the most interesting part of my tale; and your looks
remind me to proceed" (51). This deliberate and unusual break in
Frankenstein's narrative asks us to question whose desire it is to and
avoid moralizing at this potentially revealing point--Walton's or
Frankenstein's. Frankenstein wants to hide his hypocrisy, and he tells
his story to redeem himself from moral liabilities which he has never
truly accepted. His manipulation of his narrative and of his "friend"
evidences that, no matter what the pretense, he is as egocentric and obsessively ambitious as ever. This blinds him to the fact that the monster is the "guiding spirit" which controls him and reels him into life-threatening conditions; that he has in a sense become the monster's companion; that, under the conditions of his solitary hunt, his attempt is futile; and that, when Frankenstein has died, the monster's incentive for murder will also die.

Although our awareness of Frankenstein's unreliability and liability changes as the tale progresses, their existence is unchanging. Walton's reliability and liability, however, change during the actual narration of the tale. This is most evident in his closing frame, when he is actually implicated in it, but in order to note those changes we have to back track a bit. Walton is a worldly man. He is well-traveled, self-educated, confident, and reasonably concerned about his trip. He has done many things, and he likes to write about them, even when it means recounting things from his past that Margaret probably already knows---as well as an incidental tale about his shipmaster's love affair. He, like Frankenstein, has an "ardent curiosity," and he wants to know "the secret of the magnet" (10). Like the monster, he "greatly needs" a friend, one whose "tastes are like [his] own" (13-4), and this need influences his reliability and liability throughout the novel. Walton's admitted thirst for friendship is confirmed by the feelings of love and admiration he expresses for Frankenstein after only two days of knowing him. In Walton's last lines to his sister before the body of the novel begins, he writes, "This manuscript will doubtless afford you the greatest pleasure: but to me, who know him, and who hear
it from his own lips, with what interest and sympathy I shall read it in some future day!" (25). Walton has an investment in his journal for his sister and himself, and his affection for Frankenstein is bound to affect his record.

Walton's interest in Frankenstein is revealed immediately in his decision to use the first person perspective. Because this is Walton's journal, we expect him to use this perspective--but to represent himself. Instead, he uses it to represent Frankenstein. As noted above, Frankenstein also does this when he assumes the monster's voice in the embedded tale of his story. By doing so, intentionally or unintentionally, he enhances our sympathy with the monster--which is important for Frankenstein because, if he can earn our sympathy with the monster's request, he is more likely to earn our sympathy for his consent to the request. But Frankenstein or Walton or Shelley reminds us of Frankenstein's distance from the monster by using quotation marks throughout the tale, emphasizing that, even though it is written from the first person perspective, it is a quote. Walton, however, does not place quotation marks around Frankenstein's words, which enhances his identification with Frankenstein and significantly diminishes our awareness of him as a narrator. The structural demarcation of the stories also affects our awareness of the immediate narrator. The beginning of the monster's story is indicated with Frankenstein's introduction, "he thus began his tale" (97), and the chapter numbers of the monster's story are continuous with those of Frankenstein's story. However, the separation of Frankenstein's story from Walton's frame distances it from Walton's presence. Walton tells Margaret that he is
going to record Frankenstein's story, but instead of situating it within his own letters, he marks it with a new title, pagination, and chapters. This, of course, is really Shelley's gesture, and she may have done it simply as a matter of form, but it is still effective in distracting us from Walton's presence. Finally, Walton's assumption of Frankenstein's voice is different from Frankenstein's assumption of the monster's voice in that, although Walton and Frankenstein both betray sympathy for the characters they are representing, Frankenstein's sympathy is purely historical, while Walton's sympathy is contemporary and betrays his identification with Frankenstein as well as his hope to become intimate with him. Shelley does this to perpetuate character doubling, but it also presages Walton's limited ability to recount the story objectively.

Character doubling is apparent in the similar narrative styles of the three narrators. Although we hear three different perspectives, the stories are told in one voice. When Frankenstein says to the magistrate, "Man, how ignorant art thou in thy pride of wisdom! Cease; you know not what it is you say" (198), he sounds much like the Paradise Lost-influenced monster. What Patten calls "overlapping" in her article on As I Lay Dying occurs when the monster's embedded tale ends with his saying, "this being you must create" and the first words of Frankenstein's returning perspective are, "The being finished speaking" (140). Overlapping occurs frequently throughout the book with the simple repetition of a few words and phrases. In Walton's opening frame, before he even meets Frankenstein, he uses variations of "ardent" at least three times. The monster and Frankenstein also use such combinations numerous times, and all three narrators repeatedly use
combinations of "compassion" and "curiosity." The most deeply embedded use of overlapping occurs when many of the characters use the same words to express their surprise in similar situations involving the recognition of Frankenstein or, more often, of the monster. After meeting Frankenstein, Walton writes, "Good God! if you had seen the man" (20). When Mr. Frankenstein says the murderer has been discovered, Frankenstein says, "Good God! how can that be?" (74). When Frankenstein tells Ernest he knows who the murderer is, Ernest says, "Good God" (75). When the monster begins to panic just before he is discovered by Mr. De Lacey's family, Mr. De Lacey says, "Great God! who are you?" (131). And again, Walton's first words to Margaret after meeting the monster are, "Great God! what a scene has just taken place!" (216). This obvious overlapping of voice could be attributed to Shelley's inability to assume different voices, but I think, considering her extensive use of character doubling, it is more her desire to blend the voices here—-or to indicate Walton's blending of them.

A far more important narrative clue to Walton's reliability than voice consistency among the narrators is his perspective on his relationship with Frankenstein. The thematically important notion of friendship abounds in the novel—and so does the discrepancy between Frankenstein's spoken affection for Walton and his demonstrated affection. Walton's writes in his early letters, "One day I mentioned to him the desire I had always felt of finding a friend who might sympathize with me, and direct me by his counsel" (23), but Frankenstein dismisses this offer of new friendship by discussing his fellowship with Henry and retiring immediately to his cabin. It appears that
Frankenstein is more interested in acquiring an attentive listener than a friend. Nevertheless, during the rest of the tale Frankenstein is frequently quoted as addressing Walton as "my friend," and it is unclear where these salutations have originated—in Walton or Frankenstein. This becomes plain in the closing frame when, after Walton has offered to reconcile Frankenstein to friendship for life, Frankenstein "repulses the idea" (209) and tells Walton about the inadequacies of adult-formed friendships. Either Walton inserts the salutations under the impression that Frankenstein already has befriended him or in the hopes that he will—or Frankenstein inserts them in order to create an illusion of friendship.

Even though Walton may misconstrue Frankenstein's notions of friendship, his journal is reliable in that it seems true to Frankenstein's however adjusted story, feelings, and interpretations. This may not have been the case before Frankenstein's editing, as he says to Walton, "Since you have preserved my narration, I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity" (207), suggesting that perhaps Walton had mutilated Frankenstein's story (although Frankenstein's idea of "mutilation" may be quite different from ours). By assuming Frankenstein's voice, Walton is unable to make explicit his own interpretations of Frankenstein's tale. However, by simply allowing Frankenstein to edit his journal, by silently entrusting it to him, Walton manifests his implicit judgment of Frankenstein's truthfulness. Walton can do this without damaging his own credibility and character.
because he makes clear that he is recording Frankenstein's perspective and because he is in no way implicated in the body of the novel. 

When Walton begins his journey and his letters, the issue of moral liability is not problematic for him or for the readers. He proudly anticipates his expedition during which he will satiate his "ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited" (10), and he assures Margaret that he "shall kill no albatross" (15). While under Frankenstein's storytelling charm, Walton becomes gradually implicated in the tale not because of any moral transgression of his own but by his growing fondness for and acceptance of Frankenstein. He reveals the strength of his feelings in his closing frame: "His eloquence is forcible and touching; nor can I hear him, when he relates a pathetic incident, or endeavours to move the passions of pity or love, without tears" (206). His spell is founded in Frankenstein's emotive story-telling competence and in Walton's affections for him, not in deciphering Frankenstein's interpretations. Walton, still valuing Frankenstein as a potential friend, does not notice that Frankenstein treats his "friends" with an egocentric, murderous neglect. As Walton's fondness for and identification with Walton grows, his sense of liability becomes lost in Frankenstein's account of it. In the beginning of the novel, Walton's letters connect him and what MacAndrew calls a closed world to the outside world and its values (110). However, as Walton becomes engrossed in Frankenstein's perspective in the body of the novel, he centers himself in a world which revolves around Frankenstein's morals and is covertly urged by Frankenstein to accept them.
Walton does not seem to recognize Frankenstein's discrepancies and manifestations of madness; he believes Frankenstein and is influenced by him. In the opening frame Walton twice tells Margaret he will not be rash, but when the crew tells him they fear he will rashly continue their voyage and lead them into fresh dangers, instead of heeding Frankenstein's early warnings about the sin of overambition, Walton hopes that the men will change their minds and agree to continue north. Walton responds to the men's demands with silence, while Frankenstein berates them for their cowardice and urges them onward. Realizing that he may be mutinied if he refuses the crew's demands, Walton agrees to head south at the first opportunity. When Walton tells Frankenstein his decision, Frankenstein renews his request for Walton to continue the search for the monster, this time "induced by reason and virtue" (215). Frankenstein admits that he may be misled by passion, but in his last words he makes a final attempt to urge Walton on. He repeats his initial advice to Walton about overambition and then recognizes the folly in it, not because he hypocritically contradicts his own good advice, but because his advice is wrong and ambition is good: "Seek happiness in tranquility, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed" (215). If Frankenstein's plea for Walton's help in killing the monster does not urge him northward, maybe his appeal to Walton's ambitious nature, the nature Frankenstein has been purportedly rejecting, will.
The extent of Walton's allegiance to Frankenstein is revealed only when, immediately after Walton writes about Frankenstein's death, the monster appears and Walton responds to it. When Walton discovers the monster, it ceases its exclamations of grief and horror and springs toward the window. Walton says, "I shut my eyes involuntarily, and endeavoured to recollect what were my duties with regard to this destroyer. I called on him to stay" (216), but it is not yet clear what Walton's intentions are. After the monster claims unqualified moral liability for his murders, even asking Frankenstein's pardon, Walton reports: "my first impulses, which had suggested to me the duty of obeying the dying request of my friend, in destroying his enemy, were now suspended by a mixture of curiosity and compassion. I approached this tremendous being" (217). Walton denies the impulse implanted in him by Frankenstein, and instead of immediately trying to kill the monster, he, like no other character, actually approaches him to talk. Ironically, instead of averting Walton's curiosity and compassion, Frankenstein evokes them; and they enable the monster the opportunity to sound his story, to confess, and to seek what he has never obtained--affirmation of the injustice he suffered.

Walton gives the monster this opportunity. But after hearing the monster's continued self-reproaches, Walton, advocates his "friend" and addresses the monster with a harshness borne of Frankenstein's influential narrative: "If you had listened to the voice of conscience, and heeded the stings of remorse, before you had urged your diabolical vengeance to this extremity, Frankenstein would have lived" (217). Walton is then "touched by [the monster's] expressions of misery" (218),
but his indignation is rekindled when Walton remembers Frankenstein's recent warnings about the monster's persuasive powers, and he reprimands the monster using Frankenstein's terms of "wretch" and "hypocritical fiend" (218). The monster keeps talking, calling to Walton's attention the implicit unreliability of Frankenstein's tale: "You, who call Frankenstein your friend, seem to have a knowledge of my crimes and his misfortunes. But, in the detail which he gave you of them, he could not sum up the hours and months of misery which I endured, wasting in impotent passions" (219). Frankenstein does seem to have done at least some justice to the monster's better side—and it is this that lessens Walton's fear and piques his compassion for the monster before he even speaks.

Walton's direct interaction with the monster is at least as influential as Frankenstein's account of him. During their conversation, the monster says that Walton's hate can never equal the hate he feels for himself, he reports his sins, and he genuinely and unconditionally accepts responsibility for them. Although he tells Frankenstein it is in Frankenstein's power to protect others from evil, he never disputes that the evil is his. He does not manipulate his tale or his liability to procure forgiveness or help, as Frankenstein did. The monster could easily kill Walton or flee, but he remains to explain his perspective—not because he wants to absolve himself, but because he simply needs to tell his side, perhaps to be sure his version is told, perhaps in search of understanding, perhaps just to experience the however minimal companionship of a narratee.
Walton is as captivated by the monster as he is by Frankenstein, and his perception of the monster changes toward the end of their conversation, when he twice calls the monster as a "being" (218), which has quite a different connotation than "hypocritical fiend" or "wretch." In the case of overlapping noted above, the monster (or Frankenstein, in a manipulated direct quote of the monster's) calls his potential companion a "being" and Frankenstein, just before he consents to creating a companion, when he is most sympathetic with the monster, calls the monster a "being." Walton's use of the term echoes Frankenstein's moments of tolerance for the monster and suggests a change in his own perceptions—-even if this change occurs and is noted after the monster's departure. Walton, who shares not only the monster's curiosity but also his desire for a friend, listens to the monster's powerful talk about his loneliness, self-hate, and "the hours and months of the misery [he] endured" (219). He remains silent for the monster's long closing speech and, apparently convinced of the monster's truthfulness, believes that the monster is now harmless and makes no attempt to kill him or stop his departure.

Although Walton is entirely receptive to Frankenstein, his behavior at the end of the novel indicates that he is not completely under Frankenstein's spell. Although it is logical that Walton would refuse Frankenstein's request to continue north in order to honor his men's demands and protect his life—as well as to protect his own life by not attacking the monster—Walton's reaction to the monster is not what Frankenstein has been trying to formulate. Walton denies Frankenstein not only by not attempting to kill the monster, but by
listening to him, by allowing the monster the opportunity to tell his own story. In Walton's invitation for the monster to stay and then his willingness to listen, he does what no other human being has done with the monster. He delays judgment of him—an act which Shelley condones.

Throughout Frankenstein, Shelley has remained relatively covert, and she has complicated our ability to assess reliability or liability with doubling and embedding. At the center of the tale is the monster's version, which, although it is filtered through Frankenstein and then Walton, is not disputed factually, even by the monster when his perspective is filtered only through Walton. The monster also accurately interprets his own actions and those of his creator. Shelley enhances our sympathy of him by allowing him to, through Walton, tell his own story, but our sympathy is also enhanced by Frankenstein's version of the monster's perspective. Although Frankenstein seems factually reliable and generally interpretively reliable in his accounts of the monster, he is not reliable when it comes to interpreting and judging his own actions or when conveying his desires, beliefs, and purposes for telling Walton his story. And, unlike the monster, he never assumes full responsibility for his behavior.

Walton's reliability is difficult to determine during most of the novel because he relies on Frankenstein's reliability, voice, and editing. However, his easy assumption of Frankenstein's perspective, his subsequent elimination of his own, and the merging of their voices (whether due to Frankenstein's editing or Walton's writing) suggests that Walton favors Frankenstein's unreliable perspective during most of the novel. Walton's documentation also seems influenced by his desire
for Frankenstein's friendship. His moral liability in the middle of the novel is more easily located than his unreliability, and it remains just as stable. He is morally liable for nothing in the tale—not even an objective recording and interpretation of it. This changes upon the appearance of the monster, when Walton suddenly must make and act on his own decisions. Frankenstein's influence is apparent, but the attributes we see in Walton's opening frame prevail and give the monster a chance he has never had—to talk at length with someone other than his opponent. In doing so, he moves from doing what Shelley has condemned to what Shelley supports, and, thus, becomes more reliable in terms of complying with the implied author's values.

Although Shelley wants us to consider the moral issues of overambition, accountability for our acts, superficial judgments, and egocentricity, the most encompassing moral issue is the one which Walton, in his silence, learns better than any other character, that of moral relativity. MacAndrew says:

[Gothic novelists] create monsters, which force an unwilling recognition of the dread blend of good and bad to be found in themselves and the rest of mankind. The reader, sharing the characters' feelings, partially suspends his moral judgement of the villain and, thereby, an understanding of the evil in him is opened up. . . . Readers . . . are faced with the fact that they have accepted imaginatively an unexpected moral relativity, an unlooked-for consequence of the adage that 'to understand is to forgive' (44).

Although Walton does not necessarily forgive the monster, he responds to the story and the monster's narrative much as MacAndrew's readers would. His first response to the monster is condemnation, but his stunned silence after talking with the monster, although not indicative of his acceptance, does indicate that Walton has moved away from Frankenstein's
perspective toward the development of his own and toward a kind of
stunned neutrality that suggests his awareness of the moral relativity
that Shelley asks us to acknowledge throughout Frankenstein.
CHAPTER III

Determining Reliability in the Midst of Ambiguity: 
The Governess in The Turn of the Screw

Comprehensively Testing the Governess's Reliability

Whitey is an unpretentious and relatively accurate reporter, but an inaccurate interpreter whose functions as a character and a narrator are related but quite distinct. This, in conjunction with a strong sense of the implied author, who is covert but nevertheless accessible, makes it fairly easy to detect Whitey's unreliability and the liability issues associated with it. My study becomes more complicated in Frankenstein, but its opening and closing frames enable us to compare the pre- and post-Frankenstein Walton and to more accurately test Walton's reliability. Whitey and Walton function primarily as narrators and secondarily as characters, and, although their involvement in their stories influences their interpretations of them, their narrator and character roles are distinct enough so that we can locate their character involvement and its influence on their narrative.

In The Turn of the Screw, however, the governess narrates a story in which she is the central character and, unlike Walton and Whitey, she functions primarily as narrator and character. She consistently conflates her reports and her interpretations, making it difficult to determine the accuracy of either. The narrative structure of Turn also hinders us because it has a limited opening frame and no closing one.
The implied author, who is extremely covert, asks us to make our final judgment of the governess without his direct assistance or the assistance of the narratees, which enhances the story's ambiguity and tests our ability to interpret it. These factors severely influence our methods for testing reliability and liability and create the ambiguity that has been the focus of the critical writing on this story since the third decade after its publication. The determination of the governess's reliability has revolved around how critics answer the questions, "Are the ghosts real?" and "Is the governess crazy?"

In a personal letter James wrote in 1898, he said:

Of course I had, about my young woman, to take a very sharp line. The grotesque business I had to make her picture and the childish psychology I had to make her trace and present were . . . a very difficult job, in which absolute lucidity and logic, a singleness of effect, were imperative. Therefore I had to rule out subjective complications of her own—play of tone etc.; and keep her impersonal save for the most obvious and indispensable little note of neatness, firmness and courage—without which she wouldn't have had her data (Lubbock 298-9).

Many critics have relied on this comment and a few others like it to support their argument that James's reliable, sane governess sees real ghosts. It is especially important in this story to set aside such authorial assertions—especially given James's contradictory comments regarding the issue of the governess's reliability. Even after having done that, critics often use their answer to the question of the ghosts' reality as the axe of their reliability argument. If they are real, she is justified, pitied, and reliable. If they are not real, she is unjustified, mad, and unreliable. Booth writes, "The effect [of secret collusion] is most clearly distinguishable when the narrator shows
ignorance of matters of fact" (Rhetoric 305), but how can you obtain empirical evidence of ghosts—especially of Quint and Miss Jessel, who appear selectively and leave no proof of their existence? If James wants to insist upon the reality of the ghosts, he has only to provide corroboration by another, presumably reliable, character. Whether because James wants to maintain the ambiguity of their existence or because they simply do not exist, the ghosts' existence is not confirmed. Therefore, although we need to consider whether or not the ghosts are real because their existence reflects something about the governess's mental state, we cannot rely on them for final proof of her sanity or reliability. However difficult to pinpoint, there are other clues given by the implied author and additional questions about the governess and her story which will provide, for me at least, a reading which contains the ambiguity of the story and which offers a way in which to assign liability to the governess. If the ghosts are false, although we can predict that the governess will be unreliable in some ways, she might be reliable in others. And the reality of the ghosts does not guarantee her reliability in anything other than her ability to see the ghosts. In addition to the ghosts' existence, we have a wealth of other ways to test her reliability. By examining the governess both as a character and a narrator, during the time-of-action and the time-of-discourse, and specifically how she reports events, evaluates them, and reflects the views of the implied author, we can safely conclude that she is as close to unreliable as our ignorance about the ghosts' reality will allow us to place her.
Although the governess's behavior regarding the ghosts, real or unreal, is more revealing than the ghosts' reality, her accounts of them should not be overlooked. The first ghost the governess sees is Peter Quint, who is "high up, beyond the lawn and at the very top of the tower" (19). She says, "We were confronted across our distance quite long enough for me to ask myself . . . who then he was" (19), and also that they are "too far apart to call to each other" (20), implying some distance. Yet her accounts also imply a clarity of vision: "the man who looked at me over the battlements was as definite as a picture in a frame. . . . So I saw him as I see the letters I form on this page" (20). It is likely that she is able to note the man's posture from a distance, but she also acknowledges that she has "precipitately supposed" the man to be someone who she soon realizes he is not. Presumably, the man she imagines is her employer. How can she be close enough to note their "straight and mutual stare" (20), yet far enough to confuse Peter, with his very red hair, for her employer? And if the employer has red hair, then how can she distinguish Peter, who is "high up" and too far away to be called to, from the employer? Of her second sighting of Quint she says, "my vision was instantaneous. . . . He appeared thus again with I won't say greater distinctness, for that was impossible" (23). She sees him for a few seconds, but she gives a remarkably detailed account of his facial characteristics. Is it reasonable that she can see and recall this much detail under such brief, frightening circumstances? Even if she can, since she mistakes Quint for the master at the tower, why does she not note or question the resemblance now?
Does the governess know what Quint looks like before she sees him? The governess says of Mrs. Grose, "to hold her perfectly in the pinch of that, I found I had only to ask her how, if I had 'made it up,' I came to be able to give, of each of the persons appearing to me, a picture disclosing, to the last detail, their special marks" (37). She would not be able to describe Quint's facial characteristics in such detail unless she had known about them previously or the ghost is, in fact, Quint, and she is, remarkably, able to see and remember the details of his appearance. Many critics rely on her accurate description of Quint to prove the governess's reliability, but this is tautologous reasoning because it relies on the truth of her claim that she does not know what Quint looks like to prove the reliability of her claim that she sees his ghost, and the governess's general unreliability discourages us from giving her such authority. She is aware of the importance of her previous ignorance for the success of her argument, and, had she in fact known what Quint looked like, she certainly would not have admitted so.

There are indications that the governess may know what Quint looks like before seeing him. After telling Mrs. Grose about Quint, she gives her account of Quint's history, but she uses neither indirect nor direct quotes and does not indicate her source (31). She refers to the "boundless chatter" regarding his death, which may be the source for her own information. She has a small crew of servants to refer to, as well as Flora, who shows the governess Bly with notable confidence, courage, and familiarity, "step by step, room by room and secret by secret, with droll, delightful, childish talk about it," and who has a disposition to tell the governess "so many more things than [Flora] asked" (12). When
Mrs. Grose asks the governess if the visitor was "nobody about the place? Nobody from the village?" and the governess replies, "nobody--nobody. I didn't tell you, but I made sure" (25), we cannot help but wonder if she takes the twenty-minute walk to town and learns about Quint from the town gossips. Finally, before the governess gives the detailed account of Quint, she says, "then seeing in her face that she already, in this, with a deeper dismay, found a touch of picture, I quickly added stroke to stroke" (27), implying more confidence and purpose in her description than it seems a startled three-second look could offer. She also, as she does repeatedly later, utilizes Mrs. Grose's comments about Quint's appearance to determine her own. After the governess says Quint is not a gentleman, Mrs. Grose asks, "But he is handsome?" (27) implying that, contrary to what one might think, Quint indeed is handsome. The governess says, as if she has a very specific purpose in mind, "I saw the way to help her," and of course agrees with Mrs. Grose's assertion-like question, "Remarkably!" (27).

The governess's identification of Miss Jessel is less discussed by critics in their attempt to prove or dispute the governess's reliability, but it is even more useful than the identification of Quint. The governess describes her visitor to Mrs. Grose as, "a woman in black, pale and dreadful--with such an air also, and such a face!" (34), and later, "in mourning--rather poor, almost shabby. But--yes--with extraordinary beauty" (36). Both descriptions are a clever combination of what the governess knows or can presume about Miss Jessel. She has been told that Miss Jessel was "young and pretty" (15), and that she has died, and the governess uses this information to
compile a vague but thus-far accurate description of a beautiful, pale face. The following dialogue suggests that the governess had a greater familiarity with Miss Jessel's history than she admits to.

"I must have it now. Of what did she die? Come, there was something between them. "There was everything."
"In spite of the difference--?"
"Oh, of their rank, their condition"--she brought it woefully out. "She was a lady."
I turned it over; I again saw. "Yes--she was a lady."

The governess asserts that there was something between Quint and Miss Jessel, and a previous knowledge of this and Quint's death would safely enable her to picture Miss Jessel in mourning. The governess then revises the details of her description according to Mrs. Grose's comments. She describes Quint as being hatless and in someone else's clothes, "never . . . a gentleman" (27), and she says that Miss Jessel was shabby. She describes them in similar physical states, so what difference is she referring to? Since she describes them both as shabbily dressed and she is sure that Quint is not a gentleman, how can she know, based on Miss Jessel's appearance, that Miss Jessel is a lady? It seems she is reminded of it after hearing it from someone else, or that she again successfully interprets Mrs. Grose's informative response to her own open-ended question and makes adjustments in her description, not affirming but concluding, "Yes--she was a lady."

Although we can make strong but not absolute claims about the gaps in the governess's factual description of the ghosts, we can make stronger claims about the reliability of her interpretation of them. According to the governess, the sources of evil at Bly are the ghosts,
and, later, the children, but whether or not we accept her portrayal depends on how successfully she convinces us of their depravity. We first learn about the servants in the opening frame when the unnamed host-narrator says the employer sent "the best people he could find" to look after the children at Bly, his own servants, all who are "likewise thoroughly respectable" (7-8). Douglas says of Miss Jessel, "There had been for the two children at first a young lady whom they had had the misfortune to lose. She had done for them quite beautifully--she was a most respectable person" (8). This information is passed from the employer to the governess to Douglas to the host narrator, and, although we have no particular reason to doubt the employer, we also have no particular reason to believe him--not yet. But, someone tells the governess that the employer made trips to Bly "whenever he might" (7) to see how the children were doing, which, if true, gives us more cause to trust his judgment of his employees. Likewise, someone, presumably the employer, tells the governess about Mrs. Grose, "an excellent woman . . . whom he was sure his visitor would like and who had formerly been maid to his mother" (7).

Perhaps the employer tries to portray an unrealistically pleasant environment for his prospective employee. But his character judgments are confirmed early in the governess's telling of her own story, when she takes an immediate liking to Mrs. Grose, who also confirms some of what the employer has said. She tells us with sympathy about "poor" (37) Miss Jessel's situation, asserting, "she was a lady" (36), and she says the master "believed in" Quint (30), and left him, the master's own valet, in charge of Bly. Mrs. Grose also says that Miles acted
sometimes like Quint, not Miss Jessel, was his tutor, "a very grand" one (40), and that he used to spoil Miles, implying with her comment "Quint was much too free" (30), that she does not approve of this. But she also says that Quint was "too free with everyone," which can mean either casualness with Miles or promiscuity with women. She agrees with the governess's assertion that Quint is "never . . . a gentleman" (27) and tells the governess she knows Quint was bad, though apparently not bad enough or spoiling enough for her to be concerned about Mile's safety or to notify the master. Since Mrs. Grose is not blind to the behavior of Quint and Jessel, it is very likely that her disapproval stems from Quint's and Miss Jessel's implied sexual involvement, not from his treatment of the children. Finally, Mrs. Grose's sustained surprise and questioning of the governess's claim that Quint and Miss Jessel are thoroughly evil and her acceptance of them as Bly residents and the children's guardians suggests that, although Mrs. Grose finds some of their behavior unacceptable, she does not necessarily think it is harmful to others.

Mrs. Grose seems to reasonably assess the pair, but her evaluation is quite different from the governess's interpretation of them. Although the governess tells us quite a bit about the man on the tower, she does not indicate she thinks he is evil until she tells Mrs. Grose about him—and before she "learns" that the person she is describing is Quint. After telling Mrs. Grose about them, her judgment of the ghosts is relentless, and she claims to implicitly know their intentions. As Quint simply looks around the dining room, she notes, "On the spot there came to me the added shock of a certitude that it was not for me he had
come there. He had come for someone else" (23), certain it is for Miles. Miss Jessel, of course, has come "with a determination—indescribable. With a kind of fury of intention . . . To get hold of [Flora]" (36). But the governess's own accounts of the apparitions' behavior does not support her declarations that they are evil, possessive, assertive or sly. If they are out to get the children, what stops them? There are no flailing arms, flying objects, or strange sounds (except from the governess). Their locations reflect their natural familiarity with Bly. Quint turns away from the governess on the tower, at the window, and on the stairs. Indeed, Quint may be looking through the window for someone in particular—perhaps his dead lover. The governess notes that Miss Jessel sits on the stairs, "her body half bowed and her head, in an attitude of woe, in her hands," and that Miss Jessel vanishes before looking around to see the governess, leaving the governess to imagine, "none the less, exactly what dreadful face she had to show" (47). Finally, the governess describes Miss Jessel in the schoolroom as a housemaid who "had applied herself to the considerable effort of a letter to her sweetheart," a "haggard beauty" with "unutterable woe." Her posture resembles that on the stairs: "there was an effort in the way that, while her arms rested on the table, her hands with evident weariness supported her head." And she departs in a likewise manner: "she rose, not as if she had heard me, but with an indescribable grand melancholy of indifference and detachment" (64). Indeed, there is a quite a disparity in the governess's own accounts of the ghosts and her harsh judgment of them.
Perhaps it is impossible to test someone's interpretation of their encounters with ghosts, but the governess judges Flora and Miles in similarly rash ways. Until Miss Jessel's first visitation, she is enamored with Flora. Then, although Flora gives no indication that she is aware of Miss Jessel, the governess is immediately certain that the children are involved with the ghosts. The governess says the most dire thing about the incident is Flora's becoming silent in her play and turning her back to the water and Miss Jessel, concluding that Flora saw Miss Jessel, and she says the horror of it is that Flora "kept it to herself" because she does not want the governess to know she saw (33-5). Both of these interpretations are hasty and hyperbolic.

The governess's judgment of Miles is less consistent and more opportunistic than her judgment of Flora. When she learns Mrs. Grose cannot read, the governess says, "I... opened my letter again to repeat it to her; then, faltering in the act and folding it up once more, I put it back in my pocket" (13). She falters because she wants the complete power of suggestion over Mrs. Grose. When Mrs. Grose asks if the school gentlemen say if Miles is bad, the governess replies, "They go into no particulars. They simply express their regret that it should be impossible to keep him. That can only have one meaning. ... That he's an injury to the others" (13). The governess knows that Miles is too young for school, but she never considers his immaturity a factor in what she calls his dismissal--though she is the one who concludes that "Miles may never go back at all" (13). A very surprised Mrs. Grose responds, "Master Miles! him an injury? ... It's too dreadful ... to say such cruel things" (14). She tries to put Miles's character into
perspective for the governess, comparing him to the angelic Flora and indicating her thankfulness to God that she has known him to display what she considers a normal and desired amount of badness from a little boy, but the governess still introduces the notion that Miles is a corrupt influence on his classmates.

After living with him a while, the governess concludes, for equally illogical reasons, that Miles is innocent, "an imperturbable little prodigy of delightful, loveable goodness" (39). She says, "he was only too fine and fair for the little horrid, unclean school-world, and he paid a price for it," betraying her unsupported bias against the school. She says that, because she finds no sign that he has suffered or been chastised, he is an angel. She seems settled with her judgment but continues to ponder the question of Miles's badness with disappointment that her proof of his badness has failed and with suspicion that he may still be bad. She learns from Mrs. Grose that what Mrs. Grose considers the exception to Miles's goodness is "neither more nor less than the circumstance that for a period of several months Quint and the boy had been perpetually together" (39). When Mrs. Grose tells the governess that, although Miss Jessel did not mind, Miles denied certain occasions when he had spent hours with Quint, the governess says, "His having lied and been impudent are, I confess, less than I had hoped to have from you of the outbreak in him of the little natural man. Still . . . they must do, for they make me feel more than ever that I must watch" (41).

And, watch she does, until, certain that Flora is looking out the window at Quint or Miss Jessel, she finds only Miles—-but never
acknowledges her error. He tells her with frankness why he created the
scenario, but the governess disregards his explanation as well as her
earlier observation that Miles's "only defect was an occasional excess
of the restless" (32). She is certain that Miles and his "lovely upward
look" toward where she first saw Quint confirms that the children know
the ghosts (57) and that this inconclusive evidence confirms her
knowledge that the children are "steeped in their vision of the dead
restored," that they feign reading while talking "horrors," and that
"their absolutely unnatural goodness" is a "game . . . a policy . . .
and a fraud!" (52-3). There is no evidence to support the governess's
claim that the children know about, let alone meet with, the ghosts.
Flora leaves Bly, scared sick of the governess, insisting that she does
not she Miss Jessel. Although the governess believes Miles identifies
Quint at the window, it is a guess, not an assertion. Mrs. Grose
suggests that Flora sees Miles before leaving Bly, and when the
governess refers to her visitant, Miles asks, "Is she here?" as if,
based on what Flora tells him, he knows about the governess's claims
that Miss Jessel appears. When Miles finds out he is wrong, he says,
"It's he?" betraying a surprise that would not be evident had he met
with Quint. Familiar with their history, Miles guesses that it is
Quint, and then calls the governess a devil before he is frightened to
death and before he has given any indication that he has seen Quint.

The basis for the governess's certain knowledge is her vivid
imagination, which she acknowledges early in her narrative when
discussing the mystery and freedom of Bly: "And then there was
consideration--and consideration was sweet. Oh, it was a trap--not
designed, but deep—to my imagination... to whatever, in me, was most
excitable" (17). Again, after fantasizing about seeing someone with a
handsome and approving face, she sees Quint and says, "What arrested me
on the spot—and with a shock much greater than any vision had allowed
for—was the sense that my imagination had, in a flash, turned real"
(18). Although the governess is aware of her imagination, she dismisses
its influence in her commentary: "It was not, I am as sure today as I
was then, my mere infernal imagination; it was absolutely traceable that
[Flora and Miles] were aware of my predicament," aware that she knew
about the ghosts but would not discuss them (55).

Her imagination is very much affected by her subjectivity. In the
beginning of the story, she seems to have an understanding of this when
she tells us that at twenty she thought Bly was "a castle of romance,"
but to her "older and more informed eyes" it was a "big, ugly, antique
but convenient house" (12). But this is the only time she questions the
validity of her subjective responses. She acknowledges her subjective
impressions, even those completely unfounded in her sensory
experiences. When Quint vanishes from the window frame, the governess
sees no trace of him on the lawn, but she says, "I remember the clear
assurance I felt that none of [the trees] concealed him. He was there
or was not there: not there if I didn't see him" (24). When describing
how close Miss Jessel was, she says, "Oh, for the effect and the
feeling, she might have been as close as you!" (34). She even tells us
that in her meditations she often "puts things at the worst" (42), which
we see her do time and time again.
The governess uses her imagination and her suspicious subjectivity to attain knowledge. She says, "The way this knowledge [of Miss Jessel's presence across the lake] gathered in me was the strangest thing in the world—the strangest, that is, except the very much stranger in which it quickly merged itself" (32), crediting her intuitive knowledge as if it were factual. Her faith in her ability to intuit spans from the time-of-action to the time-of-discourse: "It seems to me, indeed, in retrospect, that by the time the morrow's sun was high I had restlessly read into the facts before us almost all the meaning they were to receive from subsequent and more cruel occurrences" (31). But throughout the story, she is frequently called to justify her "facts." When Mrs. Grose asks the governess how she knows Quint is looking for Miles, the governess simply insists, "I know, I know, I know! ... And you know my dear" (29), and when she asks how the governess knows Miss Jessel is horrible, the governess responds with equal vigor and certainty, "Know! By seeing her! By the way she looked" (35). She frequently relies on such tautologous statements as "I had seen exactly what I had seen" (37) to emphasize her surety. The governess's report and interpretation of the story are grossly affected by her active imagination, her reliance on intuition as fact, her faith in her subjective impressions, and her predilection for the worst of things. Using such ways of knowing, she makes such unfounded but convicted conclusions as: "The four, depend upon it, perpetually meet. If on either of these last nights you had been with either child, you would clearly have understood" (52).
The governess uses her "information" for some very specific purposes, an understanding of which depends upon an understanding of her goals and self-image. The governess wants to be valued—by her employer, by Mrs. Grose, by Flora, by Miles, by her reader. She frequently makes asides about how admirable or "thoroughly kind and merciful" she is, about the wonder of her bravery, about her strength on the stairs, even about how magnificently she holds a book. If we believe her story, it will speak for her character. Perhaps she is brave, but her excessive advocacy of her magnanimity suggests an excessive desire to earn our respect, as if she is trying to boost her own self-esteem, which seems tentative from the start. Raised in the sequestered home of a country parson, with limited books and no theater, she is hired with some trepidation and awe and by a man she is taken by to be the children's teacher and guardian. But she neglects the children's studies for months after she arrives, and, after teaching her students for only a couple of months, she says, "He was too clever for a bad governess, for a parson's daughter, to spoil" (43). When Miles tries to explain why he wants to leave Bly, he says, "Of course you know a lot—," implying that either the governess's knowledge or something else she offers is not quite enough. The governess says she "risks" replying, "But you hint that you know almost as much?" (61), as if the risk is acknowledging her inadequacy as an educator.

The governess wants to impress the master with her guardian skills, and, since her teaching skills are apparently lacking even for young Miles, she emphasizes her role as protectress. The following passage indicates particularly well her character and motivation:
I scarce know how to put my story into words that shall be a credible picture of my state of mind; but I was in these days literally able to find a joy in the extraordinary flight of heroism the occasion demanded of me. I now saw that I had been asked for a service admirable and difficult; and there would be a greatness in letting it be seen—oh, in the right quarter!—that I could succeed where many another girl might have failed. It was an immense help to me—I confess I rather strongly applaud myself as I look back!—that I saw my service so strongly and so simply. I was there to protect and defend the little creatures. . . . We were united in our danger. They had nothing but me, and I—well, I had them. It was in short a magnificent chance. . . . I was a screen—I was to stand before them. The more I saw, the less they would. I began to watch them in a stifled suspense, a disguised excitement that might well, had it continued too long, have turned to something like madness. What saved me, as I now see it, was that it turned to something else altogether (31-2).

Whether the ghosts are imaginative or real, she finds in them an opportunity to impress the master. To do this, she must convince someone else of their existence; she begins with Mrs. Grose, whose corroborations will justify her.

The governess attempts to control Mrs. Grose psychologically and physically. After grabbing Mrs. Grose and sobbing and kissing her for the first time, the governess notes, "I began to fancy she rather sought to avoid me. I overtook her, I remember, on the staircase; we went down together, and at the bottom I detained her, holding her there with a hand on her arm;" and when Mrs. Grose defends Miles, the governess holds her tighter. The governess also applies psychological pressure on Mrs. Grose, especially with the use of manipulative, dramatic, insistent, even accusatory rhetoric. She speaks of holding Mrs. Grose "perfectly in the pinch." When trying to get Mrs. Grose to say that Miles has been bad, she accuses her of knowing that Miles saw what was between Quint and Jessel, and Mrs. Grose groans, "I don't know—I don't know!" The
governess accuses Mrs. Grose of a variety of things during the night-long interrogation: "Lord how I pressed her now! . . . 'You do know, you dear thing. . . . But I shall get it out of you yet!'" She mentions numerous times how she "pressed" Mrs. Grose and notes the "great deal" of information she got from Mrs. Grose, which amounts to only that Quint and Miles played together for several months (39). Mrs. Grose tries to pull away from the governess many times, doing such things as claiming she has to get back to her work, stepping back, or turning pale and walking toward the window. But the governess knows that Mrs. Grose "knew too well her place not to be ready to share with me any marked inconvenience" (25), and Mrs. Grose listens to the governess's disturbingly dramatic, probing, and coaxing words, never fully comfortable with them, at times breaking down in sobs herself.

The governess also tries to control the children physically and psychologically. There are numerous instances during which she holds them in a posture of affection or restraint or both: "I must have gripped my little girl with a spasm that, wonderfully, she submitted to without a cry or a sign of fright" and then "almost sitting on her to hold her hand"(46). She allows them their imaginative play, but she watches them like a prison guard. Even before she sees Quint, she compares the children to "princes of the blood, for whom everything, to be right, would have to be enclosed and protected" (18). When she determines that Quint wants Miles, she tightens her control: "A rigid control, from the next day, was, as I have said, to follow them" (31), and from then on she rarely lets the children out of her sight. She refers to them not as "the children" but as "my children" even before
she sights Quint, but after that her maintenance of control over them
becomes more important in her attempt to prove herself.

For a long time, the children are entirely obedient to the
governess. She is so grateful for their obedience that, on the way to
church one day, she reports thinking:

Why did they never resent my inexorable, my perpetual society? Something or other had brought nearer home to me that I had
all but pinned the boy to my shawl and that, in the way our
companions were marshalled before me, I might have appeared to
provide against some danger of rebellion. I was like a gaoler
with an eye to possible surprises and escapes (59).

She notes Miles's "grand little air," his "title to independence," and
the "rights of his sex and situation," and says that, if he "had
suddenly struck for freedom" she would have nothing to say about it.
Then Miles immediately does strike for freedom: "Look here, my dear, you
know when in the world, please, am I going back to school?" (59). If
Miles leaves her protection, she will lose the opportunity to gain
recognition for her care of him. As the governess heads to church,
hoping that the question will not be opened further, Miles takes the
helm, symbolically stopping her at the gate by the pressure of his arm.
While asserting his desire to leave Bly, Miles indicates that he is
emotionally and mentally independent of the governess. He confidently
advocates himself, offering acceptable reasons for his wanting to leave,
and he begins to take control by deciding to call his uncle to Bly and
see how he is "going on."

The governess perceives this threat and begins to discuss their
relationship in terms of who is helpless, who has the advantage, who has
the triumph. She knows that Miles is "immensely in the right" but is
disturbed by his "unnatural . . . sudden revelation of a consciousness and a plan" (62). Miles's mental competence, his seeing that the governess has neglectfully "let it all drop" (69), and his determination to notify his uncle threatens the governess's control and the achievement of her goal. If the uncle comes before the governess has proven her bravery with the children and ghosts, he will be disturbed by being bothered, he may read the letter from the school, and he will undoubtedly question the governess's performance and mental state--probably to find them unsuitable. The governess must regain control over Miles, and she must find justification for her actions. Not surprisingly, after a period of quiet, the ghosts begin to appear again. But this time the governess involves the children directly in her vision. She becomes increasingly frantic, insistent, suspicious--what many readers call insane.

Although it is impossible to definitely determine if the ghosts are real, we can make some determinations about our positions as implied readers. Chatman notes the importance of the narratees in indicating to the implied reader the attitudes required by the text (261). But our feedback from the extradiegetic narratees in Turn is very limited, so we must find other aids to locate our stance. Chatman says, "in narratives without explicit narratees, the stance of the implied reader can be inferred on ordinary cultural and moral terms" (150). In Turn, Mrs. Grose functions as the indicator of these, as the implied reader's barometer.

Mrs. Grose responds to the governess with intermittent and varying amounts of belief, skepticism, and surprise, but also with sensibility.
Although we have no reason to doubt Mrs. Grose's reliability, as the
story progresses, our faith in it grows. When the governess tells Mrs.
Grose she went for a walk to visit a friend, Mrs. Grose responds as we
do, "A friend—
you?" (65). Her response, in some way more authoritative
than ours, is confirmed moments later when the governess tells Mrs.
Grose the "truth," that she returned to talk with Miss Jessel. If the
governess is being ironic, she is misconstruing her interaction with
Miss Jessel because, as I will discuss later, she reports nothing to us
about talking with the ghost. And in her preceding commentary, she says
she is going to get away for a few hours, mentioning nothing about
leaving with anyone else, and she reports shock when she sees Miss
Jessel. Mrs. Grose's response guides or reflects ours and reveals these
additional unreliabilities about the governess.

At first, Mrs. Grose calls upon her familiarity with the
characters to defend them. She frequently questions the governess's
claims in ways that suggest confusion about the governess's vague
implications: "[You saw] a horror?" (26), "[Quint's] effect?" (30),
"[Miss Jessel's] intention?" (36). Some of her questions and comments
imply disbelief more than accepting curiosity, as if, in her
questioning, she tries to relocate the governess in more logical
reasoning and in what at least Mrs. Grose believes: "But how do you know
[Quint was looking for someone]?" (29); "Isn't it just a proof of
[Miles's] blessed innocence?" Mrs. Grose also tries to dismiss the
governess, humor her, or call her to her senses. She ends one
conversation by saying she has to do chores; she says, "Dear, dear—
we must keep our heads!" and she even suggests that Flora might not mind
Miss Jessel's company (35). Mrs. Grose often pulls away from the
governess, both physically and mentally, and the governess notes this:
"Her thus turning her back on me was fortunately not for my just
preoccupations a snub that could check the growth of our mutual esteem"
(16); "You don't believe me?" (35). The governess notices "the far-away
faint glimmer of a consciousness more acute" (26) in Mrs. Grose, who is
concerned about the governess's changing state. After the governess
tells Mrs. Grose that Quint is a horror, she notes, "Mrs. Grose looked
around once more; she fixed her eyes on the duskier distance, then,
pulling herself together, turned to me with abrupt inconsequence. 'It's
time we should be at church.'" When the governess says she's not fit
for church, Mrs. Grose continues to encourage her, "Won't it do you
good?" (26), as if she believes the governess needs spiritual guidance.

The governess knows the importance of obtaining Mrs. Grose's
belief: "She believed in me, I was sure, absolutely; if she hadn't I
don't know what would have become of me, for I couldn't have borne the
business alone" (49). After some dramatic conversations, the governess
says, in a particularly telling quote: "I had made her a receptacle of
lurid things, but there was an odd recognition of my superiority. . . .
She offered her mind to my disclosures as, had I wished to mix a witch's
broth and proposed it with assurance, she would have held out a large
clean sauce pan" (50). But, the governess misinterprets one of Mrs.
Grose's comments shortly after this. When, after hearing from the
governess that Peter and Miss Jessel want the children "for the love of
all the evil that, in those dreadful days, the pair put into them. And
to ply them with that evil still, to keep up the work of demons," Mrs.
Grose responds under her breath, "Laws!" The governess thinks, "the exclamation was homely, but it revealed a real acceptance of my further proof of what, in the bad time . . . must have occurred," but Mrs. Grose's next question, "But what can they do now?" seems to indicate that she has not totally accepted the governess's assertion that the ghosts are bad. The governess responds, "Don't they do enough?" (53). Of course, they have not done anything, and Mrs. Grose knows this. She pulls back from the governess by slowly rising and scanning the distance. After the governess tells her that Quint and Jessel want the children, Mrs. Grose manifests increasing concern about the governess's claims. Asserting herself for the first time, she says to the governess, "make [the master] at any rate come to you. . . . He ought to be here—he ought to help" (54). It is not perfectly clear for whose safety she suggests this—the children's or the governess's. She has heard about the ghosts for some time, but she has not taken any action to guard the children, implying that she does not in fact consider the ghosts real or dangerous or both. The governess refuses Mrs. Grose's imperative, imagining the master's "derision, his amusement, his contempt for the break-down of my resignation at being left alone and for the fine machinery I had set in motion to attract his attention to my slighted charms. She didn't know—no one knew—how proud I had been to serve him and to stick to our terms" (54). Again, the governess betrays a selfish purposefulness to her motives, and she tells Mrs. Grose that if Mrs. Grouse should appeal to the master, she will leave.

Mrs. Grose consistently questions the validity of the governess's story and expresses concern for her mental state. Chatman notes that
"in autobiographical or witness fiction . . . ethical veracity relies on the principle of 'I-saw-it-with-my-own-eyes,'" and that "hearing it with my own ears" is already weaker (227). Both women rely heavily on this principle. The governess says of the notion that Miles is bad, "see him, Miss, first. Then believe it!" (14), and of Flora, "look at her." She says, of the person she imagines seeing, "the only way to be sure he knew would be to see it . . . in his handsome face" (18). Of Flora, she says, "I saw with my own eyes: saw that she was perfectly aware" (34). But, Mrs. Grose does not see the ghosts or the alleged evil in the children, so she cannot find enough evidence to support the governess's claims. Realizing that she can no longer rely on Mrs. Grose's vision in her attempt to convince her that the claims are true, the governess tries to convince her by relying entirely on her imagination and intuition: "Oh yes, we may sit here and look at them, and they may show off to us there to their full; but even while they pretend to be lost in their fairy-tale they're steeped in their vision of the dead restored" (52). But, the governess again relies on seeing as empirical evidence; she brings Mrs. Grose to the lake, seizes her, and thrusts her toward Miss Jessel, saying, "She's as big as a blazing fire! Only look, dearest woman, look--!" (77). But Mrs. Grose does not see: "Miss, where on earth do you see anything?"(77)--and believes that Flora does not either. With Flora hugging Mrs. Grose and both of them denying that they see the ghosts, they stand together and apart from the governess mentally and physically. The governess again proclaims that Flora is under Miss Jessel's dictation, that she has lost Flora, and she orders them to leave. But Mrs. Grose, in her first real act of
assertion, has already told Flora that Miss Jessel is not there and that they will leave as fast as they can. The governess has lost them both, at least in part.

When the governess tells Mrs. Grose she must take Flora to the uncle, her response is one that indicates for the first time a judgment on the part of the governess's behavior, "only to tell on you?" (81). During this conversation, Mrs. Grose seems to become increasingly aware of the governess's troubled state. Her speech might imply belief, but she also is trying to determine just exactly what the governess believes and if it is safe to leave Miles with her. The governess tells Mrs. Grose that her remedy is Mrs. Grose's and Miles's loyalty, and that the only thing she is sure of is Mrs. Grose. Mrs. Grose looks out the window again and returns to offer the governess vague support. She reports that has heard Flora speak "horrors" about the governess which justify her. The governess suggests that Flora has spoken appalling language, which, as proof that Flora is bad, would justify her in one sense. But Mrs. Grose says that she has heard some of what Flora has said before. The "horrors" could very well be comments about the governess's state which would justify or explain her behavior in another way. As soon as she says this, she wants to leave, but the governess holds her there and asks if she believes. Mrs. Grose speaks vaguely again, saying she believes but not saying in exactly what, possibly restating her belief that Flora does not see the ghost by the lake. Mrs. Grose even justifies the governess by suggesting that Miles stole letters at school and by saying she wants to take Flora "far from this... far from them" (83). I do not want to suggest that Mrs. Grose
suddenly thinks she knows what is going on or that she is entirely fabricating support for the governess. She does not quite know what to believe; however, she realizes, even as she offers the governess evidence, that the governess may be wrong, even very sick, and certainly in need of help. Mrs. Grose wants to protect the children, but she also wants to help the governess. As she leaves, to remove Flora from Bly and from the governess, finally acting upon her sensible inclinations, she tells the governess, "I'll save you without [Miles]" (84).

I have looked at the allegedly factual reports of the governess's story and whether her interpretations are consistent and logical. But her narrative style, both for her reader and for Mrs. Grose, is also an important part of her reliability as a narrator. The governess interrupts Mrs. Grose, interjecting her own conclusions as if they represent Mrs. Grose's, thereby taking command of the direction of the conversation and extracting such things from Mrs. Grose as a kiss or the characterization of Miss Jessel. One of the most notable characteristics of how the governess communicates with Mrs. Grose is her use of histrionics, of crying and grabbing and exclaiming. She frequently relies on hyperbole to communicate her sense of horror, danger, and beauty as if, by using overstatement to convey her sense of danger, she will be believed. She also distorts the tone of events by, as West notes, frequently using words like "tenderness" and "kind and merciful" to gloss over "the force of an action or attitude" (343).

The governess repeatedly asserts the certitude of her interpretations, frequently with the use of "clearly." When she sees Miles standing in the yard at night, she immediately concludes that
there is "clearly" someone on the tower. Jones believes that she is employing exaggeration, not deception, to emphasize her feelings—and that the most we can charge her with here is ambiguity (314). He might be able to successfully claim this had the governess not so frequently used "clearly" as well as other words and phrases for the purpose of affirming her interpretations or visions as fact. He has chosen a useful example for himself because neither the governess nor we find out if there was someone on the tower. But when she first sees Miss Jessel on the lake, she says, "I began to take in with certitude, and yet without direct vision, the presence, at a distance, of a third person... There was no ambiguity in anything: not whatever, at least, in the conviction I from one moment to another found myself forming as to what I should see straight before me" (33). The governess, by the very nature of her story, will have difficulty convincing anyone of its factuality. But she believes in what she says, and she uses "clearly," along with "truth," "definitely proved," "certitude," etc., to convey that she believes what she says is fact and to convince her narratees to believe it.

The governess also misconstrues her story by manipulating and misrepresenting it. She says of Quint, "there had been matters in his life—strange passages and perils, secret disorders, vices more than suspected" (31). What exactly does she mean? Why does she suddenly switch from presenting us with the specifics about Quint's life, details which seem supported by "boundless chatter," to offering us a vague, derogatory, almost hyperbolic impression of him? What has Quint really done, in life or in death, that earned him this conviction? She bases
her harsh judgment of Quint on her own ambiguous and vague reports, but she skews her presentation and judgment of Miss Jessel by very specifically misconstruing her interaction with her. In her account to the reader about seeing Miss Jessel in the schoolroom, she says that, after she told Miss Jessel she was a horrible woman, "she looked at me as if she heard me" (64). The governess, who consistently details her sightings, says nothing in her commentary about Miss Jessel speaking. But when Mrs. Grose prompts her and asks if Miss Jessel spoke, she says, "It came to that" (65). Again, Jones says that this is ambiguous but not deceptive because the governess is saying "it amounted to that" rather than "that is what happened," but the governess answers Mrs. Grose's direct question, "And what did she say?" with "That she suffers the torments—!" (65). This is the same narrator who tells us she is going home to prepare to get away from Bly for a few hours and who then tells Mrs. Grose that she went home for a talk with Miss Jessel, the same narrator who tells Mrs. Grose she has written a letter which will give "the alarm" to the master, but which, as Miles finds out, contains "nothing" (93). The governess's reports, evaluations, and rhetoric potentiate each other and betray an intentionally manipulative narrator.

The attainment of credibility is vital to the governess during the time-of-action and the time-of-discourse. If she is to succeed in impressing the master, she must gain the support of Mrs. Grose. I will discuss her audience and her purpose in detail later, but I want to note now that, if she is to justify and absolve herself, she must convince her reader of her reliability. She addresses this difficulty with him, "I scarce know how to put my story into words that shall be a credible
picture of my state of mind" (31), and then she goes on to assert her reliability, countering any concern over her imagination with, "It was not, I am as sure today as I was sure then, my mere infernal imagination" (55). However, this imagination is in part how she relives parts of her story as she narrates it: "I can hear again" (19); "the whole feeling of the moment returns" (19); "I can see at this moment" (20); "so I see her still" (65). She uses these vivid images to convey a sense of immediacy and acuity about her memory and to lend credence to the story. She also attempts to counter any concern her reader might have about the effect of the years on her recollection by using the correctness of her time-of-discourse interpretation to strengthen her time-of-action reliability: "It seems to me indeed, in retrospect, that by the time the morrow's sun was high I had restlessly read into the facts before us almost all the meaning they were to receive from subsequent and more cruel occurrences" (31). She does a related but converse thing when, as she narrates about seeing Quint for the last time, she says: "I suppose I now read into our situation a clearness it could not have had at the time, for I seem to see our poor eyes already lighted with some spark of a prevision of the anguish that was to come" (90). Likewise, she says, "But these fancies were not marked enough not to be thrown off, and it is only in the light, or the gloom, I should rather say, of other and subsequent matters that they now come back to me" (11). Although such statements actually diminish the reliability of her time-of-action perceptivity (and thus conflict with her attempts to betray constant surety), the governess says them to try to enhance her
time-of-discourse ability to reliably interpret events which she does not interpret or misinterprets during the time-of-action.

The governess also uses her post-event knowledge of events to formulate time-of-action interpretations about events before they have taken place in an attempt to find affirmation, increase her authority, and manipulate the response to the event. She affirms her intuition when she says that she anticipates Miles's asking her when he will return to school moments before he actually does. Having proven again the validity of her intuition, she tells us that, though his transcribed speech sounds harmless enough, she could "feel" that he had already perceived his own advantage (60). She tells us that she "made sure" that the children had bribed Mrs. Grose into silence before she "discovers" that from Mrs. Grose (64); and she tells us that she and Mrs. Grose found the boat where she had supposed it to be (75). In these examples, the governess uses her post-event knowledge to demonstrate the accuracy of her pre-event knowledge and interpretation. She also delays commentary on events until later events enhance the accuracy of her interpretation of earlier ones. When she sees Miss Jessel for the first time, she ends the paragraph with, "I faced what I had to face" (34), creating a fairly significant "tension" in her readers. She unfolds this information when she reports her later conversation with Mrs. Grose, when she uses open-ended comments and questions with vague assertions to extract from Mrs. Grose the descriptive information she could not have had if she had tried to recount the encounter when it occurred. Here, she creates a tension in
her audience until she can satisfy her own "instabilities" about the incident and then relieve the tension.

As in some of the preceding quotes, the governess frequently uses prolepsis in her discourse commentary to create a mood of anticipation and dread about the time-of-action events: "if I could immediately have succumbed to [my desire to urge Flora to confess] I might have spared myself--well you'll see what" (47). By creating tensions in the reader, she stimulates our curiosity, attempts to enhance our sympathy, and maintains some narrative control. The establishment of sympathy is especially important for the governess because, although we get the sustained inside view that often helps evoke sympathy for characters, the governess's values are questionable, and her behavior is unpredictable--and these prevent our comfortable attachment to her. She notes the importance of obtaining Mrs. Grose's sympathy. And, although in the following quote she denies caring about our faith, which she has evidenced implicit concern for throughout her story, she also tries to evoke our sympathy: "In going on with the record of what was most hideous at Bly, I not only challenge the most liberal faith--for which I little care; but--and this is another matter--I renew what I myself suffered" (43). Finally, the governess's frequent self-aggrandizement functions with her other attempts to mold our interpretation of her. Unlike Whitey, the governess maintains a pseudo control over her narrative, a control enhanced by her self-conscious character and perhaps also by her written instead of verbal communication. She covertly and overtly attempts to construct our view of her.
The governess, who wants to be believed and who can find no one to share her vision, is understandably concerned with the way her audience interprets her mental state. If we could be certain the ghosts do not exist, then we would be certain she is insane. Even if they are real, she gives us a variety of reasons to question her mental condition. She first broaches the subject in her commentary by reporting Mrs. Grose's belief in her, even though Mrs. Grose has not seen Quint: "Yet she accepted without directly impugning my sanity the truth as I gave it to her" (28). But her later comments betray continued concern about her sanity and our perception of it, even as she asserts her saneness: "I began to watch them in a stifled suspense, a disguised tension, that might well, had it continued too long, have turned into something like madness. What saved me, as I now see it, was that it turned to another matter altogether" (32). And, when she brings Mrs. Grose to the lake and sees Miss Jessel, she says, "she was there, so I was justified; she was there, so I was neither cruel nor mad" (76); but, of course, she does not find the affirmation she is seeking because Mrs. Grose does not see the ghosts. The governess also defends her sanity to Mrs. Grose, claiming that, though what she has seen would make Mrs. Grose crazy, it has only made her more lucid, and insisting the children are frauds, "mad as that seems!" (53). When responding to Mrs. Grose's suggestion that she notify the master, she asks, "By writing to him that his house is poisoned and his little nephew and niece mad?" Mrs. Grose responds, "But if they are Miss?" implying that the master should then be notified. And the governess's telling non sequitur response is, "And if I am myself, you mean?" She suggests her own insanity, but instead of
insisting on her mental capacity, she defends her reason for not notifying the master, "That's charming news to be sent him by a governess whose primary undertaking was to give him no worry" (54), thereby successfully changing the subject.

Goddard (226) notes the numerous visual images that the governess creates of herself which, while she suggests and then denies her insanity, ask us to question it. She says of Miles's face before church, "I seemed to see in the beautiful face with which he watched me how ugly and queer I looked" (60). She says that Mrs. Grose stared at her eyes as if they might have resembled Miss Jessel's (36). Although, these images could be accounted for, perhaps by stress, James does not provide them unintentionally, and they are supported by her strange mannerisms and responses. When she first sees Quint and still believes he is a living man, instead of going home, she roams around the grounds, alone, until well past dark. When she sees him at the window, instead of calling for help, she goes outside and waits for him to reappear. Mrs. Grose, reminding us of the sensible thing to do, says of this, "I couldn't have come out," and when the governess says she could not either, that she has her duty, Mrs. Grose replies, "So have I mine" (24), implying that, by staying inside, she, unlike the governess, thinks more of her duty to protect the children than the governess does. The governess tells us herself that she is "quite as queer" as the ghosts (28), and she once smothered "a kind of howl" (31) after calling Quint a creature. She repeatedly reports and exhibits pleasure during moments when it is least expected. It is understandable that she would find some justification and maybe joy in the thought that Mrs. Grose
believes her or shares her belief, but often the only emotion the
governess expresses is joy when it should be concern. When Mrs. Grose
questions the governess's statement that Miles has discovered a divine
way to distract the governess, the governess says, "'Infernal, then! I
almost cheerfully rejoined" (72), and then she says she does not mind
that Quint and Miles are together in the schoolroom. When Miles admits
he took the letter, she moans with joy, and when he gives her a
"mournful, thoughtful little headshake" and tells her there was nothing
in it, she "almost shouted in [her] joy, "Nothing, nothing!" (91). When
she learns that Flora has spoken horrors, she breaks into a "doubtless
significant enough" laugh (83). Considering the governess's commentary
about her sanity, her appearance, and her disquietingly bizarre
behavior, we have good cause to doubt her sanity, even if we can never
know if the ghosts are real. Using my framework for examining
reliability, the governess is a very unreliable narrator--from how she
reports events, to how she interprets and judges them. Before deciding
to what degree she departs from the values of her implied author, we
need to consider the implicit and explicit questions of liability--
James's sense of it as well as the governess's, and how the two relate
to each other.

Assigning the Governess Liability

Differing conditions of reliability and sanity determine how we
assign the governess liability. The most extreme and unfounded
condition would be that the governess is unreliable and feigns the
ghosts for the purposes I discussed earlier. Although the ghosts would
not be hallucinations, this condition would certainly reflect a
perverted mental state, but one that would enable us to define her liability most severely; we might even call her a murderess. Much commentary suggests that she intentionally sets in motion a possibly fabricated story for motives which begin and remain utterly selfish. Her fabrication of the entire story would explain why she tells Mrs. Grose not to ask Flora about Miss Jessel—because she is sure Flora will lie about it—as well as why she does not remove the children from the house—because she does not really believe they are in danger. However, if she is in entire control of her story, and if obtaining Mrs. Grose's support is essential for her, why does she lead Mrs. Grose to see ghosts that she knows are not there?

The governess's least unreliable claim is that she truly believes in the ghosts' existence. The implied author gives us little or no reason to doubt the sincerity of her belief in the ghosts. We might wonder why she remains on the grounds, possibly endangering herself, after her first sighting of Peter, but this exhibition of poor judgment does not necessarily betray disbelief in the first sighting of the man or ghost. The implied author strengthens the truthfulness of her sincerity because neither he nor she question it, and because, even with her concerns about the perception of her sanity, she is sure that Mrs. Grose will see Miss Jessel and that she will be justified. But Mrs. Grose does not justify the governess's vision; no one does, which leads us to question not the governess's belief but her sanity. We can not make decisions about her mental status using the indeterminate ghosts. But, we can ask if her behavior is justified because, given that her
vision is genuine, her interpretation of and reaction to the ghosts is the result of her belief in them, not their existence.

Because the time-of-action presumably occurs a long time before the time-of-discourse (she was twenty when she arrived at Bly and has "older, more informed eyes" when she writes the manuscript), our final determination of the governess's reliability and liability is enhanced by noting the relationship between her reliability and liability, how they are manifested in both action-time and discourse-time, as well as how they relate to her explicit and implicit purposes during these times. The governess's explicit purpose during the time-of-action is to teach and protect the children and to govern Bly. But she consistently neglects and endangers all of Bly's residents, especially the children. She admonishes Mrs. Grose for not notifying the uncle that Quint was misbehaving, promising that she would have told, yet she delays telling anyone about the strange man at Bly, locking her own door at night while the doors of some of the other residents go unlocked. She proclaims that she will protect the children, then she leaves them not only alone, but she even leaves Miles, she believes, with Quint, saying it does not bother her anymore (72).

The governess resists encouragement from Miles and Mrs. Grose to notify the uncle because her secondary purpose in caring for Bly and the children is to ensure that her employer is never troubled by her and thereby pleased by her. However, the prioritization of her purposes becomes quickly distorted when she capitalizes on the ghosts as a way to please her employer. If she protects the children from the ghosts' evil without disturbing him, he will be very impressed. Although she has
sworn not to contact him herself, she has faith that he will be contacted. She knows Mrs. Grose is illiterate, but when she threatens to quit if Mrs. Grose contacts the employer, she indicates that it is within Mrs. Grose's ability to contact him. The governess also betrays her intentions and hope in her commentary: "What I was doing was what he had earnestly hoped and directly asked of me, and that I could, after all, do it proved even a greater joy than I had expected. I dare say I fancied myself . . . a remarkable young woman and took comfort in the faith that this would more publicly appear" (18). She also says, "I now saw that I had been asked for a service admirable and difficult; and there would be a greatness in letting it be seen--oh, in the right quarter!--that I could succeed where many another girl might have failed" (31). Finally, the governess commands Mrs. Grose to go "straight to [the] uncle" (81), not contacting him herself but ensuring that he will learn of her performance. By saying Miles dies "dispossessed," the governess indicates her belief that she has succeeded in protecting him from evil. Flora, now removed from Bly is also safe from harm. Having saved the children, the governess has only to see if their uncle will be pleased.

Those who recognize the governess's unreliability know Miles dies because of her selfish motives, pride, neglect, and poor judgment. If he is dispossessed at all, it is only because he is dead, not because he is evil when alive. When she tells Mrs. Grose about her plans to confront Miles, she deflates her liability: "If nothing comes, I shall only fail, and you will, at the worst, have helped me by doing on your arrival in town, whatever you may have found possible" (82). But during
the time-of-action the governess betrays no awareness of her
misjudgment, her incompetence as an interpreter or a governess, and no
implicit or explicit guilt or regret about her behavior or the results
of it. On the contrary, she may have succeeded on all of her counts:
she protects the children, she does not contact the master, and she
thinks he will be impressed with her.

The governess expresses no sense of liability in her time-of-action
speech or behavior. However, her commentary suggests her implicit
sensitivity to her own liability, beginning with the purpose of it, of
why she wrote the story, whom she wrote it for, and whom she sent it to.
We do not know whom the governess had in mind as her audience when she
wrote the manuscript, but she chose Douglas to be its only reader. He
denies that the story is his, but James has given him an uncanny
resemblance to Miles. Douglas and Miles both return from school after
one term to meet and become enamored with their sister's governess, who
is ten years older than Douglas and nine years older than Miles.
Douglas meets the governess after his second summer at school and Miles
after his first term; however, since Miles is enrolled prematurely, he
could have begun during a summer term, thereby meeting the governess
both during his second summer and at the end of his first term. Both
boys live on beautiful lands, and Douglas says, immediately after
referring to his own home, "I remember the time and the place—the
corner of the lawn, the shade of the great beeches and the long, hot
summer afternoon. It wasn't a scene for a shudder; but oh--!" (5) . . .
but, oh, what a shudder occurred there, the shudder of this—his—story.
Douglas speaks of one afternoon, so we might speculate that the
governess shows Douglas Bly on one particular day, but she denies seeing Bly since the day she left it. Given the isolation of Miles and Flora and that no other children are mentioned, it is unlikely that the governess finds new employment and gives her new charge a tour before leaving Bly, especially amidst the presumable activities following Miles's death. A trivial resemblance, but nevertheless one, is that both the governess and Douglas keep their letters in locked drawers. Could they be the same ones? Maybe not, maybe so. Finally, the governess begins her story with "I remember," the same interjection Douglas uses in his short commentary before the story begins. These similarities suggest nothing in isolation, but James inserts enough of them to cast at least speculative doubt about Miles's death, and, thus, the reliability, purpose, and sanity of the governess. By preventing us from knowing with certainty that Douglas is Miles, James perpetuates the ambiguity in *Turn*. If he had made the identification absolute, the governess's reliability would be blatantly undermined. If Douglas is Miles, then the governess is not liable for Miles's death, and the extent of her unreliability and insanity is multiplied tenfold—especially if she believes Miles is dead.

Assuming that Miles is dead, why does the governess send the manuscript to Douglas? Douglas indicates that the two share secrets: "I liked her extremely well and am glad to this day to think she liked me too. If she hadn't she wouldn't have told me. She had never told anyone. It wasn't simply that she said so, but that I knew she hadn't. . . . You'll easily judge why when you hear" (5). It is ambiguous whether this particular secret is their shared affection, her affection
for the employer, or the story. But Douglas's comment on the secrecy,
as well as his remaining silent about the story for twenty years,
indicates his protectiveness of it and the governess. Perhaps the
governess is aware of Douglas's affection for her and, thus, anticipates
his interested and sympathetic reception of her story—especially since
he surely recognizes the similarities between Miles and himself.
Indeed, he does sympathize with and like her—as does Miles until the
very end of the time-of-action. He advocates the governess's character,
which is why Booth calls him a "direct badge of human authority" that
she is not totally unreliable (CU 296). On the contrary, Douglas's
feelings for the governess are the very reasons why we must question his
assessment of her—as well as his claim that it is not his story. Even
though Douglas (as himself or as Miles) is not implicated in the story,
he has some reason to be protective of it, and, by denying that he is
Miles if he in fact is, he protects her reliability as much as
possible.

Anticipating why the governess sends the story to Douglas, why does
she even write it? If Douglas is not Miles and has seen Bly with the
governess, he may already have heard some of the story. Of course, if
he is Miles, he knows much of it already. Does the governess, who
explicitly denies moral liability in the story, simply share the story
with this one person because she thinks it is interesting enough to be
told or to impress him with her "heroism"? Then, why not tell it
earlier? She sends it to Douglas before she dies. Since, if she sends
it at all she must send it before dying, his specifying "before she
died" suggests that she sends the manuscript just before her death. We
might speculate about how soon before her death she writes the story, or if she sends the manuscript knowing that her death is imminent, that she will not have to face its audience or implications. During the time-of-action, the governess does not receive sustained affirmation from another character for her interpretations or her behavior. On the contrary, her behavior is questioned by Mrs. Grose and even by Miles, who says: "You'll have to tell him--about the way you've let it all drop: you'll have to tell him a tremendous lot!" (69). Although she insists on her reliability and appropriateness during the time-of-action, she writes and sends her story to a sympathetic audience--either to Miles or Douglas--in an extended attempt to find support for her earlier behavior.

In many ways, the explicit sense of liability the governess betrays in her discourse is much like that which she exhibits in her conversations. During her interaction with the characters, she regularly defends or affirms her sanity and her reliability, but Mrs. Grose, Miles, and Flora do not accept the governess's behavior or claims. Nevertheless, although she thinks her "older and more informed eyes" (12) would more accurately see the house at Bly, most of her judgment on the events or her behavior there does not change with time. Her story is filled with occurrences and interpretations which ask us to question the validity of them and of her, but she still believes enough in her visions and in her ability to make other characters or narratees believe in them (as hers or their own) to express self-justification in the story and in the discourse. But in order for the governess to counter the effect of the characters' responses in her solitary reader,
she addresses him directly with numerous defensive statements about her
sanity, the accuracy of her knowledge, and the correctness of her
interpretations—all in an attempt to deny any wrongdoing on her part.
As noted earlier, in many of these statements she attempts to enhance
either her time-of-action interpretations or her time-of-discourse
interpretations by claiming that an interpretation in one period
supports an interpretation in the other. Her anticipatory statements of
defense and her refutations do not necessarily mean that she implicitly
assumes liability, but they do betray that she anticipates and attempts
to curtail similar responses from her however sympathetic reader.

She also directly addresses in her discourse, however rarely and
inadequately, some aspects of her liability. She says that Miles has an
advantage over her, because, "who would ever absolve me . . . if, by the
faintest tremor of an overture, I were the first to introduce into our
perfect intercourse an element so dire" (51), but then she introduces
the dire element to the children—and with no apparent awareness that
she errs in doing so. Similarly, she recognizes Mrs. Grose's liability
when Mrs. Grose does not notify the employer about Quint's questionably
unacceptable behavior, but she hypocritically defends her own decision
not to notify him when she believes the children are truly and
dreadfully endangered by the ghosts. In these examples, the governess
ignores the double-standard of liability she has set for herself and
never recognizes her mistakes. The only time she suggests that she has
misjudged is when she says, "I found it simple, in my ignorance, my
confusion, and perhaps my conceit, to assume that I could deal with a
boy whose education for the world was all on the point of beginning"
(17). But, while she admits that she may have been conceited about Miles's education, she does not clearly accept that she was, and she counters this suggestion of liability by surrounding it with claims of her ignorance and confusion, claims meant to enhance our sympathy of her and to absolve her of being conceited. She is not sure that she can educate Miles, but she is certain she can save him from evil spirits. And she never acknowledges in her commentary her overconfident assumption that she can contend with the ghosts--because she does not find fault with it, even during the time-of-discourse, even after her presumed reflection about the story and Miles's death.

The governess also implicitly indicates that she does not recognize the extent of her liability. Although she evidences situational control during the time-of-action and narrative control during the time-of-discourse, ultimately her narrative control is so weak that we can clearly identify her unreliabilities. Her very willingness to set herself up for such harsh judgments reveals her inadequate understanding of her own reliability and liability and her inability to successfully manipulate them in ways that, however deceivingly, more fully absolve her. For instance, she does nothing to remove the children from Bly until she sends Flora, sick with fear of the governess, away from the ghosts and away from her. But, although she knows Flora is afraid of her, she ironically never realizes the full extent of her liability for Flora's reaction. She also never regrets not sending the children away earlier or not sending Miles along with Flora. She explicitly claims great concern and adoration for the children, but she expresses, with all of her commentary, much of it
proleptic, absolutely no sense of sadness or loss over their fates—even apart from her role in them. Perhaps this is because, if Douglas is Miles, she knows Miles has not died, and she therefore has no need to grieve. But it is more likely because he dies "dispossessed," so she considers herself successful in at least saving Miles and therefore finds no wrongdoing on her part.

With all of her explicit and implicit defensive attempts, the governess does not justify herself because her gross unreliability reveals her misrepresentations and her unacceptable behavior. Her time-of-discourse assessment of the story is unchanged from her time-of-action assessment of it, and both reveal that she remains oblivious to her transgressions at Bly. Her discourse is constrained by her desire to absolve herself through it, so she never fully sees or acknowledges her own unreliability or liability. But, as an unreliable narrator, she provides us with the means with which we convict her. It is difficult to know, however, how Douglas finally assesses her. He affirms her character in his prologue, saying, "She was the most agreeable woman I've ever known in her position; she would have been worthy of any whatever" (5), but he makes no further commentary, instead, leaving his narratees to judge. We cannot be sure that he still affirms the governess, especially because he is protectively silent about the story for "many a winter" (4) and holds on to the manuscript until, like the governess, before his death, when he gives it to the unnamed host narrator.

However Douglas responds, those who recognize the governess's unreliability, her implicit purposes in both the time-of-action and the
discourse, and her role in Miles's death and Flora's traumatization find no justification for her actions, regardless of how good her intent is. No matter how insane she might appear or be at times, she evidences an awareness of what is "realistically" best for the children. Yet she neglects those things--their education, their psychological well-being, and their physical well-being--and she attempts to spiritually save them by herself in order to impress their uncle. The key to how harshly we finally judge the governess is in her most revealing quote regarding her motivation and liability:

[Mrs. Grose] could see what I myself saw: his derision, his amusement, his contempt for the breakdown of my resignation at being left alone and for the fine machinery I had set in motion to attract his attention to my slighted charms. She didn't know---no one knew--how proud I had been to serve him and to stick to our terms (54 emphasis added).

Whether the machinery originates in her own mind or in the actual but selective appearance of the ghosts, she sets it in motion by being receptive to it, and she propels it by trying to capitalize on it. The propelling and her motivation for it are what she is most liable for, and they do not depend upon whether she is hallucinating or not--but they do result in the terrorizing of one child and the manslaughter of another.

Finally, the most essential determination about narrative reliability is not how accurate the reports or interpretations are because, no matter how unacceptable readers find a narrator's evaluations, if they represent the values of that narrator's creator, the narrator is reliable. Though reporting and interpretive accuracy are indispensable in locating unreliability, a narrator is not
ultimately unreliable unless he or she diverges from the values and beliefs of the implied author. These values are, as Rimmon-Kenan says, "notoriously difficult to arrive at" (101), and they are even more difficult to locate in works with major ambiguities—like those in The Turn of the Screw.

James claims to have created a reliable narrator in a story that relies on the imagination of both the governess and the reader. A work that relies on readers' imaginations for its effect must be flexible and ambiguous to a certain extent. If a novel or narrator's values are so ambiguous that they are crippling, then they must be unreliable because it will be impossible to locate the implied author's values and to test them against the narrator's values. Indeed, most first person narratives are ambiguous in some way, but this does not mean that we should abandon our efforts to determine reliability—nor should we do so in Turn. James says in his preface to The Aspern Papers, "there is not only from beginning to end of the matter not an inch of expatriation, but my values are positively all blanks save so far as an excited horror, a promoted pity . . . " (Willen 101), and too many critics have relied on James's comments in their explication of Turn as an endlessly ambiguous work, thereby creating a kind of intentional fallacy. The ambiguity in Turn is not crippling, just challenging. Perhaps James's own values are not present, but the values of his implied author are. We just have to work harder for them and then to be able to infer them correctly. They are betrayed in Turn by the imagery used to characterize the children, by the governess's appearance and behavior, by the responses of the children and of the reliable Mrs. Grose, and by the discrepancy between
what the governess reports and how she interprets what she sees. Finally, no matter what Henry James says about *The Turn of the Screw*, if he were the uncle of Miles and Flora, he would not be pleased with their caretaker.
CHAPTER IV

A Case of Multiple Narrators: Unreliability and Liability in the Search for Equilibrium and the Tragic Action of As I Lay Dying

I have placed As I Lay Dying last in my study because, although it lacks the complicating factor of embedding, its fifteen narrators make it the most demanding and interesting work of these four in which to determine reliability and liability. Such determination depends upon an understanding of the complex themes and the tragic action of the novel. This is a story about human existence in an insane world and how its characters successfully and unsuccessfully attempt to survive in such a world by defining their own existence within it—especially by distinguishing their individual identities, the boundaries for their persons, and the boundaries for their actions. The members of the Bundren family are, as the novel begins and as the death of their mother and wife is imminent, in the midst of redefining the family existence as well as their individual identities. By the end of the novel, some of the members are successful, some of them are not. Their individual measures of success situate them in the tragic action, and the way their success is achieved or the reason why it is not achieved determines the narrative reliability and moral liability for each particular narrator-character. Because each narrator adds to the web of beliefs in the book, sometimes clarifying the implied author's beliefs, sometimes
deviating from them, the final test of reliability—the determination of how the value systems of each narrator work together to define the values of one implied author—requires an examination of all of the narrators, but especially of those within the Bundren family.

Darl Bundren, narrating far more than any of the other characters—one-third of the book—functions as the main narrator by virtue of quantity alone. But the nature of his narration, with his sensitivity and omniscience, is perhaps more important in enabling him a kind of narrative control, as well as a situational control, over the story. In the first pages of the novel, Darl describes what Jewel does when he cuts through the cottonhouse, even though Darl walks around it.
Likewise, Darl describes with detail what Jewel does with the horse in the field, though he does not witness it. These descriptions could at this point very well be speculations, accurate or inaccurate, but they gain credibility in the next section when Jewel betrays his anger in his own monologue. Booth says, "the most important single privilege [of a narrator] is that of obtaining an inside view of another character" (Rhetoric 160), and Darl displays such privilege with Dewey Dell and her pregnancy. Perhaps, as Cash suggests, Dewey Dell and Darl "kind of knowed things betwixt them" (220), and this knowing clues Darl into Dewey Dell's very new pregnancy. But he has an uncanny understanding of her thoughts and her condition: "You want her to die so you can get to town: is that it? ... I can almost tell you the day when you knew it is true" (35). Again, we see this understanding at least partially confirmed later, when we learn of Dewey Dell's feigned keening and her personal motives for getting Addie to Jefferson.
These observations are yet to be called omniscient. Like Darl's early declaration that it will rain before morning and that Addie will die before he and Jewel return, it is feasible that Darl's familiarity with his family, with rain clouds, and with Addie's condition enables him to make accurate predictions. But, Darl's observations become progressively more supernatural. He describes Addie's death scene in detail, even though he is absent--from Peabody's being pulled up the hill with ropes, to Addie's last words, to Dewey Dell's thoughts about Peabody--and these three details are confirmed by Dewey Dell's and Peabody's monologues. So, whether founded in the natural and intuitive understanding of his family that he has as a character, or in his more supernatural omniscient knowledge as a narrator, or a combination of both, Darl demonstrates an eerie insight into the workings of his family. And he uses this insight to influence the feelings and actions of other characters. He intentionally removes Jewel from Addie's deathbed, not because he wants Jewel to help him load, as he tells Dewey Dell, but because, as we later find out, he is obsessively jealous of Jewel and simply wants to deny him the opportunity to be with Addie at her death. Once he has separated Jewel and Addie, Darl taunts Jewel about her impending death and then about Jewel's feelings after Addie dies. Likewise, Darl torments Jewel about his paternity, abruptly demonstrating not only the extent of his knowledge but also the cruelty with which he uses it--a cruelty from which even Dewey Dell and her maternal state are not spared.

Darl also uses this insight to maintain a kind of narrative control. When Cash fumbles with words as he tries to discuss Jewel's
somnolence to Darl, Darl interjects in their discussion and in his commentary to the reader, finding connections in Cash's words that are not there. Darl says, "That's what he was trying to say" (118), and, instead of rephrasing what Cash has just expressed—that the things a young boy thinks are best are not always good for him, and that Cash does not like the idea of Jewel sleeping with a married woman—Darl uses an indirect, free form to express a new and very different thought: "When something is new and hard and bright, there ought to be something a little better for it than just being safe, since the safe things are just the things that folks have been doing so long that they have worn the edges off," implying that it should be okay for Jewel to explore his new-found sexuality in unconventional, if even unsafe, ways. Darl uses what Chatman calls internal analysis (or narrative report; 203), to communicate Cash's thinking or speech in Darl's words—especially considering that, if Darl quotes Cash correctly (and we have no reason yet to believe he does not), Cash truly is, with the numerous ellipses in this dialogue, stumbling for words. Although we have seen Darl's accuracy and we trust his perception, we question his non sequitur representation of Cash's ideas here. Perhaps Darl has read Cash's mind, but, instead of continuing to use direct quotes to cite Cash's words, Darl conflates the meaning and expression of Cash's thoughts. By the end of the novel, the discrepancy in philosophies evidenced here, with Cash's wish to live by the conventional rules and Darl's willingness to break them, separates the brothers and results in Darl's institutionalization and Cash's partially musically-induced complacency.
In the above quote, Darl seems unaware of the acuity of the implied readers' minds, of their ability to perceive the discrepancy in his vision of Cash's words. The other Bundren narrators share Darl's occasional disregard for reader location, presenting their thoughts via free-association rather than conventional monologue, but the non-Bundren narrators are aware of the readers' presence and narrate their stories conventionally. However, most of the narrators seem oblivious to the reader's moral stance. They tell their stories with great detail, but also honestly, even confessionally, with no or little sense of shame and with few apparent attempts to hide their sins or absolve themselves. Perhaps some narrators are unaware of their transgressions, but others certainly are not. Nevertheless, their obliviousness to or disregard for the implied reader's judgments betray either that the implied reader is non-judgmental or that the narrators assume that he or she is not. This attitude toward the implied audience unfetters the narrators and eventually enables the real readers to accurately judge the narrators.

Unlike many narrators, Darl occasionally betrays a keen awareness of the audience and uses his role as a knowledgeable narrator to manipulate it. Just before the Bundrens cross the river, he says that the mules, with their "wild, sad, profound, and despairing quality," act "as though they had already seen in the thick water the shape of the disaster which they could not speak and we could not see" (133). It seems that Darl has not obtained this knowledge omnisciently, but that he narrates the incident after it occurs and simply uses his narrative privilege to create a prolepsis which creates a tension, one which increases our anticipation and dread.
Although Darl clearly has the upper hand at times during his
narrative and in his story, his control is not sustained. By his last
section, narrated from the insane asylum, he has lost narrative and
situational control. But, when does this happen? Vardaman says Darl
goes crazy on their wagon; a fellow graduate student believes Darl snaps
when his family, especially Cash, betrays him. Darl seems to maintain
situational control when he assists with the river crossing, making
comments and suggestions, but he slowly loses his ability or his desire
to influence the Bundren family. Perhaps this is related to his
earlier motivation to influence them, apparently not to help but to hurt
various members, but it also seems related to his growing detachment
from his surroundings. Darl casts Cash's leg in cement with no
objection to Anse's ridiculous and dangerous ideas, oblivious to the
harmfulness of his actions. And when Jewel fights with the taunting
cabin-men, which could be detrimental for the entire family, Darl
remains motionless until Cash prompts him to restrain Jewel. But
perhaps one of the most disturbing early indications that Darl is not
handling the situation well is when he becomes increasingly like
Vardaman, sharing notions about animals and parenthood and about Addie's
talking to them from the coffin. Of course, by the end of the book,
after Darl has wept on his mother's fetid coffin because of his failed
attempt to incinerate her (which draws further parallels between
Vardaman, who drills holes into Addie's coffin and face, and Darl), he
is detained, losing all control of his surroundings.

It may be difficult to agree on exactly where Darl snaps. Some
readers, even with the many references by other narrators to Darl's
strange affect, feel that Darl begins dying as a sane but sensitive man, and the events in the story disrupt his sanity. But Darl's loss of situational control as a character is reflected in his corresponding decrease of narrative control, and there are indications from Darl's first words that he is not in complete command of his account. Although he has varying amounts of narrative control, his privileged authority is complicated by his unusual perspective and his varying awareness of the readers. In his first section, Darl describes the environment surrounding the cottonhouse as if it is completely unfamiliar to his audience, yet, in some of his later narration, he inconsistently assumes that his audience has some knowledge—of who characters are, of the setting, of relationships. It is as if he sometimes loses track of his audience. He also does this when he strays from his story, digressing into a kind of writer-based spewing of thoughts that seem unrelated to what he had been saying. In the beginning of Darl's second section, when he is dipping a gourd for a drink of water, Anse asks him where Jewel is, and, before reporting his answer, Darl narrates four paragraphs of thoughts about the taste of water in a cedar bucket, Anse's feet, the weather, etc. In the first and second monologues of the book, Darl's and Cora's narratives remain focused on what is actually occurring in the story they are narrating, which encourages the audience's engagement with the story. But, in this third section, Darl gets waylaid, distracting us from the story and calling our attention to the discourse, to Darl's stream-of-consciousness thoughts more than to a tightly-woven story. Faulkner uses this technique later, especially with Vardaman and Dewey Dell—both who, as relatively quiet characters,
rely on thoughts, often stream-of-consciousness, when they function as narrators. But all of the non-Bundren narrators recount their sections with a consistent frame of reference, with unity of action, time, location, etc— all which betray an awareness of or consideration for the audience, and which, thus, leads to a more conventionally-told narrative. Darl too, with his close observations and detailed descriptions, already, by his second section, has manifested a sensitivity to audience and competence in his narrative role. So, perhaps more in this first digression than in others, he dislodges us a bit as he vacillates between functioning as a tight, "conventional," narrator and a somewhat fragmented character-narrator. Of course, this happens repeatedly in the story, with Darl's numerous asides and observations, and later, as our understanding of Darl's character progresses, this tendency becomes more explicable than it is this early in the book.

Some of our recognition of Darl's decreasing narrative control becomes more evident only retrospectively. Darl's early and detailed description of Jewel seems suited to his role as an acute narrator, but, as we learn about Darl's jealousy of Jewel, it becomes evident that Darl's unself-conscious words as a narrator are governed by his character-originated obsession with Jewel. When, early in the trip, Anse notices Darl, "setting back there on the plank seat with Cash, with his dead ma laying in her coffin at his feet, laughing" (93), we wonder if Darl is just laughing at the absurdity of the whole thing the way we, as sane people, often laugh at absurd situations. But when Darl reacts to his family's attack and his committal with incessant laughter, we
note the significance of the early laughter on the wagon. More
noticeable and disconcerting than the early laughter is Darl's reference
to himself in the third person when he and Cash are preparing to cross
the river: "(Cash) and I look at one another with long probing looks,
looks that plunge unimpeded through one another's eyes and into the
ultimate secret place where for an instant Cash and Darl crouch flagrant
and unabashed in all the old terror" (128). Here, when Darl is deeply
involved in the action as a character, he seems detached and outside of
it as a narrator, but he immediately returns to the use of first person
pronouns, enabling us to note and then glide over what we might consider
an errant reference—until, in Darl's last section, narrated from the
asylum, Darl, completely detached, repeatedly refers to himself in the
third person and gives retrospective import to that first third person
self-reference.

Darl is both within the Bundren world and without it, both
reliable and unreliable. He is a reliable guide to the fictional
world, accurately and perceptively reporting scenes and characters, but,
although he participates in that world, he does so with unquestioning
detachment. He does not interpret it or the characters, and, although
he demonstrates his jealousy of Jewel and his desperation after the
barn-burning (either for Addie or for his failure to end the journey),
he never discusses his feelings, and even his demonstrations of feeling
are rare. This detachment, which none of the other characters exhibit,
enables him to view the Bundren world from afar, from the outside
world—which includes for him visions of war and cubistic bugs. It is
this combination, in conjunction with Darl's sensitive perceptions,
which enables him to view the Bundren situation in light of the world and which generates reflections like the following: "How do our lives ravel out into the no-wind, no-sound, the weary gestures wearily recapitulant: echoes of old compulsions with no-hand on no-strings: in sunset we fall into furious attitudes, dead gestures of dolls. Cash broke his leg and now the sawdust is running out. He is bleeding to death is Cash" (191). In these reflections, Darl interprets not only the Bundren situation, but the world in which the situation occurs. His reporting is limited to his immediate situation, but his interpretations, although applicable to his immediate situation, rely on his external view, a view which reflects "a still more profound desolation than this above which [they] now sit" (129).

And who could argue with Darl's vision of existence as insane, absurd, desolate? So he is reliable—to a point. He is fuzzily bifurcated into character and narrator. Faulkner emphasizes Darl's synthetic nature as narrator by giving him detachment, clairvoyance, telepathy, and a philosophic voice which is incongruous with an uneducated farmer's son—and it is these things which earn him narrative authority. It is these things which enable him to do what Booth says most characters in modern works are unable to do, to know enough about the meaning of the whole to go outside their personal world to a general view (Rhetoric 198). However, Darl's mimetic qualities--his acute sensitivity, his jealously, his limited access to knowledge--override his synthetic qualities. With all of Darl's apparent gifts, we never truly think of him as supernatural. He is a narrator with limited omniscience and with acute sensitivity, but, even with these qualities,
he functions primarily mimetically. He maintains enough mimetic qualities that we place him under the character restrictions of mimesis and, instead of being surprised when he is wrong, we are surprised when he is right. We do not read wondering what next bit of omniscient knowledge he will reveal, but with a concern for how he, as a mimetic character and along with everyone else, will survive the trek. Although we become accustomed to Darl's philosophic narrator's voice and such statements as, "he spits with decorous and deliberate precision into the pocked dust below the porch" (15), they remain somewhat jarring. His character voice, "you could borrow the loan of Vernon's team and we could catch up with you" (16), is the one we most expect from him. The differences between these voices reflect his varying positions in his immediate and in his external world, whether or not he is perceiving the Bundren world from deeply within it or from a distance.

Rimmon-Kenan says that three important sources of unreliability are personal involvement, limited knowledge, and a problematic value-scheme (100). Darl exhibits all of these. His personal involvement with Jewel, Dewey Dell, and Addie prompt him to words and actions that, however honestly revealed, are not entirely supported by the implied author's values or those of the fictional world. Although Darl never expounds on his feelings about the Bundren events, he consistently describes his physical position in the story--his place on the wagon, how he helps with the cement, where he is during the river-crossing and during Jewel's fight--but Darl says nothing about his location before the fire. And, although Darl does not deny igniting the barn, he does not acknowledge it as a character until after he is caught. And he,
unlike his cruel taunting of Dewey Dell and Jewel, never acknowledges his arson as a narrator (that is, in his stream-of-consciousness thought or his monologue to the readers). The way Darl handles this as a narrator delays our judgment of him as a character and results in our surprise in his apparent lapse of narrative honesty. Of course, his limited omniscience is revealed in numerous ways, but especially in his not foreseeing his detainment (during this he says to Cash, "I thought you would have told me" [220], implying that, had he known, he would have tried to escape). Finally, although, having followed Darl so closely, we may sympathize with him, we cannot condone his treatment of Dewey Dell or his disregard for Gillespie's property. As a mimetic character, Darl is vulnerable to jealousy, to insanity (founded in the same sensitivity which gives him his synthetic voice), to ignorance, and to the absurd world which he so painfully relates, and he becomes, as a character and a narrator, a sign of the progressive insanity around him. As his fictional world gets more and more bizarre, we can rely on him progressively less.

Darl's sensitivity and his however limited omniscience inspire faith in his authority as a narrator and in his fate as a character, while his generally honest and intimate narrative promotes our closeness with him. So even with Darl's many limiting mimetic characteristics, we are still surprised by his toppling. But Faulkner does not let the story disintegrate with the breakdown of the main narrator. There are fifteen narrators in Dying. We can talk about the reporting and interpretive reliability of them individually, and we can talk about the way the values of each of the narrators of Dying mesh with the values
of its implied author. But to identify those implied author's values, we obviously need to consider the compilation of narrators, how they function together in the telling of the Bundren tale. With this in mind, and before talking about the group as a whole, I will turn now to another one of the most important narrators--to Cash.

In the beginning of *Dying*, Cash does not function at all as a narrator. As a character, he is noted by others primarily for his coffin-building. Standing in the sidelines, his activity is occasionally spotlighted, but he remains reticent as a character and a narrator. Although his work pace determines when the family will depart, Cash's attention to detail is comically obsessive, as if his entire world exists in that task. He ignores Armstid's direct question about how the weather is affecting his bones, but when Armstid asks how far Cash falls, he replies, "twenty-eight foot, four and a half inches, about" (80). His brevity, tunnel-vision, and reticence are manifest in his first "narrative," when he lists thirteen thoughts regarding his construction of the coffin. The list consists of some quite illogical statements, a fragment, even one word, "except" (73), clearly indicating that Cash is not comfortable or competent with expression, at least with the written language. Darl confirms Cash's discomfort with expression when he tells us about how Cash fumbles with words when he tries to discuss Jewel's nocturnal escapades.

Although it is clear that Cash is uncomfortable with linguistic expression and with his role as a narrator, Cash, while a very quiet character, is not a silent one. He unravels Jewel's nighttime activities, tells Darl how to respond to them and then acts as Jewel's
spokesperson before Addie and Anse. He participates in the river-crossing, offers ideas, and even once tells Darl and Jewel to shut up. But such gestures of control are rare, and, though attempted, they betray Cash's limited ability to communicate and take control, as well as a limited regard by others for his words or efforts. In Cash's second monologue, he futilely attempts to convey the importance of balancing Addie's coffin when they are transporting her into the house. He is disregarded, sworn at, even cut off: his monologue ends with "If they want it to tote and ride on a balance, they will have" (86). Likewise, he repeatedly warns the family about the necessity of having the coffin balanced during the river-crossing, but, again he is ignored. Although he makes suggestions about how to cross, he alters them to appease Jewel's angry demands. His third monologue, which also ends—or is interrupted—mid-sentence, again reflects his bootless efforts and words: "It wasn't on a balance. I told them that if they wanted it to tote and ride on a balance, the would have to" (151). This futility continues when the trip is resumed, when his broken leg surely contributes to his passivity. He breaks his reticence with quiet but repeated protestations about having his leg put in a cement cast, but these too go unheeded, and Cash quietly succumbs to the wishes and actions of others.

In the beginning of the book, Cash is a character and a narrator who makes limited, sometimes successful but usually unsuccessful, attempts to influence the Bundren's actions and to communicate. However, this slowly changes. As Darl gradually loses situational and narrative control, Cash acquires it. Darl reveals the connection
between him and Cash when, while deciding how to cross the river, Darl says, "he and I look at one another with long probing looks, looks that plunge unimpeded through one another's eyes and into the ultimate secret place where for an instant Cash and Darl crouch flagrant and unabashed in all the old terror and the old foreboding, alert and secret and without shame. When we speak our voices are quiet, detached" (128). This connection between Darl and Cash is confirmed when, very shortly after gazing at each other, Cash clairvoyantly perceives Darl's thoughts about the way Addie used to sit with Jewel on a pillow in her lap and interjects with, "That pillow was longer than him" (130). This example of extrasensory communication by Cash is perhaps more stunning than those Darl has illustrated because Darl's clairvoyant demonstrations have been limited to anticipated or familiar events and related to familial intimacy--but Cash communicates telepathically with Darl about extraneous, unanticipated subject matter. Suddenly, at the same time that Darl's loosened grip is manifest in his third-person reference to himself, Cash displays some of the synthetic narrative authority that had been limited to Darl.

Cash, with his rotting leg, remains narratively and situationally quiet throughout most of the trip. He breaks this predisposition when he snaps Darl into pulling Jewel out of the fight. By the time the Bundrens have reached Jefferson, Darl and Cash increasingly reveal the tendencies that are hinted at earlier. Darl, having failed at his attempt to hide Addie from the "sight of man," weeps on her coffin and communicates, as narrator and character, increasingly like Vardaman. Cash exhibits situational control when he successfully rejects Jewel's
suggestion to catch and "tie up" Darl before Addie is buried, and, again, when he tells his siblings to leave alone their primped father. The most telling indicator of the reversed positions of Darl and Cash as characters is evident when Darl, fighting against those who have pinned him on his back, symbolically looks up at Cash and asks, "Do you want me to go?" (221). Cash says, "It'll be better for you." Darl defers to Cash, and, based on Cash's reply, stops fighting and begins the laughing that was alluded to at the trip's onset begins once again.

By the end of the book, Cash supplants Darl as the main narrator. Before the river-crossing, Darl uses prolepsis in a way which piques the readers' curiosity. Now Cash does this when, before Addie is even buried, he refers to "Mrs. Bundren's house" (218). His repeated and premature references to the new Mrs. Bundren's house and to the music she comes to be associated with are different from Darl's proleptic or analeptic references. Darl's references are founded in his acute sensitivity--whether due to his clairvoyance or to his familiarity with his family. But, although Cash the character once displays an amazing extrasensory ability, his references to the new Mrs. Bundren's house and her music are premature. He narrates this section in past tense, and his early inclusion in the discourse of information which he has learned from a later time-of-action betrays not his sensitive perception, but his sustained excitement of events which he has already experienced and cannot wait to relate.

Regardless of whether his narration is sloppy, Cash is at ease with it--so much so that he does what Darl never does; he explicitly refers to his audience, to the readers: "It was like [Darl] was outside of it
too, same as you, and getting mad at it would be kind of like getting mad at a mud-puddle that splashed you when you stepped in it" (220 emphasis added). When the novel begins, Cash focuses on his tasks, oblivious to anything unrelated to them. As the story progresses, he plays an increasingly important role in the events around him as a character; and, as a narrator, he assumes the role of judge in a way that Darl never does. Darl makes observations about the Bundren world and the fictional world which surrounds it, but he never says Anse is bad for being lazy or that Dewey Dell is sinful for getting pregnant. Cash, on the other hand, makes observations and judgments about the people and events in his world. He, consistent with his character, judges Darl for his "shoddy" attempt to burn the barn. He also questions the nature of insanity and how society judges it, even finding partial justification for Darl’s actions. Ultimately, Cash cannot excuse Darl’s disregard for Gillespie’s property, and he concludes, "This world is not his world; this life his life" (242).

By the end of the novel, Cash considers the paradoxical values of the Bundren world. He goes beyond that world, not only to the fictional world beyond the Bundrens, but to the reader’s world. Cash’s response to the Bundren trek, especially the above comment about the mud-puddles, is applicable and directed to Darl in his fictional world and to his readers in their real world. To Darl, he says it is useless to be mad at the results of something already done, something Darl does. He says the same thing to the reader, but he also tries to palliate the reader’s reaction to Dying by saying that, although he is obviously responsible for reading the book, it is senseless to be too disturbed by its
contents. Ultimately, Cash is, of course, restrained by his real world and our fictional one, and his coping mechanisms, which I will discuss later, as well as his final judgments, reflect the restrictions of his world.

When I began this study of *Dying*, I expected to find one narrator functioning as the implied author's spokesperson more than the others. I noted Darl's near-monopoly on the quantity of narrative, his synthetically philosophical voice, and his omniscience, and I grew comfortable with the idea that he is the main narrator, as well as the implied author's spokesperson. But Darl goes crazy, and, though his narrative falls apart, the book remains remarkably intact. It would seem appropriate, if I were to continue looking for the narrator who most represents the implied author, to then turn to Cash, especially given Cash's newfound (or, at least, newly-expressed) ability to evaluate, generalize, judge, and communicate. But, while Cash also betrays some attributes which I think the implied author might also claim, he too does not fully represent the implied author. *Dying* resists such defined character associations— with the reader or the implied author. The monologues, which range from soliloquies to stream-of-consciousness, encourage varying degrees of reader intimacy with all of the narrators. Likewise, they reflect varying degrees of the implied author's distance. Sometimes Faulkner speaks through the narrators, other times he stands apart from them and asks us to see the limits of their own perceptions.

In addition to coupling Darl and Cash, Faulkner uses a variety of techniques in this novel of numerous and dissimilar character-narrators
to facilitate a sense of unity and to betray his ever-changing location. As we end one monologue and begin another, we frequently experience what Patten calls "overlapping" (17), when the new narrator continues using words or ideas expressed by the preceding narrator—for example, when Peabody reports Addie's yelling of "you, Cash!" and then Darl duplicates this in the beginning of his following monologue; when Cash reports Jewel's, "Pick up, goddamn your thick-nosed soul" and Darl, a few sentences later, repeats this quote; or when Vardaman begins his monologue about the river-crossing with his perspective of the events that Darl has just reported on (43, 87, 136).

Faulkner effects a similar result using tense shifts and italics, using either one or both to bring the action or discourse time or both of one monologue up to the current action or discourse time in the following monologue. For example, in the 49th monologue Vardaman narrates, in standard print and present tense, his conversation with Darl about Addie. Dispersed in this conversation are his italicized, past tense comments about what he saw Darl do but was instructed by Dewey Dell not to tell anyone about. He disseminates these italicized comments until, by the end of his monologue, Vardaman's present tense, non-italicized report has brought him beyond the point at which he actually saw Darl ignite the barn. His last reference to what he saw Darl do is reported in past tense and standard print, indicating that, by the end of the time of action in this monologue, that event has already occurred. This segues smoothly into the next monologue, when Darl reports—in present tense—the barn fire.¹

The techniques discussed above link and unify the time of
discourse and the time of action of *Dying*, which is important because it
jells the story—the experiences and the perspectives of the narrator-
characters—in a way which enables us to examine the reliability of
event reporting. In order to discuss reliability as it relates to the
value systems of the constructed and the real personalities in the
literary experience, we must locate the voice and values of the implied
author—and to do that, I need to consider the voices and values of all
of the narrator-characters in *Dying*. While these voices are remarkably
diverse, they are, like the experiences of the characters, also joined
in some interesting ways—ways which will strongly influence the
identification of reliability and the assignment of liability for every
one of the narrators.

One of the most surface-structure (and perhaps, therefore, least
important) techniques Faulkner uses to link the voices of the characters
is the frequent use of unconventional typography and repetition. Darl
says, "a good carpenter, Cash is. . . . A good carpenter. . . . I go on
to the house, followed by the


of the adze" (4). Cora tells us that Kate, from whom we hear very
little, expresses five times that "[the lady] ought to taken those
cakes" (8). Jewel, in a unique expression of agreement with Darl, says,
"and that goddamn adze going One lick less. One lick less. One lick
less until everybody that passes in the road will have to stop and see
it and say what a fine carpenter he is. . . . and not that goddamn adze
going One lick less. One lick less and we could be quiet" (13-4). Tull
says, "The fans go whish. whish. whish and them talking, the talking
sounding kind of like bees murmuring in a water bucket" (76), and then he illustrates the shape of Addie's coffin with a sketch (77). Likewise, Addie relies on visual sense to communicate, portraying the shape of her body with a blank spot on the page. Dewey Dell also uses this technique when she distinguishes between the surface structure of the sign, which says, "New Hope. 3 mi.," and its longhand meaning, "New Hope three miles." In the same monologue, she repeats numerous words and phrases, particularly, "too soon" and "I believe in God" (106-8). Vardaman repeats words and phrases more than any other narrator, most resembling the above examples when he says, "I hear the cow a long time, clopping on the street... her head down clopping She lows... She goes on, clopping . She lows" (233-4). And, finally, Darl, in his most meaningful use of repetition, communicates these last words to us: "Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes" (236).

While reading is a visual experience, the experience and the meaning of silently-read words can usually be easily recreated when one hears those same words read aloud by someone else. But the above examples rely on seeing the page in order for the reader to fully experience that narrator's expression. The use of such self-conscious techniques foregrounds the synthetic experience of narrative. Although the expression is attributed to individual narrators, the repeated use of such unconventional techniques by so many narrators emphasizes the hand of the implied author. With these techniques and a narrative style which requires readers to piece together the narrative, Faulkner discourages us from participating in the novel in the intimate,
encompassing way that we do in some narratives.

In a more typical way, the implied author of *Dying* makes himself heard in repeated symbols, observations, and concerns. Although the meaning of certain observations is important, more important for my look at how the implied author unites the book is the distribution of such things. For example, many narrators observe the omnipresent buzzards—which is no surprise. However, before Addie has even died, Jewel complains to us that people are coming to gawk at Addie, sitting there like buzzards (13). He directs this attack at Tull when Anse, Darl, and Jewel, on the porch with Tull discuss whether Darl and Jewel should pick up another load of wood, but even then he does not report saying aloud that Tull is like a buzzard (16). Dewey Dell is presumably still in fanning Addie and does not hear what Tull says, but, later, while talking to Darl, she too calls Tull an "old turkey-buzzard" (24). Addie also seems receptive to the buzzard motif: "I noticed then how (Anse) was beginning to hump—a tall man and young—so that he looked already like a tall bird hunched in the cold weather on the wagon seat" (156). Similarly, Darl frequently notes Jewel's wooden-like characteristics to us, but there is no indication that he does this aloud to other characters. Yet Dewey Dell notes, "Jewel sits on his horse like they were both made of wood" (108). Likewise, Darl and Anse are the only two who, as narrators, make references to Anse's teeth, even before we are fully aware of the significance of them as symbols and motives. The other narrators seem oblivious to their importance until they have become a reality. Yet even before we hear about them from Darl or Anse, the implied author covertly introduces us to them in Jewel's thoughts:
"It would just be me and her on a high hill and me rolling the rocks down the hill at their faces, picking them up and throwing them down the hill faces and teeth and all by God" (14). And finally, as if to subtly engage our imaginations in the color and smell of illness and death, the implied author bombards us with six early visual and olfactory references to sulfur in Darl's and Peabody's narratives. For now, the meaning of the above symbols is not important. What I want to note is how, by reiterating them not only in one character, but subtly, at different times and through apparently unknowing narrators, the implied author disperses them and their meaning throughout the book in a way which signals his presence.

Although the redundancy of motifs emphasizes the implied author's presence and, to some extent, helps convey his meaning, the most important clues about his values are found in the voices, theme, and action in Dying. Darl's early and sustained use of elaborate, poetic language to describe events and to express philosophical generalizations seems inconsistent with the language we would expect from an isolated farmer, even one whose war involvement took him to Europe. Although Faulkner does ask us to accept this voice, as well as Darl's heightened perception, he is not trying to convince us that this voice is mimetically plausible. Indeed, he uses it to accentuate, once again, the input of the implied author throughout the novel—which does not mean that every time a narrator assumes this philosophic voice the implied author's values are being expressed. This voice surfaces most frequently in Darl, with such statements as:
Upon the impalpable plane of [the coffin] their shadows form as upon a wall, as though like they had not gone very far away in falling but had merely concealed for a moment, immediate and musing. Cash works on . . . his face sloped into the light with a rapt, dynamic immobility above his tireless elbow. Below the sky sheet-lightning slumbers lightly (68);

"On the long flank of [the coffin] the rain crashes steadily, myriad, fluctuant" (70); and, of Anse's face, "It is as though upon a face carved by a savage caricaturist a monstrous burlesque of all bereavement flowed" (69).

The frequency with which Darl assumes this synthetic voice at first seems to indicate that, as narrator, he is more closely related to the implied author than the other characters are. But this voice is also occasionally bestowed on other characters—including some who, as characters, demonstrate stronger linguistic and environmental limitations than Darl. Dewey Dell, whose reticence as a character is noteworthy, says in her monologue, "That's what they mean by the womb of time: the agony and the despair of spreading bones, the hard girdle in which lie the outraged entrails of events" (106; also see 23). Peabody describes the land, "opaque, slow, violent; shaping and creating the life of man in its implacable and brooding images" and speaks of "the love that passeth understanding: that pride, that furious desire to hide that abject nakedness which we . . . carry stubbornly and furiously with us into the earth again" (40, 42). And, in the most exceptional deviation of voice, Vardaman says:

I can hear wood, silence: I know them. But not living sounds, not even him. It is as though the dark were resolving him out of his integrity, into an unrelated scattering of components—snuffings and stampings; smells of cooling flesh and ammoniac hair; an illusion of a co-ordinated whole of splotched hide and strong bones within which, detached and
secret and familiar, an is different from my is. I see him dissolve—legs, a rolling eye, a gaudy splotching like cold flames—and float upon the dark in fading solution; all one yet neither; all either yet none. I can see hearing coil toward him, caressing, shaping his hard shape—fetlock, hip, shoulder and head (52; see also 50).

The use of such flowing, poetic language, of similes and anthropomorphism, is limited to the words of the character-narrators when they are functioning as narrators—that is, when telling their thoughts directly to us, not when using or reporting dialogue with other characters—and calls attention to the synthetic influence in the monologues. The shared use of this conspicuous, anomalous voice accentuates the construct of the implied author, his role and his influence as the maker of the novel. While getting a sense of the characters as individuals, this omnipresent voice of the implied author weaves together unique, unpredictable monologues and adds integrity to the book. But, although these features of the novel point strongly to the implied author's influence, his values are not as easily discerned.

Typically, implied authors use characterization and thematizing, among other things, to suggest and define value schemes. Dying is no exception. The most significant and recurring theme in this novel is that of the concern with and search for personal identity, boundaries, and existence. Often the concern and search for personal identity is manifest in a concern with familial relationships, especially paternity or maternity—both as parent and child. But sometimes it is also associated, as for Cora and Whitfield, with religion—which offers spiritual family and defined boundaries for existence and behavior. There are concerns with breaking social boundaries and rules—as with
the offensive trip, the abortion, and Addie's affair. There are concerns with breaking physical boundaries—as with Anse and Darl looking over the land, with Vardaman trying to free Addie, with Addie's and Dewey Dell's pregnancies, and with the family's attempt to cross the river. And finally, the concern for existence is illustrated by the questions of being that Vardaman, Darl, and Addie grapple with so frequently—ones they articulate by using various tenses of the copulative verb (see Vardaman's above quote from page 52), by creating negation with the unusual placement of "not" or "no" ("not-fish" 48; "not-Anse" 160; "no-hand on no-strings" 191), by the repeated use of the "neither/nor" construction, and by manipulating actual bodies or images of them (Vardaman and the fish, Addie and childbirth and the vessel, Darl with the rain shaping the wagon and needing to empty himself for sleep in a strange room). Existence is something most of the narrators grapple with, and it is their actions in the face of it which the implied author questions and which he uses to assign liability and which, thus, reflect narrator reliability.

Faulkner surrounds the Bundrens with a host of outside narrators who enhance our understanding of the Bundren situation by functioning as the backdrop against which we evaluate them. Moving from outside the Bundren world to inside it, we begin with Tull, whose close association with the Bundrens and whose high reliability and low liability increase his authority about the fictional world. His unstated motive is to help the Bundrens. In the process of offering support, Tull often falsely reassures them about the weather, and then shortly thereafter notes, as a narrator, the impending storm. This is an inconsequential liability,
especially given that the Bundrens know the storm is approaching and
begin their trip aware of the obstacles it has created. Tull's presence
may be irritating to Jewel and Dewey Dell and, as Peabody claims, he may
be stingy, but he is one of the Bundrens' most loyal, helpful,
neighbors, and his moral liability is limited and understandable. He
discourages them from crossing the river, telling them the river has
risen five feet since it was last crossed, that the ford will probably
fall apart as soon as it is stepped on, and that the water level may
start falling soon, but Jewel tells him to "Get to hell on back to your
damn plowing" (112), and the family crosses the river. Tull is in no
way responsible for the Bundren family situation.

Apart from when he misconstrues his weather predictions, Tull is
quite reliable. His unreliable wife passes along unreliable reports
that she says she heard from Tull, but his own monologues do not reveal
inaccurate reporting. He never betrays disrespect for women, including
Cora. He does, however, question her, and, though his assessment of her
may be a bit understated, it is on the right track: "I reckon it does
take a powerful trust in the Lord to guard a fellow, though sometimes I
think that Cora's a mite overcautious, like she was trying to crowd the
other folks away and get in closer than anybody else" (63). He
questions God's judgment: "If it's a judgment, it aint right. . . .
Because He said Suffer little children to come unto Me dont make it
right, neither" (66), but he finally says he is lucky to have a wife who
strives for sanctity, and he generally accepts her ways. Tull finds a
comfortable balance between questioning and accepting, between
relegating control and taking it. He refuses to leave immediately for
the Bundren's after Addie dies, and he says he would not cross the 
swollen river if Cora told him to. He also says that, if God turned "it 
all over" to Cora, she would make a few corrective changes, "And I 
reckon they would be for man's good. Leastways, we would have to like 
them. Leastways, we might as well go on and make like we did" (66). 
Tull realizes the benefits of locating behavioral rules in religion, but 
he flexibly accepts and questions them, making compromises that the 
IMPLIED AUTHOR OF DYING admires and successfully situating his own sense 
of identity.

Although Tull generally supports Cora's religious outlook, she is 
one of the least reliable narrators in DYING. Unlike any other 
character, she grossly misreports and misinterprets the events and 
feelings of the story: Addie is faithful and loves Darl more than her 
other children, Anse drives Jewel and Darl away from Addie's deathbed, 
and Darl almost begs on his knees for Anse not to force him to leave 
Addie. Her motives are allegedly founded in her generosity and her 
desire to help others and to serve God. But she betrays her selfishness 
when, after proclaiming how well Addie bakes, she says to her daughters, 
"first thing we know she'll be up and baking again, and then we wont 
have any sale for ours at all" (7). Perhaps the most symbolic mocking 
of Cora and her religion by the IMPLIED AUTHOR IS TULL'S DESCRIPTION OF 
her singing, beneath an open umbrella and no rain, "I'm bounding toward 
my God and my reward" (81). Cora relies entirely on the rules of 
religion to mold her identity and behavior--so that when she breaks the 
rules she is hypocritical and unreliable. However, although Cora uses 
religion opportunistically to justify herself and to impress God with
her good deeds, she cannot be held liable for any harmful action or for
the destruction of the Bundren family or its members. She is judgmental
about people and elitist about her own morality, but she does not break
the moral codes of society; she generally lives what she believes.

While there is some evidence of authorial tolerance for almost all
of the characters, those receiving the least of it are those who rely on
religion. Anse proclaims faith and commitment to the Lord as a crutch
to justify his selfish actions. But, the implied author offsets this,
however minimally, by evoking some pity for him. Whitfield, on the
other hand, earns no such sympathy. As far as complying with the
implied author's values, Whitfield does so least of all the characters.
While Anse informs us of his desire to obtain teeth, we cannot be sure
that he holds burying Addie in complete disregard. Nor can we be sure
that his expressed faith is completely feigned. But Whitfield, as one
of God's men, abuses his position and his power. Then, as Addie is
dying, his concern is totally for his own salvation, not hers: "She had
sworn then that she would never tell it. . . . let me not have also the
sin of her broken vow upon my soul" (164). If she breaks her vow and
confesses their affair, she is sinning, yet if he confesses, he is doing
what God has commanded him to do to ensure his salvation. So he races
to Anse's to confess to Anse before Addie does. When he arrives, Addie
is already dead, and he tells us that it is therefore too late to
confess to Anse--who is still alive--and decides that God "will accept
the will for the deed" (165). Whitfield narrates his monologue with
unusual narrative control. It is narrated in the past tense--which
allows him the distance and opportunity to adjust it to suit his needs.
Its semantics and syntax are remarkably inconspicuous, yet his dearth of logic and reliability are glaring. He demonstrates more narrative control than any other narrator, and he has, in the fictional world, more situational control and power than any other character. His factual reports are verified by overlapping with other narrators, and he probably believes his interpretation of events. Nevertheless, his values collide head-on with those of the implied author, making him grossly unreliable and liable. He is chargeable not only for his hypocrisy, his selfishness, and the way he abuses his position, but he also is morally liable, in part, for the tragic breakdown of the Bundren family—which he is a part of. Jewel does not ask to be fathered by him, but Addie's insemination by Whitfield instigates her favoritism of Jewel, Darl's cruel jealousy of Jewel, and Jewel's sense of, as Faulkner might say, "unbelonging" in the family.

For as liable as Whitfield is for Jewel's conception, there is no indication that Addie is in any way coerced into adultery. Her transgressions, her beliefs about life and love, and her request to be buried in Jefferson fuel the family's ruin. With remarkable honesty, persistent resentment, and lack of remorse, she tells the reader how she hates her father for "planting" her, how she beats and hates the "ones" with "little dirty snuffling" noses with a switch until she marks their blood with hers "for ever and ever," and how she hates Anse and her children for violating her "aloneness" (155-63). She is extremely reliable in her honest reporting and her interpretation of herself, but her values and behavior are not condoned by our implied author. Her monologue alone is enough to make us think her cruel and selfish, to
deprive her of any pity the deathbed images may have evoked. However, although she is obviously liable for abuse and perhaps neglect, her liability slowly diminishes somewhat as we come to understand her existence as a woman in that world.

Gradually, one narrator after another, we get a sense for not only the conditions of Addie's life, but every woman's. Tull says, "It's a hard life on women, for a fact" (25) and talks about the hard life of his mother. Peabody notes how women cling "to some trifling animal to whom they never were more than pack-horses" (41). Later, with obvious connotations, he refers to childbirth as "littering" (78), and even Cash complains about the shape of "them durn women" (80)--of the shape of the woman who bore him. Moseley notes the "hard" life women have. Cora notes Addie's hard life and says "every woman" has one. Rachel tries to protest about the men in the world who "torture (women) alive" (103) and then flout them, but she's interrupted by a dismissive husband and, like Addie with Anse, rejects his efforts to touch her. Although such comments do not enable us to excuse Addie's behavior, they do help us understand why this woman--whose only presumable escape from Jefferson is in marriage, who feels violated by numerous unplanned pregnancies, and who cleans up her own house after childbirth--might feel a bit resentful, might even seek escape from her miserable life through an affair.

Addie feels Anse loved her once, although she dismisses his good feelings, hating and rejecting him, even wanting to kill him. Having heard about her controlling nature and her hate for Anse, it is not difficult to imagine the miserable relationship they have. It is also
not difficult to imagine why he finds getting new teeth an important incentive for going to Jefferson, even if he does it under the guise of his burial promise. Anse is a pitiful man, intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. His appearance is described far more than any other character's, usually by Darl, Tull, or Peabody, and in each of these descriptions the narrator notes such things as his humped posture, his dangling arms, his shoddy clothing, his hand rubbing his knees, or his collapsed mouth. After Addie's death, Dewey Dell says, "he does not begin to eat. His hands are halfclosed on either side of his plate, his head bowed a little, his awry hair standing into the lamplight. He looks like right after the maul hits the steer and it no longer alive and dont yet know that it is dead" (55). From early in the novel, Faulkner uses Anse's beaten look and attitude to evoke sympathy from other characters, as well as from us.

Anse is an unreliable character, repeatedly justifying the insufferable trip by invoking his burial promise to Addie—a promise which is confirmed by Addie and Dewey Dell. But as a narrator he betrays in his comments to us and in his whisper at Addie's deathbed that his primary motive for the trip is the attainment of new teeth. Although he knows it is going to storm, he leads his family on an unbearable trip to Jefferson, taking everything he can from them in the name of his promise and of God. He ends up with new teeth and a new bride, but at the ridiculous suffering and cost of his children. We might understand his desire for new teeth and even his immediate desire for a new wife. By the end of the novel, his identity is reestablished boosted with a new wife and with a new physical image, and he is
therefore not a tragic character. But, in the process of obtaining his teeth, his wife, and a freshened identity, he ruins Dewey Dell's future by taking her abortion money, he takes Cash's money and injures Cash's leg and possibly his future as a carpenter, and he sells Jewel's beloved horse—and Darl and Vardaman lose their minds. By no means does the limited amount of sympathy Anse's pitiful condition evokes in us mitigate his treatment of his children, his initiation of actions which lead to their suffering. By the end of the novel, he receives our harshest judgment and our utter disgust.

By the end of the novel, Cash is not only more accepting of Anse by the end of the novel, but more like him. He wants the family to resume its quiet existence, and the new Mrs. Bundren's graphophone offers him something to settle into and concentrate on, something to make life a little more pleasant. So he defends Anse's grooming, a treat the haggard family cannot afford, because he sees that it may result in his getting a graphophone: "I said leave him be; I wouldn't mind hearing a little more of that music myself" (240). We also contends with Darl. He recognizes Darl's unique characteristics and the problem of defining what is right and what is wrong. His response to Darl's behavior betrays Cash's helplessness in the matter: "It wasn't nothing else to do. It was either send him to Jackson, or have Gillespie sue us, because he knewed some way that Darl set fire to it" (215). Cash guesses that Dewey Dell tells Gillespie that Darl lit the fire. Her telling does nothing to help Gillespie replace his barn because the family still cannot afford to do so; it only convicts Darl. Instead of questioning why Dewey Dell would tell on Darl just for the sake of
ruining him, Cash almost defends her: "But Gillespie knewed it. But he would a suspicioned it sooner or later. He could have done it that night just watching the way Darl acted" (215). Gillespie may not have guessed about Darl, but Dewey Dell's telling on him eliminates any chance of this.

Although Cash considers Darl's condition, he relegates it with remarkable readiness, finally judging Darl for his careless job more than for his behavior or his motivation. Cash, with striking ease, dismisses his problematic brother, the one he claims to be extremely close to, the one he shares thoughts with. When Darl realizes he has been betrayed by Cash, who gives him no warning about the arrest and no chance to run, and then hears Cash tell him he should be institutionalized, Darl's incessant laughter begins. Although Anse is responsible for the general condition of his family, Cash's response is what nudges Darl, who is precariously situated on the edge of sanity and insanity, into the depths of insanity. We might understand Cash's helplessness about Darl's fate, but we certainly do not expect him to discard Darl so insensitively: "everytime a new record would come from the mail order and us setting in the house in the winter, listening to it, I would think what a shame Darl couldn't be to enjoy it too. But it is better for him" (241-2). By the end of the novel, Cash is the main narrator--the primary reporter, spokesperson, and judge--and many of his interpretations and judgments are sensitive and valid. In this way, he is more reliable than the other narrators. However, he is not an authorial surrogate because, while he successfully avoids the tragic fate of many of his siblings and recovers the order of his family, his
methods for doing so resembles Anse's, are less than empathetic, and increase his accountability for at least Darl's outcome.

Although Dying is not a classic tragedy, Darl is in some ways like the tragic Greek hero. Darl begins Dying, with the downfall of the Bundren characters well under way, as the Bundren's influential spokesperson, as the narrator we most trust. Standing within the Bundren story and outside of it, he makes early judgments that, as the story progresses, as the Bundren world gets progressively more ironic and absurd, and as his sanity diminishes, gain credibility. But, at the same time, his general reliability diminishes and his liability becomes more noticeable. Although he betrays intermittent detachment from his fellow-characters and cruelty toward them, he does not acknowledge this liability; he simply reports his behavior and, typically, witholds judgment about anything to do with his immediate world. He cruelly taunts Dewey Dell for no apparent reason, and he acts like, as Armstid says, he "never give a durn himself" (176) when he learns Anse has taken Cash's eight dollars to trade the horse. His jealously over Addie's love for Jewel is one of the motivating factors in his narration, as well as in his repeated mistreatment of Jewel. Although Darl claims he sets the barn on fire to hide Addie from the sight of man, he also knows that Addie's body and burial in Jefferson are of utmost importance to Jewel, and he may very well have ignited the barn in an attempt to hurt his half-brother.

Darl, in an unusual act of deletion, tells us nothing that implicates him in the fire, as if he is tries to prevent our judgment of him. The assignment of liability for his arson is complicated, of
course, by his insanity. Should he be punished for this or treated for it? The characters could care less about either. They send him off so that the family, which is, undoubtedly, poverty-stricken, is not held financially responsible for the damage and so they can resume their normal activities of daily living. For us, the liability question in some ways resembles our predicament in judging the governess. But Darl is unquestionably insane, unlike the dubious governess, and this insanity, apparently aggravated by the events of the trip, results in, again, an unacceptable but not surprising response.

Darl's ignition of the barn becomes the Greek hero's "act of aggression [that] throws [the] cosmic machinery out of gear, and hence it must make a countermovement to right itself" (Frye et al. 465). Darl throws the Bundren machinery out of gear, and the countermovement to right his actions, also translated as "fate," is his institutionalization. The hero's tragic "flaw" is "not necessarily a moral defect, but rather a matter of being in a certain place exposed to a tragic action." Cash makes this case for Darl when he considers the relativity of insanity and empathizes with Darl's arson. Indeed, Darl, although sometimes standing outside of the Bundren existence, is also engrossed in it and its tragically bizarre movement. This, in combination with his enhanced sensitivity and his inability to step outside of it or to adapt to it, is the main reason he collapses. However, Cash does not consider that Darl's motives may have been to hurt Jewel. Darl's mistreatment of Dewey Dell and Jewel becomes an equally important reason for his descent, the reason they vengefully turn on him when they have the opportunity to do so.
This results in not only Darl's mental collapse, but in the
dissolution of his sense of identity and existence. Throughout the
novel, Darl has explicitly questioned his existence, but his
relationship with Cash and his taunting of Jewel have enable him at
least a familial identity. At the end of the novel, his family deserts
him. In his last monologue, he says:

The wagon stands on the square, hitched, the mules motionless,
the reins wrapped about the seatspring, the back of the wagon
toward the courthouse. It looks no different from a hundred
other wagons there; Jewel standing beside it and looking up
the street like any other man in town that day, yet there is
something different, distinctive. There is about it that
unmistakable air of definite and imminent departure that
trains have, perhaps due to the fact that Dewey Dell and
Vardaman on the seat and Cash on a pallet in the wagon bed are
eating bananas from a paper bag. 'Is that why you are
laughing, Darl?' Darl is our brother, our brother Darl. Our
brother Darl in a cage in Jackson (236).

Betraying the same enhanced sensitivity that is the root of his
downdfall and the same either omniscience or insightfulness about his
family that he demonstrates early in the novel, Darl reveals his
sensitivity to the family's abandonment of him. They have recovered and
he, locked in Jackson, repeatedly asserts his identity in terms of his
familial position, a position he no longer occupies.

Darl's collapse is a direct result of his exposure to a tragic
action and the exhibition of his character flaws. However, the fates of
Dewey Dell, Jewel, and Vardaman are almost entirely a result of their
placement in the Bundren situation. Dewey Dell is responsible for her
pregnancy. However, she does not accept her role in it, instead
justifying her sexual activity because she tells him she will have sex
with Lafe if her sack is full--so, of course, he helps her fill it. On
the other hand, Dewey Dell's looks or sexuality are noted or exploited by Darl, Cora, MacGowan, and Lafe; and her natural sensuality is evidenced spontaneously but not necessarily sexually in some of her monologues (107). Although personal feelings regarding abortion surely alter the way readers judge Dewey Dell, one would have to recognize the despair she finds in her situation--one which painfully denies her the opportunity to grieve and which hinders whatever chance she may have to resign from the Bundren family. Her young life and her apparent future reiterate the female condition of Dying.

Jewel, the quietest of the Bundren narrators, does not escape the tragic situation either. He responds most loudly as a character to Darl's questions about his paternity. Even given the Bundren situation, he wants its familial ties, but his paternity and Darl's taunting prevents him from firmly locating his identity with the Bundrens. So he identifies with his cherished horse, loving it, hating it--and giving it up to facilitate his mother's burial, to unknowingly help Anse get his teeth, and to maintain his place in the Bundren cluster. Finally, the character who is the most helpless, neglected, and perhaps even more seriously disturbed than Darl, is Vardaman. He epitomizes the inability to cope with the Bundren world, and by the end of the novel he loses the person who communicated with and understood him the most, Darl, to a similar condition.

*As I Lay Dying* has fifteen character-narrators with dissimilar motives, values, and transgressions, so it provides a challenging exercise in determining narrative reliability. Although we can detect varying degrees of value-agreement with the character-narrators and the
implied author, the implied author of *Dying* is remarkably hard to pin down at times. He speaks to us though many characters and at various times, discouraging us from locating him for too long in any one narrator. His values and beliefs are most projected by Darl, Tull, and Cash, but no narrator ever fully represents him. By intermittently dispersing his presence and his beliefs among all of the narrators, Faulkner requires us to consider not only characterization when determining his values, but the combined effects and actions of the narrator-characters. Understanding the tragic action of *Dying* is a essential in locating the implied author's values. Having done that, we are more determinately able to locate his changing and seemingly elusive presence in the most complex narrative of the works in my study.
CONCLUSION

Two important conclusions can be drawn from my study. The first concerns the morality of literature, the second the technique of unreliable narration. In this project's early stages, when I ruminated over the significance of studying unreliable narrators and their relationship to moral liability, I considered the importance of the vicarious experience of literature. I have always felt authors should recognize the potential their work has for influencing the way individuals respond to life. Since I examine the way moral liability is construed, I am especially concerned with the ways authors identify liabilities and their feelings about them. I am happy to see that Booth shares my concern. In his discussion in The Rhetoric of Fiction about the morality of literature, he says, "the moral question is really whether an author has an obligation to write well in the sense of making his moral orderings clear, and if so, clear to whom" (386). He applies this question to impersonal and unreliable narration: "there is a moral dimension in the author's choice of impersonal, noncommittal techniques. As we have seen, objective narration, particularly when conducted through a highly unreliable narrator, offers special temptations to the reader to go astray" (388).

Of course, I feel I have not gone astray in my conclusions about the reliability and liability of the narrators I have studied. However, my conviction comes only after numerous re-readings, sometimes after
searching with a fine-toothed comb for the implied author's presence. Most unreliable narrators are determinately unreliable because we can identify the narrator's norms, and we can see that they diverge from those of the implied author. This is the case in "Haircut." However, sometimes, as in The Turn of the Screw, the implied author's norms are extremely difficult to locate. Even Booth makes a case for the reliability of the governess in Critical Understanding, but he focuses on James's intent and process rather than the text, thereby constructing a less than comprehensive argument. In some works, the implied author's views are impossible to locate, and the narrators of such works are unreliable because we have no backdrop against which to test their values. Although I relish the challenge of unreliable narration, I also am aware of the importance of at least some guidance from the implied author--especially in works with narrators who diverge from the general moral norms of society. But how accessible should the implied author's norms be? Should authors who rely on extremely unreliable, impersonal narration be expected to provide postscripts which clarify their positions? Such a solution is absurd--or is it?

My efforts reiterate Booth's concerns about the accessibility of the implied author's beliefs and the possibility that impersonal narratives which encourage us to sympathize with morally deficient characters and which offer insufficient guidance from authors may lead readers astray. Given the obliviousness to or the lack of concern for these issues that I sense in many of my literary fellows (and even my own lack of awareness of it before this project), the issue warrants revitalization--or initial attention. As long as we allow great
authorial license (which I think we should), the best way to contend with the issue of the morality of literature is to address it—not only in graduate school seminars, but in English classes of all levels. Perhaps some secondary school teachers implicitly address such issues in discussions of theme. But if teachers routinely and explicitly initiated discussion about the values of narrators, characters, and authors, as well as how fiction influences readers, readers might be more aware of and more responsible for their roles in the literary experience—especially as receivers and interpreters of another's values. The length of my study bespeaks the complexity of the process of attempting to identify the implied author's views—but I examine some particularly challenging works. I surely do not expect others to delve into the issue as I have, nor do I want books to be taught strictly on the basis of their moral value or by teachers who wish to dictate morality. I also do not want to reject impersonal narratives or ones that may clash with my value system. However, I do want readers to be aware of what they are reading, of the novel's or author's implied values or the lack of values, and how those values may be influencing readers. If teachers incorporated discussions of values, readers might become more aware of the importance of their role—more engaged with the work, more aware of the power of that engagement, and more able to accept or refute values accordingly—thus, assuming part of the responsibility for the morality of literature.

Earlier scholars have discussed the technique of unreliable narration in general and, more specifically, its potential effect on readers, but such discussions have stopped short of drawing deeper
conclusions about the influence such technique has on characterization and action. As this paper shows, the situations and effects of unreliability are extremely diverse. But, although we can make no specific a priori conclusions about such situations and effects, we can begin to make some generalizations about the possible importance of liability in discussions of unreliability.

In "Haircut," Whitey's unreliability is founded in his stupidity and then perpetuates the very stupidity on which it is based. Because he has, however unaware, an investment in remaining intellectually obtuse, he never approaches reliability. By misunderstanding the moral questions about the events, Whitey perpetuates the unreliable attitudes of the town that allow such incidents to occur. Thus, the unreliability not only reflects the reasons why the incidents take place, but it crucially affects the story's action.

Similar relationships exist between the technique of unreliability, the characterization, and the action in Frankenstein and The Turn of the Screw. Frankenstein tells his tale to redeem himself of liabilities he, in his unreliability, never truly accepts, so the telling of his tale prevents him from seeing his transgressions. Because he does not want to recognize his faults, he draws Walton into the action of his inherently unreliable tale. Walton, however, is released from the source of his own unreliability--his yearning for friendship and his sympathy with Frankenstein--and approaches reliability during his encounter with the monster. The governess's time-of-action and time-of-discourse motive is also to justify her actions. Her time-of-action unreliability results in Miles's death,
and, by telling her tale unreliably, she prevents herself from recognizing and accepting her liability in his death; thus, her role in it is all the more horrific.

In *As I Lay Dying*, the technique of unreliability is intrinsic to the characterization and action in a number of ways. Like the other main narrators, Cash's and Anse's unreliability maintains their equilibrium and prevents them from recognizing their own mistreatment of others—or another's mistreatment, as in Whitey's case. Thus, they propel the tragic action of *Dying* but at the same time are relatively unscathed by it. In the situations above, the unreliability and liability of the narrators is self-preserving for them but detrimental to others. Whitey, the narrator least aware of his liability and only nominally aware of the question of his reliability, suffers less than the other main narrators—indeed, not at all. Darl, the narrator who is at times the least unreliable but who does not acknowledge or defend his own liability, suffers the most. Unlike the above narrators, he makes no attempt to defend his reliability, and, although he tells Wardaman he wants to hide Addie from the sight of man, he makes no attempt to morally justify himself. His lack of self-justification might suggest that he has an implicit understanding of his liability; such an understanding would enhance his reliability. But, whereas the other narrators, all who are more unreliable than Darl, implicitly or explicitly defend their reliability or liability and successfully preserve themselves, Darl seems unaware of his. His unreliability prevents him from even acknowledging his reliability and liability and their effects on the Bundren family. This, in turn, leaves him
defenseless to the repercussions of his unreliability and liability, so he suffers their consequences and, unlike Anse or Cash, is caught in the falling movement of the story's tragic action.

These very different uses of unreliable narrators share a design which integrates their narrative technique, characterization, and action. The technique of unreliable narration entails the use of a particularly limiting character attribute—such as moral or intellectual obtuseness, moral disregard, or selfishness. The characterization results in a liability which is founded in the particular attribute but which, at the same time, because of this very attribute, is never fully attended to by the narrator-character. The reader's job—which, if done, will help alleviate some of Booth's and my concerns—is to recognize how this denied attribute vitally affects not only the narrator's perspective but also his or her involvement in the story. The unreliability becomes something that, in turn, affects the action of the story, whether in the outcome of other characters or of the narrator. Examining unreliability in conjunction with liability enhances our understanding not only of how the technique of unreliable narration influences characterization and action, but of the story's moral implications and those implications for the reader.
NOTES

Chapter I

1 Technically, Frankenstein is also narrated entirely by Walton, but in it we are faced with the complexity of deep narrative embedding, of sustained inside views of other characters, of unedited letters from other characters, and, quite importantly, with Frankenstein's own editing of Walton's letters to his sister.

Chapter III

1 During the first three decades, the governess was considered unquestionably straight. Edna Kenton's 1924 article, "Henry James to the Ruminant Reader: The Turn of the Screw," and Edmund Wilson's 1934 article, "The Ambiguity of Henry James," jumped the track of critical writing. Both proposed what is often referred to as the "hallucination" or the "Freudian" readings, and both resulted in a barrage of counter-criticism which insisted upon the governess's sanity and reliability.

2 "He has red hair, very red, close-curling, and a pale face, long in shape, with straight, good features and little, rather queer whiskers that are as red as his hair. His eyebrows are somehow, darker; they look particularly arched and as if they might move a good deal. His eyes are sharp, strange--awfully; but I only know clearly that they're rather small and very fixed. His mouth's wide, and his lips are thin, and except for his little whiskers he's quite clean-shaven" (27).
In *Reading People, Reading Plots*, James Phelan develops the terms "tension" and "instability." He says that instabilities, which occur within the story, are the unstable relations between characters, "created by situations, and complicated and resolved through actions," which give shape to the progression of a tale. Tensions are the instabilities occurring in the discourse, "of value, belief, opinion, knowledge, expectation--between authors and/or narrators, on the one hand, and the authorial audience on the other" (15).

James said his narrator had "'authority'" publicly in his *Preface* and privately in the letter to Wells (see above). Of his reader, he said, "make him think the evil, make him think it for himself, and you are released from weak specifications" (preface to *The Aspern Papers*; Wilen 101).

Chapter IV

For similar examples of this, see page 167, when Darl peppers his monologue with italicized descriptions of Jewel and the horse, and this seques into the following monologue, in which Armstrong reports Anse's trading of Jewel's horse for a mule team. Another example is on page 232, when Vardaman's present and then past tense italicized reports about Darl's going to Jackson segue into Darl's monologue beginning, "Darl has gone to Jackson." Ross observes a similar use of tense-shifts; however, he overlooks Faulkner's use of italicized and standard print to complicate and enhance the device: "By beginning with past and changing to present tense, Faulkner causes the past to continue into the present; what was and what is blend into a single progression of experience without a sudden, abrupt jump from past to present" (38).
However, because at her deathbed she remains a construct and her mimetic personality qualities are as yet non-existent, I have no sympathy for her then.

Unlike the attainment of his teeth, I do not think Anse anticipated finding a new wife. The only early reference to his obtaining a new bride is when Kate says that he will find a new wife before cotton-picking time. Vardaman notes that, immediately after Addie's death, he starts shaving daily, but this (which may have been for her wake) apparently does not last long. Anse does not shave again until after meeting the his bride-to-be, when he suddenly takes interest in his appearance.
WORKS CITED


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