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Writing outside/in: Nonfiction narrative as implicated text

Lehman, Daniel Wayne, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1993

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WRITING OUTSIDE/IN:
NONFICTION NARRATIVE AS IMPLICATED TEXT

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Daniel Wayne Lehman, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1993

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1993
To Barbara and Hadley
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express sincere appreciation to the members of my advisory committee, Drs. Walter Davis, John Hellmann, and Debra Moddelmog, for their patient support, guidance, and insights during the research and presentation of this study. All three have taught me that the study of literature might be a study for life and that scholarship need not be remote from the problems and triumphs of the world. I would also like to thank Drs. James Phelan and Angela Jaffe, who read and offered suggestions on the early versions of some of the material in this study. Robert McGovern, chair of the Department of English at Ashland University, is gratefully acknowledged for his encouragement and professional example. Among the many writing colleagues who have taught me that journalism can be a force for positive change, I cite three by name: Jack Newfield, Bob Gibson, and Libby Wilson. To Hadley Lehman, I offer thanks for the excitement of your young life and for your ready smile. And to Barbara A. Lehman, I thank you for your example as a scholar and for your support as my companion and my best friend.
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PUBLICATIONS


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: English

Studies in Nonfiction Narrative, Critical Theory, and Twentieth Century Literature
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V
INTRODUCTION

The Stakes of Nonfiction Narrative

The call came late at night, as I remember it, long after my wife and daughter had gone to bed, and I was alone with the crickets and mosquitoes in the humid Virginia night. On the other end of the line was a distraught woman, a woman whose father had committed suicide the night before. He had scrambled out the window of a treatment center for chronic alcoholics, walked slowly and deliberately onto a nearby interstate highway, and died—head up and arms outstretched—on the grill of a 20-ton semi truck. I had written the story of his death for the afternoon newspaper, and the daughter was calling to dress me down.

Her father had been a bank president and church deacon in life. His alcohol problems, she said, had been kept quite private, and his admission to the sanatorium had been a secret to all but his closest family members. My story that day, sketchy though it was, had aired some of these secrets, even to his own grandchildren, and the daughter could not understand why. Was the idea, she asked, to destroy her family? To parade her father’s pain for
profit? What gave me the right, she demanded to know, to have the final say on her father's life?

I tried to explain that I had stuck to official sources, to easily verifiable facts. I told her that the fatality had snarled highway traffic for more than an hour, that people had the right to know why they were inconvenienced, that the police had the obligation to state publicly that the truck driver was not at fault, that we had to try to explain to our readers why a man might scramble over a fence and walk onto the highway to die.

But her voice got louder as the conversation grew longer, and I began to wish that I had taken my editor's advice and ordered an unlisted home telephone number. How much safer it would be, I reflected, to write fiction, to hide characters (or myself for that matter) behind assumed names. If I could only guard my anonymity, my privacy, my vulnerability. What I yearned for, in short, was the very same protection that I had denied the caller's father in death.

It was in that recognition—reached in the early hours sometime past the midpoint of a professional reporting career—that I first really understood the stakes of writing nonfiction. I as a writer, the woman as a reader, her father as the subject of the narrative—each one of us was implicated materially and historically by the words on the page. Whether the narrative I had written of the
father's life could be defined as true or not was not the only point. Certainly it had many elements of fact; in no way had it been exposed as lies. It was marketed as truth by the author and by the newspaper which profited from its publication. And yet it had the indeterminacy of text as well: a text produced from other texts like police reports, medical records, morgue files, memories, observation, eyewitness accounts, telling details, quotes. I could no more guarantee it was true than say it was false.

But these conventional generic markers—of truth and falsity, of fact and text—were, finally, almost beside the point. They had triggered the discussion, but what counted was how the story—this story—implicated its writer and its reader. That anguished call in the night was proof that what I had written that day—while its truth may have been presented in textual form—had a social and material effect that far transcends that of fiction. On one hand, the circumstances of its research, writing, publication, and consumption were, and are, deeply intertwined with what literary critics traditionally have called the "text." But its full power and problems cannot be understood until the discourse relations that undergird nonfiction are read as closely as the words and images that make up the text itself.
The topic of this dissertation therefore grows from my interest and training both in literature and in journalism, wherein I worked as a professional reporter and editor for fifteen years. Because I was engaged for so long in the research and writing of narratives that claim to be "history," I have some working understanding of the way that writing and reading nonfiction differs from writing and reading fiction. The writer of nonfiction produces a document for an audience that is engaged both inside and outside the text: both by the lure of the narrative and by the direct or indirect knowledge of the events and people on which the text is based. Even the reader who has never heard of the bank president before his suicide will, no doubt, have some understanding that an actual person has died and not merely a character of the imagination. No journalist or historian can work for long without discovering, as I did during that late-night telephone call, the deep stakes that her readers have in the history she attempts to capture. The production and consumption of such texts, therefore, is a site of both artistic and social struggle: a struggle with epistemological, and even ontological, dimensions.

In reading all of the major contemporary nonfiction theorists—much of whose work, beginning with Mas'ud Zavarzadeh's The Mythopoeic Reality, was clustered two decades ago around studies of "new journalism" and the
"nonfiction novel" and in several composition and rhetoric studies published since then—I have encountered no one who, in my opinion, has theorized sufficiently this most basic of nonfiction's transactions. Studies seem to be divided among those that concentrate on the "literary artistry" of nonfiction texts without paying much attention to the ramifications of their truth claims or their engagement with history; those that consider texts from a perspective of journalistic technique and thus rely on one-dimensional empirical standards to determine if a text and its reporting techniques are "true" or valid; and those, more recent, studies that, while exploring in helpful ways the artificial textuality of all expression, ultimately tend to collapse all distinctions between fiction and nonfiction and to ignore the powerful social transaction that occurs when a text claims to be literary and is marketed as "truth."

To remedy the shortcomings of these approaches, this dissertation intends to honor an invitation made by media scholar John J. Pauly in an essay on the politics of 1960s-era "New Journalism." Pauly suggests a standard of communications research that merges close textual as well as close social analysis:

We might . . . interpret a work of reporting as a social behavior, without precluding close textual analysis. We could study the venues of publication (i.e. the institutional sites at which
the story was written, printed, disseminated, and discussed. We could then analyze the research and writing of a work as social acts, noting the way the reporting process implicates writer, subjects, and readers in relationships beyond a text. . . . Social analysis does not replace the text itself, but amplifies a text's play of meaning by "reading" writing as a form of work, performed under particular conditions. (112)

In response to Pauly's invitation, and with particular attention to his sense of nonfiction as a socially implicating act, the present study offers a way to read nonfiction that will account for the specific manner by which narrative nonfiction draws in its writers and readers both as historical agents and as producers and consumers of texts. The premise to be explored is whether this social and literary transaction between writer and reader provides a more ready explanation of nonfiction discourse than do more standard genre definitions that primarily rely for classification on a determination of the "truth" of the text.

In choosing this approach, I do not insist that such a social and literary transaction never takes place in fiction. Even fictional accounts are not produced or consumed outside history and, moreover, may make use of "actual" names, settings, and historical or social conventions. But I do believe that nonfiction—a form of communication that purports to re-enact for the reader an
experience that is at least potentially also available outside the text—forces the writer and reader onto a multi-referential plane that, for purposes of this study, I will call "implication." I use the term in the sense that it means "deeply involved, even incriminated" and for the way it complicates more traditional or tidy literary notions of "ideal" or "implied" authors and readers.

Underlying the study are several assumptions: (1) any literary text, whether fiction or nonfiction, is arbitrated or "crafted" in important ways, rendering impossible the simple equation of "actuality" with nonfiction; (2) even if that equation were possible, a genre standard based solely on the verifiability of nonfiction's claims would be inadequate because texts operate in an intertextual milieu wherein actuality and its reproduction are often virtually indistinguishable; (3) the decision by either the author or the publisher to term a text "nonfiction" nonetheless remains a critical key to how it is written and read, but is much more socially constructed and negotiated by both author and reader than derived by some empirical standard of truth; (4) that decision triggers a powerful, and ongoing, dilemma for the author (who implicates herself both as a creator and character in the text she creates), and the reader (who both "reads" the text and inhabits the world that the text purports to recreate).
The force of this study intentionally blurs and refashions several rhetorical and social traditions in criticism. It will turn on an examination of nonfiction's determinative effects as a form of written communication as well as artistic expression; the examination of such effects in a cultural studies setting rather than as discrete, ahistorical cases; and the recognition that nonfiction texts normally are born and marketed as mass mediations and thus are produced and read as representations of knowledge and history. In that regard, Reginia Gagnier, in the introduction to Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation, 1832-1920, outlines the sort of social analysis, often termed "cultural studies," that can pay "unwavering attention to differing, often subtly nuanced codes and contexts" (6):

What needs to be added to the study of rhetoric to prevent it from tending toward mere academic "appreciation" is the self-conscious interpretive dimension of a more recent development: cultural studies. Cultural studies not only seeks to specify the historical meaning of a text but also takes account of how meaning, or reception, changes through time and through the mediation of interpreters and interpretive institutions. (5)

This sort of cultural reception approach, particularly in the study of nonfiction discourse, needs to be thoroughly grounded in contemporary communications theory, so that we can begin to understand how actual relationships
between implicated authors and readers are communicated and received. In direct contrast to earlier, more simplified, models which studied media transmission as one-way encoding and decoding operations, a media theory grounded in semiotics and culture will study communication as a production and exchange of meaning and will be concerned "with how messages, or texts, interact with people in order to produce meanings" (Fiske, Communication Studies 2).

James W. Carey provided a relatively early explanation of such a model of mediation in "Mass Communication and Cultural Studies," a 1977 essay too long neglected by scholars of nonfiction. Carey worried that the study of communications had become "isolated from the study of literature and art on the one hand and from the expressive and ritual forms of everyday life—religion, conversation, sport—on the other" (42). Though Carey's essay was addressed to communication scholars, it might well serve as a critique of the sort of studies of nonfiction literature that would ignore the implications, problems and rewards of reading literature as a form of cultural communication:

[A] ritual view conceives communication as a process through which a shared culture is created, modified, and transformed. The archetypal case of communication is ritual and mythology for those who come at the problem from anthropology; art and literature for those who come at the problem from literary criticism and history. A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of
messages in space but the maintenance of society in time. (43)

In accordance with Carey's ideas about communication as a complex social and historical transaction, I would contend that the quite valuable rhetorical emphasis on the text as a communication device has too often been restricted to an encoding/decoding model. Reading texts solely for the author's "intent" to present "truth" and assessing her success on the empirical grounds of whether the reader apprehends that "truth" is simply too narrow. I want to adjust that approach by reading nonfiction's rhetorical effects in the context of a fully enculturated communications ritual. But at the same time, work in cultural studies and media theory—with its traditional emphasis on the textuality and narrative organization of meaning—has much to learn from the sort of close readings at which literary theorists excel and their tradition of being as specific as possible about what kinds of narrative might produce what kinds of effects.

This dissertation, therefore, will explore in some detail the social, as well as aesthetic, matrices created by those communication artifacts that we call nonfiction texts. The reverberations set in motion by the clash of the text as an artificial construction and as a representation of history that draws a reader into the life of the text—as well as by the socially constructed memory
that a reader brings from an event to a text—are what set nonfiction apart from most forms of fiction and explain much of its affective power. Both writer and reader are implicated in a clash of varying stimuli and responses, many of which echo the intertextuality of everyday life and the uneasy feeling that it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish the narrative of memory from what is mediated or constructed.

Roland Barthes—on being "captured" by the lens in the "nonfiction" discourse of photography—examines one type of author-reader-subject relation in his musings on the transaction of actuality to text.

In front of the lens, I am at the same time the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art. In other words, a strange action: I do not stop imitating myself, and because of this, each time I am (or let myself be) photographed, I invariably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity, sometimes of imposture (comparable to certain nightmares)...I am neither subject nor object: I then experience a micro-version of death (of parenthesis). I am truly becoming a spectre. (1981:13-14)

Later Barthes sees the photograph—as imitated actuality—enter the marketplace, sees it produced, published and reproduced, consumed by "readers," and interpreted:

[When I discover myself in the product of this operation, what I see is that I have become Total-Image...Death in person. [As an object, a text] they turn me, ferociously, into an object,
they put me at their mercy, at their
disposal, classified in a file, ready
for the subtlest deception. (14)

Recognitions such as the one Barthes relays here
unearth the source of nonfiction's most powerful
theoretical significance. Readers and writers of
nonfiction—as I learned during that late-night telephone
call and scores of other times when I was confronted both
approvingly and disapprovingly by the subjects of my
nonfiction—are unable to suspend their ethical and social
responses to a text that purports to reconstruct reality as
easily as to fiction. The nonfiction text directly
construes both its author and its reader as creators and
consumers of history, thereby engaging them in ongoing
struggle and exploding what remains of the intentional and
affective fallacies. The site of that struggle and the
artifacts it spawns are the subjects that this dissertation
intends to explore.

The Problem of Truth in Nonfiction Narrative

Although this dissertation is not intended as a genre
study, one can hardly insist on nonfiction's unique power
at the same time one ducks any sort of "classifying
statement" about what it is and why it has the power to
trigger complex social and discursive relations between
literature and history. As Adena Rosmarin reminds us,
[A]n eye for resemblance is always also
an eye for difference. . . . [O]nce
genre is defined as pragmatic rather
than natural, as defined rather than
found, and as used rather than
described, then there are precisely as
many genres as we need. (25)

Therefore, this introduction will critique and merge some
of the most provocative genre readings of nonfiction
produced during the past two decades. Ultimately, the real
difference between the genre scholars' approach and mine is
that they want to build divisions in their bookshelves,
while I want to look at a range of texts along the row and
describe not only something of how those texts work but
also how our very difficulty in building a division affects
us as readers.

Traditionally, however, few boundaries are more sacred
to literary theory than the boundary between fact and
fiction. Writers and critics with allegiance to either
camp have, at least since Aristotle's "Poetics," insisted
on the distinctiveness of the form they value:

[I]t is not the function of the poet to
narrate events that have actually
happened, but rather, events such as
might occur and have the capability of
occurring in accordance with the laws
of probability or necessity. For the
historian and the poet do not differ by
their writing in prose or verse. . . .
The difference, rather, lies in the
fact that the historian narrates events
that have actually happened, whereas
the poet writes about things as they
might possibly occur. Poetry,
therefore, is more philosophical and
more significant than history, for
Yet these classifications never were adequate to explain the sensation of "inauthenticity" and "imposture" that Barthes so suggestively expresses in Camera Lucida at the moment when actuality is mediated by text. And so when Mas'ud Zavarzadeh parts the curtains into the "fictual zone" and redraws, if not obliterates, that boundary in his 1976 study, The Mythopoeic Reality, it is perhaps not surprising that his journey has drawn more fire than praise from nonfiction theorists even as it has been largely ignored by literary critics.

Yet even after persuasive rebuttals by some dozen subsequent writers, even if one discards most of the complicated typology and neologisms that accompany Zavarzadeh's "fictual" assertions, statements from The Mythopoeic Reality such as the following trace the sort of effects evoked by Barthes:

The bi-referential mode is the narrative form through which the consciousness, engulfed in fabulous reality and overwhelmed by the naked actuality, articulates its experience of an extreme situation. This area of reality, however, where the factual and the fictional converge in a state of unresolved tension, needs a special term of identification. I shall call this puzzling merging of the fictional and the factual the fictual: a zone of experience where the factual is not secure or unequivocal, but seems preternaturally strange and eerie, and
where the fictional seems not all that fictitious, remote and alien, but bears an uncanny resemblance to daily experience. (56)

From the newsroom of The Village Voice—in which at least one strand of "new journalism" claims its birth—to a long stretch in the newsroom of a quite conventional daily in a southern university town, and at all the various stops in between, I worked with scores of journalists who, as I recall, often talked about the facts we together sought in terms that remind me of Zavarzadeh. Yes, we worked in a system where "truth" was marketed by our bosses as our most important product and where "fiction" was punished by the full fury of red-pen editors and libel laws. But in our private hearts many of us were a lot less sure about the status of our claims than our bosses and our theoretical champions would believe us to be. We faced notebooks of contradictory quotes; we reconstructed events—too soon after or too long past—from the contradictory interpretations of those who had every reason to lie; we swam in an intertextual world of "morgue" copy clips and competitive media accounts; we tried to pin down data that multiplied faster than it could be processed. In sum, we often wrote our histories more the way we thought they might be or should be than the way they possibly could have been. So imagine the surprise of scores of such journalists had we been assured by theorists—in contra-
distinction to Zavarzadeh—that "nonfiction makes use of totalizing frames" (Foley 40); or that it "choose[s] to be restrained by what can be demonstrably known" (Weber, Literature of Fact 47); or that it "promis[es] the reader that [the author] is dealing in pure fact" (Hellmann, Fables 11, emphasis added); or that "the author is the sole determinant of whether a text is fact or fiction" (Heyne 480).

To sort through some of these approaches, I propose a dialectical approach to Zavarzadeh and the three most provocative theorists who have written in his wake: John Hellmann, Barbara Foley, and Eric Heyne. I choose these three in part because I am persuaded that they have the most to say and because they are the most theoretically engaged.2 Hellmann, Foley, and Heyne—in their separate ways—seem to make several enduring contributions to the theory of nonfiction narrative while falling somewhat short in at least one crucial way that points toward a strength of another one of the theorists. Hellmann—while ultimately somewhat reductive in his approach for my tastes—rescues the nonfiction novel from the stultifying realism that had grown from Tom Wolfe's quasi-theoretical introduction to The New Journalism. He also begins to articulate a theory of the writer's complex relationship in nonfiction to the social formations that surround him. Foley, writing as a Marxist primarily about documentary
fiction, picks up that latter strand and offers a socially
grounded theory of the implicated reader that is an
important key to the power of nonfiction. But her
insistence on "totalizing frames" to read fiction and
nonfiction undercuts the very power of her own argument.
For his part, Heyne offers a way to recognize the special
power of nonfiction and to make the reader an important
partner in the negotiation of truth, while forcing perhaps
too simple a wedge between the actual effects of fiction
and nonfiction. And finally, I will suggest several
amendments to Heyne's work that grow from my dialogue with
Zavarzadeh, Hellmann, and Foley, and in that way will
prepare for the examination of nonfiction's implicating
power that will make up the balance of this dissertation.

In The Mythopoeic Reality, Zavarzadeh asserts that the
nonfiction texts that interest him are composed of a
dialogue between inner and outer reference. He says,
following Northrop Frye, that these texts combine an in-
referential "field of fiction mapped out within the book"
as well as an out-referential "external configuration of
facts verifiable outside the book" (55). The enduring, and
largely unrecognized, value of Zavarzadeh's approach is
that it subverts the possibility of a privately comfortable
reading in a world removed from the actual and forecloses
the comfort level that might result from knowing that the
text is unambiguously "true," either in fact or in intent.
Zavarzadeh’s bi-referential narratives form open dynamic systems in active tension with the experiential world outside the book. The dialectical quality of these systems is partly derived from their attitude toward facts. Reading nonfiction narrative in its full bi-referential complexity, he argues, requires a re-examination of the question of the function of fact in fiction. (58)

Zavarzadeh also claims—in what many subsequent readers, including me, feel is a serious flaw—that the nonfiction novel commits itself to neutral transcription of facts with "zero degree interpretation" (89). This concept has been amply debunked by Ronald Weber’s The Literature of Fact and by Hellmann, both of whom (particularly Hellmann) demonstrate how the writer of nonfiction narrative deeply shapes his material even as it is presented as "demonstrably known" (Weber) or as experience that "actually happened" (Hellmann). Hellmann further contests Zavarzadeh by determining, finally, that the nonfiction novel, while resolutely factual, is a fictive narrative (artistically shaped in Frye’s sense) and therefore ultimately is in-referential. The new journalism is, in my view, most properly understood as a genre of literature. Like realistic fiction or romantic fiction or fabulist fiction, it has an aesthetic form and purpose making its final direction inward. (24)

Hellmann opens the way toward a poststructural analysis of book-length nonfiction texts by showing us in
specific ways how it resembles fabulist fiction in such aspects as framed narratives, self-conscious narration, altered punctuation, episodically contrived structures, allegorical and mythic patterns taken from classical and popular culture sources, heavily mannered style, use of parody and satire, and concern for larger philosophical and social issues (13-14). But in so doing, Hellmann contends:

The new journalists give us what literary artists have always given us—only they do so in direct confrontation with the news that has become our major shared experience in a media age. Their works are aesthetic experiences embodying the result of this confrontation between external events and personal mind—a microcosmic selection, shaping, and interpretation of events of the macrocosm into a text, a construct representing not events, but an individual consciousness's experience of them. (25-26)

These comments point up what are in my opinion both the enduring strengths and the lingering weakness of Hellmann's approach. Its strength is that it avoids a purely formalist reading of either fiction or nonfiction, seeing literary creation as intimately tied to a social context. However, in my opinion, Hellmann's approach ultimately short-circuits some fruitful critical "dilemmas" by locating the social negotiation of fact in the "personal mind" and by privileging a formal consideration of in-referential narrative, as when he asserts:

Apparent critical dilemmas are solved by recognizing that, like any writing,
new journalism points to an external subject; but, like traditional novels, romances, fabulations, and historical novels, it is fiction because it finally points to its own form. (33)

To grant actuality while releasing the reader from an ongoing struggle to reconcile that actuality to the text would seem to somewhat diminish the power of nonfiction to emphasize the interplay between text and experience—the tension that can make us read a narrative with full mimetic involvement/implicated resistance, even though (and in spite of the fact that) we know that the Cutters will die in Truman Capote’s In Cold Blood, or that Gary Gilmore will be killed in Norman Mailer’s The Executioner’s Song, or that the United States will lose the Vietnam War in Michael Herr’s Dispatches.

Even those few recent poststructuralist accounts that have followed Hellmann do little to correct the over- insistence on "inside" readings at the expense of the cultural and historical. For example, Phyllis Frus McCord, in "The Ideology of Form: The Nonfiction Novel," concludes that "even narratives that use historical materials are fictional in the sense of ‘made,’ not made up, ‘creations,’ not lies" (66)—a direct echo of Hellmann. But McCord—perhaps because she wants to force open the canon to accept reportage and other forms of nonfiction—proceeds to collapse any really meaningful distinctions between the two when she concludes that the only difference between a
fiction and nonfiction novel is at the level of story, "what happens" outside the text (66) and that "the text has priority over the events it purports to describe" (67):

This is why we read and judge them [fiction and nonfiction] similarly as novels. To summarize, all novels are fictional because they are made of plots; but the story of the nonfiction novel (including biography, memoir, history, journalism) is historical, whereas the story of the traditional novel is hypothetical. (67)

McCord's theory is useful, particularly when she discusses how the "truth" of fictions might lie in the gaps between competing discourses (76), but a theory that finally asserts the primacy of text over events (67), or suggests that we should no longer "insist on the separation of literary and fictional texts from nonfiction, nonliterary ones" (77), ironically is as formalist as the traditional genre critics and canon defenders that her essay means to contest.

Barbara Foley's Telling the Truth holds a more exact balance between the formal and the social aspects of documentary texts though I remain struck by what seems to me to be an internal contradiction in her analysis. Although she primarily studies documentary fiction texts, she makes several points that resonate strongly when applied to nonfiction. She claims that documentary narrative is distinguished by its insistence that it contains some kind of specific and verifiable link to the
historical world and that to investigate truth claims is to illuminate the assertive capacities of narrative, whether fiction or nonfiction (26). Moreover, she builds a specifically historical analysis, showing how our notions of "truth" have shifted over the centuries and how each epoch affects our ability and specific strategy for "telling the truth" either through fiction or nonfiction (25).

But Foley's analysis is marred by its rather doctrinaire insistence that fiction and nonfiction can be read only through "totalizing frames." Exactly why is her theory unable to account for texts that might blur either fictive/factual presentation or response? Perhaps one answer is that Foley is writing during the mid-1980s, an era when Marxist critics felt pressure from deconstructionism and other stripes of post-structuralism, and as such, she wants to ground her theory in Marx and Lenin rather than in a theorist like Derrida who by this time had broken irretrievably from strictly material analysis. "I would not therefore conclude," Foley writes that all inherited cognitive opposition are equally ideological and equally fallacious. Some opposition—between fact and fiction, for instance—describe very real (and, I believe, necessary) cognitive operations, in which actual historical people engage and have engaged. (35)
Foley wants to insist on the power of cognition because she depends on it to rescue the post-modern dilemma from radical indeterminacy. Therefore, she ultimately argues that any narrative must be read as fiction or nonfiction, like a Gestalt rabbit/duck drawing, "because any given particular must be understood as part of a larger scheme" (36). The strands that make up its narrative, she argues, must be read in "totalizing frames," must be "scanned and interpreted as either factual or fictive in order to be read and understood" (40).

Even if we grant Foley her metaphor, are there not those moments when the vision blurs as one abandons one Gestalt for another? Is there not a sensation of dizziness when the rabbit is lost, but the duck has not yet emerged? Sometimes the eye gropes for patterns that will not impose themselves. Zavarzadeh, no doubt, would say that the twentieth century is one such moment, while Barthes is alive to those instances of blurred sight/insight as he contemplates the frozen images of his own history in those photographs he scans.

In contradistinction to what we shall discover in Heyne's approach, Foley explicitly rejects any grounding for her "Gestalt" theory in intentionalism—exemplified by "speech-act" theories of discourse—whereby fictive or factual status is solely determined by the intention of the speaker or artist. Not surprisingly, she believes that a
theory driven by authorial intent leaves little room for the explicitly social power she carves out for documentary fiction and, therefore, must rest her case for the essential difference between fiction and nonfiction, not on intent, but on an insistent cognitive certainty wherein concepts "with blurred edges" are not necessarily concepts that lack a principle of unity (18). Because she wants to historicize experience, she cannot tolerate a theory that would blur the distinction. Therefore, she rather intriguingly lumps speech-act theorist John Searle with Louis Althusser, the post-structural Marxist, and suggests that both would "dehistoricize" the text:

Searle's stipulation that fiction suspends illocutionary force resembles in some ways Althusser's view that literature "alludes" to reality. By consigning all fictive discourse to an epistemological region midway between ideology and science, moreover, the Althussarian definition makes it impossible to judge whether one representation of historical activity possesses more legitimacy than another.

(83)

Eric Heyne offers a reading of speech-act theory that almost directly contradicts Foley's. In a 1987 article in Modern Fiction Studies, Heyne used Searle's The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse to build a theory of literary nonfiction that distinguishes between the text's "factual status" (determined by the author's intent) and its "factual adequacy" (judged by an empirical standard whereby
the author's version of the facts is compared and contrasted to the facts themselves):

When we claim that something is a "true story," we mean either that it is to be taken in a certain way or that it can serve as an adequate representation of real events. The madman's tale is "true" in the first sense, but not in the second. The first distinction is between fact and fiction, the second between good and bad fact. The difference is important because . . . different sorts of responses are appropriate for fiction and nonfiction. If Searle's distinction makes sense, it follows that the author is sole determinant of whether a text is fact or fiction, whereas the reader must decide for herself whether a work is good or bad fact. (480)

Unlike Foley, Heyne insists that a fictional text has neither factual status nor factual adequacy; a nonfiction text, he asserts, has factual status, but readers would have to resolve individually or by debate the question of its factual adequacy. Status is either/or, a binary matter determined by the illocutionary intentions of an author (Searle 325), whereas adequacy is a relative matter open to debate among readers. (480-81)

The value of Heyne's distinction of "status" and "adequacy" is that it begins to account for the differing effects produced by many fiction and nonfiction texts and it creates room for author-reader negotiation at the factual adequacy stage without erasing the unique status of the nonfiction narrative. Heyne's analysis also seems
valuable because, as he points out, it allows the reader to negotiate factual adequacy on a sliding scale without denying the power of a nonfiction claim that makes the analysis possible. This concept helps to explain and extend Hellmann's understanding of the way that nonfiction novelists can use the experimental techniques of fabulist fiction without violating the factual status of their narratives. As Heyne says,

When we are challenged by a narrative that presents itself as fact, but includes dialogue or events that we may doubt, our response is usually to challenge the text and determine its worth, not throw up our hands and surrender. We will continue to maintain the fact/fiction distinction at least as long as we find it worthwhile to conduct a collective search for the truths of our past. (484)

I doubt that Zavarzadeh, whom Heyne is addressing here, would think of himself as throwing up his hands in surrender when he speaks of the fictive nature of contemporary fact, but Heyne's formations do help to complicate Foley's rigidly binary system by addressing fact-fiction issues on two levels.

Yet, can we grant that Heyne's model accounts for all nonfiction texts or that the status of all fiction and nonfiction texts is resolutely intentional? Of course he believes his model is adequate because the texts it won't account for, by his very definition, are not non-fiction and thus outside the scope of his study. For example, a
reader might cite an instance in which Joan Didion, in *Salvador*, tells her readers straight-away that she is incapable of telling the truth about El Salvador: "no ground is solid, no depth of field reliable, no perception so definite that it might not dissolve into its reverse" (13). Heyne, by the definition of his argument, would have to respond that *Salvador*’s factual status is never in doubt because Didion claims it is true. Thus, what I--partially following Zavarzadeh--might interpret as a deliberate fact-fiction blurring (forcing us to negotiate what Didion asserts as truth and what she tells her reader she is unable to assert as truth), Heyne might interpret only as two competing forms of factual adequacy (sometimes the greatest truth is that which we can’t know) within an unambiguously factual text.  

In trying to assess the strengths and weaknesses of all these theorists, and before turning my attention from genre to the affective qualities of reading and writing nonfiction, I want to propose a path which points back toward Zavarzadeh’s bi-referential model without repeating his mistakes. The nonfiction text--one that purports to recreate for the reader an experience that is at least potentially also available to the reader outside the text--forces the reader into a multi-referential reading, not simply, as Zavarzadeh argues, because of the bizarre nature of contemporary fact (humans have for thousands of years
faced war or other disorienting experience) but because the reader now experiences the original event both within and without the nonfiction text. Several strands of potentially complicated relationships are established: writer (outside text) to event; writer (through text) to event; reader (outside text) to event; reader (through text) to event; event arbitrated by text; text arbitrated by event and interpreted by writer and reader.

This dissertation, therefore, will make the case that a solely "first-cause" analysis of authorial intent is insufficient to account for nonfiction's discursive power and that empirical analysis, while useful, is not determinative. Rather than searching for the certain division of genre, I will argue that "public" narratives (i.e. those with recognizable historical characters, events, or settings) are the sort that implicate writers and readers most keenly while more "private" nonfiction narratives differ rather less automatically in effect from their fictive counterparts. But that is certainly not to say that authorial intent has no part to play in this implicating transaction. In the first chapter of this study I will cite the examples of Jane Kramer's "Cowboy" and "Sigmund Freud's Dora: A Fragment of a Case History of Analysis," substantially "private" nonfiction narratives, to prove that the truth claim triggers a powerful social negotiation that implicates author and reader.
I agree with Heyne that there is no reason to abolish the discussion of fact-fiction boundaries. Indeed, they may be of invaluable assistance in explaining how many of the texts marketed as nonfiction implicate their authors and readers. But I doubt that this sort of blurred status is as experimental or marginalized as Heyne thinks. Our increasing confrontation with just this sort of blurred reality/textuality in our extra-literary lives accounts for some of the disturbing power of contemporary nonfiction. We turn on our television to see a fictional character respond in narrative "real" time to the taped account of an "actual" vice presidential speech six months earlier while the vice president is filmed watching the "actual" television show in an elaborately staged [nonfiction?] media photo opportunity.

To return our discussion to the theorist at which it began, it was Zavarzadeh's *The Mythopoetic Reality* that argued nearly two decades ago that nonfiction throws its readers into disquieting, "bi-referential" readings.

[A] bi-referential work which refuses an either/or approach to experiential situations...establishes, through its dual fields of reference, a double perspective on contemporary fictuality. It is a narrative which is simultaneously self-referential and out-referential, factual and fictional, and thus well equipped to deal with the elusive fusion of fact and fiction which has become the matrix of today's experience. (56-57)
Even if, following Heyne and counter to Zavarzadeh, the work's factual status can be determined, its indeterminacy is not an empty consideration. For, after all, the second stage of Heyne's analysis asks us to negotiate factual adequacy by determining whether "it can serve as an adequate representation of real events" (480). His formation thus assumes both that we can determine what is real and that we can establish a standard by which we can judge an adequate representation of the real. There may be no problem with that goal, so long as nothing we do precludes the reader from a fully engaged, dialectical response in which "facts" and "representation" are always open for active contest.

Unfortunately, what often happens in practice is that an uncontested binary leads to comfortable conclusions such as those drawn by formalist critic Barbara Lounsberry in her recent book, The Art of Fact: Contemporary Artists of Nonfiction. She concludes that the proper stuff of nonfiction is "documentable subject matter chosen from the real world as opposed to 'invented' from the writer's mind" (xiii) and that

when the factual accuracy of a work is questioned, or when authorial promises are violated, a work of literary nonfiction is either discredited or transferred out of the category. (xiv)

Finally, then, a comprehensive theory of nonfiction is served neither by a collapse of all distinctions between
fiction and nonfiction nor by a binary approach, whether it be materially or intentionally grounded. These categories might be quite useful for understanding and analyzing nonfiction; certainly, struggling with truth claims and their effects will inform us about how we read and write history. Ultimately, however, we don’t need to define nonfiction with empirical certainty before we can study its social, cultural, literary effects any more than we need to define fiction with empirical certainty every time we read or think about a short story or novel.

What we can do is to consider the epistemological claims of the author of the text as well as the social conditions of its production and marketing. We can blend the forms of close reading and narrative analysis that allow us to get "inside" the text at the same time we understand that its author and subjects live "outside" the text as well. We can be alive to the complications inherent in the matrix of inside and outside forces at work and play. Given contemporary critical theory’s obsession with textuality, popular culture, social history and practice, and the extension of semiology and narrative theory to "non-canonical" texts, it is a timely project.

Methodology and Outline

This dissertation is organized around a theoretical exploration of the ways in which nonfiction implicates its
writers and its readers. The first chapter will explore the ways in which a writer's decision to present his text as nonfiction both limits and expands his options. Because human history is the material that the author refashions and because the author, too, is a human subject whose narrative, as well as analytical, methods should be open to scrutiny, he is both responsible for and vulnerable to the text in a way that would not be so sharp in fiction. For example, a text that purports to be nonfiction throws its narrative style open to scrutiny, even in so small a manner as the author's decision and ability to grant "voice" to characters through direct quotes. Though the narrative style of a fiction narrative can be studied in all its artistic and social implications, it is not so directly arbitrated by the powers and limitations of an historical figure who lives both inside and is a creator of the text. The nonfiction claim thrusts the text inevitably into the world of social discourse; the Mailer who writes *The Executioner's Song* must account for how he knows the thoughts of Gary Gilmore. We will not grant the text's narrator the right of omniscient and omnipresent narration unless it can be socially negotiated. What might be taken for granted in fiction becomes the source of social and theoretical concern in nonfiction.

The second chapter will examine in specific detail how a nonfiction text implicates its reader in a way that a
fiction text much less readily does. As the consumer of a history in which he is living, the reader is both mimetically engaged in the nonfiction text and alienated by its attempts to construe his extra-textual history. The multi-leveled vision thus created haunts an implicated reader not unlike the jolt one finds when one unexpectedly catches a glimpse of one's reflection in a store window, or in a video monitor in a store, or perhaps by a surveillance camera image of oneself in a mirror that causes one to reflect how one's face had looked better (or worse, but different) in the natural light of the (mirrored) morning. The "history" that the reader meets in the mirror or screen or mirrored screen of the text is at once mediated and thus "other," yet the force of its fiction-like presentation can trigger a narrative field that pulls the reader into the life of the text as well as, in a manner that seems particularly forceful in nonfiction, evokes personal memory.

The journalism industry has long since known of the sensations produced in the reader by encountering this "real-life" other in a text: sensations which inform the standard marketing news values of prominence, impact, conflict, immediacy and timeliness. Normally, those deeply "othering" sensations are safely contained by the form of the standard journalism text. But the sensations, nonetheless, are powerful, as chapter two will attempt to
demonstrate. The manner by which the nonfiction text implicates its reader is by producing a textual identification with an "other" that cuts against the grain of the reader’s history, or "self." Moreover, the method of the text’s presentation—the way in which it positions the reader—deeply intertwines with its message. Some texts reveal their methodology or "apparatus" to the reader, while others hide or try to "normalize" their methodology so as to frustrate the reader’s attempts to implicate the author as an historical entity.

The theoretical section of the dissertation is meant to apply as fully as possible to nonfiction narratives across period and national boundaries, though it will, of course, be impossible to demonstrate that application fully within the scope of this study. I hope to address this problem in two ways: by referring at least briefly to texts spanning those boundaries within my theoretical chapters and by choosing more narrowly focused texts for the latter half of the dissertation that enable me to read in quite specific and socially grounded detail.

The second half of the dissertation, therefore, is constructed around a practical demonstration of the theories of implicated writer and reader when applied to several twentieth-century nonfiction narratives that depict political and social upheaval. The choice of these authors—John Reed, Tom Wolfe, and Joan Didion—is not
meant to suggest some sort of "canon" or even that my theories of reader and writer implication are limited either to the twentieth century or to narratives of social or political struggle. But if I am to argue that reading nonfiction both inside and outside the text calls for historical as well as textual specificity, then I must narrow my practical considerations in the second half of this study to a scope that will allow for such a reading. My strategy here is to consider texts specifically and historically, noting the ways in which the narrator of a nonfiction text cuts against the grain of its historical author as well as the ways in which the reader of the narrative as positioned by the text cuts against the grain of an actual reader in history.

The third chapter assesses the journalist John Reed, and specifically his two book-length nonfiction narratives, *Insurgent Mexico* and *Ten Days That Shook The World*. Reed wrote at a time when the mechanical reproduction of art and media was coming into its own as well as a time in which the United States was assuming a military and political role that extended far beyond its boundaries. The manner and depth by which his reportage implicated both himself and his readers is virtually unparalleled among twentieth century writers. Many of his readers resented the close textual identification with characters they could not accept in their extra-textual lives and, moreover, resented
the manner by which Reed's narrative strategies made the events of revolution appear to be historically determined and inevitable.

The fourth chapter studies the writings of Tom Wolfe, specifically his *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, to see how they helped to usher in "New Journalism," the self-consciously epistemological breach with standard journalism forms in mid-century America and how that rupture ultimately was addressed by Wolfe's developing formal and theoretical conservatism. The chapter specifically looks at how Wolfe tempts both himself and his readers to break ranks with linear forms as well as how he "re-captures" both himself and those readers and helps to usher in the more epistemologically fixed standards of "city magazine" feature writing.

Finally, the dissertation takes a close look at the writings of Joan Didion in chapter five, partially as a contrast to Wolfe and partially to show how nonfiction's particular blend of historical representation and artistry works in a writer who has closely aligned herself with the dilemmas of postmodern expression. The chapter explores Didion's increasingly complex analyses of events, particularly her recognition that the narrative devices once trumpeted as revolutionary have now been pressed into the service of the "instant history" of conventional nonfiction. Those nonfiction forms, Didion seems to
suggest, do more to hide than to reveal the contradictions of the late twentieth century, and so her journalism will take on a more complex, "deconstructing" role for its author and readers. The chapter examines, along with Didion, whether the very possibility of the sort of personal journalism that flourished during the "new journalism" era has been overwhelmed by the hypertext of media transmission and the impersonal nature of modern conflict.5

FOOTNOTES

1. Following a period that ranged roughly between 1976 and 1982, the field of nonfiction theory and analysis largely was dormant in both literary and film studies. Bill Nichols Representing Reality, a study of nonfiction film notes in 1991 that "the last wave of single-author books on documentary film occurred fifteen years ago" (ix), a period that closely parallels, in literature studies, the publication of Ronald Weber’s The Literature of Fact and John Hellmann’s The Fables of Fact.

2. Of the other nonfiction critics who have written book-length studies since Zavarzadeh, Chris Anderson and W. Ross Winterowd are composition specialists who do not directly confront nonfiction’s particular truth claims; Barbara Lounsberry, Norman Sims, and John Hollowell stick to a formalist approach that asserts an epistemologically secure realism for the nonfiction narrative; and Ronald Weber—though often quite provocative, particularly in a response to Zavarzadeh that recalls Hellmann’s—devotes his attention more toward a literary history of the early New Journalism.

3. Hellmann develops this relationship much further in the texts covered by his subsequent study, American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam, as a "confrontation between external events and personal mind." In this way, he saves some of the best elements of Zavarzadeh’s text/non-text interaction without repeating the mistake of "zero-degree interpretation."
4. In a footnote to his Modern Fiction Studies essay, Heyne seems to make some room for this sort of blurring narrative, though he won’t agree with Zavarzadeh that it is pervasive or even common in contemporary literature. "There are certain instances," he says, "in which the factual status of a text is problematic," because the author’s intent is not clear or because she deliberately blurs the fact/fiction boundary. "But even such experimentation is defined by a norm from which to deviate" (484n).

5. Further complicating the cultural communications model that this dissertation forwards is the recognition that the scholar’s work itself will be affected by a cultural and social matrix. In that regard, I don’t wish to efface myself and my own subjectivity from this discussion. As this introduction has already noted, I am a professional journalist and teacher of journalism as well as a literary scholar, and the practical side of my craft, as well as my continuing challenge to some of the forms of the journalism industry, no doubt colors my readings. Other readings are colored by my own history and social positioning. For example, when I read the works of John Reed, I recognize that my own history (raised in a pacifistic Mennonite tradition, one in which many men were imprisoned for refusing conscription during World War I) will color the way Reed’s texts, particularly those in which he opposes war conscription, implicate me. Similarly, I worked as a writer for the Village Voice’s Jack Newfield during the late 1970s and early 1980s, so that professional relationship no doubt colors my reading of Tom Wolfe’s theory of "New Journalism" and the ways he disagreed with Newfield. Finally, as a literary scholar, I am trained to appreciate a "deconstructing" journalist like Joan Didion, whose articles, particularly those she published in The New York Review of Books, seem to be tailored for readers with my training and interests.
CHAPTER I
THE IMPLICATED WRITER OF NONFICTION

What is "imaginary" about any narrative representation is the illusion of a centered consciousness capable of looking out on the world, apprehending its structure and processes, and representing them to itself as having all of the formal coherency of narrativity itself. But this is to mistake a "meaning" (which is always constituted rather than found) for "reality" (which is always found rather than constituted). (Barthes, "Discourse of History" (qtd. in White 36)

The one deeply exciting thing to me about Gudger is that he is actual, he is living, at this instant. He is not some artist's or journalist's or propagandist's invention: he is a human being: and to what degree I am able it is my business to reproduce him as the human being he is; not just to amalgamate him into some invented, literary imitation of a human being. (Agee, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men 240)

No more vexed—and mystifying—notion appears in the theory of historical writing than that of the historian's "style." It is a problem because insofar as the historian's discourse is conceived to have style, it is also conceived to be literary. But insofar as a historian's discourse is literary, it seems to be rhetorical, which is anathema for those who wish to claim for historical discourse the status of objective representation. (White 227n)
Centuries before anyone thought to separate the implied author from a flesh-and-blood author, John Milton sat down to write the history of the universe. He knew that it was deeply risky to refashion what he believed to be history as verse. And so he prayed:

Hail holy Light, offspring of Heav’n first-born,  
Or of th’ Eternal Coeternal beam  
May I express thee unblam’d? Since God is Light,  
And never but in unapproached Light Dwelt from Eternity, dwelt then in thee, . . . (257)

Is it possible to say that nonfiction narrative merges the literary and the historical in a way that not only explodes the artificial definitions of the two terms, but teaches us about each one? Might we assert that a fully implicated writer and reader engage each other in a conflict and mediation that educates us about the nature and argument of experience?

Even those critics who write in the rhetorical tradition, critics whose business is to chronicle closely the effects of narrative on the reading audience, seem almost apologetic about this co-mingling of literature and history, about the ways in which an historical account implicates its author and audience. What insights they have are pushed to margins and footnotes, as if the whole business of confronting an actual author or imagining an actual audience were somehow beneath the dignity of
professional criticism. For example, in *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, Wayne Booth—perhaps the most widely read rhetorical critic since World War II—contrasts Norman Mailer’s *Executioner’s Song* to Anne Tyler’s *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*—a novel whose plot reminds him somewhat of Mailer’s history of Gary Gilmore:

Imagining herself into a situation [Tyler] could hardly know at first hand, one that involves characters she had had to "make up," she immediately asks us to begin inferring the meaning, for character and event, of such a wrenching death wish. Instead of two cliched kids . . . we have a puzzling wish, a promise of complexity, and of course a direct oath of office sworn by the implied author: "I shall imagine a complex world with you; I shall resist the easy way of simply reporting a world that you are to accept as actual without having to work much at it." It would seem that simply on the scales of quantity, reciprocity, and range, Tyler will prove the better friend. (208)

In part, Booth simply is repeating Aristotle’s preference for the "persuasive impossibility to an unpersuasive possibility" (48), but Booth at least proves to be more honest than a strictly formalist critic in detailing his objections to Mailer. He first admits that part of his problem is with the "public image ‘Norman Mailer’," most of whose books Booth has read and who, Booth says, "is simply playing games with me; he does not care a hill of beans for my welfare" (209). Though he deflects his disdain for Mailer with the curious claim that it is possible to sort
out literature from history "without having to work much at it," Booth thus at least indirectly suggests what Milton knew all along, that a narrative intended to be read as nonfiction positions an actual authorial presence and implicates its author much more readily than does fiction. The "real" Anne Tyler, Booth seems to recognize and, indeed, virtually to celebrate, is neither a character in her novel nor a physical presence that hovers over the novel in quite the same way as does Mailer.

But Booth's second—and in my view even more significant—objection is banished to a footnote that, ironically, insists on evoking, then discounting, its own force:

I have deliberately ruled out of my discussion an additional motive I have for mistrusting "my" Mailer. I am from the area of Utah in which his "novel" is set; I know how misleading some of his portraits of the area and the people will be to readers who live elsewhere. And I fear the harm that his book will do to many of those who are caricatured in it, including Gilmore's wife, children, and relatives. Though such objections make me think less of Mailer the man, they are in large part irrelevant to my appraisal of the book as a narrative that I might recommend to one of my own friends. (210n)

Why should Booth—who after all is posing an ethics of criticism here—dismiss as largely irrelevant his reactions to Mailer's reworking of history and culture? At least since Horace, critics have understood that the artist's
relationship with—and the reader's emotional response to—any historical or cultural characters and events that a work portrays is part of its artistry and its force, an issue that resonates when Horace directly applies it to the rewriting of history. In "The Art of Poetry" Horace confronts a tension between text and reality that Booth seems less willing to confront (at least overtly) in his footnoted reaction to Mailer:

But literary property that belongs to everybody is the hardest to invent well: poets who carve up songs of ancient Troy, constructing the well-shaped plays, work harder than poets that make it all up as it falls on the page. Old stories are yours for the working—if you walk somewhere off the beaten path and forget the exact words of tradition and never use the names without the substance and spirit. . . . (70)

Horace seems here to recognize the tension of a text that implicates both its writer and its readers in issues of history and the representation of history. While he seems to prefer to concentrate on the delight that accrues to creative histories presented as seamless art, the warning that broods beneath the overt invitation of the passage is that when you write history as literature you risk bruising your reader both inside and outside the text.¹ "Old stories are yours for the working . . . if [and, we might
add, only if] you never use the names without the substance and spirit." Agreement on "substance and spirit," of course, is more easily suggested than accomplished. These forces situate the text in social as well as in aesthetic considerations, even if Booth seems to believe we won't have to work much at sorting out these tangled notions.

Michael Foucault outlines the justification for examining the role of an author in any text, a task that is even more crucial when the author purports to refashion history:

[T]here exist properties or relationships peculiar to discourse (not reducible to the rules of grammar and logic), and one must use them to distinguish the major categories of discourse. The relationship (or nonrelationship) with an author, and the different forms this relationship takes, constitutes—in a quite visible manner—one of these discursive properties. (987)

An implicated reading of nonfiction calls for reading the narrator of a nonfiction text against the grain of what we know of its author in history. It is on purpose that I play off my concept of "implicated author" against Booth's notion of "implied author" that he outlined in The Rhetoric of Fiction. For Booth, the implied author occasions "the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole" (73) and is implied by the book's total form "regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life" (73-74). My notion, of course, refuses to ignore that "real-life
creator" and her affiliations, however they might implicate her. The author's narrative and analytical methods are always open to scrutiny because she is limited by a human presence. Therefore, she must negotiate such issues as whether she can read minds, be omnipresent, give "voice" to characters, and the like. The idea here is not to transfer nonfiction narrative out of the category if we find moments of constructedness, for we inevitably will. Rather, readers should learn about the author from the way he constructs the text, what Foucault calls its "discursive properties."

Historiographer Hayden White in *The Content of the Form* outlines some of the stakes of this project in his discussion of the way in which historical representation wishes to construct a world that is "putatively 'finished'" (21), even though the actuality underpinning the representation may be less coherent:

Insofar as historical stories can be completed, can be given narrative closure, can be shown to have had a plot all along, they give to reality the odor of the ideal. This is why the plot of a historical narrative is always an embarrassment and has to be presented as "found" in the events rather than put there by narrative techniques. (21)

We can begin to demonstrate the way in which even a text that largely represents "private" events opens to question its author's discursive properties by examining
Jane Kramer's "Cowboy," a brief nonfiction narrative that purports to construe the life of a Wyoming rancher. Although its characters and location are not readily known to the general reader, its publication history (originally in *New Yorker*, later collected in book form, and still later reprinted in Norman Sims' collection, *The Literary Journalists*) asserts that "Cowboy" is nonfiction and thus makes Kramer an important—if unnamed and unacknowledged—character in the narrative. In "Cowboy," Kramer presents the story of a ranch foreman named Harry Blanton who, alienated from his labor on a shrinking and increasingly mechanized ranch, drinks too much and finds himself unable to make any meaningful connections either with his wife or with any other female.

In the story's pivotal scene, Harry Blanton and his brother drive their pickup truck out for a night on the town on Harry's birthday. Their brief, but bitterly ironic, conversation is presented verbatim, though there is no evidence that anyone (least of all a female reporter from *New York*) was seated on the truck seat between them. One might suspect that they may have relayed the conversation later, except that the entire thrust of the story (which ends with Harry Blanton slashed and beaten in a meaningless fight with two city slickers) is that neither brother has ever been capable of any meaningful conversation with a woman.
The story, read as a piece that cuts its narrator against the grain of the possibilities and limitations of an actual author, presents a theoretical impossibility. Strictly speaking, the only way Kramer could have gained her story is if the thematic underpinning of her narrative were false: that is if Blanton or his brother could speak frankly and self-perceptibly in front of a sophisticated, educated, and presumably strong woman about their personal pain; their feelings of political, social, economic, and perhaps physical, impotence. But if that were true, they would no longer fit with the way that the narrative characterizes them. If Blanton could relay his thoughts through his wife to Kramer, it would undermine the story's point that Blanton is incapable of any meaningful conversation with his wife.

This reading is unusually literal to make a point, but one cannot readily imagine such an analysis of "Cowboy" were it a fictional text, which it resembles in every sense except for its marketing as nonfiction. In fiction, we routinely grant authors the power to read their characters' thoughts or present their speech verbatim. My argument is that the nonfiction claim of "Cowboy" thrusts it inevitably into the world of social and historical discourse. While nonfiction authors, at least since the social convention of "new journalism" entered the publishing marketplace, normally are expected to take advantage of leeway in
omniscient and omnipresent narration, the issue here is that Kramer is implicated directly by her decision to present a narrative strategy that seems to contradict her story's plot and theme. We might ultimately grant a nonfiction author such extended powers, but a reader alive to nonfiction's social construction will not grant those powers unexamined. Were the narrative presented as fiction, we would not concern ourselves with how Kramer's narrator came to know her characters' thoughts and speech and that specific objection would disappear.

I am thus proposing a model for reading nonfiction that would first locate the author inside and outside the text, examine these intertwined and differing presences and explore their relationships in both historical and artistic terms. We would open the author's methodology to scrutiny, not just (or even primarily) to determine the "truth" of the text for, as Hayden White has shown in *The Content of the Form*, all historical narratives are inevitably contrived (21), but to examine, as Foucault tells us, "the relationship (or nonrelationship) with an author, and the different forms this relationship takes" (987).

We might examine specifically the author's positioning *vis a vis* the subject, not only what the author *acknowledges* (the intention), but also what the author *reveals*, and thus communicates through cultural signs (the production and exchange or ritual) (Carey 43). The
emphasis in these sorts of readings, then, is on the relationship of the writer to his subject and to his reader within a literary and social text. This task is as important as, or even more important than, examining the specific truth claims of the nonfiction text.

A brief analogy will make this distinction more clear. An employer summons a new employee to his office. "You will find that we are all treated as equals here at the Acme Widget family," he says with a welcoming smile. "I want you to make yourself at home and think of me as your friend, rather than as your employer." In seeking to determine the truth of the assertion, the intentionalist view of communication transmission would evaluate the truth and effectiveness of the employer’s direct claim against the text of the employee’s subsequent experience at the company. But the ritual view of communication already would be exploring the symbolic, cultural exchange of the initial communication and would be evaluating it as well as the intentional transmission in the context of the employee’s responding rituals. Is the interview scheduled at the employer’s convenience or at the employee’s? Does the employer sit on a plush chair behind an imposing desk while the employee sits on a stationary chair facing his boss? In the universe of the Acme Widget family, does the employer have a communications system at his fingertips (phone, intercom, computer terminal, fax machine,
television remote) while the employee receives and transmits his messages second-hand? Is the employer allowed a range of expression in clothing (tailored suits, hand-painted ties, even black T-shirts and jeans) while the employee is expected to dress in a uniform, formal or otherwise, largely selected by someone else? As Regenia Gagnier points out in her study of Victorian autobiography, the cultural critic must situate the "I" or "we" of social participation or antagonism with unwavering attention to differing, often subtly nuanced, codes and contexts. What is crucial in the cultural critics' analysis is that she or he be sensitive to the participatory or positive, in Raymond Williams' sense, as well as to the negative or antagonistic articulations. (6)

That "unwavering attention" to nuanced codes and contexts will include traditional close readings that pay attention to author and narrator, to word use and scene construction, to tone and theme. This chapter will offer two such readings: one of a nonfiction Hemingway text squarely within the twentieth-century literary canon and the other a Freudian case study text rarely, if ever, studied by nonfiction theorists. In both cases, a close (even a resisting) analysis that is able to read the intent and ritual of communication will measure what the author crafts and what the author reveals, even as it locates the author as a presence inside and outside the text.
Even a writer so exhaustively studied as Ernest Hemingway can yield fresh insights once a reader understands how the author lives both inside and outside the nonfiction text. While *Green Hills of Africa* certainly is not Hemingway’s strongest work, it does implicate him directly in the text in a way that his book-length narratives, even his non-fiction *Death in the Afternoon*, had not to that point and in a way that previous commentators have failed to show. That recognition, I believe, gives *Green Hills of Africa* a curious new complexity and complicates several traditionally reductive readings of the book.

Traditionally, as Hemingway nonfiction specialist Ronald Weber points out, critics have judged the nonfiction books to be far inferior to most of Hemingway’s fiction, primarily because of factors that Weber says are most influentially stated by Edmund Wilson:

> The heart of the problem—though Wilson did not put it [in] such terms—was that what Hemingway said was essential for a good writer, a built-in shockproof shit detector, invariably seemed to fail him when he wrote in his own voice. (*Hemingway’s Art* 44)

But *Green Hills of Africa*, in my opinion, represents an effort on Hemingway’s part to implicate himself directly and deeply as an historical character within a nonfiction narrative. Ultimately we can certainly conclude that this narrative is as wrong-headed as any Hemingway ever wrote,
but the narrative power of its relationship between the inner and outer life of the writer remains uncharted. Although its publisher has classified the book as fiction, Hemingway's own foreword, (wherein he claims it to be "an absolutely true book") as well as his insistence during an interview that it be read that way (Weber Hemingway's Art 2), makes a convincing case that he intends it to be consumed in a manner that involves him historically in his text.

How else to read the narrative's curious opening scene, during which Hemingway is confronted by the hyperreal imaginary of his own literary reputation at the hunt's least successful moment. As Hemingway and M'Cola crouch in the blind in Hemingway's desperate attempt to shoot the kudu that will cement his mastery over Karl, what should spoil it but the "clank of loud irregular explosions," the truck carrying a bandy-legged Tyroler who pins Hemingway with his own historical reputation. No wonder the theatrical tracker comments, "It is finished" (2):

[H]ere we had not seen a white man for two weeks, not since we had left Babati to go south, and then to run into one on this road where you met only an occasional Indian trader and the steady migration of the natives out of the famine country, to have him look like a caricature of Benchley in Tyrolean costume, to have him know your name, to call you a poet, to have read the Querschnitt, to be an admirer of
Joachim Ringelnatz and to want to talk about Rilke, was too fantastic to deal with. (9-10)

A pile of steaming elephant dung in the middle of the road seems to be the apt symbol for Hemingway's radical displacement in this scene, and as the evening wears on he allows himself to be coaxed into a long-winded discourse on the state of American authors, why promising careers (including Hemingway's own?) fizzle and burst:

We destroy them in many ways. First, economically. They make money. It is only by hazard that a writer makes money although good books always make money eventually. Then our writers when they have made some money increase their standard of living and they are caught. They have to write to keep up their establishments, the wives, and so on, and they write slop. It is slop not on purpose but because it is hurried. Because they write when there is nothing to say or no water in the well. Because they are ambitious. Then, once they have betrayed themselves, they justify it and you get more slop. Or else they read the critics. If they believe the critics when they say they are great then they must believe them when they say they are rotten and they lose confidence. (23)

Hemingway refuses to identify for Kandisky the two failed writers who form his paradigm and pretends to distinguish himself from their number because he has "been very lucky" (25). The surface picture that remains is the comfortable writer-hunter, bragging into the night, boring his host, his guests, and his wife.
Weber, who otherwise finds much to admire in the book, identifies the opening scene as proof that Edmund Wilson was at least partly right in concluding that Hemingway, in his nonfiction, invariably loses his capacity for critical understanding (72). In his attempt to rescue Hemingway and Green Hills from this charge, Weber brands the scene nonessential, presumably inserted to break up the book’s dramatic pace:

The major instance of the Old Master at work is the discussion with Kandisky at the beginning of the book, Hemingway arranging to interview himself on American writing. Although he makes a faint stab at undercutting the confident assertions of the scene . . . Hemingway here is the Hemingway frequently encountered in his Esquire articles or his personal letters, pontifical and reductionist. It is a part of the book . . . that a less enthralled editor than Perkins—or a reader with Dos Passos’ dislike of Hemingway’s tendency to strap on the white whiskers and give the boys the lowdown—might have suggested he remove. (92)

I want to demonstrate here how reading Green Hills of Africa as a nonfiction text, one that directly implicates its author in both history and narrative, suggests an exactly opposite approach. The scene—though it comes in the chronological middle of the narrative—opens the book that we are reading and directly implicates Hemingway as an historical figure. Why else would it open the progression? Once we read it, we can never again take the book’s
narrator as some sort of fictive alter ego, some Jake Barnes or Frederick Henry gone a'hunting or even some "Hemingway" persona addressing a fictional "old lady," as in *Death in the Afternoon*. Hemingway locates himself as an historical figure with all his strengths and faults and positions his reader in his history as well as in the narrative he is presenting.

Moreover, the scene's undercutting power far exceeds Weber's "faint stab." Hemingway brags to Kandisky that he is a "lucky" man, but as the book progresses we learn that Karl has had all the luck and that Hemingway, at this moment in history, is never more convinced of his own failure. Hemingway tells Kandisky that kudu shooting is part of a "damn good life," but we are to learn that he is in an almost desperate depression about the way that time is running out on the hunt (an echo of the conversation about aging authors) and about his failure to accomplish the very type of thing that he says gives his life meaning. And thus Hemingway directly encourages the reader to consider the possibility that he is one of the failed writers at the very moment he is assuring his listeners that he is not. Certainly, P.O.M.'s salute to the "B'wana M'Kumba" contains a much richer irony than a momentary bout of "verbal dysentery" (29).

These assertions are underscored when we return, 150 pages later, to the chronological present which opens the
book. Hemingway on our second visit to this chronological moment reveals to the reader his truer emotions, deeply undercutting the false bravado he has mustered for Kandisky:

having, in the last five days, failed on the lick where Karl shot his bull, having failed in the hills, the big hills and the small hills, having failed on the flats, losing a shot the night before on this lick because of the Austrian's truck, I knew there were only two days more to hunt before we must leave. M'Cola knew it too, and we were hunting together now, with no feeling of superiority on either side any more, only a shortness of time and our disgust. (176).

I want to insist that this is a moment when Hemingway indicts himself as an historical character, a moment that he exploits documentarily as well as narratively, a moment that he confronts in a sustained dramatization beyond anything he attempted in *Death in the Afternoon*, without the mediating protagonists of his novels, without the mediating figures of either Nick Adams the character or Nick Adams the insulating author of *In Our Time* (Moddelmog 609-10). To miss what the writer is doing here is to indict Hemingway on an historical record that he, himself, constructs and confesses while at the same time indicting him for making the record.

Once the reader understands Hemingway's willingness to implicate himself, the ironic and confessional modes of the work assume much greater significance and the work takes on
much deeper interest. For example, the reader can now understand why Hemingway listed himself as "the braggart" in the table of characters in the Scribners' serialization (Weber, *Hemingway's Art* 69). We can also understand the significance of Hemingway's memory of his own festering war wound and of his certain knowledge that he has caused, by his incompetence, similar excruciating pain to animals (148). Even Hemingway's promise to "shoot only as long as I could kill cleanly and as soon as I lost that ability I would stop" (148) is complicated by the reader's recognition that, even after making this solemn promise, he has "gut shot" a sable bull and missed a (misidentified) sable cow "twice, prone, standing broadside" (281).

These latter confessions, it is important to understand, the extra-textual Hemingway didn't need to make, surrounded as he was only by "native" hunters during the last day's shooting. That he does make them, and that he no longer hides behind his fictional alter egos to reach this sort of self-judgment, is at least intriguing. Therefore, Hemingway's discussion around the fire in the scene that opens the narrative--far from being a marginal intrusion as Weber would argue--now reveals to the reader alive to the special blending of history and narrative not only Hemingway's own anxieties as a writer, but the specific failures he identifies in aging American writers. These failures can be directly compared to the hurried "gut
shot" that exposes both bad hunting and the hunter’s later attempt to justify it:

It is slop not on purpose but because it is hurried. Because they write when there is nothing to say or no water in the well. Because they are ambitious. Then, once they have betrayed themselves, they justify it and you get more slop. (23)

The book, of course, contains just that sort of rationalization, when Hemingway gut-shoots the bull sable and then tries to justify it to himself:

But that damned sable bull. I should have killed him; but it was a running shot. To hit him at all I had to use him all as a target. Yes, you bastard, but what about the cow you missed twice, prone, standing broadside? Was that a running shot? . . . I thought I could shoot a shot-gun better than I could and I had lost plenty of money backing my opinion but I knew, coldly outside myself, that I could shoot a rife on game as well as any son of a bitch that ever lived. Like hell I could. So what? So I gut-shot a sable bull and let him get away. (281-82)

The hurried gut shot and the excessive rationalization that follows both bad art and the bad shot are contrasted on other occasions to the hunter’s and artist’s more expertly developed craft. The trick both in hunting and in writing, Hemingway suggests, is to observe truly and cleanly:

I was watching, freezing myself deliberately inside, stopping the excitement as you close a valve, going into that impersonal state you shoot from. (76)
Similarly,

[T]he feeling comes when you write well and truly of something and know impersonally you have written in that way. (148-149)

Whether deliberately or not, Hemingway reveals in *Green Hills of Africa* how often that moment is compromised both in shooting and in art. His competition with Karl, (indeed, his competition with other writers), his obsession with completing his trophy set as time runs out on the hunt, all are of a piece with his internal argument about the gut shot and his inability to rest on the internal satisfaction of writing well and truly.

Certainly, I don't wish to suggest here that, along with his failures, Hemingway doesn't inscribe his moments of shooting skill or his feats of heroic prowess on the historical record. Or that his use of the natives to construct his "great white hunter" representation with the "thumb in fist" salute is not the story of imperialism in microcosm. These moments could, in fact, serve as a textbook account of the sort of experiential colonial "othering"—even in its discussion of Mungo Park's narratives—that Mary Louise Pratt identifies in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. And, beyond the imperialistic overtones of *Green Hills*, Edmund Wilson no doubt is correct to conclude that Hemingway has a compulsive need to prove his manhood by killing animals.
But Wilson is wrong, in my judgment, in his conclusion that Hemingway, as a characterized historical figure, even (especially) in all his rant and self-revealed prejudices, is marginal to and destructive of the work's artistry. And where Weber repeats the mistake, despite his valuable adjustment of Wilson, is in his inability to construe the central scenes of Hemingway's historical posturing.

Read without these tensions, no wonder Wilson believes that the book is "dull" (Weber, Hemingway's Art 72) or that Weber concludes of its story line, "there isn't, finally much to it" (93). In his attempt to rescue Green Hills of Africa from a fate he misidentifies, Weber finally decides that as

the true account of an action that had stimulated an animal happiness, the book is as compelling as Hemingway thought it was. His landscape painting and the intricate structure he worked out and the drama of the kudu hunt add to the pleasure, but it is the portrayal of total, mesmerizing absorption in physical activity that gives the book its special flavor. (94)

Such a reading simply misses the point of Green Hills of Africa's social significance. As I will show in the next chapter's discussion of the implicated reader in nonfiction, it is important to note that the reader often won't forgive in nonfiction what we routinely forgive in fiction. Because Hemingway construes himself, and therefore his readers, historically in Green Hills in
Africa (or for that matter in Death in the Afternoon), many readers (who otherwise are all too quick to respect the sanctity of the text's norms) will, and indeed should, hold the author socially responsible. In the same way that Booth is bothered by the historical presence of Norman Mailer and Mailer's attempts to construe Booth's native Utah, the nonfiction reader is right to consider Hemingway as an historical character whose shortcomings in Green Hills in Africa assume an historical and material dimension that surpasses Jake Barnes' similar shortcomings in The Sun Also Rises.

Readers who are quick to see Robert Wilson as an ironized presence in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," or to see that story's evocation of a slam-bam-race-around-in-cars-and-shoot as anything but endorsive, are unable to grant a similarly ironic potential to Hemingway's nonfiction. Because Hemingway represents the bullfight or the hunt as part of his own history, we hold him accountable for its brutality in a way we less readily hold him responsible for similar action in The Sun Also Rises. The written record seems to suggest that Hemingway was aware of that and thus covered himself, at least early in his career, with insulating layers of persona. Whether his later nonfiction was simply a failure of inventive powers (as most critics traditionally have assumed) or a greater willingness to take responsibility (and glory) for
his own historical presence is a decision for another study. But before we decide, we should at least teach ourselves to read the nonfiction for the deeply implicating power it evokes.

If the theory of writer (and reader) implication can bring fresh insights to a work traditionally studied as literature, it might also be expected to show benefits when applied to nonfiction narratives that traditionally have not been considered within the literary canon. An examination of Sigmund Freud's case study, "Dora: Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," allows me to demonstrate more clearly both the power of a specific nonfiction analysis as well as how formal considerations assume social importance when considered within the ritual of nonfiction communication. I shall begin by re-examining the construction of the case study as nonfiction form, in the process citing some of Mas'ud Zavarzadeh's theories that have been largely neglected by nonfiction scholars. Secondly, I will offer a close reading of Freud's methodology inside the work, examining the sort of nuanced codes and contexts that include Freud's decisions on narrative detail, scene construction, and voice.

Although Freudian case studies rarely have been discussed in the context of nonfiction theory, the threshold contract of the case history is its claim to tell truth; otherwise, it collapses into entertainment and is
insufficient to meet Freud's stated production goal of "intelligible, consistent, and unbroken case history" (32). Recent studies which explore Dora as a fictional text (Marcus 64; Sprengnether 272n) certainly demonstrate its moments of artificiality and constructedness, but ultimately miss the implications of Freud's contract with his readers. And the wealth of post-Freudian psychoanalytical reconsideration already produced on the subject of Freud and Dora has not explored specifically how Freud's development of the case study as a nonfiction narrative form cements his power over both Dora and the reader. His methodology demands that we take Dora, however artificial and constructed, as an historical figure. It is within the specific apparatus of the narrative case study that Freud the writer is deeply involved in a project whereby he completes the re-interpretation of Dora's life that Freud the psychiatrist had begun and thereby fixes her identity in history.

In Discipline and Punish, Foucault exposes the implications of this sort of narrative transaction. He found that "scientific" discourses, particularly those of the nineteenth century, hid their abilities to gain control over deviance by fixing the identity of others within the norms of "objective" research. In a way that seems distinctly true for nonfiction, where presumably actual subjects are the sources of written records:
The child, the patient, the madman, the prisoner, were to become... the object of individual descriptions and biographical accounts. This turning of real lives into writing is no longer a procedure of heroization; it functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection. (192)

In fact, Philip Rieff’s introduction to the Collier paperback edition of Dora, endorses just that sort of "objectification and subjection" formation in his enthusiastic tribute to Freud’s methodology. Rieff salutes a project that seems to be nothing less than the rewriting of a woman’s life in Freud’s own terms:

By any practical test, Freud’s insight was superior to Dora’s. Hers had not helped her win more than pyrrhic victories over life, while Freud’s, engaged as he was in the therapeutic re-creation of her life, demonstrated its capacity to make Dora superior to some of the symptomatic expressions of her rejection of life. Her own understanding of life had in no way given her any power to change it; precisely that power to change life was Freud’s test of truth. His truth, therefore, was superior to Dora’s. (11-12)

Freud’s overtaking of Dora’s story reveals the stakes of his project and its intimate connection to nonfiction discourse; there is no correlative in fiction, no fictional contract that presents a writer with so much control over an extra-textual life. It is difficult to imagine a critic making a statement like Rieff’s about, say, the relationship of George Eliot to Dorothea Brooke, a critic
who would claim that Eliot's writing of Dorothea's life "demonstrated its capacity to make [some real-life Dorothea] superior to some of [her] symptomatic expressions."

This crucial distinction may be illuminated by a reconsideration of Mas'ud Zavarzadeh's "typology of prose styles," which I alluded to in the introduction to this study and which builds on a system of classification first posed by Northrop Frye in Anatomy of Criticism to distinguish between "in-referential" and "out-referential" truth claims (55). While Dora and Middlemarch can in differing senses both claim "true" representation for their female characters, Freud's claim is that the "truth" of the Dora text has an external configuration, some sense of an external "Dora" by which readers must arbitrate the written Dora.

Analyses that insist on reading fiction and nonfiction as similarly constructed texts will miss Freud's deep implication in Dora's history and the ramifications of his purpose in constructing Dora's life as a written text. In fact, if the extra-textual Dora, herself, were to read Dora, Freud says, "she will learn nothing from it that she does not already know" (23), Freud thus asserts a direct one-to-one correlation between the truth of his text and its external configuration. By contrast, Dorothea Brooke's life is in-referential. The reader assumes that her
identity (even if it is based on Eliot’s notion of some sort of external life) is, in Zavarzadeh’s terms, "mapped out within the book" (55). If that were not so, we might have to give serious attention to articles written by people who would claim to have later met the "real" Dorothea Brooke and who would bring that professed knowledge to bear on Eliot’s representation.²

We can, in fact, read such an article about "Dora" by Felix Deutsch. His encounter with Ida Bauer was enough to convince him not only of the essential correctness of Freud’s original analysis, but, by implication, of the inevitability that the Ida Bauer who rejected Freud’s assistance would turn out to be "one of the most repulsive hysterics" that Bauer’s informant "had ever met" (43).

My insistence on the threshold importance of the nonfiction contract that Freud’s narrative posed with Dora, of course, places it partly at odds with Steven Marcus, the Freudian scholar whose landmark essay "Freud and Dora: Story, History, Case History" makes a compelling case for reading Dora as modernist fiction. Marcus finds a Proustian enterprise in the narrative in which Freud plays the auteur sifting the fragmentary nature of modern experience to build a compelling, though ultimately failed, fictional coherence to Dora.

There is much to recommend Marcus’ reading, but ultimately it never confronts the specific power formation
encoded by Freud's claim to write nonfiction. For despite the brilliance of his argument that "what Freud has written bears certain suggestive resemblances to a modern novel," Marcus finally returns to a point very similar to that made by Deutsch, Deutsch's informant, and Rieff. At the same time he insists that he reads Dora as fiction, he relies on the irreducibly out-referential nature of the Dora text to grant Freud's superior interpretation:

She refused to be a character in the story that Freud was composing for her, and wanted to finish it for herself. As we now know, the ending she wrote was very bad indeed. (88)

Zavarzadeh's analysis in The Mythopoetic Reality—beyond illuminating the essential difference between in-referential and out-referential narrative in a way we can explicitly apply to Dora—surpasses Frye's in its recognition that both in-referential and out-referential narratives, while moving in opposite directions, share a mono-referential contract that gives the author of the text singular power to construct meaning. While such power might be inevitable in fictional texts, mono-referentiality assumes political and ideological dimensions when it is applied to factual or out-referential narrative.

Intriguingly, Freud short-circuits any sense of bi-referentiality (the possibility that reality could impinge on the text at the same time the text organizes reality) by making Dora both "real" (an extra-textual truth
claim) and anonymous. While he, perhaps, partly is motivated by compassion for her privacy (which seems, after all, not to have worked [Deutsch 38]), his subject's anonymity ensures that Freud's interpretation of her history is the only operational one. This "truthful," but unverifiable, strategy seems to be an enduring quality of the case study narrative form, no doubt because it precisely inscribes the power relationship that underlies its mono-referential intentions. As Foucault similarly demonstrates by his analysis of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, the sideways glance is prohibited within this narrative strategy. No reader—at least in theory—can approach Dora except through Freud. The subject of analysis is thereby repositioned as object. Centralized power is the only power, at least until it is breached by someone who "discovers" the extra-textual Ida Bauer at the heart of Dora's representation.

Freud explicitly asserts his right both as psychoanalyst and writer to construct all textual power at the formation and consumption levels. Strikingly, he asserts both his and other professionals' rights over the dissemination and reception of the representation:

Needless to say, I have allowed no name to stand which could put a non-medical reader upon the scent; and the publication of the case in a purely scientific and technical periodical should, further, afford a guarantee against unauthorized readers. (23)
By contrast, some nonfiction texts deliberately air out this closed discourse system by revealing sources and naming names, thereby subjecting truth claims to external verification and ongoing negotiation. When Tom Wolfe, for example, writes about novelist Ken Kesey's drug-induced paranoia in The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test (a nonfiction text that in some senses is also a document of both historical and hysterical experience), Kesey's experience is presented bi-referentially, open to a complex negotiation in which Wolfe, Kesey, Wolfe's writings, Kesey's writings (both those inside and outside Wolfe's text), supporting written documents, taped messages and film, recalled and recreated fantasies, verbatim testimony, memory, etc., all are at least theoretically open to reader scrutiny. (See chapter four for some of the possible results of such a close examination.)

Mass media theorist John Fiske helps to show how these decisions have strong implications for the writer of nonfiction, the writer who explicitly proposes to refashion history as narrative expression. They are the sorts of decisions—like dress codes, access to information, and control of time and schedule in our hypothetical Acme Widget Company—that are part of the cultural expression as much as any words that the author places on the page. Fiske urges less tidy, more complex representation systems and delineates the power implications of varying nonfiction
discourses. The writing of history, Fiske argues:

should stress its discursive constructedness, should nominate all its voices and refrain from its desire to impose a knowledge of the world upon all its readers. . . . The pursuit of objectivity, with the final unarguable "truth" located in an assumed universal, empiricist reality, is precisely the wrong enterprise . . . totalitarian to the core. (Reading the Popular 176-77)

Zavarzadeh argues that bi-referential nonfiction narratives tend to present facts phenomenalistically, "post-mimetic, non-verisimilar, anti-symbolic," while mono-referential nonfiction narratives tend to present facts comprehensively in an effort "to discover the significance [always under direct authorial control] behind the random facts" (53). Freud not only routinely treats the facts of Dora's body and history comprehensively, but he explicitly organizes their comprehensonal significance so as to lay the very foundation of case study narrative methodology. The relationships stack up this way:

sign/signification
Dora/Freud's reading of Dora
case study/psychoanalytical generalization

The initial Dora/Freud relationship may be demonstrated by Freud's oft-quoted passage in Dora whereby he reserves for the psychoanalytically trained observer the final power to read the significance of human signs:

There is a great deal of symbolism of this kind [Dora's fingering of her reticule as a symbol of masturbation
desire] in life, but as a rule we pass by it without heeding it. When I set myself the task of bringing to light what human beings keep hidden within them, not by the compelling power of hypnosis, but by observing what they say and what they show, I thought the task was a harder one than it really is. He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore. And thus the task of making conscious the most hidden recesses of the mind is one which it is quite possible to accomplish. (96)

At the level of case study/psychoanalytical generalization, Freud's sign/significance formation is demonstrated by the unstated argument of Freud's narrative contract, which assumes that Dora's experience, particularly her dreams, are significant only to the extent that they prove the theories that he is exploring. Everything pales before that task; Freud tells us he will not burden us with messy details or technical explanations if they get in the way of the streamlined sign/significance equation that illuminates the neurotic disorder:

I have as a rule not reproduced the process of interpretation to which the patient's associations and communications had to be subjected, but only the results of that process. Apart from the dreams, therefore, the technique of the analytic work has been revealed in only a very few places. My object in this case history was to demonstrate the intimate structure of a neurotic disorder and the determination of its symptoms; and it would have led to nothing but hopeless confusion if I
had tried to complete the other task at
the same time. (27)

Not only, then, is the sideways glance precluded by
Dora’s anonymity, not only is her ability to read the
significance of her own actions precluded by privileged,
centralized power, but Freud informs the reader that the
case study will efface its "analytic work" or power
apparatus so as to avoid "hopeless confusion." His refusal
to reveal that apparatus—although it has been breached in
contemporary readings—virtually precludes his readers’
ability to construct a different interpretation from the
raw data than that of the master’s—just the sort of
"unauthorized reading" (23) that Freud seems anxious to
deny by making Dora anonymous. Therefore, we are presented
with a unique nonfiction form—the case study—tailored to
undergird Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. It emerges as the
central surveillance tower with no backlighting, its power
visible, but unilluminated, unexplained and therefore
unverifiable. As Foucault explains in Discipline and
Punish:

Visible: the inmate will constantly
have before his eyes the tall outline
of the central tower from which he is
spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate
must never know whether he is being
looked on at any one moment; but he
must be sure that he may always be so.
(201)

If the overall narrative strategy of the case study,
as we have shown, is to objectify its subject in the
scientific project, we might expect to find that strategy revealed both inside and outside the text in the precise way the case study writer constructs the narrative, particularly in the way in which he constructs the voice of the narrative's central character. What a close reading of Dora reveals is that Freud never quotes Dora directly unless her speech supports his psychoanalytic assertions. Because Freud took no notes at the time of the conversations (24), any direct quotes are suspect, so the writer's decision to quote directly may be regarded as more than the ordinary desire to take advantage of what a direct quote can inscribe in any narrative: immediacy, credibility, interest, the creation of voice, the ability to relate opinion without its specifically being seen as the writer's own opinion.

In this context, we can look first at how Freud's quoting addresses the moment of conflict between his and Dora's interpretation of a significant event: his analysis of Herr K.'s kiss in the office. Freud believes that the pressure of Herr K.'s erection (his own supposition) is displaced by Dora into repressed oral desire, which in turn becomes the hysterical cough and proves that her sublimated memory of the kiss (sexual desire) contradicts her conscious memory (powerlessness and disgust). Many writers have examined the weaknesses and strengths of this diagnosis, but none has examined how Freud's nonfiction
strategy reveals itself when he disagrees with his patient. Freud registers Dora's disagreement in oblique, evasive terms:

I did not find it easy, however, to direct the patient's attention to her relations with Herr K. She declared that she had done with him. (47, my emphasis)

Freud has already shown the careful reader that he will not hesitate to quote a long conversation directly even when he has no written record of it. So why would he deny Dora a direct voice on this most pivotal point? Even the indirect quote itself is not permitted to be more than reactive. The analyst's movement ("direct the patient's attention") is privileged and controlling; Dora's responding declaration can only try to deflect its directive force. Because Dora's supposed repression of her love for Herr K. is central to the entire force of the case study, one would expect more immediacy if Freud's project truly was meant to create a fiction-like tone rather than a mono-referential inevitability to his own interpretation of Dora's history.

What's more, Freud's decision not to give Dora a voice contrasts vividly to the immediately preceding, 216-word direct quote of Herr K., which is filled with just the sort of idiomatic expressions ("I myself believe," "by the by," "We are just two poor wretches" [41]) that establish both immediacy and a sure sense of voice, a status explicitly
That this quotation also contains the "get nothing from my wife" line that Dora is supposed to have recalled from her second encounter with Herr K. not only underscores Freud's underlying control of the case study, as Marcus points out (81), but questions its credibility. If Freud wants to invest so much meaning in Dora's "slips" of speech, in her exact words, it might be more convincing were more of those "exact words" presented.

However, until the discussion of the first dream, Dora's voice is limited to such interjections as "'Three to six weeks, too,' she was obliged to admit" (55), whose force does nothing more than inscribe Freud's authority. The second-hand comment of an unnamed seven-year-old companion of Dora's ("You can't think how I hate that person . . . and when she's dead I shall marry papa" [74]) is the longest sentence to pass Dora's lips during the first two-thirds of a narrative that constructs her own life, and even then she is not permitted to impart her own words.

During the first dream discussion, Freud introduces a colloquy form that does provide Dora with a directly quoted voice. But is it her own? What's remarkable here is how much the eighteen-year-old girl resembles her therapist in word choice and sentence formation:

[Dora:] By way of reply he said he was not going to be prevented from coming into his own bedroom. . . . (84)
Would a moment with such clear emotional impact for Dora likely to have been recounted in such a formal, dispassionate manner? Whose words are "by way of reply"? Freud’s or Dora’s? The reader obviously cannot know for sure, but the qualifying introductory clause certainly proves a seamless fit for Freud’s writing style. A close reading shows that the narrative strategy that Freud has chosen seems to be more concerned with mono-referential control than with the fiction-like artistry that Marcus identifies. M. M. Bakhtin examines the difference in The Dialogic Imagination. A writer, Bakhtin says,

may, of course, create an artistic work that compositionally and thematically will be similar to a novel, will be "made" exactly as a novel is made, but he will not thereby have created a novel. The style will always give him away. We will recognize the naively self-confident or obtusely stubborn unity of a smooth, pure single-voiced language (perhaps accompanied by a primitive, artificial, worked-up double-voicedness). We quickly sense that such an author finds it easy to purge his work of speech diversity: he simply does not listen to the fundamental heteroglossia inherent in actual language. (327)

In any event, although Freud tells us he wrote Dora’s account of the dreams immediately after the sessions (24), he does not say that he attempted to create a word-for-word transcription of the conversation during the sessions, even if his memory were up to that task. What, then, is the careful reader to make of this:
[Dora:] He says it will not do: something might happen in the night so that it might be necessary to leave the room ... [Freud:] Now, I should like you to pay close attention to the exact words you used. We may have to make use of them. You said that "something might happen in the night so that it might be necessary to leave the room." (82, emphasis added)

While it might seem reasonable that the careful scientist would want to pay close attention to Dora’s exact words, the exactness of her words is anything but certain. Thus, the movement from "exact words you used" to the "We may have to make use of them" seems to reveal the manner in which Freud’s entire case study narration displaces the voice of his subject and implicates his motivations in the project. And, because the case study convention maintains Dora’s anonymity, no reader could check her recollection of this conversation. Her voice is effaced both within the text and by the very underlying theory that has produced Dora as a nonfiction narrative. What is clear in the case study Dora is that Freud uses the conversational mode only so long as the constructed conversation makes his point. He interrupts it to demonstrate the correlation between the case study and psychoanalytic generalization and terminates it when Dora’s interpretation differs from his own:

[Freud:] In short, these efforts prove once more how deeply you loved him.
. . . [Dora: silence] [Commentary:] Naturally Dora would not follow me in this part of the interpretation. I,
myself, however, had been able to arrive at a further step. . . . (88)

Throughout, Freud's commentary is laced with sentence structures that appear to give his conclusions inevitable scientific force, even if they sometimes spring from circular reasoning:

I could not help supposing in the first instance that what was suppressed was her love of Herr K. I could not avoid the assumption that she was still in love with him. . . . In this way I gained an insight into a conflict which was well calculated to unhinge the girl's mind. (75, my emphasis)

Ultimately, in recounting the second dream, Freud's voice consumes Dora's. The dream is first told in Dora's voice, but as the force of Freud's interpretation builds, the narrative shifts the "I" of her voice to the "she" locked within his point of view, until the text, at last, relates the dream addenda unlocked by, and inseparable from, his analysis:

I informed Dora of the conclusions I had reached. The impression made upon her mind must have been forcible, for there immediately appeared a piece of the dream which had been forgotten: "she went calmly to her room, and began reading a big book that lay on her writing table." (120, Freud's emphasis)

she herself helped me along it by producing her last addendum to the dream: "she saw herself particularly distinctly going up the stairs." (122, Freud's emphasis)
Why are italics and direct quotes used here? By contrast, the initial phrases that punctuate Freud's analysis of the second dream are not enclosed by quotes (115, 116, 117). Whose voice are we now hearing? Why would Dora shift to the pronoun "she" in a directly quoted memory of her own dream? The blurring suggests less the emotional force of an intense psychoanalytic session than a narrative strategy that has entirely consumed its subject.

Ultimately, at the end of the last visit, the force of Freud's voice reduces the Dora of the narrative to silence and acceptance:

Dora had listened to me without any of her usual contradictions. She seemed to be moved; she said good-bye to me very warmly, with the hardiest wishes for the New Year, and--came no more. (130)

If the "came no more" clause encodes Dora's final resistance in a surprise ending, Freud, of course, again and again will reserve the last word for himself: writing an epilogue, revisions, footnotes, and commentaries on the text. He declines to treat the actual "Dora" again, insisting,

I have always avoided acting a part, and have contented myself with practicing the humbler arts of psychology. In spite of every theoretical interest and of every endeavor to be of assistance as a physician, I keep the fact in mind that there must be some limits set to the extent to which psychological influence may be used, and I respect as one of
these limits the patient's own will and understanding. (131)

And so, it seems, Freud forges his special brand of truth-claim, the case study, so that he can transgress in prose what he tells us he will not in life—truth claim without the possibility of verification, the perfect patient who never talks back.

We have seen, then, how the reading of nonfiction narrative for the manner by which it cuts across history explodes more traditional and tidy literary notions of "ideal" or "implied" authors. Reading nonfiction for the manner by which it implicates its author will examine the narrator of the text (the unseen listener/teller of Henry Blanton's dialogue or the speaker in Green Hills of Africa who gut shoots a sable or the analyst in his office working with the disturbed child) against what we know of the limitations and possibilities of an actual author (the Jane Kramer who was unlikely to have been a direct witness to Blanton's most intimate speech or the Ernest Hemingway desperate to best his literary competitors or the Sigmund Freud who "silenced" Ida Bauer by the methodology of his case study as well as by the apparatus of his analysis). Far from consigning nonfiction to some sort of inferior plane in the scale of reading experiences, as critics since Aristotle have assumed, such readings open up nonfiction to dynamic, resisting readings.
The intent is not to transfer a narrative into the category of "fiction" as soon as discrepancies are found, but to examine it for what it reveals of its ritual of communication, its cultural relationships between author, subject, and reader. How is the author positioned against his subject? What does he reveal of his methodology? Does he tend to dominate his subjects? His readers? Some problems revealed by this sort of analysis might be so large as to cause us to shut the book or read it as fantasy, but more often a reading of nonfiction that is alive to the way it construes its author will bring a wider understanding, and possible a deeper admiration, for the position of the text in history.

FOOTNOTES

1. As I stated in the previous chapter, I am not arguing that a fictional presentation would not, as well, draw a reader's actual sense of history into play. My argument is only that nonfiction virtually refuses a non-implicated reading.

2. Occasionally, of course, fiction does cut closely enough to actual events and persons that it does breach that divide, and the sources of "fictional" characterization complain about their representation. Perhaps the most famous case of this is Harold Loeb, who objected of his depiction as Robert Cohn in The Sun Also Rises. I shall discuss this brand of "reader implication" more closely in the next chapter.

3. This accusation has also been made of fiction writers as well: for example, Faulkner, of whom critics sometimes say that his characters sound like him. But Faulkner characters also sound unlike him. And a fictional child like Sarty Snopes in "Barn Burning" is not measured outside the text by his own words, as was Ida Bauer.
In contemplating the historical past, the reading subject is treated to a spectacle that allows him to exercise his fantasies of freedom under the aspect of a fixed order, of conflict under the aspect of resolution, of violence under the aspect of an achieved peace, and so on. In other words, historical representation permits the reader to give free reign to "the imaginary" while remaining bound to the constraints of a symbolic system. (White, Content of the Form 89)

The reader is made to feel a sense of eavesdropping, of reading someone else's mail, that makes the danger of violation . . . more palpable. (Reed, Fifteen Jugglers 55)

Recognition involves a sudden click or shift of levels. . . . [T]he shift is from the recognition of a human figure to its placement as a particular, historical figure. A face in the crowd becomes the visage of a friend. The man stricken by an assassin's bullet in the Zapruder footage becomes John F. Kennedy, President. . . . The animated figure giving a speech to a crowd of thousands in Triumph of the Will suddenly becomes not just another political orator, but Adolph Hitler. (Nichols, Representing Reality 161)

In assessing the manner by which texts implicate their authors, we have seen how some professional readers, those
who normally make a practice of separating their critical judgment from their personal responses, grow uneasy in the presence of nonfiction. Like Wayne Booth and Edmund Wilson in the examples already mentioned, some are made uncomfortable by the historical presence of writers they would like to criticize—something like an analyst or lawyer meeting a client at a cocktail party and being forced to make a human, rather than professional, connection. But a far greater measure of the uneasiness that a reader like Booth feels in The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction—both with the historical figure of "Norman Mailer" that he confronts inside and outside the text and with the text's depiction of Utah, its people, and Gilmore's family—seems to be triggered by his personal implication in the book. Booth is a character, if unnamed, in the very text he is reading in a way he would not be were it fiction. He tastes the sting of this power first-hand when, as a product of Utah's Mormon culture, his culture is the culture at stake in the novel. The "Utah" that Booth meets in the setting of Mailer's The Executioner's Song cannot be neutral; Booth has been and can again be a character in that setting. And, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Mailer's own role as well is anything but neutral or aesthetically "implied." Mailer is, after all, at once a character interpreting Booth's socio-religious heritage, an historical figure, and an
author ("implied" or otherwise) whom Booth has read and interpreted in texts over the years.

The multi-leveled vision thus created haunts an implicated reader like Booth or anyone with experience of the events and places described in the text. The deeper the reader's actual stakes are in that text, the more it will produce what Bill Nichols calls in his study of nonfiction film the "click of recognition" (161), the mirrored effect that forces a simultaneous outside/inside reading. In this sense the most deeply implicated reader will be the subject of the text itself, as any journalist knows who has ever misquoted a subject or who has construed a news source in a manner that the source considered unflattering.

If reading for an implicated author will require reading the narrator of the text against the grain of what I know of its actual author, then reading nonfiction for the manner by which it implicates me will require reading the "self" that is positioned by the text against the grain of what I know of myself outside the text. The "history" that I meet in the mirrored screen of the text is at once mediated and thus "other," yet the synthetic force of its fiction-like presentation can trigger two powerful mimetic appeals: a narrative field that pulls the reader into the life of the text ("those who, like me," Booth admits of Mailer's book, "somehow 'could not put the book down'"
as well as—in a manner that seems particularly forceful in nonfiction—the evocation of memory (Booth's idea of "Utah," its people and culture, and its significance for his personal history).

The reverberations set in motion by the clash of synthetic and mimetic narrative strands—as well as by the personal and socially constructed memory that the reader brings to the event—are what set the reading of nonfiction apart from at least many readings of fiction and explain much of its affective power. For example, the reader captured by the sweep of revolutionary drama might build a strong textual identification with a Bolshevik revolutionary like Leon Trotsky in John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World* (which, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, clearly is told from a narrative positioning that attempts to bind the reader to the revolutionary cause) and might, therefore, be thrilled when Trotsky rises in the Second Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies with a "rich voice in cool contempt" and consigns his enemies as "just so much refuse which will be swept away into the garbage-heap of history!" (104).

But in the more than seventy years since Reed's nonfiction narrative was published it has been virtually impossible—in the United States, the Soviet Union, or post-Soviet Russia—for many readers to encounter that scene as if Trotsky and his revolutionary desires were
merely someone's fictional construct. Most readers of the text are instead implicated in a clash of varying inside/outside responses: some of which are frankly disturbing to its capitalist or Stalinist or post-Soviet readers. Other, less directly political implications echo the intertextuality of everyday life: was that really Trotsky? Or Reed? Or Warren Beatty playing Reed in Reds? Visual images, even/especially if they are representations, construe our ideas of the way the world might be. We see less and less with our own eyes, and the uneasy feeling among many contemporary readers is that it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish the narrative of one's own memory from what is "mediated" or "constructed."

As I stated in the introduction to this study, I am certainly not claiming that such transactions never take place in fiction. Fictional accounts are not written or read in a social vacuum and frequently make use of recognizable social or political conflicts or, indeed, even "actual" names or characters. And occasionally the status of fictional characters is challenged directly from across the divide, as when Harold Loeb challenged Ernest Hemingway's representation of Robert Cohn in The Sun Also Rises, or when the James J. Hill family sued Time Inc. for revealing that they formed the basis of the crime novel The Desperate Hours (since the novel allegedly misrepresented their experience when the family was taken hostage by
escaped convicts) (Overbeck 157). But in most cases, as I believe the previous chapter has demonstrated, the "first-cause" of the fictional text is assumed to be the author, and her power to construct that fictional world is not so seriously contested as is that of a nonfiction author.

Nonfiction texts, on the other hand—those that purport to re-enact for the reader an experience that is at least potentially available elsewhere—tend to force their readers onto the plane of multi-referentiality and social contest. M. M. Bakhtin has written of the disorientation that can result when one’s experience, even one’s words, has been recontextualized by an "other" discourse:

Any sly and ill-disposed polemicist knows very well which dialogizing backdrop he should bring to bear on the accurately quoted words of his opponent, in order to distort their sense. By manipulating the effects of context it is very easy to emphasize the brute materiality of another’s words, and to stimulate dialogic reactions associated with such "brute materiality." ... Another’s discourse, when introduced into a speech context, enters the speech that frames it not in a mechanical bond but in a chemical union. (340)

It is that sort of "chemical union" which can create Booth’s contradictory claims that Mailer’s text in Executioner’s Song takes "the easy way of simply reporting a world that you are to accept as actual without having to work much at it" (208) and that this so-called lazy text yet has the verve to "harm . . . many of those caricatured
in it" (210n). The aim here is not to side either with Booth or with Mailer on the value of the text itself (I'm not particularly taken with *Executioner's Song*), but to explain (with Bakhtin) the uneasy relationship that blooms when an author assumes narrative control over an actual experience shared, even obliquely, by the reader.

"To see oneself (differently from in a mirror): on the scale of History" (12) is how Roland Barthes explains the nonfiction discourse of photography in *Camera Lucida* and the sensation of experiencing oneself in a re-enacted text:

> For the photograph's immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Live: by attesting that the object has been real, the photograph [or nonfiction text] surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive, because of that delusion which makes us attribute to Reality an absolutely superior, somehow eternal value; but by shifting this reality to the past ("this-has-been"), the photograph suggests that it is already dead. (79)

Like the photograph, nonfiction narrative rubs differing planes of actuality together in the narrative present or mixes the real with the referential in a way that recalls the impulses of surrealism or metafiction. That disquieting, almost chemical, union, in fact, accounts more significantly for the affective quality of reading nonfiction than does some sort of empirical "truth" test of the text itself. The nonfiction text--particularly one
like *Ten Days That Shook the World*—that purports to recreate for the reader an experience that in some way is or was also available to the reader outside the text—creates an implicated reader, a reader who has both lived within the world the text purports to reveal (and is thus at least a potential character), who is now reading about that world (and is also an audience), and who may have experienced that world through competing representations (and is therefore an even more complicated, or intertextual audience).

The implicated reader model accounts for the affective power of a text like Don DeLillo’s *Libra*, which—while it is marketed as fiction—clearly forces the reader to interact with the text as both audience and character. Many of its American readers have considered conspiracy theories for the Kennedy assassination, even if those theories only question why so many conspiracies persist. Some readers have "met" Lee Harvey Oswald in the televised images of his death at the hands of Jack Ruby and now are mimetically engaged in Oswald’s thoughts that DeLillo presents with full narrative force from the factual record of Oswald’s diaries. Some readers have seen the Zapruder film’s depiction of Kennedy’s death and now are engaged by *Libra*’s re-enactment of those moments immediately preceding and after the limousine rounded the corner near the Texas School Book Depository.
The readers' extra-textual world, in which we try to reconcile those conflicting images and arrive at some master narrative of the event, interplays with DeLillo's created world, in which Nicholas Branch, the government official who has been asked to review the case, tries to reconcile those conflicting images and arrive at some truth of Kennedy's death. Both Branch and many of the book's readers are forced to recognize that no ground is solid here, that we have experienced Kennedy and Oswald primarily through mediated images and that the labyrinth of espionage and intrigue cannot be, or at least has not been, solved in either "fiction" or reality.

The affective interplay between reader as character and reader as audience, I believe, enables the author to interweave the effects produced by the text's inside/outside movements. As James Phelan has shown in his analysis of a metafictive novel like Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler*, in which an author tries to directly "characterize" a reader as a named inhabitant of the plot, the author can vary the density of reader characterization to engage the reader "to reflect on the complexity of its own reading about reading" (143) or about the nature of history and how we know "reality" in the world represented by nonfiction. Nonfiction often assumes metafictive qualities because it is always doubling, outside/inside, and is, in a sense, about reading itself.
It is from this potentially fruitful tension that I believe those critics who would collapse all distinctions between fiction and nonfiction would release the reader too easily. The inside/outside interplay depends on the tension between an implicated (outside) and reading (inside) audience. Similarly, to grant actuality to nonfiction, while releasing the reader from an ongoing struggle to reconcile her experience to a created text, would seem to diminish the power and effects of the nonfiction form. As Barthes says in *The Pleasure of the Text*:

> The reader can keep saying: I know these are only words, but all the same . . . (I am moved as though these words were uttering a reality). Of all readings, that of tragedy is the most perverse: I take pleasure in hearing myself tell a story whose end I know. I know and I don't know. I act toward myself as though I did not know. (47, Barthes' emphasis)

The task of assessing the almost "chemical" reaction of the implicated reader will not be to posit some "ideal" or "implied" reader by which to measure scientifically these responses, but to gather something of the range of responses that are possible when actual readers read a nonfiction text from the outside/in or the inside/out. For example, the analysis of narrative expression has long since taught us that a reader's sympathy might be engaged by reading the thoughts of others and by building a close
textual identification with their hopes, dreams, and fears. But when those "others" are nonfiction characters whom (outside the text) the reader might also experience as exotic, alien, or even menacing, complex and potentially incendiary reactions are produced. The "friend" created by narrative effects inside the text can become the "enemy" of outside memory.

The historian Hayden White, in his extended critique of historiography, The Content of the Form, outlines the "uncanny" union of narrative mastery and untamed actuality:

As distinct from the present the past is alien, exotic, or strange; as continuous with it, this past is familiar, recognizable, and potentially fully knowable. The historical past is, in a word, "uncanny," both known and unknown, present and absent, familiar and alien, at one and the same time. Thus construed, the historical past has all the attributes that we might ascribe to the psychological sphere of "the imaginary," the level of infantile fantasies and narcissistic projections that feeds off dreams of uninhibited mastery and control of objects of desire. (89)

The appeal of the nonfiction narrative for many readers thus becomes its ability to create a fantasy of rupture accompanied by one of mastery and control, the ability to gain some power over the shock, the scandal, the formlessness or ambiguity of the past. Ironically, then, nonfiction can produce both a disquieting effect and a promise of formal control that releases that anxiety.
The power of these narrative sensations of rupture and control has long since been of interest to the journalism industry, which, after all, originates many of the nonfiction narratives that are produced each day for mass consumption. The industry even adopts terms that betray the economic underpinning of such considerations: events are considered to have more or less "value" for their power to implicate readers; these competing values are assessed and assigned credits or debits in the daily "budget" of the news product.

The industry responds in a more direct, but similar, way to the same effects that draw readers to more nominally "literary" nonfiction—effects that are produced when readers encounter "real-life" others in narrative. Journalism has codified those sensations into six enduring standards of news value: conflict, unusualness, impact, prominence, proximity, and timeliness—close variations of which are taught in every basic journalism class in America and codified near the front of every standard news writing and editing textbook. These standards are what makes news "fit to print" and enjoy a special status in the profit-making news industry that exceeds even that of the "inverted pyramid" or the "who-what-when-where-why" lead. The first four standards succinctly define the power of the "real-life other," the markers of the past that White calls "alien, exotic, or strange," while the last two standards
promise to bring that textual power to the consumer/reader with its juices still hot.

These standards help to explain why in the vast majority of American newsrooms—where representations of reality are marketed each day along with advertisements for clothing, cars and entertainment—a house fire is news while a house raising might not be, why reporters regularly visit police stations but rarely classrooms, why the media covers political campaigns far more closely than the inner workings of policy, why Donald Trump is hotter news than David Dinkins, why Jeffrey Dahmer or Amy Fisher gets more press than Bishop Tutu. In a manner similar to that outlined by Hayden White, standard forms of nonfiction narrative—newspaper and magazine accounts, network television, and the like—play off the sensation of "othering" experience against its recapture and release at the level of "infantile fantasies and narcissistic projection" (89). The mastery of both news values and the fairly rigid forms that channel such values is, in fact, the principle requirement that the profession demands of the beginning journalist.

A close reading of conventional journalism news writing texts, therefore, can offer insights into the way that desire and recapture work to implicate nonfiction readers, at least within contemporary standards of news value and news writing form. Gerald Stone’s *Newswriting,*
an introductory college text marketed by HarperCollins Publishers and adopted by many journalism schools, offers an example of the way the industry begins to build a standard of news value for its neophytes. It defines its six enduring news values as consequence, prominence, proximity, timeliness, action, and novelty. Corollary values are attributed to sex and humor. The very first words of Stone's discussion sound the continuing theme of reader implication:

News values that affect the largest number of people have the most consequence. The news value of consequence should be considered at every level, both for good news and bad. . . . And the consequence principle is applied easily to money: a $1 million bank heist generates much more reader interest than a $10,000 robbery. Remember consequence is the rule of "greater" effects. The greater the numbers--the more people, places or things affected--the greater the consequence. Greater consequence means more reader interest. (3-4)

Consequence is closely aligned with "human interest," which, Stone reminds his readers, "involve[s] the reader by arousing feelings such as joy, hatred, sorrow, understanding or sympathy" (8).

The textbook, like all standard journalism news writing texts, defines the news value of "prominence" along economic and class lines, devoting special emphasis to spectacular professions like movie or rock stars or to titled professionals or managers. "[T]he title of doctor
and kidney specialist suggests a higher news value than if the person were a paramedic," Stone reminds his students. The rock star is more newsworthy than the stage hand. And "people in the spotlight—whether government officials, educators, business people, labor leaders or movie stars—rate higher in general reader appeal than less conspicuous people" (4). Similarly, conflict is measured according to its ability to be conspicuous, not necessarily by the number of people who are hurt by it. Therefore an unusual, highly visible conflict would be more important than a chronic problem that affects even more people in a less dramatic way. "[D]isruption of the status quo is news" under the rubric of "action," Stone tells beginning journalists: "The more disruptive an action, the more likely it will grab attention. But the 'action' news value is also at play when a definitive action preserves the status quo" (7).

The news value of "novelty" corresponds to a market demand for diversified news product as well as for the reporting of "freak" events that excite an otherwise routine news consumption pattern. "Reporters chronicle novel ways of committing crimes," Stone observes. "Hospitals provide a multitude of both miracles and inexplicable tragedies" (8). In all cases, the emphasis is on events that break normal patterns, that offer their readers a "real-life" experience that is exotic or strange,
though safely mediated. Stone suggests examples:

Robberies occur in most medium-sized cities every day, but seldom does a thief mistakenly break into a police precinct. A local hotel owner defies superstition and numbers the 13th floor. From that time forth, every misfortune that occurs at the hotel happens on the 13th floor, including fires, police raids, and leaky plumbing. A woman has a baby in a local cab, and although that’s happened before, this is the third time she’s had a baby in a taxi. (9)

Proximity and timeliness are discussed as corollary values to the initial four; both are important enough to be mentioned high up in a news story so that the product can be marketed as fresh and relevant. But even proximity, Stone says, does not outweigh the spectacular effects of the prominent or unusual. An event like the firing of a local government official may be upstaged by the "news that a famous Hollywood actress has died," the textbook suggests, recalling that every U.S. newspaper and television station devoted "conspicuous and extensive coverage to the death of John Wayne." According to Stone, "this famous actor’s death must have lowered the news budget priority of a lot of more-local stories at many papers and stations" (9).

Although most news writing texts are not candid enough to grant sex its own news value category, the HarperCollins text shows no such squeamishness. Reminding beginning journalists that "sex is one of the basic human needs,"
Stone counsels them to remember its power in determining news value, whether it be "titillating, shocking or shameful" or a combination of the three (9):

This news value has been recognized as a separate category, although it frequently accompanies other discrete news values, but it also can be identified as a major aspect of human interest. The embezzling of bank funds might be just another theft except that the vice president falsified the books to keep a lover. Police raids resulting in a drug bust are common until linked with a wife-swapping club. (9)

The value of this sort of close reading for my study of the nonfiction narrative and its implication of readers is that standard journalism--like its longer or more adventurous nonfiction counterparts--also works an inside/outside, attraction/repulsion edge. Because it is a more immediate and simpler form, and because novices must be efficiently taught the rules of the system, its underlying ideology is more readily spelled out, even if it is rarely shared with "common" readers. Its lessons show that readers are attracted to the spectacular and to the scandalous; the re-enactment of history as narrative allows the reader to replicate the "othering" experience without necessarily surrendering to it.

Richard M. Barsam's critical history of non-fiction film demonstrates how a similar "reenactment" quality pervaded early movies. Audiences were attracted by "real-
life" films that depicted war, by images of the "Wild West" or Native American life, or by travel films of exotic locations (particularly, we can assume, if the "natives" might be expected to wear less clothing than Westerners). One of the earliest manifestations was George C. Hale's "Pleasure Railway," debuting at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, which "gave audiences the illusion of actual travel: good sightlines to a life-size image on a large screen and vibrations with sound effects adding to the overall effect" (30). Ushers dressed like conductors to welcome patrons to the "Pleasure Train"; each week featured a new destination. Like today's "virtual reality" computer projections, the lure of Hale's "Pleasure Railway" was not so much that it could produce a more convincing picture than the naked eye (the films were, in fact, available only in black and white), but that it allowed its viewers to experience simultaneously both real and fantastic effects, the power (gained for the price of admission) to "transgress" safely, to travel to places they had not yet been with the assurance that they might safely return.

When audiences tired of the travel films, Barsam notes, producers upped dramatic values by "restaging and outright deception" (30). One of the more popular film series was George Milies' "actualite reconstituee," re-enactments of war and disasters contrived to reproduce the effect of reality. "[M]any of the faked films were
carefully produced to seem authentic," Barsam notes. "Thomas Edison, who shot all his Boer War series in the Orange Mountains of New Jersey, was particularly adept in this respect" (32). One can readily see how such depictions mirror the concepts of theme parks and thrill rides, where a consumer is allowed to experience a controlled, but fantastic, "real-life" effect. If, as in the island park depicted as Jurassic Park, the regenerated dinosaurs sometimes exceed their bounds, at least the audience for the film Jurassic Park is granted the assurance (purchased along with its admission) that it might safely leave the theater once the film has ended.

Mainstream journalism is equally effective at safely recovering its evocation of "othering" desire through newswriting conventions. Spelled out in great detail over the hundreds of pages that follow the discussion of threshold news values in textbooks such as HarperCollins' Newswriting, these conventions include "objectivity," the "inverted pyramid" news hierarchy, the cultivation of official sources, and the reliance on legally privileged (and often governmental) sources for quotes and documentation that establish an epistemologically firm footing and a "top-down" view within the news text.

Similarly, reading more adventurous nonfiction texts for the specific ways in which they implicate their readers will entail a consideration of how the readers are
positioned against the text. We might want to assess as carefully as possible the sources of "othering" desire as well as the manner by which those desires are channeled by the underlying forms of the texts. Generalizations, of course, are shaky, particularly in nonfiction. Not all readers will read a text in the same way, particularly if that text explicitly recalls the reader's extra-textual experience. A Russian citizen, for example, might read Ten Days That Shook the World much differently than a reader who has never been to Russia, but the content and form of the text nonetheless can reveal its constructedness, its ideology, to the careful observer by the manner in which it positions its readers.

An initial example might be drawn from two nonfiction film texts that culminate with the death of one or more human beings from the weapons of war. The first nonfiction film text is The Battle of Chile, a documentary described by Bill Nichols in his thoroughgoing study of nonfiction film, Representing Reality. In the making of the documentary, Nichols tells us, a camera operator was shot and killed; the footage from the operator's camera became part of the finished film:

[T]he endangered camera may even record the final moments of a fatally jeopardized camera person. One of the most compelling examples of this gaze, if we can still call it a gaze rather than a look or line of sight, occurs in The Battle of Chile. We see the killer
and witness the moment at which the bullets are fired, their impact inscribed in every jolt and jostle of falling man and camera before the machine stops running and the image turns to black. (84)

The second nonfiction film text is documentary footage of a precision bomb "kill," footage supplied by the U.S. government and widely aired on television and cable during the 1991 "Desert Storm" war in Iraq. It is described by Richard V. Vincent in his study of Cable News Network published in *Triumph of the Image*:

The black-and-white grainy footage always showed pinpoint accuracy of this high technology as the target entered the cross hairs of the camera and moments later the screen went blank. The released footage was always of a perfect hit. Rarely could human activity be seen on the ground prior to the explosion. It was all so sterile. Yet people undoubtedly were inside some of the buildings that were obliterated. The destructive power of these bombs and missiles was appalling—people unfortunate enough to be caught at the center were not identified, their arms, legs, and flesh scattered in small pieces. (188)

Set side by side, the two slices of nonfiction film offer intriguing similarities and differences. Both are constructed, yet carry the power of actuality. Both help to demonstrate that no matter how artificial the nonfiction representation might be, there is no point to collapsing all distinctions between fictional and nonfictional representation. Film, of course, differs somewhat from
written text because of its ability to construe the replica of a material body. But there is something to knowing that the victim is actual, not an actor or a fictional construct, in either film or written text. Real people die. No actor got up and walked away from either of the fatal attacks chronicled by the camera footage. As Nichols says, "Danger, in documentary, is real. Contingency abounds . . . risks will have real consequences" (84).

Yet, the viewer/reader is positioned much differently in each of the documentaries. The bombing of the Iraqi installations is viewed from the top down. The reader/viewer rides the projectile into the building; the explosion is proof that the viewer has successfully penetrated the defenses of the enemy. But in the Chilean footage, the reader/viewer is positioned at the receiving end of the projectile. The view is bottom up and the explosion is proof of the viewer/reader's failure to mount a successful defense against the enemy. The blank screens that end each segment, even though identical in form, thus convey vastly different meanings because of the manner by which they position and implicate their viewers/readers. One becomes the celebration of victory from which all evidence of death is effaced; the other is mute proof of death's certainty. Both depictions carry the force of an actual war representation that meets the test of nonfiction's power mutually to attract and repulse our
interest. Yet, in the Chilean footage the blank screen tastes of death while in the Iraqi footage it tastes of victory.

A similarly careful assessment of reader positioning can also be applied to more canonical nonfiction texts like Charles Dickens' "A Visit to Newgate Prison," Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, or William Hazlitt's "The Fight." Each of these three writers offers his readers a top-down voyeuristic discourse that will remove the "wall" that separates readers from the objects of repulsion/desire while at the same time avoiding the danger of interaction. As such, the authors produce what Mary Louise Pratt in "What the Bushman Saw," her analysis of colonial travel narratives, calls "informational" discourse: "textually produc[ing] the Other without an explicit anchoring either in an observing self or in a particular encounter in which contact with the Other takes place" (140) or what Peter Stallybrass and Allon White call "balcony" discourse, a downward view that allows for the gaze while restricting the contaminating touch (136).

In his visit to Newgate Prison, Dickens positions his reader as a man in the street, minding his business, oblivious to the squalor and death just inside the Newgate prison wall. Dickens takes that reader by the hand, transgresses the wall and invites his reader to confront a scrupulously depersonalized Other from an intimate, but
slightly elevated, distance:

There is one object, too, which rivets the attention and fascinates the gaze, and from which we may turn horror-stricken in vain, for the recollection of it will haunt us, waking and sleeping, for a long time afterwards. Immediately below the reading desk, on the floor of the chapel, and forming the most conspicuous object in the little area, is the condemned pew; a huge, black pen, in which the wretched people, who are singled out for death, are placed on the Sunday preceding their execution, in sight of all their fellow-prisoners. (209)

Dickens asks his readers to imagine "the hopeless clinging to life to the last" and the "wild despair" with which the felons meet their death, but he never wades into the "huge black pen" to ask "wretched people" themselves, much less forces his reader inside. His narrative, therefore, has the power of actuality—we are, after all, inside the notorious prison witnessing the last moments of people who will actually die—but maintains both a reporting and a formal distance.

Mayhew's London Labour and the London Poor, a "Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those that Will Work, Those that Cannot Work, and Those that Will Not Work," also virtually precludes interaction between the observer and subject and removes the reader to a safe narrative distance while at the same time the reader is explicitly—indeed sometimes gleefully—held close to the repulsive subject. Mayhew's "cyclopaedia" of subjects
includes street peddlers, criminals, prostitutes, deviants, entertainers, garbage collectors, sewer sweeps and—in the case of the redoubtable Jack Black—rat exterminators. Mayhew meets Jack Black (whom he bills as the "Queen of England’s ratcatcher," thereby invoking the news values of unusualness, impact, and prominence at one sweep) on the streets of London where Black is peddling rat poison. Black has a cage of rats with which to demonstrate his virtually erotic powers:

I saw him dip his hand into this cage of rats and take out as many as he could hold, a feat which generally causes an "oh!" of wonder to escape from the crowd, especially when they observed that his hands were unbitten. Women more particularly shuddered when they beheld him place some half-dozen of the dusty-looking brutes within his shirt next to his skin. (11)

The reader here again is a voyeur in the crowd, though he no doubt is construed among the crowd’s male members, who, after all, are treated to the spectacle of female reaction as well as to Black’s prowess. Black, as it turns out, is not above demonstrating his prowess by thrusting the heads of live rats into his mouth and, moreover, proves a master of dramatic discourse (though Mayhew’s presumed lack of a recording apparatus would place Black’s exact "voice" in some doubt, as the previous chapter would demonstrate).

Perhaps the most chilling of Black’s narratives involves the extermination of rats that have invaded the
house of Lord of Hay, Hempstead. The spectre of rats in
the houses of royalty, presented as a nonfiction narrative,
must have produced a sensation for Mayhew’s middle-class
audience as well as reminding them of the terrors of the
underground sewers and the thin line that separates the
high from the low, the exalted from the underworld. In his
Lord of Hay narrative, Mayhew, through Black, inscribes the
rats, "a dreadful spiteful feller—a snake-headed rat"
(17), with virtually serpentine force as they attack their
Edenic victims:

[T]hey must have come up from the
bottom of the house to the attics. The
rats gnawed at the hands and feet of
the little children. The lady heard
them crying and got out of her bed and
called to the servant to know what the
child was making such a noise for, when
they struck a light, and then they see
the rats running away to the holes;
their [the children’s] little
nightgowns was kivered with blood, as
if their throats had been cut. I asked
the lady to give me one of the night-
gowns to keep as a cur’osity, for I
considered it a pheenomenon. (17,
Mayhew’s emphasis)

William Hazlitt’s "The Fight" allows for slightly
greater interactivity between the reporter and his subject,
but Hazlitt, like Dickens and Mayhew before him, seems
primarily content to be the professional voyeur, enticing
his readers with promises of real-life blood and potential
death at the illegal bare-knuckles venue. "Reader, have
you ever seen a fight?" he asks, "If not, you have a
pleasure to come, at least if it is a fight like that
between the Gas-man and Bill Neate" (637). For readers of
"The Fight," pleasure mixes with desire and death, which
begins when Tom Hickman (the "Gasman") unveils a right hand
and promises "this will send many of them to their long
homes" (638).

Ironically, it is Hickman who approaches the death for
which Hazlitt has enticed his readers. When the moment of
death comes, the reader is implicated by explicitly demonic
imagery, borrowed from Milton and Dante, to inscribe the
scene's Otherness. Hit full in the face by Neate's
tremendous lunge, the Gasman

hung suspended for a second or two, and
then fell back, throwing his hands in
the air, and with his face lifted up to
the sky. I never saw anything more
terrific than his aspect just before he fell. All traces of life, of natural
expression, were gone from him. His face was like a human skull, a death's-
head, spouting blood. His eyes were filled with blood, the nose streamed
with blood, the mouth gaped blood. He was not like an actual man, but like a
preternatural, spectral appearance, or like one of the figures in Dante's
Inferno. (641-42)

In each of these three examples, the reader is allowed
to witness the deeply othering sensation of "real-life"
death. Though the reader is permitted to view more closely
the results of violence, the positioning remains as
resolutely top-down as in the grainy footage of the U.S.
bombs that penetrated the Iraqi defenses. It is, after
all, the denizens of the condemned pew who are executed, the Lord of Hay's children who are bloodied by rats, the Gasman who dies; the reader is permitted to watch, but is never personally threatened.

But that very safety heightens the tension that voyeurism produces in the observing of actual death. Each writer is careful to remind his readers that the deaths are "real," not staged. It is the distinction that removes the thousands of staged deaths that one routinely can observe any week on network television from the scrupulously suppressed "snuff" film in which a real victim dies. No doubt, our historical implication in the Dickens, Mayhew, and Hazlitt texts is blunted somewhat by having no specific outside knowledge of the victims, as we might in late twentieth-century America if the Gasman were Mike Tyson, or if the Lord of Hay were Senator Robert Dole, or if the condemned pew held Ted Bundy or Jeffrey Dahmer. But even across the years, it seems to me, many readers will recognize they have participated in the artful re-enactment of an event that ended in the death of a person, not merely a character. As Bill Nichols reminds us, "History kills"; there is a materiality to the body and to death that is not entirely discursive, even if its meaning and social value is. (109)

Against the Dickens, Mayhew, and Hazlitt accounts, I will briefly consider two other literary texts that are
presented by their authors as nonfiction and which position the reader at the receiving end of the narrative's force. Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater* suggests a link with a twentieth-century narrative like Michael Herr's *Dispatches* in that each implicates the reader by asking her to consider her complicity with guilty experience. Their and their readers' positioning recalls the category that Mary Louise Pratt describes as experiential discourse in her analysis of colonial travel narratives. The journal of the experiential nonfiction discourse, Pratt says, "narrates the journey as a kind of epic-style series of trials and challenges--often erotic ones" (150).

De Quincey draws his reader into the text experientially through a double-edged confessional mode, both evoking opium's magical charms and demonizing it for its attack on the autonomous self. The reader encounters a distinctively epic voice for the narrative journey as De Quincey frequently invokes his nemesis openly for its power to soothe the savage soul. De Quincey directly tempts his reader with a long catalogue of opium's charms for its "assuaging balm," for its potent rhetoric, for its gift of brief oblivion, for its power to deliver to "the guilty man, for one night givest back the hopes of his youth" (44). But as the narrative progresses, opium reveals itself as the explicitly demonized Other. In a discourse
with interesting reverberations for Pratt’s colonial literature readings, De Quincey explicitly compares his opium hallucinations to "Oriental dreams" (70), the foreign, the Other that will not be colonized by the Western rationalized self. De Quincey evokes a self subsumed by the Other, a life with "lunatics and brute animals," "Oriental imagery and mythological tortures," "cancerous kisses," "confounded with all unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud" (69).

The "self" that is under attack in this scene is looking upward into the trajectory of a weapon that has an Oriental face, the weapon that can end its life. The reader—whatever her feelings about the "actual" or "extra-textual" essence of Orientalism—is dragged along in De Quincey’s project. To the extent that the reader has developed any textual association with De Quincey’s tortured revelations, she will be challenged by his enemy, even if she would not share that challenge outside the text. De Quincey’s Oriental dreams, he tells us, are of Southern Asia, "the seat of awful images and associations," the "ancient, monumental, cruel and elaborate religions of Indostan. . . . Man is a weed in these regions" (69).

Michael Herr’s Dispatches offers a way to culminate this part of the chapter’s discussion of the manner by which nonfiction implicates its readers. In a way that resembles De Quincey, the book also is about the accounts
that one must pay for guilty experience. And like De Quincey, Herr merges the drug experience and the Asian experience as mutual challenges to Western rationalism and conquest. But in addition, Dispatches offers both informational and experiential challenges to its readers as it promises to give us the story of the Vietnam War that the official histories won’t dare to communicate. That very premise, of course, powerfully implicates the book’s late twentieth-century American readers, for whom the war lives on both in memory and in its continuing power to alter current events.

In Dispatches, Herr draws in his readers by bringing the Western ego-ideal into direct confrontation both with what De Quincey had earlier termed the "awful images" of Southern Asia and with itself. The former challenge Herr constructs for his readers in the typically top-down manner that Pratt has identified as informational colonial discourse. But the latter challenge—the Western ego-ideal in direct confrontation with itself—Herr is able to meet in a powerfully intersubjective way as he brings his readers into the trenches along with the Marine Corps grunts as each braces himself against the rounds of "incoming" fire. To address the initial strand first: for a book about Vietnam, Dispatches manages virtually to ignore the country and its people, most likely because Herr was dressed as a soldier and was reporting within a
powerful military machine that effectively separated him from the land. When we do meet Vietnam and its people in Herr’s text, we see them always in a distanced, slightly elevated perspective (often literally from a U.S. helicopter), positioning the reader in a manner not unlike that which I have earlier identified in Dickens. For example, of the Vietnamese Montagnards, Herr writes:

Their nakedness, their painted bodies, their recalcitrance, their silent composure before strangers, their benign savagry and the sheer, awesome ugliness of them combined to make most Americans who were forced to associate with them a little uncomfortable over the long run. It would seem fitting, ordained, that they should live in the Highlands, among triple canopies, where sudden contrary mists offered sinister bafflement, where daily heat and the nighttime cold kept you perpetually, increasingly, on edge. (99-100)

By contrast, Herr will bring his reader into a prolonged close-up view of the subject he knows far better: the Marine Corps grunts, the Green Berets, the Lurps, and the rest of the U.S. forces fighting the generals’ war. The thrust of Herr’s narrative is to bring (indeed, even force) the reader into closer and closer contact with these subjects and with their battle. The reader first encounters them as the Other personified, as in this prolonged view of the Lurp that opens the book.

He wore a gold earring and a headband torn from a piece of camouflage parachute material, and since nobody was about to tell him to get his hair
cut it fell below his shoulders, covering a thick purple scar. Even at division he never went anywhere without at least a .45 and a knife, and he thought I was a freak because I wouldn’t carry a weapon. (4)

Both the Lurp and the battle itself are experiences that the reader must confront if she is to hear the story that Herr insists that no one else seems to be able to tell about Vietnam. And so the book for the reader is a long double experience as Herr moves closer and closer to ground zero both in his original experience and in his drive to re-experience and re-channel its power through its retelling. Symbolically, Herr pulls the reader into the re-experience of the war when he moves underneath the voyeuristic position and climbs into the trenches with the grunts, closing the distance between the high and the low, between observer and observed in both social and epistemological terms. Herr seems to grab his readers, telling us that we cannot read about the war until we can experience the battle as "incoming" fire:

dreaded and welcome, balls [a term that "genders" his reader inside the text and will implicate him or her outside] and bowels turning over together, your senses working like strobes, free-falling all the way down to the essences and then flying out again in a rush to focus, like the first strong twinge of tripping after an infusion of psilocybin, reaching in at the point of calm and springing all the joy and all the dread ever known, ever known by everyone who ever lived, unutterable in its speeding brilliance, touching all
the edges and then passing, as though it had all been controlled from outside, by a god or by the moon. (144, Herr's emphasis)

To summarize the arguments of the chapter thus far, I have demonstrated that nonfiction narratives implicate their readers by working on an outside/inside edge—seducing the reader into the text at the same time the reader may read the text through the screen of outside knowledge. That "double" inside/outside vision explains many of the sources of nonfiction's power—not the least of which is the reader's ability to transcend his own limitations through imagination, with the guarantee of a safe return. Mass market journalism—like the movies or like theme park adventure rides—is particularly adept at marketing that sensation, selling the thrill of "othering" implication while recouping it through "safe," top-down structures and practices.

A reading of nonfiction narrative that is alive to its underlying ideology will try to assess the manner by which a text positions its reader. Because real-life readers differ according to their experiences and closeness or remoteness from the events described by the text, it will be impossible to posit some sort of ideal reading. Yet we can begin to determine how a text positions our own readings. If, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, reading for an implicated author will require reading the
narrator of a text against the grain of what we know of its actual author, then reading nonfiction for the manner by which it implicates us will require reading the "self" that is construed and positioned by the text against the grain of what we know of ourselves outside the text.

As historian Hayden White reminds us in The Content of the Form:

The act of reading requires that the subject assume a particular position vis-a-vis the discourse, on the one side, and the system of beliefs, values, ideals, and so on, that comprise his cultural horizons, on the other. To acquiesce in the adequacy of a given way of representing "reality" is already to acquiesce implicitly to a certain standard for determining the value, meaning, or worth of the "reality" thus represented. (88)

To recognize that a U.S. military videotape positions us on the nose of an invading "smart" bomb should force an historical as well as a textual reaction; similarly, seeing that a Michael Herr normally permits us to experience the Vietnamese people only from the psychic distance of a hovering U.S. helicopter will help us to assess the manner by which Herr construes our reading of the war. Nonetheless, a book as powerful as Dispatches will inevitably (and, I believe, should) produce strong reactions and identifications inside its text. The enduring charm of literature, after all, is its power to draw us into the people and events that are at its core.
But when those events assume an historical and material dimension as well (even if, as Fredric Jameson argues, "history is inaccessible to us except in textual forms" [82]), we will read them for the ways that those texts construe our own histories.

While the latter half of this dissertation will attempt to test the theories of implicated writers and readers in a systematic way against the nonfiction of John Reed, Tom Wolfe, and Joan Didion; I want to end this chapter with a close, personal reading of a less well-known author, Jacqui Banaszynski, whose three-part series, "AIDS in the Heartland," published in the St. Paul Pioneer Press, won the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for feature writing. An analysis of "AIDS in the Heartland," similarly to the analysis of Freud's Dora presented in the preceding chapter, will permit me to show in a very specific way something of the value of reading a text against the grain of a specific reader's history.

Katie Dyer presents a reading model for me to follow:

What is my job as critic here? To help you understand these words, the experience offered by the text. But what words other than these are available? Only my own. Words from my own life, personal words, words you might not want to hear. If my own subjectivity is my passageway to this text, how can I share that with you in a language that won't make you squirm? The complex dynamics between empathy, sympathy, and judgment, the way I am positioned/position myself in the world
of this text compose my engagement with the malady of death and with the possibility/burden of life. I empathize with characters I feel close to. I am involved, implicated in their lives. It’s as if parts of us were mixed up in each other. (8)

Dyer is writing about fiction: Marguerite Duras’ *The Malady of Death*. But the reading she suggests, it seems to me, rings all the more true for nonfiction, in which characters assume a material as well as a textual dimension and in which a death diminishes the population of the actual world, not only the literary world, by one more body. I am but one reader of "AIDS in the Heartland"; I do not insist that mine is the "ideal" reading of this nonfiction text. What I want to do instead is to model the sort of reading that is possible when a conscientious reader reads both inside and outside a nonfiction text, alive for the way that the reading entangles his aesthetic judgment and his own memory. This is that space that Dyer calls

this place where the force of the reader’s life breathes being into the text and where, then, we must go back to the text, to be true to it and to see what it may have to teach us about the life that we have been. (6)

"AIDS in the Heartland" is Jacqui Banaszynski’s story of the sickness unto death of political activist Dick Hanson on his farm in rural Glenwood, Minnesota. Hanson lives there with his lover, Bert Henningson, who is a
researcher for Minnesota's Department of Agriculture and who has also tested positive for the HIV virus. Despite the fact that the series of three stories was published in a mainstream commercial newspaper, the St. Paul Pioneer Press, Banaszynski writes frankly of Hanson and Henningson's relationship: how "Henningson had gathered Henson into his arms and said, 'I'll never leave you. Dick,'" when the two tested positive for AIDS (261); how Hanson's 75-year-old mother, before her death, had served the lovers a breakfast of caramel rolls in bed to show that she accepted their relationship (266); how the two men had celebrated their first five years together with an exchange of rings before a gathering of friends (265).³

Banaszynski has said it was important to her to write a series about gay AIDS patients rather than the usual "family newspaper" choices of a hemophiliac or blood transfusion victims. She knew the choice would be controversial, but with the full support of her editors, she searched for more than a year until she found a gay couple who was willing to be openly identified for the article. "I have found it absolutely essential to be perfectly honest. I think a lot of reporters go into things and try to dance around the issues, the tough stuff," Banaszynski now says. "I think it's much better if you go and say 'This is what I'm about. This is why I need to know these things.'" (Friedlander 258).
I turn the pages of Hanson and Henningson's lives and become enfolded in Hanson's approaching death. I wonder what has happened to Henningson in the six years since the story was published. Then he was HIV-positive, but asymptomatic; has he, too, now died? I can see the Kaposi's sarcoma sores that disfigure Hanson's face and arms, the lesions that attack his eyes and mouth.

For it was in 1985 and 1986 that I also wrote a series of articles in which I had the grim task of watching an AIDS patient grow progressively ill and die. The young man had called The (Charlottesville) Daily Progress, where I worked as a reporter, and asked if anyone wanted to write an article about the unwillingness of Charlottesville landlords to rent an apartment to a gay, sick man. I almost immediately agreed, in part because he also said he had been accepted as a subject in the first official medical trial of the drug, AZT, at the National Institutes of Health, and so his story, in that way if in no other, had the sort of news value that I could sell to my editors.

Like Banaszynski, I recognized that naming names, particularly in a story such as this, was an act that would profoundly impact the young man who was the subject of my articles. Although he was trying to find a place in town, the young man then lived in rural Nelson County, a poor and transcendently conservative area about 30 miles south of Charlottesville. This was long before Earvin "Magic"
Johnson, a time when Rock Hudson was just a whispered rumor and when radio announcers were demanding that a studio be fumigated after the visit of an HIV-positive guest. Because the young man who approached me was unwilling to face the prospect of discovery in his community, I agreed to call him "John" in the articles. Even then, as an active journalist, I reflected on how seldom it is that fictional representation invests the naming of characters with such devastating political and social ramifications.

In retrospect, and after reading Banaszynski's articles, I believe I should have worked harder to convince "John" of the public value of his name. It is, after all, the name and the body that are the most powerful facts in stories such as these; the fact is that the body will die and that the name will bear witness that an actual person has been sacrificed to this plague. In no way do I blame "John" for not agreeing to come forward. In fact, like Freud in his case study, the maintenance of anonymity had certain advantages for me in that it allowed me to control the textual presentation more closely. But I can see the power that Banaszynski's stories have that my own did not have. In addition to her superior reporting and writing, the name of the subject, Dick Hanson, and the carefully developed public character she builds for him assumes a presence in her articles that simply will not let her readers assign the story to some "fictional" space.
where they don’t have to deal with the personal implications of this character’s future and that of his lover:

The tiny snapshot is fuzzy and stained with ink. Two men in white T-shirts and corduroys stand at the edge of a barnyard, their muscled arms around each other’s shoulders, a puzzled bull watching them from a field. The picture is overexposed, but the effect is pleasing, as if that summer day in 1982 was washed with a bit too much sun. A summer later, the same men—one bearded and one not, one tall and one short—pose on the farmhouse porch in a mock American Gothic. Their pitchforks are mean looking and caked with manure. But their attempted severity fails; dimples betray their humor. (260)

Banaszynski reports that the pictures in the photo album become sharply fewer after 1985. One shows the taller man, picking petunias from his mother’s grave. He is startlingly thin by now; as a friend said, "like Ghandi after a long fast." His sun-bleached hair has turned dark, his bronze skin pallid. His body seems slack, as if it’s caving in on itself. The stark evidence of Dick Hanson’s deterioration. (260)

Banaszynski, again in a way that contrasts my stories, writes of the manner by which the men contracted the disease, disclosing Hanson’s practice—until he met Henningson—of traveling to Minneapolis each weekend “for anonymous encounters at the gay bathhouse. ‘I had to taste all the fruit in the orchard,’ he said” (266). But she and her subjects never allow the disclosures to fold back into
stereotypes. Hanson is unashamedly spiritual, so those traditional readers who will want to criticize his choices will also have to make sense of this comment: "I believe that God can grant miracles. He has in the past and does now and will in the future" (263). Near the end of the opening story in the series, Banaszynski even states matter-of-factly that Hanson the night before has heard his mother speaking to him from beyond the grave: "It wasn't part of any dream,' he said. 'Just her voice, crystal clear, calling.'" (269)

As it happens, I am not one of those readers who would have a strongly negative reaction to Hanson and Henningson's sexuality. But the manner by which Banaszynski writes the story makes it difficult even for those readers who do reflexively hate or fear gays to dismiss the lovers. The story opens and closes with the two together; their farm-bred vigor is as pervasive to the pieces as is Hanson's illness. In their sickness and health, Banaszynski writes clearly and persuasively of their thoughts and desires for the future. Any reader identification created at all by the articles (and it seems substantial to me) seems to flow naturally toward them, seducing even those readers who would want to criticize them. When the first article in the series was published, Banaszynski said that the newspaper received responses that it was "glorifying homosexuality," but by the time the last
segment was published, "readers were calling and writing to say the stories had changed the way they viewed AIDS and its victims" (Friedlander 257).

Like Banaszynski, I found that many people wrote to me and asked what they could do to help "John" in his economic and medical struggle. Several landlords offered their apartments in response to my first story, but by then "John" was too ill to live alone; enough other benefactors contacted me that I was able to set up a fund where readers could donate money to meet John’s ever-mounting medical bills. Other than a smattering of letters to the editor, I didn’t hear from those readers who thought the series was wrong, but John did. Despite the care we took, several Nelson County readers (again in ways that recall Freud’s *Dora*) guessed that the story was about him; his sister and her children were ostracized, and the family was asked to stop attending their conservative Baptist church "for health reasons, you understand."

But what implicates me now most strongly about Banaszynski’s stories is the simple fact that they force me to watch a man, an actual man, die in front of my eyes. Perhaps the stories assume this power partly because I sat in a University of Virginia Hospital room and watched "John," now too ill to recognize me except in far-flung moments, vomit into his pillow; watched his sister carefully wash him for the tenth time that day; watched him
sweat and shiver and rave. The last coherent thing he ever said to me was that he wished he had defied those doctors who had warned him that animal fur could worsen his pneumocystic pneumonia. His eyes opened wide against the drawn white blinds of the hospital room, and he looked squarely at me for the last time. "I just want a cat near me for the long nights ahead," he said. "You know what I mean?" I ended my stories with that image. John died.

In "AIDS in the Heartland," Hanson and Henningson sit in the hospital room and, on television, Jeff Reardon is losing a lead for the Minnesota Twins in the late innings of a baseball game. Hanson has been given a spinal tap to see if the virus has entered his brain; he and Henningson discuss funeral plans in matter-of-fact tones. As the two talk quietly, Banaszynski subtly shifts the focus to the survivor as Henningson ponders the possibility of Hanson's ashes sprinkled in one tributary of the Mississippi River and his own in another:

He sits at the window next to Hanson's hospital bed, and holds his hand. Finally, he abandons the diversionary talk and cries. He is worried about losing the farm, about the political hassles involved in getting housing assistance, about getting a job after his contract with the state expires, about not having enough time left with Hanson. And he can't help but worry about the AIDS virus in his own body and his own health prospects. (270)
Banaszynski ends her story with this image: the ashes of two gay men flowing down the Mississippi River to entwine in the warmer waters of the Gulf of Mexico. "You can't control what happens to people after they're dead," Henningson says. "But even if it doesn't happen, it's a lovely, consoling thought" (270).

Banaszynski later talked to the editors of a feature writing textbook about the structure of her article, saying that she carefully chose her final image. "I like my endings to be as strong as my beginnings," she said. "I save some of my best quotes for the ending, for the kicker. . . . My goal is to bring the reader back so that the ending is as satisfying as the beginning was" (Friedlander 271, my emphasis). As a reader of nonfiction, one who deeply identifies with Banaszynski's profession and who salutes her ability to get a story as sensitive and important as this into a mainstream newspaper, I both praise and curse her for this "satisfaction." For Dick Hanson, after all, not some fictional character, is dead, and I can take little satisfaction in that ending. I recognize here, as in my own work, the insidious way in which the journalism market (in a way that resembles all nonfiction) will entice readers to dip into Hanson and Henningson's stories with morbid fascination; how a resolved, personal, quietly ironic ending to this love story might release those readers' anxieties.
I ended my own series with a perhaps harder-edged image. The young man's wish—even in his moment of death—to take a "cat" to bed with him, especially against his doctors' wishes, carried an inside message of final, resistant desire in the face of death that only a few of my readers may have gleaned. Most would read it as the story of the healing power a cuddly kitten might bring to a dying man, and they would not be wrong either. But either way, the stories that Banaszynski and I wrote position their readers at the bedside of a dying man, ready to leave the room when the death is fulfilled, when the ending of the series of stories fulfills their opening, finally outside the grief and consoled by the power of resolution.

To draw out (as well as culminate) my implicated reaction to Banaszynski's "AIDS in the Heartland" series, I must turn to Randy Shilts remarkable article, "Talking AIDS to Death," that was first published in Esquire and later reprinted in The Best American Essays 1990. As the author of And the Band Played On, the book-length narrative chronicle of the origins and spread of the AIDS plague, Shilts has become what he admits is "the world's first AIDS celebrity" (233). His article is about the difficulty of recognizing that one has mastered the discourse of a disease that refuses to be mastered. The piece details Shilts' experience on the talk show circuit after publication of his book, honing his responses to the
inevitable questions about AIDS with flash and brilliance. But at night, when the television lights dim, he dreams of

talking to my friend Kit Herman when I notice a barely perceptible spot on the left side of his face. Slowly, it grows up his cheekbone, down to his chin, and forward to his mouth. He talks on cheerfully, as if nothing is wrong, and I’m amazed that I’m able to smile and chat on, too, as if nothing is there. His eyes become sunken; his hair turns gray; his ear is turning purple now, swelling into a carcinomatous cauliflower, and still we talk on. He’s dying in front of me. He’ll be dead soon if nothing is done.

Herman’s dying body haunts the piece, brings both Shilts and his readers back again and again to a dying body, to the death that defies the domestication of discourse. When he returns to San Francisco’s gay community "from network tapings and celebrity glad-handing," Shilts sees his friends back home, dying. "The lesions," he says, "spread from their cheeks to cover their faces, their hair falls out, they die slowly, horribly, and sometimes suddenly" (234). As he talks AIDS to death, "they die in my arms and in my dreams, and nothing at all has changed" (234). In his desperation, Shilts plies his audiences with more and more gruesome statistics, scribbling notes in his margins to update the ever-growing mortality figures. It works for a time, and then his audiences grow bored with the death count, and he must think of new ways to satisfy their demands for novelty.
But the enduring difference between Shilts' story and those that were written by Banaszynski and me is that he places the personal tragedies that are AIDS into a social and political context. He details how the stock National Institutes of Health responses that AIDS drugs were forever "in the pipeline" were the direct result of the Reagan administration's willingness to fund only eleven of 127 positions requested by Dr. Anthony Fauchi, associate NIH director for AIDS. "The lives of 1.5 million HIV-infected Americans hung in the balance, and the only way you could get a straight answer out of an administration official," says Shilts, "was to put him under oath and make him face the charge of perjury. Where I went to journalism school, that was a story" (237).

But the reporters to whom Shilts suggests the story only want to know what actor will play Shilts in the television mini-series of And the Band Played On. So Shilts fashions ever-more-glib, ever-more-effective responses on the talk shows, and his friend Kit Herman dies in excruciatingly slow, tortured stages. And then Shilts cracks, on a radio call-in show, in the San Fernando Valley, and begins to scream in an insane rage, which, the article suggests, is his first sane response to the crisis. In his mind he hears the "disembling" NIH researchers go home to their wives at night, "complain about the lack of personnel" and sees them shrug in frustration:
They’d excuse their inaction by telling themselves that if they went public and lost their jobs, worse people would replace them. It was best to go along. But how would they feel if their friends, their daughters, were dying of the disease? Would they be silent—or would they shout? Maybe they’ll forgive me for suspecting they believed that ultimately a bunch of fags weren’t worth losing a job over. And when I got home, I was going to have to watch my friends get shoved into powder-blue vans [on their way to the morgue], and it wasn’t going to change. (245, Shilts’ emphasis)

In San Francisco, gay men and lesbians have the economic and political power to ensure that a reporter who writes such an article still will have a job at one of the city’s two principal daily newspapers. Elsewhere, it is more difficult. In Charlottesville, a town where doctors number a higher share of the population than in any city except for the Rochester, Minnesota home of Mayo Clinic, readers and editors will respond far more gracefully to a story that depicts the AIDS patients as individuals whose heroic doctors are struggling, against all odds, to save them. There is no time or money to assign a reporter like Shilts to uncover the complicity that government policy shares in a continuing health emergency.

Are these considerations that one is likely to face so clearly in fiction? I think not. And so, as I close the book on "AIDS in the Heartland," I see how, at last, the stories that Banaszynski wrote—despite their many values—
position their readers far differently than does Shilts. As a reader, I can walk away from Dick Hanson’s bedside, or at least it seems so from the evidence. But neither Shilts, nor I as his reader, can walk away so easily. His piece, as they all do, ends at the bedside of a dying man, his friend Kit Herman. The two discuss their frustration at how the longer that Shilts works to uncover the scandal of AIDS policy, the more it seems to be ignored. Herman, who the day before has tried unsuccessfully to take his own life with an overdose of morphine, tells Shilts that the reporter has got to keep trying:

Kit closed his eyes briefly and faded into sleep while plastic tubes fed him a cornucopia of antibiotics. After five minutes, he stirred, looked up, and added, as if we had never stopped talking, "But you don’t really have a choice. You’ve got to keep doing it. What else are you going to do?" (246)

Six years after the publication of *And the Band Played On* and three years after his essay was printed in *Esquire*, Randy Shilts is battling for his own life. A bout of pneumocystic pneumonia in August, 1992 signaled his contraction of fully developed AIDS. He had known he was HIV-positive since the day he had finished the manuscript of *And the Band Played On* in 1987 (Schmaltz 1-G), though he did not disclose that fact in his *Esquire* essay. But the evidence in that essay is everywhere, I now see. And it raises the stakes of his narrative and explains what I
thought I had intuited from Shilts' text. "[Y]ou don't really have a choice," his dying friend told Shilts (246). As it turned out, Shilts didn't. And his readers don't either. "Yeah, I have a good life," he told the New York Times' Jeffrey Schmaltz in May. "I'd be a lot happier if I didn't have to worry about dying" (6-G).

Footnotes

1. Fred Fedler's Harcourt Brace Jovanovich text, Reporting for the Print Media, calls his standards timeliness, importance, prominence, proximity, and oddities (116-17). The four University of Missouri School of Journalism professors who write St. Martin's News Reporting and Writing call theirs impact, proximity, timeliness, prominence, novelty, and conflict. (6-14) Melvin Mencher's text for William C. Brown identifies news values as impact, timeliness, prominence, proximity, conflict, the bizarre and currency (58-60). As an example of the latter, he says that "although starvation is common in several countries in the Third World," it lacked currency until a television crew brought these images back to the United States. "For a while a massive outpouring of aid went to the country. Then the interest slackened" (60).

2. Dickens imagines his reader walking idly along the street just outside Newgate, separated by only a wall from the squalor and death inside. As such, Dickens' effort to draw that reader from the "sidewalk" safety into an experience from which he will be released functions somewhat like a sidewalk newspaper vending machine that "summons" the reader from routine travel into the world of media representation where exotic "news values" are consumed.

3. Former Los Angeles Times and The Wall Street Journal reporter A. Kent MacDougall, a socialist, has written of a reporter's ability to get controversial topics into mainstream newspapers so long as the reporter remembers the standards of news value and delivers fresh, readable, ostensibly objective stories. Even though they are committed to capitalism, MacDougall says, few editors are conscious ideologues. "Most just want to print good stories and get the paper out on time. In their mind, a
good story is one that is read and commented on, whatever its message" (13). Yet reporters seldom are able to propose thorough-going economic solutions to the problems that their reporting uncovers, McDougall says. He recalls his long series on economic inequality for the Times: "understandably, there was no concluding piece on remedies. . . . [R]edistribution of wealth was more than the wealthy Los Angeles Times was prepared to contemplate" (17).
CHAPTER III
JOHN REED AND THE WRITING OF REVOLUTION

In New York, I first loved, and I first wrote of the things I saw, with a fierce joy of creation--and knew at last that I could write. There I got my first perceptions of the life of my time. The city and its people were an open book to me; everything had its story, dramatic, full of ironic tragedy and terrible humor. There I first saw that reality transcended all the fine poetic inventions of fastidiousness and medievalism. (Reed, "Almost Thirty" 139-140)

The mountains had withdrawn somewhere beyond the horizon, and we rode in the midst of a great bowl of desert, rolling up at the edges to meet the furnace-blue of the Mexican sky... It is almost impossible to get objective about the desert; you sink into it,—become part of it. (Reed, Insurgent Mexico 35)

This book is a slice of intensified history—history as I saw it... In the struggle my sympathies were not neutral. But in telling the story of those great days I have tried to see events with the eye of a conscientious reporter, interested in setting down the truth. (Reed, Ten Days That Shook the World 9, 13)

Reed has no detachment, and is proud of it, I think. By temperament he is not a professional writer or reporter. He is a person who enjoys himself. Revolution, literature, poetry, they
are only things which hold him at times, incidents merely of his living. Now and then he finds adventures by imagining it. Oftener he transforms his own experience. . . . There is no line between the play of his fancy and his responsibility to fact; he is for the time the person he imagines himself to be. (Lippmann 15)

The War has been a tremendous shatterer of faith in economic and political idealism. And yet I cannot give up the idea that out of democracy will be born the new world—richer, braver, freer, more beautiful. As for me I don’t know what I can do to help—I don’t know yet. All I know is that my happiness is built on the misery of other people, so that I eat because others go hungry, that I am clothed when other people go almost naked through the frozen cities in winter; and that fact poisons me, disturbs my serenity, makes me write propaganda when I would rather play—though not so much as it once did. (Reed, "Almost Thirty," 142)

The author of such powerfully and deeply implicating pieces of nonfiction narrative that his writings were suppressed both in the Soviet Union and America, the subject of at least three federal prosecutions for his on-the-scenes reports of a nation skidding toward war, a writer almost systematically ignored by literary critics even if alternately vilified and lionized by historians, biographers and film makers—John Reed offers an intriguing demonstration of the means by which nonfiction narrative can implicate its author and audience.

First, as implicated author, Reed attempted an historically significant and so far under-documented break
with the journalistic conventions of his time, particularly by challenging the ruling notions of how to cover armed conflict. And, writing at a time when prose journalists and their editors increasingly felt the competition of photography's market claim to represent the real, Reed was early to understand both the singular power of nonfiction narrative to force readers to confront history inside and outside the text as well as its ability to complicate the easy promise of visual representation. Third, many of Reed's prose stylings, particularly his devastatingly drawn character sketches, his sharp eye for ironic detail, and his trademark enumerations, remain fresh nearly a century after they were written and belie the new journalists' claims to having discovered literary reportage in the 1960s. And, finally, Reed offers an intriguing study because he was a writer who habitually implicated himself and his audience to an uncommon degree; who recognized many, if not all, of the ways in which he did so; and who, as a result, paid so dear a price of notoriety that a critical establishment enamored of detached scholarship could hardly bring itself to read him.

As evidence of the latter point, Reed is a writer whose historical presence looms so large that he has been the subject of three full-length biographies (Granville Hicks' John Reed: the Making of a Revolutionary [1936]; Robert Rosenstone's Romantic Revolutionary: A Biography of
John Reed [1975]; and Eric Homberger’s John Reed [1990]) and at least two feature-length films (Warren Beatty’s Reds and Sergei Bondarchuk’s Campanas Rojas), but virtually no serious critical study. The only book-length treatment that purports to analyze Reed’s writing (David C. Duke’s John Reed [1987]) is written by a history professor and is much more valuable as biographical sketch than literary criticism. Indeed, the Modern Language Association lists no English-language critical publications on Reed since 1980, save a chapter by Rosenstone (like Duke, an historian) in a social history of the twentieth century’s progressive era published in 1983 and a brief mention in a recent "sourcebook" of literary journalism. Only two dissertations have been filed on Reed since 1975, both written by historians.

Moreover, books by and about Reed are rarely classified as literature in either libraries or bookstores (in marked contrast to books by and about Stephen Crane and George Orwell). Walter B. Rideout’s study, The Radical Novel in the United States 1900-1954, concludes, "As far as his influence on the literature of the Left goes, Reed’s death was his greatest achievement. . . . Strictly as a literary man, Reed has no place in this volume" (127). And finally, the recently published (1992) and quite comprehensive Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism devotes less than ten of its nearly four hundred pages to
Reed, concluding that he "became an apologist of the [Bolshevik] regime and a political activist, thereby ending his career as a literary journalist" (Humphrey 159).

By contrast, a wealth of source material on Reed's writing and literary influences has been collected that can offer the underpinnings of serious literary analysis such as that I have proposed in the model of implicated writer and reader outlined in the previous two chapters. The material begins with the John Reed papers at Harvard's Houghton Library, which were donated by Reed's companion Louise Bryant, collected by John Stuart for the Harvard John Reed Alumni Committee, and exhaustively studied and cited by Rosenstone for his comprehensive biography of Reed and, to a somewhat less scholarly extent, by Hicks. Moreover, Eric Homberger and John Biggart have collected Reed's hitherto unpublished writings for the period 1917 until Reed's death in 1920 for their 1992 anthology John Reed and the Russian Revolution: Uncollected Articles, Letters, and Speeches on Russia. The scope of that collection deepens and complements earlier valuable anthologies of Reed's articles and short stories: the Communist Party's International Press reader, The Education of John Reed; the Floyd Dell-edited volume, Daughters of the Revolution and Other Stories; City Lights' Adventures of a Young Man: Short Stories from Life; and John Reed for The Masses, a 1987 collection of Reed's articles first
published in the radical Greenwich Village periodical, The Masses.

In this chapter I will make use of this wealth of source material to remedy the gap in the critical study of Reed. This chapter will also serve as a close demonstration of how Reed’s literary reportage implicates its writer (as both an author and character) and its readers (as both consumers and characters) in the powerful social and literary transactions that are presented (and were marketed) as narrative histories of the Mexican Revolution, World War I, and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Along the way, by concentrating closely on Reed’s two most fully realized narratives, Insurgent Mexico and Ten Days That Shook the World, and to a somewhat lesser extent on his World War I journalism (The War in Eastern Europe and several shorter articles), I will document how Reed increasingly recognizes his own implication as a reporter and creator of nonfiction text, how that implication changes as his radicalism deepens and his sense of purpose and audience shifts, and how that change affected his contemporary (and, indeed, even his current) readers.

The overriding theme of Reed’s nonfiction—both early and late—is its exploration of power relationships with social and political overtones. And for the purposes of this study, Reed certainly deserves to be read as a
journalist who crafted his reportage with vivid narrative style. In his autobiographical essay, "Almost Thirty," written while he was recovering from a kidney operation shortly before he returned to Russia to cover the Bolshevik revolution, Reed recalls that "history was my passion," but also reveals his boyhood love for Twain; Bill Nye (I Rode With Geronimo); R. D. Blackmore's Lorna Doone, filled with local historical allusions; The Arabian Nights; and the Tales of the Round Table (128).

In that same essay, Reed credits two sources, Harvard composition professor Charles Townsend Copeland and classmate Walter Lippmann, for his blending of literary narrative with keen social, political, and economic analysis. He had had his quarrels with both men, but his tribute to their influence encapsulates the complementary interests that drove Reed's literary reportage:

Professor Copeland, . . . under the pretense of teaching English composition, has stimulated generations of men to find color and strength and beauty in books and in the world, and to express it again . . . [and Lippmann] reading and thinking and talking about politics and economics, not as dry theoretical studies, but as live forces acting on the world. (136)

In "Copey," Reed found a teacher courageous enough to buck what Reed described as the prevailing Harvard educational philosophy: "We take young soaring imaginations, consumed with curiosity about the life they see all around, and feed
them with dead technique" (129). And in Lippmann, he found a way out of the "dry, theoretical" study of the social sciences: the Socialist Club, city elections, the Massachusetts legislature, organizing Harvard servants, the Men's League for Women's Suffrage, Single Tax, anarchy (128).

Granville Hicks quotes an anecdote in his biography of Reed that summarizes Reed's interest in enlivening dead technique (even in reportage) with literary imagination. Reed and artist Boardman Robinson were together on the Eastern Front in World War I when Robinson challenged Reed's historical accuracy on a point. "But it didn't happen that way," Robinson complained:

In reply, Reed seized some of his companion's sketches and announced, "She didn't have a bundle as big as that," and "He didn't have a full beard." Retorting that he was not interested in photographic accuracy, Robinson claimed to be giving a feeling, and impression. "Exactly," said Jack, "that is just what I am trying to do." (197-198)

Underpinning Reed's complementary interests in literature and history was his lifelong obsession for the foreign, the exotic, the remote, the "Other." He recalls in "Almost Thirty" that he gained that fascination (and sometimes fear) from two sources. One source, neatly domesticated by humor and imperialist fantasy, was "my uncle, a romantic figure who played at coffee-planting in
Central America, mixed in revolutions, and sometimes blew in, tanned and bearded and speaking 'spigotty' like a mestizo" (128). Reed recalls with no small satisfaction that his uncle was said to have helped to lead a revolution that captured Guatemala for a few days, and when he was made secretary of state of that Central American nation, used the funds of the national treasury to host a grand state ball and to declare war on Germany "because he had flunked his German course in college" (128). The other source, although economically domesticated at Reed's Portland home in their roles as the family's servants, were Chinese. They offered to young Reed the promise and menace of Orientalism, something not fully tamed:

They brought ghosts and superstitions into the house, and the tang of bloody feuds among themselves, idols and foods and drinks, strange customs and ceremonies, half-affectionate, half-contemptuous, wholly independent, and withal outlandish, they have left me a memory of pig-tales and gongs and fluttering red paper. (127)

Little wonder, then, that Reed's most lasting prose blends literature with history, social struggle, and economics, and, moreover, that most of it is set outside the borders of the United States. Reed's inter-relationship with the foreign subjects of his reportage creates a fascinating trajectory across his career, as he shifts from the easy, romanticized imperialism that his uncle represented toward a position much further removed
from the domesticized North American fantasies of his boyhood dreams. This chapter will consider *Insurgent Mexico* and *Ten Days That Shook the World*—the first and last of his major literary reporting projects—as the limits of that trajectory.

Like his uncle, for his first real reporting adventure, Reed traveled south of the border. In *Insurgent Mexico*, a book compiled from magazine assignments gained by the sponsorship of mentor and muckraker Lincoln Steffens, Reed explores the remote cruelty of Mexican nobility/intelligencia pitted against the humanity of both the Mexican peasants and their (and certainly Reed's) hero: the outlaw and revolutionist Pancho Villa. A close examination of Reed as an implicated author reveals a more hidden agenda in *Insurgent Mexico* as well: his attempt to symbolically disassociate himself from ruling class interests and to chronicle his acceptance by the Mexican peasants. In doing so, Reed makes a dramatic break with such literary and journalistic progenitors as Richard Harding Davis and Stephen Crane, a break he no doubt expected his readers to recognize. But despite this adjustment, in *Insurgent Mexico*, unlike his work after the outbreak of World War I, Reed was careful to present revolution in terms palatable to most American readers.

The cultural and artistic conflict revealed by a close reading demonstrates that the Reed of *Insurgent Mexico*
could never shed his recognition that he—as a "gringo" journalist trading on the wealth and rights of North American power—was implicated by the very terms of his project. He thus leaves, wittingly or unwittingly, unacknowledged "traces" of his presence throughout the text, most notably in the liberties he took with the historical record and in his construction of the morality play that makes up the book's final scene.

By the time Ten Days was written, only some five years later, the events of Reed's life—his strong break with his government over the U.S. involvement in World War I, his indictment for seditious writing and editing, his exclusion from and/or the suppression of his traditional writing markets—had produced a profound change in Reed that affects the transaction between him, as author, and his audience, as readers and consumers. Although Reed's few critics have generally argued that Reed as a historical presence is virtually absent from Ten Days, his narrative style is everywhere present there. That style in his story of the Russian Revolution goes far beyond "no more than a camera recording history" (Rosenstone 335-36). The narrator of Ten Days speaks from the "present" of revolutionary action. Yet, both Reed (who because of the U.S. government's seizure of his notes and records was writing more than a year after the November revolution) and his readers were certainly well aware that the Bolsheviks
ultimately had prevailed. This technique of present, yet inevitable, change produces in the narrative an effect of immediacy trembling under the force of history—thus revealing Reed's political ideology and forcing a conflicted stance for the vast majority of Reed's audience (then and now). Much of that audience is forced, finally, to identify within the text with protagonists that it cannot accept outside the text—a transaction that Reed milks for all its dramatic effect and a transaction so unsettling that it ultimately helped to prompt the book's suppression in both the United States and the Soviet Union.

At the same time, Reed's own involvement in the events of the Bolshevik Revolution has shifted from his earlier book-length narratives. Unlike in *Insurgent Mexico*, he is not so much implicated by the gathering of his material (where he seems to want to hide that privilege) as by its reception. Reed presents an almost eerie repetition of key initiation moments from *Insurgent Mexico*, but with significant differences. He now seems to recognize that he has more in common with the subjects of his narrative than with many of his readers and that his "acceptance" by the Bolsheviks cannot by tolerated without direct political and social cost, unlike his "acceptance" by Pancho Villa and the Mexican peasants.

The son of a progressive Portland social reformer, protege of muckraker Lincoln Steffens, Harvard classmate of
T. S. Eliot and Walter Lippmann—John Reed was just beginning to establish himself as a serious political writer on the eve of his assignment to the Mexican Revolution by Metropolitan magazine. Metropolitan in 1913 was a mass circulation periodical with pretensions to avant garde culture and, despite the trendy socialism it had embraced a few years earlier, was bankrolled by a Vanderbilt and Guggenheim heir Henry Payne Whitney (Rosenstone 209). The magazine, therefore, occupied something of the same social and market niche in 1913 as does, perhaps, Rolling Stone or Vanity Fair in the 1990s.

For his part, Reed was more than ready to meet the challenge of blending radical politics and Bohemian fashion in the service of career advancement. During his first several years as a New York journalist, Reed had already reported on and been arrested at the Paterson silk mill strike, had written a participatory journalism account of his arrest and incarceration for the radical journal, The Masses, and had composed an expose of the Paterson jail for Metropolitan. He had also helped to produce, along with the I.W.W.'s "Big Bill" Haywood and feminist Margaret Sanger, the historic Madison Square Garden pageant for which thousands of striking I.W.W. silk mill workers had played themselves in a drama of their struggle.

By 1913, Reed had penned a credo for The Masses, the new Greenwich Village-based magazine edited by Max Eastman
and the publisher of Reed's first article about the I.W.W. Paterson strike. Named a contributing editor of the magazine and confident of Eastman's approval, Reed had written boldly of the magazine's mission:

[T]he broad purpose of The Masses is a social one; to everlastingly attack old systems, old morals, old prejudices—the whole weight of outworn thought that dead men have saddled upon us; and to set up many new ones in their places. So, standing on the common sidewalk, we intend to lunge at spectres,—with a rapier rather than a broad-axe, with frankness rather than innuendo. We intend to be arrogant, impertinent, in bad taste, but not vulgar. We will be bound by no one creed or theory of social reform, but will express them all, providing they be radical. (qtd. in Rosenstone 99)

Yet, in 1913, as he traveled to Presidio County, Texas, with his then-lover, Mabel Dodge Luhan, Reed seemed as much the prototypical "gonzo" journalist or Tom Wolfe dandy as serious political writer. Dressed in a bright orange corduroy suit and indulging, with Luhan and her money, in several days of hard partying as the train wound its way toward Texas, Reed arrived to find a border town bristling with Yankee profiteers, soldiers, outlaws, and gun runners. Richard Harding Davis, perhaps the most famous war correspondent of the day, and with Stephen Crane the star reporter of the Spanish-American War, was already there for the New York Tribune (Hicks 112) as were other journalists and photographers.
The Mexican Revolution was the first war to be covered by photographers capable of shooting action scenes for quick newsprint reproduction, an innovation which extended what seemed like an insatiable public appetite for war representation. Fifteen years earlier, the coverage of the "Rough Riders" and other U. S. forces in Cuba had attracted "some five hundred reporters, photographers, and artists, . . . including virtually all of the era’s most famous journalists" (Robertson 75).

Yet, the development and efficient transmission of "halftone" photos by the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 had transformed war photography from a collection of "staged scenes" and stills to action shots. The Mexican Revolution soon became the laboratory for the new photographic techniques, and competition intensified. Editors searched for writers capable of constructing strong narrative "word-pictures" that could compete with and support photographic reproduction. As photographer George Leighton recalled some thirty years later:

All through the boom years of the muckrake periodicals after 1900, most of the photographs were "scenes" or posed photographs of notables. . . . [i]t is fair to say that no revolution has ever been so thoroughly photographed. (288)

Leighton remembers that pictorial reproduction was so fashionable during the 'teens that even the outlaw revolutionary Pancho Villa hired an artist to ride along
with him to chronicle the triumphs of the revolution and indulged the Mutual Film Co.—which had offered him money to stage a sham battle for their cameras—by hurrying preparations for a real battle and fighting it while the camera crank turned (Brenner and Leighton 192).

For his part, Reed was more than ready to take up the challenge to create word pictures of prose, yet he seemed to be almost alone among contemporary reporters to recognize the power of the photographic and print media to alter, as well as to document, the events they recorded. Given that his account of the Mexican Revolution is not presented strictly chronologically, it seems important that Reed devoted so many of the early pages of Insurgent Mexico to a narrative critique of the interaction between reality and its representation. Some of these anecdotes seem startlingly contemporary today, and they are a feature of Reed’s writing that is entirely missing from such contemporary accounts as Davis’ 1910 collection, Notes of a War Correspondent.

For example, Reed noted that one of the most booming businesses in the Texas border town of Presidio was taking portraits, normally sold on the installment plan, whereby the locals would prove their existence by having it photographically reproduced. Here is Reed’s vignette of the sheriff of Presidio County, who lived his life like a bad imitation of an Owen Wister novel and:
would bluster into town on a small pinto horse,—a figure true to the best tradition of "The Girl of the Golden West." He had read all Owen Wister's novels, and knew what a Western sheriff ought to look like: two revolvers on the hip, one slung under the arm, a large knife in his left boot, and an enormous shotgun over his saddle. His conversation was larded with the most fearful oaths and he never caught any criminal. He spent all of his time enforcing the Presidio County law against carrying firearms and playing poker; and at night, after the day's work was done, you could always find him sitting in at a quiet game in the back of Kleinmann's store. (6)

After wading across the Rio Grande into Mexico in defiance of General Orozco, Reed met Villa's compatriot, General Tomas Urbina (who would later be executed by Villa's militia for stealing thousands of pounds of gold from the Division of the North's war chest [Atkin 254-55]). Reed's vignette of Urbina is strikingly drawn, a virtual prototype of the ironically surreal set pieces that Joan Didion was to use to her advantage some six decades later in her reportage from San Salvador and Miami. Reed, like Didion, draws a strong sub-theme of the interrelation between macho posturing and its media representation:

In the patio the General was talking with his mistress, a beautiful, aristocratic-looking woman, with a voice like a hand-saw. When he noticed me he came up and shook hands, saying that he'd like to have me take some pictures of him. I said that that was my purpose in life. (26)
As the days pass and the photographs pile up, Urbina grows suspicious of Reed’s impatience to reach the front and asks the young reporter whether he is unhappy with Urbina’s hospitality. Does he want a woman, a pistol, a horse, money? Urbina throws a handful of silver dollars at Reed’s feet in a gesture the reporter interprets as far more menacing than munificent:

I said: "Nowhere in Mexico am I so happy and contented as in this house."
And I was prepared to go further. For the next hour I took photographs of General Urbina: General Urbina on foot, with and without sword; General Urbina on three different horses; General Urbina with and without his family; General Urbina’s three children, on horseback and off; General Urbina’s mother, and his mistress; the entire family, armed with swords and revolvers, including the phonograph, produced for the purpose, one of the children holding a placard upon which was inked: "General Tomas Urbina R."
(27)

Later in the book, even under fire during the "Bloody Dawn" invasion of Torreon, Reed has time for a sardonic anecdote about the symbiosis between war and those correspondents that cover it. In a scene that, except for the horse, would not be out of place in Michael Herr’s Dispatches, Reed draws a portrait of Captain Marinelli, an Italian soldier of fortune,

steering as near the newspapermen as possible, with a serious Napoleonic look on his face. He glanced once or
twice at the camera man, smiling graciously, but the latter coldly looked away. With a workmanlike flourish he ordered the wheeling of his gun into position and sighted it himself. Just then a shell burst deafeningly about a hundred yards in front. The Federales were getting the range. Martinelli bounded away from his cannon, mounted his horse, limbered up and came galloping dramatically back with his gun rumbling along at a dead run behind. None of the other guns had retreated. Pulling up his foaming charger in front of the camera man, he flung himself to the ground and took a position.

"Now," he said, "you can take my picture."
"Go to hell," said the camera man, and a great shout of laughter went up along the line. (219-20)

Several of the early chapters of what was to become *Insurgent Mexico* were printed in *Metropolitan* to the enthusiastic response of its editor Carl Hovey. The magazine advertised the series in newspapers with a drawing of Reed outfitted in sombrero, revolver, and gunbelts and a text that revealed *Metropolitan*'s sense of competition both with the war photographers and with other, more well-known correspondents: "Word pictures of war by an American Kipling ... What Stephen Crane and Richard Harding Davis did for the Spanish American War in 1898, John Reed, 26 years old, has done for Mexico" (qtd. in Rosenstone 166).

For his part, Reed was considerably less enamored with the capacity of reporters and photographers to "do" anything for a war effort, as can be seen in a blistering scene of journalists riding on the train car hired by
Robert Dorman, who would eventually become the general manager of Acme News Pictures. Dorman had, himself, been a soldier of fortune until he learned that shooting pictures of war might be more profitable than shooting bullets (Leighton 290). The car was hitched onto Villa’s troop train and carried the correspondents into battle. Reed spares neither his fellow correspondents nor himself from his acidly ironic reporting when the train car comes under fire, noting that they began drinking neat whiskey when the firing started and grew much more brave as they got drunk. Soon, two “belligerent Anglo-Saxons” begin to curse passing Mexicans and “one man almost choked a driveling old fool who was with the moving-picture outfit.” Two members of the press fall into a booze-addled conversation that Reed faithfully reports:

"A Mexican greaser hasn’t any guts! One American can lick fifty Mexicans! Why, did you see how they ran this afternoon when the shells hit that grove? And how we--hic--we staid [sic] by the car?" (259)

His editor’s name-dropping marketing strategy notwithstanding, Reed’s coverage of the Mexican Revolution itself differs strikingly from that which either Crane or Davis had produced during the Spanish-American War. For example, these more famous writers—both of whom could be fine reporters and deft stylists and who, in fact, are under-appreciated as prototypical literary journalists—
had displayed a "rah-rah" sensibility in covering the Battle of San Juan Hill in Cuba some 15 years earlier that it is impossible to imagine Reed emulating. And to the extent that either Davis or Crane concerned himself with print or photographic coverage of the war, it was only to establish his own talent. Both are careful to establish their superiority over the "picture papers," but neither critiques the complicity between war and its media representation as does Reed.

First there is Davis, the most famous correspondent of his time, who writes of the U.S. Army charge:

General Hawkins, with hair as white as snow and yet far in advance of men thirty years his junior, was so noble a sight that you felt inclined to pray for his safety; on the other hand, Roosevelt, mounted high on horseback, and charging the rifle-pits at a gallop and quite alone, made you feel you would like to cheer. He wore on his sombrero a blue polka-dot handkerchief, a la Havelock, which, as he advanced, floated out strait [sic] behind his head, like a guidon. . . . I have seen many illustrations and pictures of this charge on the San Juan hills, but none of them seem to show it just as I remember it. In the picture-papers the men are running uphill swiftly and gallantly, in regular formation, rank after rank, with flags flying, their eyes aflame, and their hair streaming, their bayonets fixed, in long, brilliant lines, an invincible, overpowering weight of numbers. Instead of which I think the thing which impressed one the most, when our men started from cover, was that they were so few. It seemed as if some one had made an awful and terrible mistake.
One's instinct was to call to them to come back. (Cuba 96-97)

And now, compare Crane as he tries his hand at covering the same battle for the New York World in a dispatch reprinted in the Chicago Tribune, Boston Globe, and Harper's Weekly under the headline "Stephen Crane's Vivid Story of the Battle of San Juan":

No doubt when history begins to grind out her story we will find that many a thundering, fine, grand order was given for that day's work; but after all there will be no harm in contending that the fighting line, the men and their regimental officers, took the hill chiefly because they knew they could take it, some having no orders and others disobeying whatever orders they had. In civil life the newspapers would have called it a grand, popular movement. It will never be forgotten as long as America has a military history... One saw a thin line of black figures moving across a field. They disappeared in the forest. The enemy was keeping up a terrific fire. Then suddenly somebody yelled: "By God, there go our boys up the hill!" There is many a good American who would give an arm to get the thrill of patriotic insanity that coursed through us when we heard that yell. Yes, they were going up the hill, up the hill. It was the best moment of anybody's life. (155, 158)¹

A contrast of either Richard Harding Davis' or Stephen Crane's scenes of the Battle of San Juan Hill to Reed's depiction of Pancho Villa's successful invasion of Torreon is striking. Certainly, Reed makes no secret of the fact that he wishes Villa's forces to prevail; therefore,
Villa's invasion might be the occasion when one might most expect a "best moment of anybody's life" tone to emerge in his writing. Instead, Reed devotes scenes to the irony and immediacy of death and limits his heroes to those ragged soldiers in ditches who have the creativity and moxie (like I.W.W. pageanteers) to celebrate their struggle in impromptu song. First, as the battle interrupts the card games in the trenches, it becomes a desperate gamble with death the reward for a losing hand. There is no time to mourn the fallen in this battle scene, which is presented with Reed's customary eye for detail:

Instantly the wall bristled with shining barrels and the two awoke crackling with hidden vicious firing. Bullets roofed the heavens with whistling steel—drummed the smoking dust up until a yellow curtain of whirling cloud veiled us from the houses and the tank. We could see our friend running low along the ground, the sleepy man following, standing erect, still rubbing his eyes. Behind strung out the gamblers, squabbling yet. Somewhere in the rear a bugle blew. The sharpshooter running in front stopped suddenly, swaying, as if he had run against a solid wall. His left leg doubled under him and he sank crazily to one knee in the exposed flat, whipping up his rifle with a yell. "--- --- the dirty monkeys!" he screamed, firing rapidly into the dust. "I'll show the -----! the cropped heads! The jail-birds!" He shook his head impatiently, like a dog with a hurt ear. Blood drops flew from it. Bellowing with rage, he shot the rest of his clip and then slumped to the ground and thrashed to and fro for a minute. (225)
The heavens in Reed’s battle scene are cut off from earth by a "roof of bullets." The "hero" lies dead, pumping his bullets into the ground in an ineffectual death reflex. Eventually, the land and the peons who work the land rouse themselves to begin anew, and Reed allows himself a moment of genuine, if more than a little patronizing, tribute:

The sun gloriously down behind the notched purple mountains in front of us, and for a minute a clear fan of quivering light poured up the high arc of stainless sky. The birds awoke in the trees; leaves rustled. The fertile land exhaled a pearly mist. A dozen ragged soldiers, lying close together, began to improvise the air and words of a song about the battle of Torreon--a new ballad was being born. . . . Other singing came to us through the still, cool dusk. I felt my whole feeling going out to these gentle, simple people--so lovable they were. (233)

Even this redemptive scene, however, soon is undercut by three vignettes that establish the poison, the randomness, and finally the terrible boredom, of war. First, Reed, like many of Villa’s soldiers drinks water from a poisoned ditch and "rolled very sick on the ground" (236). Second, Reed and a news photographer (a significant detail given Reed’s ongoing critique of the media’s role in the war) are fired upon by a random, and indeed almost aimless, sniper:

"By God," said the photographer. "Some beggar’s sniping at us." Instinctively we both sprinted. The rifle shots came faster. It was a long distance across the plain. After a while we reduced it to a jog-trot. Finally we walked along,
with the dust spurting up as before, and a feeling that, after all, it wouldn’t do any good to run. Then we forgot it. (244)

With a thousand dead and a thousand wounded in the four days before the fall of Gomez Palacio, Reed gives the last word of the battle chapters to a common soldier:

"How brave we Mexicans are," he said drolly. "Killing each other like this! . . ." I soon went back to camp, sick with boredom. A battle is the most boring thing in the world if it lasts any length of time. It is all the same . . . (253)

Therefore, Reed establishes a strong break with the manner by which reporters like Davis and Crane covered war. Although Reed seemed genuinely moved by the sacrifice of common soldiers, his work is almost entirely bereft of scenes that would glorify a battle on its own terms. What Crane consigned to his own notes and never tried to publish—an explicit critique of foreign wars and the tendency of American journalists to stereotype foreign natives—(see end note one for this chapter) is presented directly by Reed in Insurgent Mexico.

Aesthetically, Insurgent Mexico is a fine first book for a 26-year-old journalist just beginning to reach maturity as a writer. What Reed has done is to create a factual novel whose protagonists are a modern diaspora, traveling through the Wilderness in search of a Promised Land (or at least the land promised them by agrarian
reform). Rather than depending on a higher power, Reed suggests that the power available to them is their ability to work together for a common goal. Hence the famous opening scene of the Yermo section, where Villa’s troop train creates its pillars of smoke and fire for the people to follow:

At Yermo there is nothing but leagues and leagues of sandy desert, sparsely covered with scrubby mesquite and dwarf cactus, stretching away on the west to jagged, tawny mountains, and on the east to a quivering skyline of plain. . . . There is no water to speak of for forty miles. There is no grass for animals. For three months in the spring bitter, parching winds drive the yellow dust across it. Along the single track in the middle of the desert lay ten enormous trains, pillars of fire by night and of black smoke by day, stretching back northward farther than the eye could reach. (175)

When the train (both literally and symbolically) is stopped by the enemy’s sabotage, Reed depicts "four hundred men working shoulder to shoulder" (193) on the instrument of their own salvation rather than waiting for some high priest to bring them a sign of God’s blessing.

Within the virtually Biblical effect for which Reed was striving, the panoramic scenes of flood, drought, poison waters, pillars of fire and smoke achieve a unifying sense to what otherwise might be disjointed scenes. And, ultimately, the book’s Exodus sub-text provides fertile ground for Reed’s careful juxtaposition of the people’s
leader, Villa, and the remote, aristocratic Carranza (a juxtaposition that will recur in *Ten Days* in the contrast between Trotsky and Kerensky or Smolny and The Duma). Carranza, as a remote high priest, "descended from the dominant Spanish race; a great land-owner" (269) and is like the high priest or Pharaoh, remote in his Nogales border town compound. Reed notes ironically that the page containing his questions for an interview with Carranza has been answered by five different handwritings and that "newspaper men were in high favor at Nogales; they were treated always with the utmost courtesy by the members of the Provisional Cabinet; but they never seemed to reach the First Chief" (277).

On the last day of his stay, while "loafing around" the Municipal Palace grounds, Reed chances to see Carranza leave his room and creates a riveting final scene:

> Carranza himself stood framed in it, arms hanging loosely by his sides, his fine old head thrown back, as he stared blindly over our heads across the wall to the flaming clouds. . . . At the doorway he stopped and stood there a long time, looking out on the street. The four sentries jumped to attention. The two men behind him grounded their arms and stopped. The First Chief of the Revolution clasped his hands behind his back, his fingers working violently. Then he turned, and pacing between the two guards, went back to the little dark room. (278)

Reed, therefore, brings the artistry of *Insurgent Mexico* to bear on the manner by which he intends the book
to break from earlier depictions of North American presence in Mexico and Central America. If the work represents a contrast from the flag-waving reportage of Crane and Davis, then Reed's artistic recreation of a modern-day diaspora does service to that cause. But, as I have shown, Reed refuses to glorify war itself, writing of the revolution in positive terms only when he can establish the manner by which Mexican peasants work together, an directly criticizes an important U.S. ally. Otherwise, he finds the actual warfare of the Mexican Revolution boring, never the "best moment of anybody's life" that Crane finds in a successful skirmish.

But beyond this artistry, the effects achieved by reading Reed's historical presence against the narrative presence he constructs for himself seem to be significant. Some are intended by Reed; others seem to be unintended, but become even more revealing because they are unintentional. As Rosenstone and other careful readers have already shown, Insurgent Mexico can be read as the elaborate coming of age of the young writer. Certainly its long Part I lends itself to that sort of reading as the young journalist slowly works his way into the graces of not only Villa, but, even more importantly, the Tropa soldiers with whom he shares a camp. Reed learns to drink the fiery sotol of the Mexicans, eats the carne crudo ("we ripped meat from the carcass and ate it raw" [45]), argues
the meaning of liberty and self-interest (40-41), dances until dawn, and watches the campanieros fight the bulls.

When Reed is threatened by the drunken Julian Reyes and called a coward because he is a correspondent and thus forbidden to fight, the gentle Longinos Guereca stands over him and tells Reyes that Reed is braver to go into battle without arms:

He sat down where Julian had been, smiled his homely, gentle smile and took both of my hands in his. "We shall be compadres, eh," said Longinos Guereca. "We shall sleep in the same blankets, and always be together." (52)

Another friend is Subteniente Luis Martinez, and at night, with the fire out and the camp filled with snores, "We sat at each other's blankets . . . talking about the world, our girls, and what we were going to be when we really got to it" (67).

These scenes set up the ambush of the Tropa by the loyalist Colorados and make the deaths of Guereca and Martinez in that battle all the more poignant. Reed learns here that war is not so romantic as he thought.

Symbolically, the reporter sheds the instruments of both civilization and representation as he flees the Colorados, but, at first, consoles himself with the gain of "material":

It was a straight path through the desert toward the mountains. The desert was as bald as a billiard table here. We could be seen for miles. My
camera got between my legs. I dropped it. My overcoat became a terrible weight. I shook it off. . . . I ran on--ran and ran and ran, until I could run no more. Then I walked a few steps and ran again. I was sobbing instead of breathing. Awful cramps gripped my legs. . . . I ran. I wondered what time it was. I wasn't very frightened. Everything still was so unreal, like a page out of Richard Harding Davis. It just seemed to me that if I didn't get away I wouldn't be doing my job well. I kept thinking to myself: "Well, this is certainly an experience. I'm going to have something to write about." (87-88, 90)

A pacifico offers the fleeing Reed sanctuary and a bath at great personal risk to himself "because a stranger might be God, as we say" (90), and the correspondent sinks into its healing waters, sharing the hot spring with a priest who admits that God "is better in Spain than he is in Mexico" (90):

I let myself slowly down into the pellucid, hot depths. The pain and the soreness and the weariness fled shuddering up my body. I felt like a disembodied spirit. Floating there in the warm embrace of that marvelous pool, with the crooked gray branches of the alamo above our heads, we discussed philosophy. The fierce sky cooled slowly, and the rich sunlight climbed little by little up the pink wall. (95)

But Reed ultimately recognizes that the nonfiction material he has sought has been purchased at the price of his friends. Both Gino and Martinez have been shot, and Reed shifts his thoughts from material to mortality: "I felt sick. Sick to think of so many deaths . . . Blithe,
beautiful Martinez; 'Gino Guereca, whom I learned to love so much" (98). That night Reed shares a bed with a woman who has lost her man to the war that day. The villagers mistakenly think they are to consummate their love and serenade them as newlyweds. But the two do not have sex. Instead, "Her hand reached for mine. She snuggled against my body for the comforting human warmth of it . . . . And calmly, sweetly, sleep came to me" (107).

With its ironic echo of Richard Harding Davis, its surrender to the solace of bath and Platonic bed, Reed's travels with the Tropa are meant to establish for the reader not only his narrative presence in the book, but also his flesh-and-blood presence as a foreign writer and journalist. The scene—which teaches the journalist not to subsume actual human beings to "material"—plays much the same role as the essay on the "Mexican poor" that Crane consigned to his "unpublished" files. Fleeing alone as he was, Reed might have written any "script" for himself. That he chooses one that ends in womb-like acceptance of his mortality, in his declaration of love for two soldiers, in his implication in their deaths, in his chaste night with a grieving widow, shows the extent to which Reed—at least on the surface of the text—is willing to rewrite the script of what it might mean to be a heroic witness.

Yet, unacknowledged in Insurgent Mexico is an even deeper personal guilt that Reed was not so ready to face.
Eager as he was to declare his solidarity with the Mexican peasants, the facts of Reed's own personal history were not up to the role he consigned himself in his nonfiction, and so he needed to create in his narrative that which he could not be in his own life. A discussion of that issue will raise interesting ramifications of what it might mean when an author chooses to present "truth" as fiction and "untruth" as nonfiction, and will prepare us for reading the nonfiction that Reed produced later in his career.

Although Reed took several chronological liberties within *Insurgent Mexico* and presented English versions of Spanish dialogue that were no doubt beyond his translation and transcription powers, careful readers like Hicks, Rosenstone, Homberger, and Duke are willing to grant him the license to rearrange and even enhance his narrative version of truth. Rosenstone is perhaps the most articulate of Reed's readers in summing up this permission:

> Suspended in John Reed's writings are incidents that float delicately between the realms of fact and fiction, with the narrator a character living in a world of romance, enacting a truth more emotional than literal. Details and dialogue altered for the benefit of dramatic structure, the result is an account of events that transcends the world of reportage... A fusion of self with historical event occurred because his writing reflected a search for meaning and self-definition. (150)

Because the thrust of my study has never been to draw generic boundaries, I have no desire to somehow disqualify
Reed as a literary journalist (as some critics might) because he might play loosely with the facts. But neither will I ignore the social and artistic implications that arise from those decisions. The essence of reading for the implicated author in nonfiction, as I have argued, compels the critic to examine the ways in which the narrative voice in the text cuts across the historical voice of the author as well as the traces of conflict that remain. Insurgent Mexico provides at least one such example of that sort of conflict that is worth examining in detail.

In the book, Reed lies about the manner by which he first gained access to Villa’s Tropa, hiding the truth behind a narrative he marketed as fiction: a tale entitled "Mac-American" published in the April 1914 edition of The Masses. In that story, Reed writes of a man named Mac, an "American in the raw" (43), whom the first-person narrator meets in a bar on New Year’s Eve, 1913. Among other details, the story has the character of Mac say that all Mexican women are "whores," that Mexican men are "dirty skunks and greasers" (44), and that "the greatest sport in the world is hunting niggers" (47). In ironic contrast to these remarks are Mac’s thoughts on American womanhood:

If any man dared to dirty the fair name of the American Woman to me, I think I’d kill him. . . . She is a Pure Ideal, and we’ve got to keep her so. I’d like to hear anybody talk rotten about a woman in my hearing. (45)
Mac, who has worked as a law enforcement officer in the United States, recalls a time he was working as a southern deputy sheriff. One night, he is writing a letter to his beloved sister (presumably one of the American Women whom he wishes to protect) when he is summoned to the bloodhound hunt of a black man through cotton fields, woods, across fences and rivers. He asks his audience:

"Say, did you ever hear a bloodhound when he's after a human? It's like a bugle! . . . Of course," he said, "when we got up to him, the dogs had just about torn that coon to pieces." (48-49, Reed's emphasis)

At the story's climax, Reed's narrator quotes Mac:

"I wouldn't like to live here in Mexico," Mac volunteered. "The people haven't got any Heart. I like people to be friendly, like Americans." (49)

Although the first-person narrator is never developed as a full character in the story, his sensibility is certainly not that of Reed, for the narrator finds Mac to be "a breath from home" (43) and tells the reader he and his companions listen to Mac with "the solemn righteousness of a convention of Galahads" (43). Reed thus presents as a presumably fictional character in a deeply ironic "tale" his actual conduit to Villa's army in Magistral. He does so, most likely, because Mac, though actually a useful guide for a reporter desperate to see wartime action, does not square with the narrator "self," nor with the political stance, that Reed intends his nonfiction to present. Thus,
it is easier for Reed to hide his relationship with Mac behind the cloak of a fictional persona rather than to own up to it in an historical account, one that I contend construes Reed both inside and outside the text.

Reed fashioned Insurgent Mexico as a true account of the Mexican Revolution and presented himself as an actual (and thus historically implicated) character within that account. But he could not bring himself to present "Mac-American" as an actual character. For if Reed acknowledges that his conduit to his "material" is American imperialism in microcosm, how is he to distinguish himself from the U. S. governmental interests, whose presence in Mexico he means to criticize?

Hiding his own sensibility behind the fictional narrator of "Mac-American" also offers Reed the advantage of effacing himself historically in that fictional story. As in his other tales (most notably, in his story "A Taste of Justice," where Reed names his first-person narrator "George" and has him confess that, although he picks up streetwalkers, he never does so in front of his midtown club [133]), Reed creates a distance between himself and his fictional narrator and thus avoids the implications of a strictly historical presence. Yet, Reed's daily log contained among his papers at the Harvard Library proves that without Mac, Reed might never have been able to meet Villa's army train (Rosenstone 168). Instead of giving Mac
a place in his nonfiction, Reed chooses an actual Mexican character named Antonio Montoya, whom he briefly met in Jimenez, to stand in for Mac in *Insurgent Mexico*.

Montoya is presented as "a pock-marked officer with a big revolver" who surprises Reed in his room and threatens to kill the "Gringo." Reed buys off Montoya by giving him his $2 wrist watch and observes as with "parted lips and absorbed attention [Montoya] watched it delightedly, as a child watches the operation of some new mechanical toy. 'A *compadre*, ' he cried emotionally" (163); then Montoya agrees to take Reed ("my *amigo*") to Magistral. In addition to suppressing the "Ugly American" character of Mac behind a Mexican "stand-in," the book presents, apparently without irony, the tableau of an American buying the friendship of a childlike Mexican with cheap mechanical gifts. It is, therefore, the story of imperialism in microcosm and a startling contrast to the genuine scenes of friendship that Reed had established in the Tropa with Gino or with Martinez.

Normally well suppressed in the text, this aspect of Reed's character is much closer to the sort of nakedly ambitious journalist who surfaces in a June 10, 1914 letter to *Metropolitan* editor Carl Hovey. With characteristic braggadocio and startling candor, Reed tells Hovey he has bought Villa a saddle and a rifle with a gold name plate upon it and a Maxim silencer. He is hugely delighted and
will do almost anything for me now. The story is going to be not only exciting to the limit, but the greatest human document you have ever seen. It is a beat on the whole world. (qtd. in Rosenstone 163)

That picture of Villa eating out of Reed's hand for the price of a saddle, rifle, and silencer is, of course, also silenced from the pages of *Insurgent Mexico*, its place taken by scenes of Villa's seemingly genuine liking for the North American (190) and his playful teasing of the "Senor Reporter" who comes south to cover the Mexican struggle (217).

Reed's biographers, even so astute an historian as Rosenstone, seem to want to apologize for Reed's alterations of the truth in *Insurgent Mexico*, perhaps because they, like most readers, are so taken by the book's overall depth of insight. Although Rosenstone recognizes that a "brutish American . . . is hardly a suitable companion for the narrator as revolutionary sympathizer" (168), he explains the suppression of Mac for Montoya as "more dramatic." Choosing not to make an issue of the price for which it was purchased, Rosenstone also sees Montoya as evidence of Reed's "ability to be embraced even by people who hated gringos" (168).

David Duke and James C. Wilson are more forgiving. Wilson argues that Reed introduced Montoya to the pages of *Insurgent Mexico* to "personify both the revolution and the
Mexican people . . . the spirit of Mexico" (69) while Duke goes even further and argues that Reed simply employs "a little literary license" (88) to add narrative excitement. And without apparently seeing Reed's own deep involvement in the same sort of project, Duke argues that Reed's "Mac-American" story makes it clear that Mac is no different from the many other Americans he had met in Mexico. With their ugly nationalism and predatory instincts, their only goal was the pursuit of the dollar. For these "friendly Americans" Mexico was a country to be exploited. (79-80)

While that is certainly a fair statement of the theme of "Mac-American," Duke neglects to see that Reed, too, had traveled to Mexico to pursue both fame and fortune and, in his own way, had treated the revolution as an event to be exploited for his growing journalistic capital. These impulses would not make Reed a singular reporter; indeed, profiting from the misfortunes of others is an occupational hazard of journalism. Fleeing from the Colorados, rejoicing in his "material" only to find it was undermined by the death of his friends, Reed is willing to implicate himself historically in those hazards by enfoldig them in his nonfiction; in buying off Montoya and Villa and burying Mac in a fiction, he is not.

Recognizing that complicity and/or responsibility and the ways that it is acknowledged or evaded is one of the
key insights that can be gained by reading nonfiction both inside and outside the text. It serves no purpose to deny that Reed hid those impulses behind a fictional persona, nor should a careful reader somehow banish *Insurgent Mexico* from the pristine nonfiction genre because she has caught its author in a lie. Far better to read a text like *Insurgent Mexico* as an opportunity to "analyze the research and writing of a work as social acts" and to examine how "the reporting process implicates writer, subjects, and readers in relationships beyond a text" (Pauly 112).

For, finally, Reed—with some significant exceptions—makes it easy for his North American readers to swallow their complicity in Mexico’s struggles even as Reed avoids some of his own deeper complicity. By concentrating on Villa’s human side, his fierce individualism, his Robin Hood method of operations, and the ability of North Americans to take advantage of the "natural friendliness" of their neighbors to the south, Reed ensured himself a book that could be popular with most North American readers, despite the significant break it represented from the worst jingoism of war correspondents like Crane and Davis.

Reed most likely recognized many of the ways in which his reporting methods sometimes compromised his ideals, particularly the ways in which his project forced him to embrace the "Mac’s" and the "Mac-attitudes" that undergird
the fact of a reporter writing about social revolution in a magazine bankrolled by Guggenheim-Vanderbilt trusts. Some of these contradictions he hid and others he acknowledged. And some traces of that conflict are buried skillfully in the text, as in Reed’s construction of the morality play that makes up the book’s final scene at the pastorellas at El Oro and that is one of the most gorgeous and unsettling sections of the book.

Here, the villagers gather for an ancient miracle play, a slice of Elizabethia in rural Mexico. "It is called 'Luzbel,'" Reed tells his reader, "the Spanish for Lucifer, and depicts Perverse Man in the Midst of His Deadly Sin" (310). The description of the crowd that gathers for the pastorellas is Reed’s writing at its stylistic best and worth quoting at length:

White, burning moonlight flooded the place. The patio sloped upward along the side of the mountain, where there was no wall to stop the view of great planes of shining upland, tilted to meet the shallow jade sky. To the low roof of the house a canopy of canvas drooped out over a flat place, supported by slanting poles, like the pavilion of a Bedouin kind. Its shadow cut the moonlight blacker than night. Six torches stuck in the ground around the outside of the place sent up thin lines of pitchy smoke. There was no other light under the canopy, except the restless gleams of innumerable cigarettes. Along the wall of the house stood black-robed women with black mantillas over their heads, the men-folks squatting at their feet. Wherever there was space between their
knees were children. Men and women alike smoked their cigarros, handing them placidly down so that the little ones might take a puff. It was a quiet audience, speaking little and softly, perfectly content to wait, watching the moonlight in the patio, and listening to the music, which sounded far away in the arch. A nightingale burst into song somewhere among the shrubs, and all of us fell ecstatically silent, listening to it. (312-13)

The woman who plays Lucifer, probably fittingly to Reed, wears the red leather costume of a Roman or imperial Spanish legionnaire. As Lucifer laments her "mad envy and ambition," one irrepressible audience member yells: "That's the way Huerta is going to feel when the Maderistas enter Mexico City" (317). The Reed who organized the I.W.W. pageant thrills to these breaches of the fourth wall between performers and audience, who "joined violently in the discussion" of marital fidelity, "hurling the words of the play back and forward—men and women drawing together in two solid hostile bodies" (322). Once, the play is interrupted outright when a hatless youth rushes in and reports a rebel victory in Mapimi. "Even the performers stopped singing, . . ." Reed reports, "and a whirlwind of questions beat upon the newcomer" (325).

Amid the hubbub, Reed inserts the ironic detail. the character of Lucifer, who earlier had fled the set after stealing a wallet from a peasant, returns unrecognized and is invited to join the feast:
[Lucifer] incited them maliciously to continue discussion of the robbery, and little by little to place the blame upon a stranger whom they all agreed having seen. Of course they meant Lucifer, but, upon being invited to describe him, they depicted a monster a thousand times more repulsive than the reality. None suspected that the apparently amiable stranger seated in their midst was Lucifer. (325)

Reed's overt agenda is to suggest how people are blinded by their fears into believing that the enemy is greater than they are. But he leaves a trace of a theme much more profound, one that implicates him (as well as his readers) in his very search for dramatic material. The "amiable stranger seated in their midst" seems to be Reed himself, for he is indeed the only foreigner mentioned in the scene.

Rosenstone is Reed's only commentator to address the scene at length, and he interprets it to be "the lingering romance" of peaceful, sleepy towns drowsing in the sun. "Here, beyond the reach of government," Rosenstone comments, "peons live without politics in a world where no such word as war or revolution is spoken" (168). But despite Rosenstone's reading, of course, the audience does discuss war and celebrate revolution in Reed's scene. Moreover, the Lucifer character dressed in the costume of Spanish conquistadors would seem to prove that the Mexican peasants are never beyond the reach of government, and that Reed knows it, especially if he is its emissary as the "Lucifer in their midst."
Reed ends his book by drawing that problem into a larger social question. The correspondent reluctantly pulls his gaze from the pastoral stage and seems to shift in his seat so as to directly address his modern readers as he and we contemplate our roles in the real-life drama of history amid the nightingales under the white, burning moonlight:

But already around the narrow shores of the Mexican Middle Ages beat the great seas of modern life—machinery, scientific thought, and political theory. Mexico will have to skip for a time her Golden Age of Drama. (326)

Read in retrospect, Reed’s closing words in Insurgent Mexico, seem prophetic for his own life as well. For his golden age as a rising media star was soon to be over. The outbreak of World War I was to beat great seas of change around the narrow shores of his own artistry and reportage. After the success of Insurgent Mexico, Reed was one of the highest-paid domestic and foreign correspondents in the country (Rosenstone 282) and had his pick of the major newspaper and magazine markets. But within little more than two years, stunning changes ensued both in the political climate of the United States and in Reed’s career. In that span, Reed was to face federal charges under espionage and sedition acts for conspiracy to obstruct the military draft, see more than 300 of his friends in the I.W.W. jailed on some 10,000 federal
charges, and stand by as virtually all of his normal outlets for publication either refused to print his work or were forced out of business by postal regulators or federal indictments.

An exchange of letters between Reed and his long-time mentor Lincoln Steffens during June 1918 (cited by Rosenstone from the Steffens papers at Columbia University Library) offers insight into the critical decisions Reed faced in his personal and professional future. He had just returned to the United States after witnessing the Bolshevik uprising in St. Petersburg and Moscow. On his return to Manhattan on April 28 (after being detained in Oslo for two months without a visa), he was interrogated and strip searched. His trunks of notes, Russian handbills, newspapers, and speeches were seized by the U. S. Department of State. Burning to write what he believed to be the greatest story of his life, he asked for advice from Steffens—who for years was his role model as a progressive journalist, muckraker, and the closest political associate to Reed’s late father. As the man who had arranged Reed’s assignment to the Mexican Revolution, Steffens was an important link to his success. Reed tells his mentor in the first letter that no newspaper will touch his syndicated series of the events in Russia: Collier’s took a story, put it in type, and sent it back. Oswald Villard told me he would be suppressed if he
published John Reed! I have a contract with Macmillan to publish a book, but the State Department took away all my papers when I came home, and up to date has absolutely refused to return any of them. . . . I am therefore unable to write a word of the greatest story of my life, and one of the greatest in the world. (319)

Steffens’ reply counsels patience. Publishing the story of the events in Russia, even if truthful, might be undemocratic while the United States is at war:

Jack, you do wrong to buck this thing. .. it is wrong to try to tell the truth now. We must wait. You must wait. I know it’s hard, but you can’t carry conviction. You can’t plant ideas. Only feelings exist, and the feelings are bewildered. I think it is undemocratic to try to do much now. Write, but don’t publish. (320)

Reed’s response to his mentor is brusque:

I am not of your opinion that it is undemocratic to buck this thing. If there were not the ghost of a chance, if everybody were utterly for it, even then I don’t see why it shouldn’t be bucked. All movements have to have somebody to start them and, if necessary, to go under for them. (320)

What happened in those few years to force Reed to consider extinguishing his future as a publishing journalist on the altar of political and social change? Is it true, as Reed’s only recent North American critic argues, that Reed had become "an apologist of the regime and a political activist, thereby ending his career as a literary journalist" (Humphrey 159)?
In fact, Reed’s literary reportage was never more vigorous than during the years between the Mexican and Russian revolutions. The telling elements of his style—the panoramic enumerations, the ironic details, the devastating character sketches—were, in fact, reaching the height of their powers as he approached the age of thirty. If anything, his reporting and literary judgment had matured from that of the young writer almost giddy at the prospect of being arrested for covering the silk mill strikes in Paterson. What had changed was the political and social climate in which he wrote. And because Reed was presenting his writings as nonfiction reportage, not as fiction, what he wrote directly affected not only himself, but also his contemporary readers, in ways that profoundly altered his career and life.

The range of Reed’s writing between the publication of Insurgent Mexico and Ten Days That Shook the World is quite rich, but in the context of the present chapter, a few examples will have to stand in for many. One of Reed’s last major pieces for Metropolitan was "The Colorado War," a long article on the miners’ strike in Ludlow, which Reed characteristically opens with an epigraph from testimony the president of Colorado Fuel and Iron. "Just what is meant by 'social freedom' I do not know," a lawyer comments. "Do you know what is meant by 'social freedom,' Mr. Welborn?" The president of the mining company
responds, "I do not." From that wry opening, Reed writes in his characteristic scenic detail of how private detective strike breakers clashed with strikers at the Ludlow colony. But the connection between international profits and the political insurgents that was only hinted at in *Insurgent Mexico* is explicitly stated here: "And orders were that the Ludlow colony must be wiped out," Reed writes. "It stood in the way of Mr. Rockefeller’s profits" (97).

Reed was delighted to learn that all of the book stores in Denver had cancelled their standing orders for *Metropolitan* after the Ludlow article appeared in the magazine. But the owners of the *Metropolitan* were not so pleased, and Reed’s line became tenuous to the publication that had once extolled his "word pictures" as born-again Stephen Crane or Richard Harding Davis.

His next major article for the magazine, "With the Allies," was even more troubling. On the train to Paris, Reed sees at Cernadon "the youth and the young blood of France, the Class of 1914, ... infinitesimal parts of an obedient machine to hurl against the youth of Germany, who had been treated the same way" (78). The dispatch ends by foretelling the fate of those youth—whether German or French—with a vignette of barbarity set against the rolling plains of Champigny that recalls for Reed the barbarity of Attila the Hun:
Here in the fields were long flat mounds of yellow earth--traces of quicklime around their edges--where the dead had been dragged by the leg and buried; Germans and French together. One long mound bore a wooden cross hung with flowers, on which was inscribed: "Here lie forty-three Frenchmen of the 73rd Regiment of the Line." (87)

Readers in the context of the journalism market of the 1990s might at first believe (like Humphrey) that Reed's writing lost its market because of his increasingly opinionated prose. But the current fashion of an ostensibly "neutral" press was not yet then in vogue, and it seems that his politics, not his partisanship, was the major stumbling block for Reed. A contrast with Richard Harding Davis' World War I reporting again helps to set in contemporary context the way in which Reed's reporting breaks from more acceptable patterns, not by its willingness to editorialize, but by its politics.

By 1914, Davis was a reporter for the Wheeler Syndicate and the London Daily Chronicle, and he wrote on December 1:

Were the conflict in Europe a fair fight, the duty of every American would be to keep on the side-lines and preserve an open mind. . . . [Germany] is defying the rules of war and the roles of humanity. . . . When a mad dog runs amuck in a village it is the duty of every farmer to get his gun and destroy it, not to lock himself indoors and toward the dog and the men who face him preserve a neutral mind. (With the Allies xiii-xix)
To a nation then still reluctant to go to war, Davis' dispatches from Europe raised the specter of a river of steel-gray German troops flooding Allied lands. "All through the night like the tumult of a river when it races between the cliffs of a canyon, in my sleep I could hear the steady roar of the passing army" (27-28), Davis writes, and then like "giant pile-drivers," the army advances like "a cataract of molten lead. The infantry marched singing, with their iron-shod boots beating out the time. They sang, 'Fatherland, My Fatherland'" (28-29).

For his part, Reed had been banned from France for allegedly firing two shots from a German bunker in the general direction of the French army during his tour for Metropolitan (Rosenstone 198), a prank that had brought Davis to the offices of Metropolitan demanding that they fire Reed. Reed thus was dispatched to the Eastern Front, where he and Robinson managed to spend several weeks in jail for traveling to the Russian frontier without permission.

But at the summit of Goutchevo, after the "Battle Above the Clouds" in what is now Serbia, Reed witnessed a harrowing scene that gave rise to what may be his most unforgettable prose. In retrospect, it seems more vivid and implicating than any Michael Herr penned about Vietnam or Joan Didion wrote after witnessing the body dump above San Salvador. At Goutchevo, Reed sees the trenches of the
Austrians and Serbs, barely twenty yards apart, interspersed by pits dug fifty feet deep. He sees protruding from those pits "pieces of uniform, skulls with draggled hair, upon which shreds of flesh still hung; white bones with rotting hands at the end, bloody bones sticking from boots such as soldiers wear" (Education of John Reed 149). The sense of the passage is that of the civilized world under siege:

Bands of half-wild dogs slunk at the edge of the forest, and far away we could see two tearing at something that lay half-covered on the ground. Without a word, the captain pulled out his revolver and shot. One dog staggered and fell thrashing, then lay still—the other fled howling into the trees; and instantly from the depths of the wood all around came a wolfish, eerie howling in answer, dying away along the edge of the battlefield for miles. (149)

In a sharp break from Davis' partisan evocation of the German threat, Reed observes that in the finality of the death pits, it no longer matters which soldier fought for what side: "the half-eaten skeletons of an Austrian and a Serbian were entangled, their arms and legs wrapped about each other in a deathgrip that could not even now be loosened" (149).

Reed reports that the dead, ten thousand of them, were heaped in this manner for six miles, and, as he rises above the clouds, he scans the green mountains of Bosnia across the Drina River, sees white villages, ground yellow with
new crops, the peaks of Goutchevo, all broken by "the
double line of trenches and the sinister field between"
(150). Reed eventually comes down from the mountaintop
pits of the dead and closes his passage by mingling beauty
and horror in an extended water metaphor from a far
different tributary than Davis' "river of steel":

We rode through fruit orchards heavy
with blossoms, between great forests of
oaks and beeches and blooming
chestnuts; under high wooded hills,
whose slopes broke into a hundred
rippling mountain meadows that caught
the sun like silk. Everywhere springs
poured from the hollows, and clear
streams leaped down canyons choked with
verdure, from Goutchevo, which the
Turks called "Mountain of Waters"--from
Goutchevo, saturated with the rotting
dead. All this part of Serbia was
watered by the springs of Goutchevo;
and on the other side they flowed into
the Drina, thence into the Save and the
Danube, through lands where millions of
people drank and washed and fished in
them. To the Black Sea flowed the
poison of Goutchevo. . . . (150, Reed's
ellipsis)³

Reprinted in The New York World on April 22, 1917, as
"The Most Tragic Incident I Saw in the War," Reed's
Goutchevo dispatch drew both Reed and (one presumes) many
of his readers into an actual as well as literary response
to the text in a way that a fictional horror story never
would. The passage concentrated on the dead of both sides
rather than on the glory, or even necessity, of war. To a
nation even then readying conscripts for battle, the
article both advanced Reed's reputation as an outspoken
opponent of the Great War and helped to dry up his
publishing markets. And his article, "This Unpopular War,"
published in Seven Arts magazine in August of that year,
got even further. Although its scenes and vignettes are
as effective as any he penned, it seemed to be the
culminating move in his rapid slide from the favor of
magazine editors that once clamored for his services.

Reed opens the article on a stifling summer night in
Washington, listening to a group of young college graduates
think up "talking points" to sell the war as might
"drummers." One young man suggests that the nation should
just send several thousand Americans to slaughter "to wake
the country up" (167). Reed muses on this interchange and
confesses to his readers that he went over to Europe with
"the fixed socialist idea that the capitalistic ruling
classes had cynically and with malice tricked their people
into this war" (167), but that what he found were young
troops "not even reasonable enough to make trickery
necessary" (167). Continuing the theme of the terrible
boredom of armed conflict that he first explored in the
latter stages of Insurgent Mexico, Reed takes his readers
in the article first to the French trenches and then to the
German front, discovering that men in both warring camps
are engaged in "the same mechanical business" (169).

At the German front, Reed sees soldiers the color of
mud. In contrast to Richard Harding Davis' description of
the German uniform as "green-gray . . . the gray of the hour just before daybreak, the gray of unpolished steel, of mist among green trees" (With The Allies 25), Reed's soldiers are up to their hips in water, covered with lice, and firing at anything which moved behind a mud-bank eighty yards away. They were the color of mud, their teeth chattering incessantly, and every night some of them went mad. In the space between the trenches, forty yards away, was a heap of bodies left over from the last French charge; the wounded had died out there, without any effort being made to rescue them; and now they were slowly but surely sinking into the soft mud, burying themselves. (171-72)

Reed ends "This Unpopular War" with a blistering editorial and with a vignette that recalls his "Mac-American" tale, but without the insulating veil of fiction. Reed first directly warns his readers that the United States already has had the taste of war fever, suppression, "beating of 'pacifists' by soldiers and sailors." His culminating vignette takes the reader to "the exclusive club [to] which I belong" on the eve of Wilson's war message to Congress. The papers are reporting that the Germans have torpedoed another American ship, drowning several American citizens. In Reed's club, a youth drawls, "I must confess that my ardor was somewhat dampened when I read that one of the victims was a Negro" (175).
Reed was correct in predicting the suppression of messages such as these. *Seven Arts* ceased publication in December when a major patron withdrew subsidy directly because of Reed's "This Unpopular War." Seventy-five publications, including several for which Reed wrote, were banned by the postmaster general under the Espionage Act, although the ban on *The Nation* was lifted after its editor refused to print any more articles by Reed. *The Masses*, which Reed co-edited and which was his most reliable source of publication, was banned from the mails in August, then denied regular publication mail status for September because it had not mailed copies in August. Its five editors, Reed included, were indicted for conspiracy to obstruct the draft, primarily for an article Reed had written which had questioned the sanity of enlistees (Rosenstone 321-24). One cannot imagine any of these responses had Reed stuck to a fictional form. It is in this context that Reed, recovering from the removal of a kidney, wrote his brief autobiography, "Almost Thirty," whose title not only refers to his age, but also to the common journalistic technique of signaling the end. "The War has been a terrible shatterer of faith in economic and political idealism," he confesses. "And yet I cannot give up the idea that out of democracy will be born the new world--richer, braver, freer, more beautiful" (142).
And although the events of the past 75 years have complicated that promise to an infinite degree, Reed was to find for himself that "new world" in Bolshevik Russia. He was so taken by its creation that he penned his own prose nonfiction creation epic, *Ten Days That Shook the World*. The book was written during the last eight weeks of 1918, after Reed's papers were returned to him from seven long months in the custody of the U. S. Department of Justice. Reed rented the top floor of the Greenwich Village Inn and, with pamphlets, newspapers, notes, and memories crowded about him, wrote chapter after chapter whose titles re-awaken the real-life drama of some monumental I.W.W. pageant: "The Coming Storm," "On the Eve," "The Fall of the Provisional Government," "Plunging Ahead," "The Committee for Salvation," "The Revolutionary Front," "Counter-Revolution," "Victory."

Although *Ten Days* is by far the most well-known of Reed's writings, no commentator has yet discussed the source of its sweeping hold on many of its readers—both those who support Reed's politics, those who despise them, and those who still aren't sure. In *Ten Days*, Reed produces a narrative effect virtually exclusive to nonfiction that deeply implicates his readers. The "present action" of the narrative holds the reader *inside-the-text* in genuine suspense as it sweeps readers toward a conclusion (the triumph of Bolshevism) that both they and
Reed *outside-the-text* already know will occur. Moreover, it is a conclusion that many of those very same readers, at least in North America, despise. The resulting fusion of narrative immediacy, historical context, and political and social implication, at its best moments, can achieve a disquieting, and almost startling, power.

For example, on the night of November 5, Reed is hurrying from his interview with Trotsky in the small bare room of the Smolny headquarters of the Bolsheviks toward the Marinsky Palace for the Council of the Russian Republic. For almost thirty pages he has carefully tightened the circle of revolution and counter-revolution: first interviewing Kerensky, then Trotsky—pitting the two in inevitable conflict—now traveling to the palace, now Smolny "bright with lights, hummed like a gigantic hive" (87). Outside the Marinsky Palace,

An armoured automobile went slowly up and down, siren screaming. On every corner, in every open space, thick groups were clustered; arguing soldiers and students. Night came swiftly down, the wide-spaced street-lights flickered on, the tides of people flowed endlessly. . . . It is always like that in Petrograd just before trouble. . . . (75-76, Reed’s ellipses)

The passage implicates the reader in several ways, partly because it is immediate and dramatic. The present tense verb of the last sentence ("it is always like that in Petrograd just before trouble") drags the reader into the
immediacy of the scene as the sky darkens and lights flicker on. The dramatic effect pulls the reader inside the text, making that reader, willingly or unwillingly, suspend her knowledge of how soon, or in what manner, the "gathering storm" will break. Were Ten Days a fictional account, the effect of suspenseful play against a known outcome might be produced by a "flashback" narrative technique such as that which Faulkner might plumb for ironic and dramatic effect. In a novel like Light in August, for example, the reader "knows" that Joe Christmas has killed Joanna Burden, but reads to find out how it occurred. Yet, a text like Ten Days, with its claim to tell the truth about a war that profoundly affects the nation of many of its readers, implicates its reader still further, as if Joanna Burden were our flesh-and-blood aunt or Joe Christmas our flesh-and-blood brother.

The particular manner by which Ten Days deepens the stakes is by presenting these powerful narrative effects within the scope of an actual contemporary (and in many ways still on-going) political and social struggle. For example, Reed interviews Kerensky (probably on Oct. 31) in Ten Days, noting that it is "the last time he received journalists," a comment which throws the reader outside the narrative and into history. Yet at the same time, Reed quotes Kerensky: "The world thinks that the Russian Revolution is at an end. Do not be mistaken. The Russian
Revolution is just beginning" (59). Reed provides the ironic aside: "Words more prophetic, perhaps, than he knew" (60, my emphasis).

In the time of action, Kerensky means to say that the March revolution has not yet run its course and that the Bolshevik threat will be denied. The great majority of readers of Ten Days, of course, know otherwise, and now see that the Bolshevik version of the Russian Revolution is "just beginning." Reed, as he sat in his rented room above the Greenwich Village Inn, was just as aware of that fact, but he inserted the "perhaps" to pull his readers back into the moment when he sat in Kerensky's study, the moment of action, as well as to milk the suspense (and the inevitability) of his narrative.

A brief contrast of that scene to a version Reed wrote soon after his interview with Kerensky for Liberator (successor to The Masses after the latter magazine was suppressed) might make these points more clear. In that article, written November 5, 1917, and published in April 1918, (Homberger and Biggart 64), Reed was not sure of the unintended irony of Kerensky's remarks and thus included no such quote. The article, unlike the book version of the interview, throws the reader much more often outside the time of action, breaking the narrative moment with such asides as Reed's first memories of Kerensky and his sardonic observation that Associated Press correspondents
(one of whom was his companion at the interview) are prejudiced "against common peasants, soldiers, and workingmen who insisted upon calling one tovarisch - comrade" (66).

Reed seems to be quite aware of the narrative effect he is producing in Ten Days; even his chapter titles (as cited earlier) milk the suspense of present action at the same time the book's title trumpets its past-tense inevitability. Reed's ideology is revealed by this effect; he does believe that historical forces are aligned to produce a new heaven and a new earth and that the future is as inevitable as the present tense of the narrative is dramatic. Moreover, he will shift the reader out of present-tense suspense whenever it suits his purpose, so as to signal to us that history will not bear out certain present moments. For example, at the end of November 10 the book tells the reader that "counter-revolution had begun" (180), a verb choice that signals counter-revolution's death even in its birth.

Reed's introduction to the Ten Days, written on New Year's Day, 1919, makes his belief in the power of history clear (and his rhetoric still has the power to implicate and unsettle many of its Western readers in this post-Soviet age):

It is still fashionable, after a whole year of the Soviet Government, to speak of the Bolshevik insurrection as an
"adventure." Adventure it was, and one of the most marvelous mankind ever embarked upon, sweeping into history at the head of the toiling masses, and staking everything on their vast and simple desires. . . . No matter what one thinks of Bolshevism, it is undeniable that the Russian Revolution is one of the great events of human history, and the rise of the Bolsheviki a phenomenon of world-wide importance. (13)

Examples of the present events trembling in the force of history are everywhere in the book: the night of November 7 when Reed states, "Now there was all great Russia to win--and then, the world!" (an observation that he knows will deeply trouble those readers who have reason to fear international revolution) and sets it against his readers' engagement in the present of the action: "night was yet hazy and chill. There was only a faint unearthly pallor stealing over the silent streets, dimming the watch-fires, the shadow of a terrible dawn grey-rising over Russia... ." (116, Reed's ellipsis).

Later that day, Reed brings Lenin into the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets in terms that stop only just short of hagiography. The passage, an example of Reed's gift for the brief word sketch as well as his lack of objectivity, stays in the present, even to clocking time as it passes, but shifts from the certainty of the past to the inevitability of the future as it suits Reed's needs:

It was just 8:40 when a thundering wave of cheers announced the entrance of the
presidium, with Lenin—great Lenin—among them. A short, stocky figure, with a big head set down on his shoulders, bald and bulging. Little eyes, a snubbish nose, wide generous mouth, and heavy chin; clean-shaven now but already beginning to bristle with the well-known beard of his past and future. Dressed in shabby clothes, his trousers much too long for him. Unimpressive, to be the idol of a mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been. (128)

Reed almost revels in the scene that he is about to present, signaling his (and the readers’) engagement with the adverb "now":

Now Lenin, gripping the edge of the reading stand, letting his little winking eyes travel over the crowd as he stood there waiting, apparently oblivious to the long-rolling ovation, which lasted several minutes. When it finished, he said simply, "We shall now proceed to construct the Socialist order!" Again that overwhelming human roar. (129)

Reed remembers to tell the reader that it was "exactly 10:35" when the proclamation to belligerent nations (which effectively ended Russia’s involvement in World War I) was passed, then picks up the present, but inevitable, action with the adverb, "suddenly":

Suddenly, by common impulse, we found ourselves on our feet, mumbling together into the smoothing lifting unison of the Internationale. A grizzled old soldier was sobbing like a child. Alexandra Kollontain rapidly winked the tears back. The immense sound rolled through the hall, burst windows and doors and soared into the quiet sky. "The war is ended! The war
is ended!" said a young workman near be, his face shining. And when it was over, as we stood there in a kind of awkward hush, someone in the back of the room shouted, "Comrades! Let us remember those who have died for liberty!" So we began to sing the Funeral March, that slow, melancholy, and yet triumphant chant, so Russian and so moving. (133)

The passage culminates with a line that brings full circle the Kerensky-Trotsky contrast that had informed the book's early chapters, a passage whose power to implicate at least some readers still results in its suppression from Communist Party-sponsored anthologies (Education of John Reed 206-07): "Then up rose Trotsky, calm and venomous, conscious of power, greeted with a roar."

The particular narrative effect (trembling present in the force of inevitable history) produced by Ten Days That Shook the World is in many ways reminiscent of Milton's technique in Paradise Lost. Both narratives celebrate the creation of a new world and the forces that play on that creation, but are unable to alter the force of time ("I now must change those notes to Tragic" [378]). If Insurgent Mexico exploited an Exodus motif, it is fair to say that Ten Days' marching orders come from the Book of Genesis, although it is a decidedly secular version and, indeed, ultimately plays out against the grain of Biblical creation. In Reed's narrative, the earth heaves and cracks and separates, light is created, the firmament is divided
from the waters, the fragile planets are born. In the "Background" chapter a "ground-swell of revolt heaved and cracked the crust which had been slowly hardening on the surface of revolutionary fires" (51); the Bolshevik workers at the Ibukhovsky Zavod munitions plant are bathed in "sun, flooding reddish light through the skeleton windows upon the mass of simple faces upturned to us" (52); the revolutionary Smolny is "bright with lights, humming like a gigantic hive" (87); the workers in Red Square are thunderous as surf, "proletarian tide" (230). After the Bolshevik take-over, "Old Russia was no more; human society flowed molten in primal heat, and from the tossing sea of flame was emerging the class struggle, stark and pitiless—and the slowly cooling crust of a new planet" (147).

That new planet is a decidedly unorthodox creation, as Reed points out in the section that ends the ten days proper of the narrative. Indeed, in an unpublished sketch entitled "Foreign Affairs," which Reed wrote after interviewing Trotsky at Smolny and which served as a prototype for the Trotsky interview in Ten Days, Reed leads with the line "Two months ago, at NO. 6 Dvortsovy Ploschad, I saw the new world born" (Homberger and Biggart 147). In the sketch, he presents Trotsky in decidedly Mephestilian terms: "His whole face narrows down to a pointed chin, accentuated by a sharp black beard; and when he stands at the tribune of the Petrograd Soviet hissing
defiance at the Imperialists of the world, he gives the impression of a snake" (150).

Before sunrise on November 16, Reed sharpens the distinction between the old creation and new creation when he attends the funerals in Red Square in the shadows of the street chapels that are now locked and dark, their candles out for the first time since Napoleon occupied St. Petersburg. The scene begins in darkness, but Reed creates a light to replace that which has been darkened:

The Holy Orthodox Church had withdrawn the light of its countenance from Moscow, the nest of irreverent vipers who had bombarded the Kremlin. Dark and silent and cold were the churches; the priests had disappeared. There were no popes to officiate at the Red Burial, there had been no sacrament for the dead, nor were any prayers to be said over the grave of the blasphemers. (228)

The workers come to bury their dead as men begin to shovel showers of dirt on coffin lids. The sun rises as the last mourners pass the spot on Red Square where Reed, himself, will be buried in only a few years’ time:

I suddenly realized that the devout Russian people no longer needed priests to pray them into heaven. On earth they were building a kingdom more bright than any heaven had to offer, and for which it was a glory to die. . . . (230, Reed’s ellipsis)

Reed, who had declared a year earlier in "Almost Thirty," "I haven’t any God and don’t want one; faith is only another word for finding oneself" (143-44), seems sure of
his citizenship in this new kingdom on earth, a significant change from his status in Mexico, where he was always the outsider looking in, unable to shed the privilege of race and nationality, no matter how deeply he had buried it in his fictions.

The status shift in *Ten Days* offers an intriguing glimpse into the way nonfiction narrative draws its textual narrator against its historical author: the book presents almost eerie repetitions of key moments from *Insurgent Mexico*, but this time from the status of an insider in Russia (who, ironically, thus cuts himself off from the vast majority of his North American readers) rather than the outsider of *Insurgent Mexico*, where, despite his significant adjustments of journalistic conventions, Reed never really broke company with the values of much of his reading audience.

One of the most telling moments of repetition and adjustment is his journey to the front at Tsarskoye Selo on November 10 as Kerensky was massing the forces of counter-attack. Like his journey to the Mexican front with "Mac-American," Reed is less than candid with his readers, but in an intriguingly different way. This time, instead of hiding his conduit out of shame for Mac's xenophobia, Reed hides his own identity to save the Bolshevik officers who are granting him access to the front without official authorization. Reed calls himself Trusishka (which can be
translated as a somewhat affectionate name for a cowardly youngster [Vitaly interview]), "a Russian acquaintance of mine [who] got in [the officers’ car] and sat down and nothing could dislodge him" (172). Diffidently asserting that he sees no reason to doubt Trushishka’s version of the trip, Reed weaves one of the few really comic tales in Ten Days, as the Peoples’ Commissars for War and Marine first try unsuccessfully to borrow a military vehicle of the troops they now command, then must hail a battered taxicab flying the Italian flag. The Bolsheviks eventually must borrow a notebook, and finally a pencil, from the ever-accommodating Trushishka, so as to write a requisition for ammunition for Red troops at the front. The significance of the scene is that Reed has such firm access to the material he wants that he is able to withhold evidence of his solidarity with the Russian insurgents, rather than to withhold evidence of his complicity with North American interests as he had by burying "Mac-American" in fiction.

Even more importantly, on a second trip to Tsarskoye Selo on November 13, Reed—without in any way acknowledging it—replays the scene he had drawn in Mexico on the way to the front with Urbina’s troops. On both journeys, Reed is packed into a conveyance with a load of incendiary bombs. In both cases, the bombs bump and jounce on the rutted roads as the good-natured Reed hangs on for dear life. The Russian journey even features the same sort of close
questioning of Reed about United States embarrassments like Tammany or the Mooney case with which the Mexican rebels had challenged Reed in Mexico. Finally, on the road to Tsarskoye Sel, Reed is forced out of the Sixth Reserve Engineers truck and is interrogated by Red Soldiers as a suspected spy. "The soldiers consulted in low tones for a moment," Reed reports, "and then led me to a wall, against which they placed me. It flashed upon me suddenly; they were going to shoot me" (213).

At the point of a gun in Mexico, Reed had bought off his accuser Montoya with a two-dollar watch, then shared a private joke with his North American audience as the childlike Montoya marveled at the movement of the watch's hands and pledged his undying fealty to Reed. Here, in Soviet Russia, Reed—who had earlier donated his pad and his pencil to the cause under the pseudonym of Trusishka—finally finds a local committeeman who can read his pass from Smolny:

The bearer of this pass, John Reed, is a representative of American Social-Democracy, an internationalist. . . . Comrades, this is an American comrade. I am chairman of the committee and I welcome you to the regiment. . . . A sudden general buzz grew into a roar of greeting, and they pressed forward to shake my hand. (214-15, second ellipses Reed's)

The scene, as do so many in Ten Days, closes the gap between Reed and his material, but opens the gap between
the author and a majority of his North American readers. Reed makes no pretense of objectivity in the scene; the Bolsheviks are his comrades and his story of their revolution will be impassioned and partisan.

Finally, in a scene not included in Ten Days, but published in Reed's article, "A Visit to the Russian Army," in the April-May issue of The Liberator while Reed was waiting for the U.S. Department of State to return his Russia papers, Reed closes the book on the issue of bribing foreign subjects with cheap gifts. Although he had bought off Montoya with a cheap watch and Villa with a saddle, engraved rifle, and silencer, such gifts are identified as bribes in Reed's "A Visit to the Russian Army." In the scene, Reed and his colleague, Albert Rhys Williams of the New York Evening Post, are traveling from Venden after having witnessed the funeral of three Lettish sharpshooters and revolutionaries:

As we sat on the platform waiting for the Petrograd train it occurred to Williams that we might as well give away our superfluous cigarettes. Accordingly he sat down on a trunk and held out a big box making generous sounds. There must have been several hundred soldiers around. A few came hesitantly and helped themselves, but the rest held aloof, and soon Williams sat alone in the midst of an ever-widening circle. The soldiers were gathered in groups talking in low tones.

Suddenly he saw coming toward him a committee of three privates, carrying rifles with fixed bayonets, and looking
dangerous. "Who are you?" the leader asked. "Why are you giving away cigarettes? Are you a German spy, trying to bribe the Russian revolutionary army?"

All over the platform the crowd followed, slowly packing itself around Williams and the committee muttering angrily - ready to tear him to pieces. (56)

The article, stylistically an effective piece of artistic reportage, identifies Reed directly and immediately as the bearer of a note identifying himself as a member of the American Socialist Party "authorized to proceed to the active army to gather information for the North American Press" (28). It includes a gorgeous enumeration of rich Estland, "White birch forests glorious with yellow autumn foliage," birch leaves breaking through the somber pines "as if the whole woods were on fire," "gray-stoned windmills, weathered and mossy," "bearded men in dun coats, boots, peaked caps or shaggy shapkis, almost always with a touch of red somewhere about them" (30-31). As the front approaches in the Baltic province, "over the silent country, wasted and empty, only immense flocks of rooks wheeled screaming in the rain, . . . and the only human life was the hysterical life of an army in battle. . . ." (40-41, Reed's ellipses). Within this scene of devastation, Reed poses the Lettish revolutionaries at the funeral of three comrades: "they know these three dead, perhaps even spoke with them, heard them laugh, joke,
before the unseen warning shell fell out of the sky and tore them to bloody pieces" (54-55).

Reed remembered those Lettish men and women and, as evidence of the way that his material has shaped his life even as he was shaping his material, soon had reason to cast one such Lettish soldier in a starring role. In *Ten Days*, in the most pivotal scene of the most pivotal day, November 7, at the Congress of the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies, Reed sets up the confrontation that symbolically passes the torch from the Cadets (Constitutional Democrats) to the Bolsheviks. In his exhaustive catalog of Russian factions in the "background" section of the book, Reed identifies the Cadets as the Russian equivalent to the (U.S.) Progressive Party, Reed’s boyhood heroes and the party of his father’s and Lincoln Steffens’ reform politics. As the argument at the Congress ebbs and wanes, and as rumors spread that counter-attack is on its way to Petrograd, a lean-faced Lettish soldier stands amid the clamor and cuts the Russian reformers to the heart:

"No more resolutions! No more talk! We want deeds--the Power must be in our hands!" . . . The hall rocked with cheering. In the first moments of the session, stunned by the rapidity of events, startled by the sound of cannon, the delegates had hesitated. For an hour hammer-blow after hammer-blow had fallen from that tribute, welding them together but beating them down. Did they stand then alone? Was
Russia rising against them? Was it true that the Army was marching on Petrograd? Then this clear-eyed young soldier had spoken, and in a flash they knew it for the truth. . . . This was the voice of the soldiers--the stirring millions of uniformed workers and peasants were men like them, and their thoughts and feelings were the same. (103, Reed's ellipses and emphasis)

Reed here symbolically disassociates himself from the reform politics of his father and fatherland. In the writing of *Ten Days*, he resolutely will break Steffens' advice not to "buck this thing. "It is wrong to try to tell the truth now,. . . ." Steffens had counseled. "[Y]ou can't carry conviction. You can't plant ideas. . . . I think it is undemocratic to try to do too much now. Write, but don't publish" (qtd. in Rosenstone 319-320).

*Ten Days That Shook the World* is Reed's answer to Steffens, even as Reed summons Trotsky to answer the Russian reformers at the Second Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies:

Trotsky, standing up with a pale, cruel face, letting out his rich voice in cool contempt, "All these so-called Socialist compromisers, these frightened Mensheviki, Socialist Revolutionaries, Bund--let them go! They are just so much refuse which will be swept away into the garbage-heap of history!" (104)

In his second-floor study above the Greenwich Village Inn, his contract with Macmillan canceled because of political pressure, and his material only just returned after seven
months at the Department of State, John Reed, during the last two months of 1918, implicated himself about as deeply as any writer can. He had written the birth pangs of the nation that would become his own country's greatest enemy, and he had presented it as truth, as nonfiction, as living history with the power to attract and repel its readers both inside and outside its pages. "[A]n artillery shell, a peal of thunder, or ocean surf does not possess the power of the book that is lying on that desk," he said of Ten Days in 1919 (qtd. in Duke 54).

The price Reed paid for that power was that for most of the four decades after his death, his nonfiction was barely accessible—neither in the West nor in Stalin's Soviet Union. Trotsky had been banished to his own refuse heap, Lenin was dead, and Reed had committed the unpardonable sin of ignoring Stalin. The Soviet writer, Anatoli Rybakov, summarizes the case for the Stalinist prosecution:

The main task was to build a mighty socialist state. For that mighty power was needed. Stalin was at the head of that power, which meant that he stood at its source with Lenin. Together with Lenin he had led the October Revolution. John Reed had presented the history of October differently. That wasn't the John Reed we needed. (qtd. in Homberger 1)

Meanwhile, Reed's crime against the United States, if it was a crime, was that he believed in Petrograd that a new
world was being born. And in his fervor to be the chronicler of that creation story, he obliterated any opportunity he had to come back inside his nation's fold.

One of his most dramatic pieces of domestic reporting, "The I.W.W. in Court," is final witness to the writer John Reed had become. The article was published during the fall of 1918, when Reed was defending himself against his own sedition indictment, and just before he was to sequester himself to write Ten Days. It is vintage Reed: its ironic epigram a quote from the Magna Charta on the federal courtroom wall ("No freeman can be taken or imprisoned . . . but by the lawful judgment of his peers"). Reed observes sardonically that the "heroic priests of Israel veil their faces" in Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis' courtroom, "while Moses elevates the Tables of the Law against a background of clouds and flame" (176).

The article's primary character sketch, as fresh and ironically powerful as any written during the heyday of new journalism a half-century later, is that of Landis, who during that next year would gain notoriety for ruling baseball with an iron fist after the Chicago Black Sox scandal:

Small on the huge bench sits a wasted man with untidy white hair, an emaciated face in which two burning eyes are set like jewels, parchment skin split by a crack for a mouth; the face of Andrew Jackson three years dead. This is Judge Kenesaw Mountain
Landis, named for a battle—a fighter and a sport, according to his lights, and as just as he knows how to be. . . . Upon this man has devolved the historic role of trying the Social Revolution. He is doing it like a gentleman. Not that he admits the existence of a Social Revolution. (176)

Reed notes with approval that Landis has abolished "pompous formality." No one need stand when he enters the judge's courtroom, and Landis "sits without robes, in an ordinary business suit, and often leaves the bench to come down and perch on the step of the jury box" (177). By Landis' personal order, spittoons are placed beside the I.W.W. prisoners' seats, "so they can while away the long day with a chaw" (177). For their part, the defendants are permitted to remove their coats, walk around, read newspapers. "It takes some human understanding for a judge to fly in the face of judicial ritual as much as that," Reed concludes.

The article's trademark Reedian enumeration is the I.W.W. prisoners themselves, whose names the reporter rolls luxuriantly on his tongue and for whose faces he shifts to present tense:

There goes Big Bill Haywood, with his black Stetson above a face like a scarred mountain; Ralph Chaplin, looking like Jack London in his youth; Reddy Doran, of kindly pugnacious countenance, and mop of bright red hair falling over the green eye-shade he always wears; Harrison George, whose forehead is lined with hard thinking; Sam Scarlett, who might have been a
Reed keeps his reporter’s gaze steady while the heroic priests of Israel veil their faces on the courtroom wall: the I.W.W. heroes pitted against a judge to whom Reed has taken an instant liking. And then Reed’s eyes swim and the characters assume fresh roles. Reed’s vision becomes that of the new world whose creation he is about to chronicle in those second-floor rooms above the Greenwich Village Inn:

To me, fresh from Russia, the scene was strangely familiar. For a long time I was puzzled at the feeling of having witnessed it all before; suddenly it flashed upon me. The I.W.W. trial in the Federal court-room of Chicago looked like a meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviets of Workers’ Deputies in Petrograd! I could not get it into my head that these men were on trial. They were not at all cringing, or frightened, but confident, interested, humanly understanding... like the Bolshevik Revolutionary Tribunal. For a moment it seemed to me that I was watching the Central Committee of the American Soviets trying Judge Landis for—well, say counter-revolution. (164, Reed’s ellipses)

In that moment, Reed "flashes" into the recognition that has progressively shown itself when his narrative presence
is read against the facts of his history. He has joined a citizenship of a new world, and the perhaps final irony is that the new world, at least in its incarnation, under Stalin, was to be just as harsh to him as the one he had left behind. The evidence, therefore, is compelling of nonfiction's power to implicate writer and readers.

Footnotes

1. Crane does produce one startlingly different essay, "The Mexican Lower Classes," but it is an essay that his editor Fredson Bowers reports that Crane never attempted to publish, nor, for that matter, even had set in type (Tales, Sketches, and Reports 890-91). In the essay, Crane remarks on the tendency of visitors to regard foreign peoples with scorn and to find their occupations "trivial and inconsequent," which Crane says is "the arrogance of the man who has not yet solved himself and discovered his own actual futility" (435). Crane remarks that "the most worthless literature of the world has been that which has been written by the men of one nation concerning the men of another" (436) and pledges never to sit in literary judgment upon the lower classes of Mexico. "I even refuse to pity them," Crane concludes:

It is true that at night many of them sleep in heaps in doorways, and spend their days squatting upon the pavements. It is true that their clothing is scant and thin. All manner of things of this kind is true but yet their faces have almost always a certain smoothness, a certain lack of pain, a serene faith. I can feel the superiority of their contentment (438).

2. Although the fiction/nonfiction status of some of Reed's tales is murky, Floyd Dell, Reed's fellow editor at The Masses and the editor most likely to have supervised the publication of Reed's dispatches from Mexico, classified the narrative among Reed's "stories" rather than among Reed's "journalistic accounts" in Daughters of the Revolution and Other Stories, Dell's 1927 collection of Reed's narratives (viii).
3. Dorothy Day, the Catholic Worker social reformer who followed Reed as a reporter for The Masses may have been influenced by Reed’s startling metaphor of the dead filtering down to the living. For, long afterward, on the occasion of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, she quotes the New York Herald-Tribune as saying "we hoped we have killed them" and for Catholic Worker writes: "It is hoped they are vaporized, our Japanese brothers, scattered men, women and babies, to the four winds, over the seven seas. Perhaps we will breathe their dust into our nostrils, feel them in the fog of New York on our faces, feel rain on the hills" ("We Go on Record," qtd. in Roberts 183).

4. Vitali Tselischev was a Visiting Lecturer in Philosophy at Ashland University during the 1993 Spring Semester. During a June 6, 1993, interview in Ashland, Ohio, Tselischev, who teaches at Novosibirsk State University in Russia and has translated the writings of philosopher Richard Rorty into Russian, translated key words for me and also recalled that when he was a youngster of 16 in 1958 the long ban on Ten Days was lifted in the Soviet Union. As a lad, he recalls reading the narrative with relish, particularly its depiction of the taking of the Russian Winter Palace. "He was there," Tselischev said of Reed. "He was an important witness. We had never been permitted to read him before."
CHAPTER IV

TOM WOLFE AND THE WRITING OF RECAPTURE

I'm interested only in how certain tastes become established. I insist that they become established in a political fashion, using politics in a broad sense as various social pressures added together to produce a particular result, specifically in the case of the arts--painting, sculpture, and architecture. I think my major contribution is one that is seldom mentioned. (Wolfe in American Artist, April, 1982)

Most of the major things that I have written, like The Right Stuff and The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, have not been personal. They've been completely about the lives of other people, with myself hardly intruding into the narratives at all. They were based on reporting, so a lot of it is impersonal and objective. It can be discouraging to see it described as implausible, personal, and unbelievable. I very seldom use the first person anymore. I think it's a very tricky thing because whether you know it or not, if you use the first person you've turned yourself into a character. (Wolfe in Contemporary Artists: New Revision Series, 1983)

I have a fantasy brother named Harris who runs a hotel in Cuba and he leads to a fantasy of the F.B.I. being on my trail because of him. I think there must be some symbolic truth underneath the lies. (Wolfe in Vogue, April, 1966)

Reading Tom Wolfe's nonfiction across its grain, for the manner in which its chameleon narrators and its historical author reverberate and intersect, is to enter a sustained fantasy of escape and recapture. For not only are Wolfe's fugitive plots—a psychedelic novelist on the lam in Mexico, a test pilot reeled to earth after eluding the clutches of the Mach One barrier, even his fictional Master of the Universe wriggling in a tangled web of transgression and punishment—the stuff of rights and wrongs, but for nearly a third of a century Tom Wolfe has made a habit of breaking every established rule and then denying he has done so.

Wolfe escapes into a realm of reportage where words shift and sparkle, where intersubjectivity warbles and woofs, where status and culture do battle and nothing is as slippery as an uncontested fact. In turn, he recaptures himself and others by his public screeds and creeds: interview after interview, manifesto upon manifesto in which he contends that reality is "prosaic, common, external" (Bellamy 45); that "realism" is the only juice that electrifies literature ("The New Journalism" 35 and "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast" 50-51); that the New Journalism he authored and theorized during the 1960s and
1970s represents merely a technical, and never a cultural or epistemological, break with the past.

Tom Wolfe, of course, already has been the subject of several excellent scholarly studies, particularly those clustered around his two book-length nonfiction narratives, **The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test** (1968) and **The Right Stuff** (1979). But such studies have tended to concentrate on generic or stylistic considerations: a critical catalogue of his multi-leveled narrations and verbal pyrotechnics or the manner by which Wolfe's nonfiction techniques have approximated and/or differed from those of experimental fiction. What is so far missing from Wolfeian criticism, and what this chapter hopes to redress, is a fuller analysis of Wolfe's writings as political and cultural phenomena intertwined with the rupture and recovery of the social and epistemological phenomena that has been defined as New Journalism. John J. Pauly suggests this path into Wolfe by arguing that New Journalism must be examined not only as literary expression, but "as a social act" (116, Pauly's emphasis). Otherwise, he argues,

When writers and critics memorialize the new nonfiction as a literary genre, they tend to ignore the social, political, and economic worlds in which writing (including their own) gets done. At worst they begin to assume that they can read society off the pages of a text without engaging, except in silent language, the human actors who inhabit that society. This tendency to read texts as society
(rather than society as a text) produces a fascination with the New Journalism’s narrative qualities.

(112)

Reading Tom Wolfe’s nonfiction for the manner in which he implicates himself (overtly, covertly, or inadvertently) as an historical presence will help to show us the ways by which he implicates many of his readers in his project. For Wolfe was to promise in his writing a new frontier by which his subjects (and, by implication, his readers) could re-define and free themselves through everyday social choices and broadly defined political acts. But time and again, those choices/escapes are circumscribed by the fates/recapture of Wolfe’s characters ("We blew it!" [Acid Test 368]), even as his own stylistic experimentation is circumscribed by his unwillingness to grant full permission to himself and others. Ultimately, Wolfe’s more and more tightly drawn boundaries help to arrest the social and epistemological break-out represented by his earlier writing; his New Journalism thus transforms itself toward a literary realism that more and more has become synonymous with social and cultural conservatism.

Wolfe offers a fascinating subject for study because he has been so outspoken and so articulate, if often evasive and contradictory, on so many occasions. (The task of assessing Wolfe’s many public statements over the years has been made immensely more easy by the recent publication
of Conversations with Tom Wolfe, a collection of his interviews over 24 years.) Wolfe has made something of a second career at tweaking the sorts of leftist, establishment, New York and European eggheads who have often been his critics, yet, ironically, he shares many of their assumptions. For example, Wolfe believes that history and its representation are so intertwined that it becomes almost impossible to distinguish the two, yet he calls the phenomenon "information ricochet" (Reagan 198) rather than crediting the "hyperreality" of Baudrillard or any other of the European intellectuals Wolfe so scorns. Wolfe once listed Hunter Thompson and Michael Herr as his two favorite nonfiction authors (Bellamy 1974), then drew a strictly objective border around his own poetics that excludes either of those two writers. And, perhaps most significantly, Wolfe says he believes that literary and aesthetic tastes "become established in a political fashion" (Zelenko 173), even though he would exclude himself from the implications of that assertion by insisting that his own cultural reporting and writing can be "impersonal and objective" (McLeod 178).

Hence, Wolfe insists, as he declared in the interview that forms the second epigraph of this chapter, that he began to efface his own presence in his texts as his writing "matured." The comment reveals both a boast and a fear, for if Wolfe were really to open himself as a
character in his nonfiction, it would be that much more difficult to maintain the illusion of the impersonal objectivity he wishes to claim. A reading against the grain, however, a reading for the implicated writer, aims to uncover the very presence that Wolfe wishes to conceal.

Although it has not been very seriously studied in recent years, Wolfe’s *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* offers the most fascinating entry into my particular project. Published in 1968 at the height of New Journalism’s impact and controversy, *Acid Test* promises to take its readers on a no-holds-barred trip to the frontier of cultural struggle that is so much the source (and occasionally the product) of New Journalism. This chapter, therefore, will read *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* for the way its text implicates Wolfe and many of its readers in the fantasy of escape and recapture; it will wrap the discussion of *Acid Test* around a fuller exploration of New Journalism as a social and historical phenomenon; and it will reassess Wolfe’s theories of realism and reportage in light of his subsequent career.

While questioning Tom Wolfe for an interview that subsequently was published in the April 1966 edition of *Vogue*, writer Elaine Dundy asked Wolfe—who was only to become the nation’s most famous author of "truthful" narrative during the next two decades--about his habitual practice of lying. Wolfe, it seems, had told Dundy that he
had lots of brothers and sisters, only to retract the tale as Dundy's research deepened. "Tell about the lying," Dundy prodded. "For instance you told me you had eight brothers and sisters and then later retracted it." Wolfe replied:

That one began in Sunday school when I was about five. The teacher asked each of us in a kind of getting-to-know-one-another way if we had any brothers and sisters, and I said I had eight. She knew I hadn't and spoke to my mother about it, but it still persists. I don't understand it. I've always had a fantasy of lots of brothers and sisters. I have a fantasy brother named Harris who runs a hotel in Cuba and he leads to a fantasy of the F.B.I. being on my trail because of him. I think there must be some symbolic truth underneath the lies. (17)

Only a few months after the publication of the Vogue interview, Wolfe gained an opportunity to open the doors of perception toward the "symbolic truth" of his fugitive fantasy. It was during the summer of 1966, Wolfe tells his readers in the initial pages of The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, that he first became interested in Ken Kesey, a "Young Novelist Real-Life Fugitive" (5), the author of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and Sometimes A Great Notion, and a celebrated escapee from two marijuana indictments. Then a writer for the "New York" Sunday supplement of the New York Herald-Tribune, Wolfe flew to California in October, 1966, shortly after Kesey's arrest, and opens his narrative a few days shy of the Halloween Night "Acid Test
Graduation" of Kesey's "Merry Pranksters." Wolfe first comes face-to-face with his fugitive double through a 24-inch glass partition in the visiting room of the San Mateo jail. While Wolfe scribbles shorthand notes, he and Kesey shout at each other over a raspy telephone. "I don't want to be rude to you fellows from the city," Wolfe recounts Kesey's unspoken thought, "but there's been things going on out here that you would never guess in your wildest million years old buddy . . ." (8). A few days later, Kesey is out on bail and returns to the Pranksters' Harriet Street garage, where Wolfe waits: "He seems to see me for an instant," Wolfe recounts, "but there is no hello, not a glimmer of recognition. This annoys me, but then I see that he doesn't say hello to anybody. Nobody says anything" (22).

Although Wolfe never fully develops himself as a character in Acid Test, he does devote most of the few pages between the two initial meetings with Kesey to chronicle his deepening recognition of the implications of entering the Pranksters' "scary, scary stuff out on the raggedy, raggedy edge . . ." (29) world. For example, Wolfe is forced, like Kesey's followers, to use a service station bathroom near the Harriet Street garage, and when he does so, he gets "the look" from its proprietor along with a "bladder totem" restroom key attached to a Shell Oil can. Wolfe thus symbolically, if only temporarily, crosses
the boundary between acceptable class (the Credit Card
elite "tanking up and stretching their legs and tweezing
their undershorts out of the aging waxy folds of their
scrotum") and unacceptable social class. To be a fugitive
from American class hegemony, it seems, carries a cost:

Suddenly it hits me that for the
Pranksters this is permanent. This is
the way they live. Men, women, boys,
girls, most from middle-class
upbringings, men and women and boys and
girls and children and babies, this is
the way they have been living for
months, for years, some of them, across
America and back, on the bus, down to
the Rat lands of Mexico and back,
sailing like gypsies along the
Servicecenter fringes, copping
urinations, fencing with rotten looks--
it even turns out they have films and
tapes of their duels with service-
station managers in the American
heartland trying to keep their concrete
bathrooms and empty Dispensa-Towels
safe from the Day-Glo crazies. . . .
(16)

Wolfe tells us he begins to develop "a strange feeling
about the whole thing," a feeling that deepens when he
hears the Pranksters refer to Kesey as The Chief and bears
witness to the inevitable synchronicity that seems to
determine their actions. The feeling deepens and turns to

mysto, as the general mysto steam began
rising in my head. This steam, I can
actually hear it inside my head, a
great sssssssssssssss, like what you hear
if you take too much quinine. I don't
know if this happens to anybody else or
not. But if there is something
startling enough, fearful, awesome,
strange, or just weird enough,
something I sense I can't cope with, it
is as if I go on Red Alert and the fogging steam starts. . . . (16-17)

Having established his own "Red Alert" fog like some creeping rash of roseola, Wolfe then introduces a character, Neal Cassady, whose reputation extends outside the text as a figure that many of his more avant garde contemporary readers would recognize as Jack Kerouac's driver in On The Road. Wolfe is careful to take Cassady beyond his readers' comfort zone, observing that "the whole old-style hip life" (9) is gone. Cassady is by now a full-blown methedrine addict, and he is juggling a sledge hammer and rocketing and racheting to his own private Joe Cuba calypso rhythm. (In an irony that perhaps escaped him, Wolfe tells the Vogue interviewer that his fantasy brother was a hotel keeper in Cuba). Cassady is the prototypical rapper, "by himself if necessary, although anyone is welcome aboard . . . spinning off memories, metaphors, literary, Oriental, hip allusions, all punctuated by the unlikely expression, 'you understand'" (14, my ellipsis). Of course, most readers don't understand, and Wolfe's rhetoric depends on construing them in that outsider status.

Ultimately, Wolfe also summons Hell's Angel "Freewheelin' Frank," a menacing symbol in the era when the Angels' rapine lore had a hold on the American psyche similar to that which a Los Angeles "Blood" or "Crypt" gang
member might hold in 1993, to rap a "Fuck God. Up with the Devil" riff, while in the eerie background an "In the Nowhere Mine" variable lag incantation echoes and reverberates in shimmering sound waves:

his hands flicking out, first this side, then the other, like Cassady, and he is off on his trip, like Cassady, and, all right, a Hell's Angel--and the Hassler brushes his teeth after every meal, in the middle of a Shell station tin-can economy--Just then Kesey arrives. (22)

Culminating the opening passages of the book, the only passages in which he permits his own character to emerge and in which he attempts to implicate even his most avant-garde readers by screening a Pranksters' movie that would be weird by anyone's standards, Wolfe summons all his verbal pyrotechnics as he introduces his book-length theme of Kesey and the Pranksters as proto-religious mystics come to shake late-1960s America by its sizzling teeth. Wolfe, as narrator/character, confesses that he has almost begun to buy into the metaphors, to slide into the group-think of Kesey's parables, and he portrays himself (and, by association, any readers who have identified with him as the central consciousness of the text so far) as teetering on the brink of surrender. A quote of some length is required to gain the full flavor of Wolfe's strategy and language:

Faith! Further! And it is an exceedingly strange feeling to be
sitting here in the Day-Glo, on poor abscessed Harriet Street, and realize suddenly that in this improbable, ex-pie factory Warehouse garage I am in the midst of Tsong-Isha-pa and the sangha communion, Mani and the wan persecuted at The Gate, Zoroaster, Maidhyoimaongha and the five faithful before Vishtapu, Mohammad and Abu Bekr and the disciples amid the pharisical Koreish or Mecca, Guatama and the brethren in the wilderness leaving the blood-and-kin families of their pasts for the one true family of the sangha inner circle—in short, true mystic brotherhood—only in poor old Formica polyethylene 1960s American without a grain of desert sand or a shred of palm leaf or a morsel of manna wilderness breadfruit overhead, picking up vibrations from Ampex tapes and a juggled Williams Lok-Hed sledge hammer, hooking down mathematical lab drugs, LSD-25, IT-290. DMT, instead of soma water, heading out in American flag airport coveralls and an International Harvester bus—yet for real!—amid the marshmallow shiny black shoe masses—

(27-28)

The passage reads like a Cassady rap: Wolfe on the edge, chanting religious references like mantras, riffing them off of late-capitalism brand names and a mish-mash of alpha-numerical drugs for the "marshmallow shiny black shoe masses" (at least some of whom are his readers) who somehow don't quite yet get the connection.

Of course, the Tom Wolfe outside the narrative, the one who is writing The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test more than a year later, has long since divested himself, at least on the surface, of any true personal dread that he might get sucked into the Prankster mysto. And thus his
narrative presence (the newcomer almost persuaded), played off against his historical presence (but sufficient to have stood), allows him the extended fantasy of escape and recapture. We know, at least on second reading if not the first, that he, along with Kesey, believes the Pranksters "blew it" by allowing their religious vision to slide into an institutional morass of power and control. Moreover, Wolfe knows that their religious icons have been seized by "secular" promoters like Bill Graham and that they no longer serve to attract even the fringe believers they once did. In fact, by the next time the book's chronological structure loops back to this moment in time (late October, 1966, a few days before the Acid Graduation), Wolfe will be depicting the psychedelic movement as some sort of over-the-hill compendium of Marxist splinter groups in the 1920s, which for him is a testament not of their power, but of their ineffectuality:

It's a little like the socialist revolution in New York after World War I--the Revolution is imminent, as all know and agree, and yet, Christ, everybody and his brother has a manifesto, the Lovestonites, the Dubinsky Socialists, the CPUSA (Bolshevik), the Wobblies, everybody has his own typewriters and mimeography machines and they're all cranking away like mad and fuming over each other's mistranslations of the Message. (337)

This sort of analysis shows how the reading of nonfiction perhaps most differs from that of fiction. In
fiction, an author could more easily create a "fictional" narrator who is somehow "other" to the author and thus might be permanently naive while the author is wise. But read against the grain of its historical author, Wolfe's narrator in the opening scenes of the book--while he is pretending to be in the sway of Kesey and the Pranksters: "we can't stop here, next rest area 40 miles" (14)--is at work on more subtle cultural and aesthetic tasks.

First, by admitting that he is almost, but never quite, seduced by the Kesey aura, Wolfe's narration gains the sort of capital boasted by a revivalist preacher who enthralls the flock with a tale of being almost persuaded to sin, but is so much the stronger for never having surrendered. That capital works to establish Wolfe as an ostensibly reliable guide on this long, strange trip to Edge City. Throughout Acid Test, he suggests to his readers that he certainly understands Kesey's movie better than "Mom&Dad&Buddy&Sis," or the "White Smocks," or the "Sport Shirts," or any one of a number of the other synecdochic squares and has-beens who are summoned to play off the Pranksters' (and Wolfe's) sensibilities. Nonetheless, so as not to surrender fully to the escape fantasy, he won't enter the movie. He makes a point of telling the reader that, despite Black Maria's urging that he lose the shiny shoes, he continues wearing his blazers and the lowcut black shoes that make him "stolid" (3).
Although he says that the Pranksters seem not to "give a damn" about this tactic ("So I kept on my necktie just to show that I had pride" [15]), Wolfe takes pains to establish his independence from the Prankster style both inside the text as a narrator and in interviews he granted outside the book. For example, in a 1987 conversation with *Rolling Stone*, Wolfe says:

> I arrived in a suit and tie to work on *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, and I never took that necktie off. Never. I quickly realized that it would be folly to pretend for a moment to be "on the bus" with the Merry Pranksters. Because it was a commitment that led--you know, you didn't just present your tickets and sit in your seat and watch. Once you pretended to be or somehow assumed that you were a part of what was going on, you were swept into the maelstrom! So I was never really in any of those scenes. (Mewborn 237)

After the first few chapters of the book and once the narrative enters its long flashback into the origins and mission of the Merry Pranksters, Wolfe virtually disappears as a physical character other than in his role of researcher and commentator of new religious movements. But Wolfe's narrative presence suffuses the book, nonetheless, primarily through a sometimes subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle dialogics in which that presence provisionally assumes the voices and values of a variety of characters--sometimes actual people, sometimes a whole race or class.
On occasion, Wolfe takes pains to document his sources to this language—which is lifted from diaries, other written records, recordings, or films—and is presented as actual thoughts. Most notably in "The Fugitive" chapter, Wolfe informs the reader that he uses Kesey's letters to novelist Larry McMurtry as a source for some of Kesey's internal monologue in "The Fugitive" chapter (371). Other justly celebrated point-of-view writing is found in such sections as those where Sandy Lehmann-Haupt slides into paranoid delusions, which Wolfe tells the reader that Lehmann-Haupt later recounted to him in "especially full and penetrating detail" (371).

Critics have previously documented many of the stylistic characteristics that establish Wolfe's presence in the text. Ronald Weber is correct to note that Wolfe is never very far removed: "[T]he reader is more instructed in the varieties of Wolfe's style than in the actual workings of Kesey's paranoid psyche," Weber contends, "even if the reader is drawn inside Kesey's mind, the journey pales before the fireworks display of Wolfe's writing about Kesey's mind" (The Literature of Fact 101).

Chris Anderson concentrates on Wolfe's disjunctive images, abrupt transitions, present tense narration, exclamations, and mistrust of words, all witness to the rhetorical problem of communicating experience. "The ellipsis records a silence, the silence as Wolfe pauses to
find the right words, the right phrase," Anderson suggests. "Within the gap we sense the strain of expression . . . the experience itself as it hovers just beyond . . ." (24).

John Hellmann goes even further in his exploration of the use of what Wolfe has called the "Hectoring Narrator," a device which allows his narrator to carry on dialogue with characters, prod them and occasionally insult them (Fables 105). Hellmann also documents Wolfe's use of formal techniques such as impressionistic synecdoche, almost fetishistic repetition, brand name catalogues and descriptions, and "hyperbolic, kinetic, or baroque words and phrases [that] make his descriptions as much an assault as a representation" (106). Hellmann concludes that one of primary strengths of Wolfe's style:

is that it not only represents the appearance but also conveys the fabulous character of the subject. While contemporary writers of realistic fiction have labored with mixed success to solve the dilemma of how to make fabulous reality seem real, Wolfe . . . has been able to represent contemporary phenomena in full detail while emphasizing the effect of strangeness. By portraying strange phenomena through strange prose, he retains and even heightens the fabulous quality of the actuality he is reporting. (106)

But despite all of the exacting work already produced on the particularities of Wolfe's style, no commentator has yet written in detail about its social positioning. Yet we know from Wolfe's own words that these considerations are
crucial to him, that he believes that cultural tastes "become established in a political fashion" (Zelenko 173) and that "perfect journalism would deal constantly with one subject: Status" (Dundy 9). Subtly and not-so-subtly, Wolfe assigns a class and rank to virtually every person and group of people in the book. A ready example comes early when he comments on the "head" world's assessment of shoes:

The heads have a thing about shoes. The worst are shiny black shoes with shoelaces in them. The hierarchy ascends from there, although practically all lowcut shoes are unhip, from there on up to the boots the heads like, light fanciful boots, English boots of the mod variety, if that is all they can get, but better something like hand-tooled Mexican boots with Caliente Dude Triple A toes on them. (2)

Indeed, on many occasions, Wolfe's narrator (sometimes in his hectoring mode) reinforces those rankings by purporting to give voice to the values and beliefs of an entire racial or social classification. At these moments, Wolfe is far from the "impersonal and objective" (McLeod 178) narrator that he purports to be. He is working from no written or electronically reproduced records for this voiced, but never quoted, material and is thus far less certain of the "relatively assured credibility of his factual contract" (Hellmann 106) than he would like to project.
I shall explore in some detail several examples of this sort of Wolfeian narrative presence and the largely covert social and political ramifications that its use triggers. Initially, of course, Wolfe deftly voices the sensibilities of "shiny shoes" squares, so as to play off the Pranksters against the people who "just don't get it" and to align himself clearly as one who does. For example, in the following passage Wolfe not only describes the reaction of San Francisco police to the Haight-Ashbury, but slides in and out of their voice:

The cops are busy trying to figure out these new longhairs, these beatniks—these crazies are somehow weirder than the North Beach beatniks ever were. They glow blue like a TV tube. The hippie-dippies . . . their Jesus hair, men with hair falling down to the shoulders and limp like . . . longers! Sergeant, they're lollygagging up against the storefronts on Haight Street up near that Psychedelic Shop like somebody hocked a bunch of T.B. longers up against windows and they've oozed down to the sidewalks, staring at you with these huge zombie eyes, just staring. And a lot of weird American Indian and Indian from India shit, beaded headbands and donkey beads and temple bells—and the live ones, promenading up and down Haight Street in costumes, or half-costumes, like some kind of a doorman's coat with piping and crap but with blue jeans for pants and Mod boots . . . The cops!—oh, how it messed up their minds.

(315)

The passage begins and ends in conventional third-person, if somewhat omniscient, description, but slides into words
Like "Jesus hair," "crap," "hocked a bunch of T.B. lungers," and "weird American Indian and Indian from India shit" meant to evoke some sort of yah-hoo (if metaphorically creative) police officer running his mouth to the sergeant back at the cop shop. In dialogical narrative, Wolfe deftly constructs both the subject/escapee (Haight denizens) and the observer/captor (shiny shoes cops), as well as the conflict between them, and thus positions himself within the escape-recapture position that I have been documenting in this chapter.

In interviews, Wolfe likens this narrative technique to "method acting":

Instead of using the approach of the man dissecting rather tawdry little specimens down there on a plate—like Orwell, whom I admire very much, looking down on the art of Donald McGill and his seaside postcards—I tried to get the opposite approach, a kind of Method acting, trying to get inside of some of these manifestations: discotheque life in New York, or the stock car racing in the moonshine foothills of North Carolina, or London debutantes. (Dean 24)

One of the most revealing uses of "method acting" narration in *Acid Test* is Wolfe's evocation of the Vietnam Day Committee leftists who have organized a protest at Berkeley and have invited Kesey to be one of the "shock workers of the tongue" who will rouse the protesters until "they are ready to march and take billy clubs upside the head and all the rest of it" (195). Wolfe, who was quoted in 1987 by
Rolling Stone as saying, "Ninety-five percent of the young people in the United States in the Sixties didn't give a damn about Vietnam" (Mewborn 234), initially in the scene can't resist an opinion stripped of dialogical camouflage. "There had been about forty [speakers]," he reports in his own voice, "all roaring or fulminating or arguing cogently, which was always worse" (195, my emphasis).

But with that exception, Wolfe chooses to ridicule the organizers of the demonstration, not directly, but from inside their own heads. Never does Wolfe tell us that he extended his "saturation reporting" to the Vietnam Day Committee or any other group that purported to be New Left, nor was he at the rally, yet he seamlessly shifts inside the New Left group think ("he's ruining the goddamn thing") as they watch Kesey and the Pranksters cavort on stage to the strains of a harmonica-honking "Home on the Range":

If they had had one of those big hooks like they had on amateur night in the vaudeville days, they would have pulled Kesey off the podium right then. Well, then, why doesn't somebody just go up there and edge him off! He's ruining the goddamn thing. But then they see all the Day-Glo crazies, men and women and children all weaving and electrified, clawing at guitars, blowing horns, all grazed aglow at sundown. . . . And the picture of the greatest anti-war rally in the history of America ending in a Day-Glo brawl to the tune of Home, home on the range. . . . (199)
Kesey eventually tells the crowd to "look at the war, and turn your backs and say . . . Fuck it . . ." (199) and Wolfe reports with evident satisfaction that although no one could prove Kesey had done it, "something was gone out of the anti-war rally" (200).

Wolfe enters the New Left's group head for a second time in a rather astonishing verbal critique of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nonviolent tactics and their relevance to a potentially "physical confrontation" with police. Although it is not entirely clear from the narrative, apparently Wolfe is reporting that someone (because of Kesey's performance) had suggested that the police were not worth challenging directly that day, and that a second person may have called that someone a Martin Luther King. Wolfe unleashes a racist "hectoring narrator" in the sensibility of the imaginary New Left agitator:

That was about the worst thing you could call anybody on the New Left at that time . . . big solemn preachery Uncle Tom. Yah! yuh Tuskegee-headed Uncle Tom, yuh, yuh Booker T. Washington peanut-butter lecture-podium Nobel Prize medal head, yuh--Uncle Tom--by the time it was all over, Martin Luther King was a stupid music-hall Handkerchief Head on the New Left--and here they were calling each other Martin Luther Kings and other incredible things--but nobody had any good smashing iron zeal to carry the day--O where is our Zealot, who Day-glowed and fucked up our heads--and there was nothing to do but grouse at the National Guard and turn back, which they did. What the hell has happened
Here, again, Wolfe constructs a verbal lens of one social group (the New Left) by which to critique another (nonviolent blacks), meanwhile escaping the fray except for the initial, almost off-handed, personal opinion delivered early in the scene.

One way in which nonfiction narrative implicates its authors in ways that fiction cannot, of course, is that some readers may have different memories of the event being narrated than does the writer. Journalist Hunter S. Thompson is one such reader. Although his account of Kesey's relationship to the New Left is written much later and is, of course, subject to the same sorts of contradictions and social constructions that I have been exploring in Wolfe, Thompson traces a somewhat different recollection and thus calls into question Wolfe's positioning of Kesey.

In Paul Perry's *On The Bus*, Thompson—who first gained fame as a biographer of the Hell's Angels and, in fact, first introduced them to Kesey—says that "Kesey and [Allen] Ginsberg were trying to get the [Hell's] Angels to calm down and become anti-war activists," even to act as bodyguards "for radicals in Berkeley who were fighting with the Oakland police." Thompson recalls that Kesey was at an Oakland rally where protestors blocked war shipments:
I remember that the Angels, along with the Oakland police, turned on the Berkeley leftists and attacked them. I think Kesey actually got stomped and whacked around at one point. Things with the Angels kind of went to hell after that. (136)

In any event, when Wolfe turns his verbal hose on "music-hall Handkerchief Head" Martin Luther King, Jr., he is continuing a book-long pattern of constructing African-Americans negatively through the eyes of Pranksters and others. "The whole old-style hip life—jazz, coffee houses, civil rights, invite a spade to dinner, Vietnam" was suddenly dying, Wolfe reports early in the book. "It had even gotten to the point that Negroes were no longer in the hip scene, not even as totem figures. It was unbelievable" (9). When the Pranksters bus tour reaches Lake Pontchartrain near New Orleans and they mistakenly swim at a segregated beach, Wolfe shifts inside the head of Prankster Steve ("Zonker") Lambrecht and notes that the police win the day in their task to separate blacks and whites:

Everything is orange and then he looks at the writhing mass of Negroes, out every window, nothing but writhing Negroes mashed in around the bus and writhing, and it all starts turning from orange to brown. Zonker starts getting the feeling he is inside an enormous intestine and it is going into peristaltic contractions ... the white cops turn up at that point and break up the crowd and tell the white crazies to drive on, this is a segregated beach, and for once they
On other occasions, Wolfe reports that "spades" are now out of the hip scene, except for a couple of drug pushers. And when the Pranksters hold their second acid test at the house of a "local boho figure known as Big Nig" (210), their temporary landlord comes in for a verbal spanking, again filtered through the Prankster mindset, but never directly quoted, when he demands his rent:

Big Nig, the poor pathetic spade, wants his rent. A freaking odd thought, that one. A big funky spade looking pathetic and square. For twenty years in the hip life, Negroes never even looked square. They were the archetypal soul figures. But what is Soul, or Funky, or Cool, or Baby—in the new world of the ecstasy? (213)

Similarly, Wolfe takes every opportunity, during Ken Kesey’s fugitive flight in the latter stages of the book, to construct a view of Mexican culture through a Kesey mindset that might make John Reed’s "Mac-American" proud. The "Rat-aesthetic" of Mexico is presented from within several levels of Kesey’s consciousness documented in "The Fugitive" chapter and is the sort of catalogue which prompts Ronald Weber to conclude that Kesey "pales before the fireworks display of Wolfe’s writing about Kesey’s mind" (The Literature of Fact 101). The following relatively brief example is extracted from several pages of
Wolfe’s overheated "Rat cones, Rat sodas, Rat meat-salad-sandwiches, Rat cheezis, Ratburgers" prose:

Greyhound bus toiletttes with paper towels and vomit hanging over the hockey-puckblack rim, Army-Navy stores with Bikini Kodpiece Briefs for men, Super Giant racks with matching green twill shorts and balloon-bottom pants for honest toilers . . . a spade counter chef scraping a short-order grill with a chalky Kitchy-Brik and he won’t take your order till he’s through. (261)

My intention with this sort of narrative analysis is not to subject Wolfe’s lexicon to some latter-day standard of "political correctness," but to explore how his language constructs his subjects and through whose eyes those subjects are constructed. Much of his most savage satire is presented from inside the sensibilities of others, though with unmistakably Wolfeian language and cadence. This strategy allows Wolfe to escape, at least provisionally, some of the implications of these passages, not unlike the way John Reed escaped his complicity with "Mac-American" by presenting Mac as fiction. Certainly, Wolfe’s verbal spitfire (if not always its message) is one of the enduring charms of the book, at times, indeed, reaching almost Joycean proportions, but it is scant evidence of a writer who "hardly intrud(es) into the narratives at all" (178), as Wolfe contended about Acid Test in a 1983 interview published in Contemporary Authors: New Revision Series.
The pattern which emerges is that of Wolfe training his sights on social groups normally considered to be either marginal or "avant garde"—blacks, Mexicans, Berkeley New Leftists, North Beach hipsters, Big Sur Unitarians, Learyites—and out-gunning their marginality or hipness through the vicarious sensibilities of the always-ever-hipper-than-thou Pranksters and their psychic tag-team allies, the Hell's Angels:

One way or another, the Hell's Angels came to symbolize the side of the Kesey adventure that panicked the hip world. The Angels were too freaking real... It is the eternal game in which Clement Attlee, bald as Lenin, lively as a toy tank, yodels blood to the dockworkers of Liverpool—and dies buried in striped pants with a magenta sash across his chest and a coin with the Queen's likeness upon each eyelid. (326)

Once that hipper-than-thou hierarchy has been established, Wolfe will at last reveal an emptiness at the heart of Kesey's Prankster dream. Thus, while Wolfe makes gleeful use of the Pranksters to savage a host of familiar left/marginal targets, he can escape the implications of actually having to endorse Kesey's own full-scale critique of rational Western culture. Only a careful reading which reads the historical author against the grain of its narrative positioning will uncover those contradictions.

In this respect, it is worth examining at least one more scene in some detail—the Pranksters' visit to
Millbrook. Such a discussion will illuminate the ways in which events and their nonfiction representation implicate each other in a nonfiction narrative like *Acid Test*, begin to illustrate some of the tensions that pervaded counterculture and the emerging New Journalism in the late 1960s, serve as a transition toward a more specific exploration of Wolfe's attraction to and escape from the Prankster fantasy, and introduce the manner in which that fantasy mirrors Wolfe's journalistic theory and practice.

Wolfe presents the Millbrook visit as a potential summit between Kesey's Edge City crazies and the Eastern psychedelic establishment represented by psychologists Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert. The reader is drawn into familiar turf here. Wolfe inhabits the heads of the Learyites (but does not report in his author's note that he ever interviewed any of them [371-72]) as they sniff their disapproval of Kesey's gang and thereby, ironically, forfeit their place on Wolfe's status ladder: "We have something deep and meditative going on here, and you California crazies are a sour note" (94). While the Pranksters cavort on the Millbrook grounds, co-opting the Learyites' guided tour to poke fun at their pretensions, Wolfe relays the Big Question of the Day:

> Where was Leary? Everyone was waiting for the great meeting of Leary and Kesey. Well, word came down that Leary was upstairs in the mansion engaged in a very serious experiment, a three-day
trip, and could not be disturbed. Kesey wasn’t angry, but he was very disappointed, even hurt. It was unbelievable--this was Millbrook, one big piece of uptight constipation, after all this. (95)

Yet, a photograph taken by poet Allen Ginsberg, who had boarded the Pranksters’ bus after having set up a meeting between Kesey and Kerouac at a party in Manhattan, presents ready proof that Leary actually did leave his room. Here is Leary, tongue clasped between his lips, head leaned back against a window of the "Further" bus, wrapped in sweater and scarf, while a shirtless and blade-faced Neal Cassady looks on. Leary now recalls 25 years later that he soon left the Pranksters’ bus and went upstairs, not for a three-day trip, but to recover:

I had just fallen in love with a woman who later became my wife, so needless to say, that was number one on my consciousness. Not only was I lovesick, but I had also come down with a heavy flu. So I went right to my room and went to bed. Put yourself in my place. I didn’t know this was history being made, a meeting of the acid tribes. I was preoccupied with other things. (Perry 97)²

Although he later reveals that Sandy Lehmann-Haupt was given the dose of the powerful hallucigen DMT at Millbrook --which, in fact, helps to trigger Lehmann-Haupt’s later breakdown in the "Dream Wars" chapter--Wolfe in Acid Test portrays the Prankster-Learyite visit as quite brief, almost uneventful. Ginsberg’s photo record, however, shows
nurse/guide Susan Metzner, the wife of psychologist Dr. Ralph Metzner, injecting Cassady's bare bottom with DMT in an attic bedroom of the Millbrook mansion, as well as a beatific Dr. Richard Alpert entertaining the Pranksters on the mansion's front porch. Alpert, now known as Baba Ram Dass, recalls:

There was no forewarning whatsoever that the Pranksters were going to show up at Millbrook. Our situation was as follows: The night before, there were about twenty of us. We had all done acid and it turned out to be a very intense and profound trip. We sat by the fire, all of us huddled together. There was a lot of intimacy and profundity and it was a very deep trip that had gone on all night long. By seven or eight in the morning, everybody was in mellow, delicate, vulnerable space and drifting off to bed for the day. It was at this very moment that the bus drove up. (Perry 93)

Wolfe tells us the bus "entered the twisty deep green Gothic grounds of Millbrook with flags flying, American flags all over the bus, and the speakers blaring rock 'n' roll" as Sandy Lehmann-Haupt tossed great green smoke bombs overboard (93-94). Ron "Hassler" Bivert now remembers "their house was kind of enveloped in green smoke. It was like the Huns coming to visit Camelot" (Perry 93). While Wolfe recounts the Learyites' manner of greeting as "a couple of figures there on the lawn dart back into the house . . . finally a few souls materialize" (94, my ellipses), Ken Babbs, who as the "Intrepid Traveller" was
Kesey's chief lieutenant, has written the following "flashback" of the arrival:

They emerge from the green smoke pulling to a stop in the turnaround in front of the mansion, greeted by Richard Alpert and the lovely lithe bikinied maidens; Pranksters tootling and fluting the arrival; Babbs and Cassady and Kesey and Ginsberg leading the handshaking charge; followed closely by the rest of the Merry Band. (Perry 95)

By now, of course, the visit has been so mediated and re-mediated that everyone's memories are mostly of other accounts and other memories, not the least of which is Wolfe's book. In this way, the transaction is reminiscent of what historian A. J. P. Taylor has to say about John Reed's Ten Days That Shook the World:

As with most writers, Reed heightened the drama, and this drama sometimes took over from reality. Bolshevik participants, when they looked back, often based their recollections more on Reed's book than on their own memories. . . . In this sense, Reed's book founded a legend, one which has largely triumphed over the facts. Not that the legend was untrue. Most legends spring from facts. But the mood and emotions of the Bolshevik revolution would not stand out so clearly if Reed had not been there to record them. (ix)

The thrust of Wolfe's legend of the Prankster-Learyite summit, however, was to dramatize a gulf that, at least with the passage of time, does not seem so deep to many of its participants, and which is somewhat controverted by the photographic record. Alpert/Baba Ram Dass, who seems to
have stayed on friendly enough terms with the Pranksters
despite the Millbrook visit to be a guest at Kesey’s La
Honda house the weekend of the first Hell’s Angel party,
finishes the story:

I remember them staying around for the
day. I remember sitting on the porch
railing talking to them. We all went
out to the little tennis house where
people would go for a week of silent
retreat and they did sort of a ceremony
out there. Then they took a bath and
ate and slept. They really did little
more than that. It was fairly
disappointing for them. They caught us
about twelve hours too late; it was
nothing more than that. If they had
come the night before, it would have
been an entirely different story for
all of us for the rest of our lives.
(Perry 101-02)

Although the initial incident is presented in one of
the book’s shortest chapters, Wolfe makes symbolic use of
the aborted Kesey-Leary summit to build one of Acid Test’s
most important and compelling themes: the manner in which
Kesey’s experiments represented a profound, and indeed
ecstatically religious, challenge to mid-1960s society.
But it was a challenge mounted from the Left Coast
electricity of neon shopping strips and freeways rather
than the Eastern/Far Eastern establishment of meditation,
Zen, Yoga, and inner contemplation. Predictably, Wolfe’s
narrator, at least on the surface, chooses sides, although
the passage also signals the beginning of the long,
downward spiral of the book (Hellmann 113) by which Wolfe
can reject both alternatives and move toward Kesey's final conclusion: "We Blew It" (368). The following long passage captures both the rhetorical flair and the ideology of Wolfe's mission:

And many things are clear in the flow. They are above the multitudes, looking down from the Further heights of the bus, and the billion eyes of America glisten at them like electric kernels, and yet the Pranksters are grooving with this whole wide-screen America and going with its energy, as in solar heat, from its horsepower and its neon, and the trouble with Leary and his group is that they have turned back. But of course! They have turned back into that old ancient New York intellectual thing, ducked back into the romantic past, copped out of the American trip. New York intellectuals have always looked for... another country, a fatherland of the mind, where it is all better and more philosophic and purer, gadget-free, and simpler and pedigreed: France or England, usually--oh, the art of living, in France, boys. The Learyites have done the same thing, only with them it's--India--the East--with all the ancient flapdoodle of Gautama Buddha or the Rig-Veda blowing in like mildew, and Leary calls for blue grass growing in the streets of New York, and he decrees that everyone should have such a dwelling place of such pristine antique decor, with everyone hunkered down amid straw rugs and Paisley wall hangings, that the Gautama Buddha himself from 485 B.C. could walk in and feel at home instantly. Above all, keep quiet, for God's sake, hold it down, whisper, moan, mumble, meditate, and for chrissake, no gadgets--no tapes, video tapes, TV, flags, no neon, Buick Electras, many moonstone-faced Servicenters, and no manic buses, f'r chrissake, soaring, doubledyclutch,
doubledy clutch to the Westernmost edge. (100-101)

The passage extends and deepens themes that Wolfe explored almost compulsively throughout his early journalism, particularly during a period when he was in deep revolt against the hegemony of the daily newspaper business and its tyranny of inverted pyramid objectivity. And so, to demonstrate that assertion, for a time I shall leave the Pranksters doubledy clutching their way toward Edge City as I examine the ways in which Wolfe's own journalism in the 1960s mirrored the Pranksters' no-holds-barred challenge both to the Old Establishment and the New Left.

On the book tour for The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test in August 1968, Wolfe said he had been spending a lot of time watching "fugitive" shows on television before accepting the project and that he was fascinated by Kesey because of his "attempt to harness all the totally California things--gadgets, TV, movies, the cars, the bus" and take them beyond their "immediate, rather limited" space toward "some wild edge" (Dietz 18, 23). That interactive response toward technology, what social critic Dick Hebdidge discusses in Subculture: The Meaning of Style (103-04) in a post-dated incarnation of Claude Levi-Strauss' concept of "bricolage," informs Wolfe's early journalism as well as the Pranksters' pop responses:
Wolfe harnessed the quick cuts/conscious irony of mid-1960s pop style and did what television and the movies couldn't do as well: dive inside the consciousness of his subjects. The result doesn't sound a lot like inverted pyramid journalism, as when he enters record producer Phil Spector's head on an airplane flight (after having interviewed Spector later about his thoughts at the time):

"Phil Spector goes sailing through the rip, dark, freezing. And the engine, it is reedy-- 'Miss!' A stewardess is walking to the back to buckle herself in for the takeoff. The plane is moving, the jets are revving. Under a Lifebuoy blue skirt, her fireproof legs are clicking out of her Pinki-Kinki-Panti Fantasy" (Kandy-Kolored 48). Of that sort of writing, Wolfe said later:

I had the feeling, rightly or wrongly, that I was doing things no one had ever done before in journalism. I used to try to imagine the feeling readers must have had upon finding all this carrying on and cutting up in a Sunday supplement. I liked that idea. I had no sense of being a part of any normal journalistic or literary environment. ("The New Journalism" 20)

Stock car races, record producer Spector's "wall of sound," Kandy-Kolored Kustom Kar shows, Las Vegas casino hustle, lipstick-lick fashion frenzies: these are the beats that Wolfe drummed during the 1960s. In retrospect, the signal feature of his poetics was to capture an image from popular culture and turn that image on its ear, spitting it
back at the reader in ways that made the reader drop his preconceptions. Wolfe, along the way, wrote lead paragraphs like these and called it reporting:

Hernia, hernia, hernia, hernia, hernia,
hernia, hernia, hernia, hernia, hernia,
hernia, hernia, hernia, HERNia, hernia,
HERNia, hernia, hernia, hernia, hernia,
HERNia, HERNia, HERNia, hernia, hernia,
hernia, hernia, hernia, hernia, hernia,
eight is the point, the point is eight,
hernia, hernia, HERNia; hernia, hernia,
hernia, hernia, all right, hernia,
hernia, hernia, hernia, hard eight,
hernia, hernia, hernia, HERNia, hernia,
hernia, hernia HERNia, hernia, hernia,
hernia, HERNia, hernia, hernia, hernia,
hernia. (Kandy-Kolored 3)

It is a nonsense word . . ." suggests Chris Anderson in his book Style as Argument: Contemporary American Nonfiction, "the droning chant of a man at a craps table," which, repeated, emphasizes the breakdown of language amidst the sensory overload of the casino. But Anderson seems to catch only part of Wolfe's verbal work-out, a method, in fact, that explains why Wolfe was so attracted by the Kesey/Cassady/Prankster route. Although Wolfe certainly has the breakdown of language in his sights, the word he chooses is anything but a nonsense word.

"Hernia," by contrast, is a "real" word confiscated from the medical establishment, a word that means "protrusion of an organ or organic part through the wall that normally encloses it; rupture" (American Heritage Dictionary 327). To assume that Wolfe doesn't know the
dictionary meaning of "hernia" or that he chooses it at random to signify the dealer's drone chant is to miss his extraordinarily careful—though always undercutting—use of language. As an "organic protrusion" or "rupture," the word could perhaps be managed as an image or "sign" of the disruptive energy (or disease) that Wolfe finds in Las Vegas, the "super-hyper-version" of America, as he calls it elsewhere in his article, "Las Vegas (What!)." Or it might even be the rupture in a city editor's spleen when he reads a lead paragraph like the one Wolfe wrote.

Whatever, Wolfe never allows the proto-symbol to coalesce. He repeats the word 57 times so it no longer makes sense on the page to either the eye or the ear, then a page or two later tells the reader deadpan that, though the dealer's "hernia" rap contains "next to no useful construction," its underlying message is, "We are the initiates, riding the crest of chance." Then, less than a sentence later, he undercuts this new message, assuring the reader that while the accumulated sound comes out "hernia," it is merely "an unfortunate phonetic coincidence" (3), the point where Anderson would have us begin and end. But, without acknowledging any of these labyrinthine contradictions, Wolfe ends the passage by declaring that the sound is actually "part of something rare and rather grand" (5).
Certainly this is the voice of a reporter working at a complex and disingenuous level, a level in which Mas'ud Zavarzadeh reminds us that the facts of reporting enter a realm of "disorienting fictiveness" (66). In that realm, Wolfe prowls a world in which signs outstrip signification, "the super-hyper-version" (Kandy-Kolored 7) of which, he tells us, was Las Vegas, the only town in the world whose skyline is made up neither of buildings, not of trees, but of signs:

But such signs. They tower. They revolve. They oscillate, they soar in shapes before which the existing vocabulary of art history is helpless. I can only attempt to supply names--Boomerang Modern, Palette Curvilinear, Flash Gordon Ming-Alert Special, McDonald's Hamburger Parabola, Mint Casino Elliptical, Miami Beach Kidney. Las Vegas' sign makers work so far out beyond the frontiers of conventional studio art that they have no names themselves for the forms they create. (Kandy-Kolored 7)

It is not much of a stretch to understand that Wolfe is describing his own aesthetic practices as much as the Las Vegas signs. He told a Vogue reporter, somewhat breathlessly, a year later that he tries to re-create a scene from "a triple point of view," often within a single paragraph recounting his own thoughts, his subjects' thoughts and the thoughts of witnesses. "Incidently," he added. "I always use the present tense" (Dundy 10). Vanity Fair writer Toby Thompson's article on Wolfe, while
published in a popular, rather than scholarly, journal, offers as insightful a description of Wolfe's early articles as has been written:

They incorporated the electric beeps and chatter of TV, of rock radio; they moved like the spontaneous bop prosody of the Beats; they had a visual quality, on the page; and they were scholarly, with bits of art history and sociology. Wolfe flung this pastiche at a baby-boom readership raised on television and Top 40 radio, the best educated generation in the history of the world. (162)

As were many of the New Journalists of the mid-1960s, Wolfe was rebelling against a news establishment that, like his former employer the Washington Post, forced him to go on deadline to the parents of a dead crime victim and convince them "that it was in the best interests of humanity that they surrender a picture of this girl." The Post's motive, Wolfe recalls almost three decades later, was "sheer prurience, the way every other newspaper's is" (Sellers 268).

His ongoing critique of the news business, then and now, goes far beyond its prurient deadline competition. In an interview with Chet Flippo published in Rolling Stone, Wolfe takes dead aim at newspaper monopoly economics and, despite the fact that Wolfe no longer had to worry much about his own next meal, accurately describes the exploitative habits of the news industry:
I doubt if there are five cities where there is still newspaper competition. . . . When this happens, the monopoly newspaper cuts back on its staff--always happens. They just stop covering local events--too expensive. And they'll hire children from journalism schools at the lowest possible scale. They'll let them work for a couple of years, send them to the Statehouse, 'cause at the Statehouse they can pick up four or five stories a day handed out by public relations people. (101-02)

Within *Acid Test* itself, Wolfe manages to critique the straight news business on several occasions, beginning with his "PALO ALTO, CALIF., July 21, 1963" dateline that ends the "What Do You Think of My Buddha" chapter and recounts the press' befuddlement at the last-night party on Bohemian Perry Lane. "[I]t was hard as hell to make the End of an Era story come out right in the papers . . . but they managed to go back with the story they came with, End of an Era, the cliche intact" (48). Wolfe's critique culminates at "The Acid Graduation," when the TV crews press close to get Kesey's words to the multitudes and start ordering the Pranksters around. "The heads are disgusted. They just stare at them," Wolfe reports, adding that Kesey "shoots a few whammies their way." Then, suddenly, Wolfe is inside Kesey's head, but what is revealed, predictably, sounds a lot like Wolfe. "These bastards and their . . . positioning . . . They're punctures in the dirigible, flatulent murmurs in the heart" (353).
Wolfe, of course, was prepared to search for alternatives to pack journalism. And like Kesey, he doesn’t mind a little self-promotion if that is what it takes to spread the word. Of "The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby," the magazine piece that gave its name to Wolfe’s first article collection, Wolfe wrote in his 1973 manifesto, "The New Journalism":

It was hard to say what it was like. It was a garage sale, that piece . . . vignettes, odds and ends of scholarship, bits of memoir, short bursts of sociology, apostrophes, epithets, means, cackles, anything that came into me head, much of it thrown together in a rough and awkward way. That was its virtue. It showed me the possibility of there being something "new" in journalism. (15)

Imagine, then, Wolfe’s fascination with Kesey’s Pranksters, out on The Edge, huddled in the glow,

starting to rap—a form of free association conversation, like a jazz conversation, or even a monologue, with everyone, or whoever, catching hold of words, symbols, ideas, sounds, and winging them back and forth and beyond . . . the walls of conventional logic. (53)

But like his reconstruction of Kesey’s Pranksters—or at least the many examples of unspoken language attributed to them in the passages that form the first part of this chapter’s discussion—Wolfe at the same time was fending off another, more politically engaged, form of New Journalism. From the New Left of the 1960s had arisen the
challenge of a committed form of writing that, while it differed from Wolfe's, represented just as deep a rupture in the mid-century American practice of corporate, "objective," inverted pyramid journalism. Most subsequent scholarly studies of the creative nonfiction loosely grouped as New Journalism have not examined the political and social struggles that lies at the core of New Journalism and, instead, have confined themselves to considerations of genre and canon—New Journalism's peculiar truth status and the question of whether or not it deserves to be studied as serious literature. But at least two theoretical articles written between 1965 and 1974 by a pair of the form's leading practitioners—reprinted in Ronald Weber's anthology, The Reporter As Artist: A Look at The New Journalism Controversy (1974)—offer a direct challenge to Wolfe's own poetics.

Nat Hentoff, in his essay, "Behold the New Journalism --It's Coming After You!", called for reporting that breaks down the barriers between reporter/reader/history by eliminating the reporter as "faceless notetaking onlooker." Hentoff asks for engagement between writer and reader: "It's I who am there; it's I telling you where I've been, what I've seen, how I felt about it, what changes it made and did not make to me" (53). Such engagement, Hentoff argues, would disclose journalism's dirty little secret, the idea that somehow subjective judgments don't come into
play in the creation and consumption of news product. Though Hentoff is rebelling from the same sort of corporate media power as is Wolfe, Hentoff's belief that any reporting necessarily is deeply subjective strikes at the heart of Wolfe's contention that he can present "impersonal and objective" reporting in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (McLeod 178). "I can get in the mind of Ken Kesey . . .," Wolfe told interviewer Joe David Bellamy the same year that Hentoff's essay was published in Weber's anthology, "get completely inside Kesey's mind, based on interviews, tapes that he made, or letters he wrote, diaries, and so on. It's still a controversial thing to do but I was not at all interested in presenting my subjective state" (45, emphasis in original).

That promise of objectivity squares with Wolfe's belief, expressed elsewhere in the interview, that there "are certain things that are objectively known" (45), even if different subjects experience those objective phenomena somewhat differently: "[Y]ou can't dismiss the common demonimators in the external world and say there is no reality," Wolfe said (45). Therefore, to Wolfe, New Journalism remains a revolution of technique, not of epistemology or politics. In the following exchange, Wolfe's questioner summarizes Hentoff's position succinctly, and Wolfe's response is telling:
Bellamy: [I]sn’t the real crux of the issue the question of the nature of reality itself? It seems to me that one argument that’s been given in favor of the new journalism is that so-called outside reality doesn’t really exist, that all you really have is subjective reality. So the reporter, instead of using the old rigid forms and formulas, which were supposedly a way of capturing outside reality, assumes now that he’s being more honest by giving his subjective experience, which he sees as truer to reality. And isn’t that really the argument that the new novelists are giving too—that there is no "outside reality"? So that leaves you open to go into fantasy—because that’s part of what reality is, after all, because fantasy is part of reality. We’re always having fantasies.

Wolfe: I disagree with that totally. Because, for my money, the only thing new in this new journalism I’m talking about is the new techniques that nonfiction writers have discovered they can use. The subjectivity that I value in the good examples of the new journalism is the use of techniques. (44-45, my emphasis)

In another interview, Wolfe describes those techniques with explicit reference to Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test. He says he would review his notes for an upcoming chapter of the book, then try to envision himself as living those events, "going crazy, for example . . . how it feels and what it’s going to sound like when you translate it into words—which was real writing by radar" (Thompson 212). But he insists that he was reporting objectively.
Hentoff and other more politically motivated journalists of the 1960s, however, were less willing to circumscribe the issue of subjectivity to formal and technical limits. They preferred to critique the illusion of objective reporting as a matter of social and political control. Wondering aloud, for example, how the New York Times "would look if it were edited and written by the people from Bedford-Stuyvesant," Hentoff finds that "all the news fit to print" is determined by social and cultural, not objective, or even formal, standards. Hentoff, therefore, defines the promise of New Journalism as follows:

a new generation of young readers is being brought into the news in ways that make more and more of them realize that they need not remain only voyeurs in living history. The new journalism, because it is powered by feeling as well as intellect, can help break the glass between the reader and the world he lives in. A citizen has to be more than informed; he has to act if he is to have some say about what happens to him; and the new journalism can stimulate active involvement. (52)

Hentoff's arguments are made even more forcefully by then-Village Voice senior editor Jack Newfield in an essay, "Journalism: Old, New, and Corporate," written shortly after the 1968 presidential election and also published in Weber's anthology. In that essay, Newfield argues that his "gripe against the respectable gray pillars" of American journalism isn't simply that "there is monopoly ownership
in too many cities by publishers who care little about professionalism, and everything about profits"; isn't simply that "the newspaper unions have become conservative" perpetuators of "a seniority system that protects the lazy and punishes the imaginative"; isn't simply that "advertisers have a subtle say about what goes into a newspaper" (54-55). To Newfield:

the disturbing reality is that the press censors itself, through superficiality, through bias, through incompetence, and through a desire to be the "responsible" fourth branch of government. . . . They have a mind-set. They have definite life styles and political values, which are concealed under a rhetoric of objectivity. But those values are organically institutionalized by the Times, by AP, by CBS, into their corporate bureaucracies. Among these unspoken, but organic, values are belief in welfare capitalism, God, the West, Puritanism, the Law, family, property, the two-party system, and perhaps most critically, in the notion that violence is only defensible when employed by the State. I can't think of any White House correspondent, or network television analyst, who doesn't share these values. And at the same time, who doesn't insist that he is totally objective. (55)

Read twenty-five years later, the particular historical thrust of Newfield's piece is that journalism, like radicalism, cinema, and music has emerged "beyond the frozen frontiers of the older forms" (60). Adopting the term "participatory journalist," Newfield contends that new journalists will recognize along with Andrew Kopkind that
"objectivity is the rationalization for moral disengagement, the classic cop-out from choice-making" (61). Interestingly, Newfield includes Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test among his examples of the new, participatory journalism, though he complains elsewhere in his essay that Wolfe has "no politics" (63). Despite that, Newfield finds that a resistant streak creeps through Wolfe's reporting because it is "written with intelligence from inside the drug subculture" (65). Ultimately, Newfield argues that engaged writers will be the cornerstone of the rebellion against old journalism. His argument is presented here at some length to retain the flavor of its 1960s-era faith in freedom and newness:

Participation and advocacy remain the touchstones of the new insurgent journalism. The evidence now seems overwhelming that the closer a serious writer gets to his material, the more understanding he gets, the more understanding he gets, the more he is there to record those decisive moments of spontaneity and authenticity. He gets inside the context and sees scenes and details that distance and neutrality deny to the more conventional reporters. He does not have to write about impersonal public rituals like ghost-written speeches, well-rehearsed concerts, and staged and managed press conferences. He is there to see and react to the human reflexes exposed late at night that illuminate a man's character. The advocacy journalist breaks down the artificial barrier between work and leisure; between private and public knowledge. He can do this because he is writing, by choice, about subjects that excite
his imagination, rather than fulfilling an assignment made by the city desk, and that needs to be approved and edited by the copy desk. He is a free man, relying on his instincts, intelligence and discipline. (65)

The struggle between Wolfe's and the Hentoff/Newfield brands of New Journalism, ironically, reverberated inside the world of unconventional New York journalism of the late 1960s, though it would be too reductive to consider the larger social and political rift only as some internecine dispute. Wolfe's early reporting was published in the Sunday "New York" section of the New York Herald-Tribune, a breeding ground of adventurous feature reporters that Wolfe sketches in the opening sections of his essay, "The New Journalism." Under the editorship of Clay Felker, the Sunday supplement branched out as the prototypical "city" magazine in 1968, the same year Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test was published, and Wolfe was named a contributing editor. Ken McAuliffe's history of the Village Voice (1978), where both Newfield and Hentoff were editors, notes that the Voice and New York "competed for ads, especially after the Voice began seriously looking for national advertising, for readers--about one in three Voice readers also read New York Magazine--and on a purely prestige level for the bragging rights around town to having started the New Journalism" (377).
McAuliffe writes that declining circulation during its first years of independent publication forced New York's Felker to shift the magazine's emphasis away from politics and toward "lifestyle"—a direction that, coincidentally, had always been Wolfe's consuming interest. McAuliffe quotes Felker:

We as journalists looked too long and too lovingly at the hippies, yippies, protesters and rock groups. . . . They are no longer, to use the cliche, relevant. What is relevant is that you can go broke on $80,000 a year, that you can't get an apartment, that there are new pressures on marriage and new ways to make money. (369-70)

For his part, Wolfe described the Voice and its editors like Hentoff and Newfield as serving a role, along with the New York Review of Books, as the "pulpit-voice in the Church of Good Liberals" and said that reading it would "confirm you in your supposition that it is really not worth going below 48th Street--ever" (qtd. in McAuliffe 131). And Wolfe more recently has insisted that the social rebellion of "style" overshadowed any of the tumultuous political upheavals of the decade (Mewborn 235).

The final irony of this sometimes intramural squabble (which should not overshadow the very real social, political, and epistemological rifts within New Journalism) was that by 1974 Felker had purchased a controlling interest in the Village Voice and thus was in a direct position to settle the future of the market, both in its
uptown and its downtown incarnations (McAuliffe 441). In an interview shortly after the purchase, Felker named Tom Wolfe as the journalist he most admired and suggested he might keep a tighter rein on the point of view expressed by Village Voice writers, if not their creative form:

I'm concerned with content here [at the Voice]. This is me, but even here, I give the writers--the essential thing that I do is come to an agreement with the writer as to point of view, but after that I don't interfere with what they have to say. I don't believe in that. And I think you will kill a writer's creativity by doing that. (Frankfurt 263, my emphasis)

Wolfe's concept of "New Journalism," and the service it can do for the profit-making news industry is ironically summarized in an essay written by Thomas R. Kendrick, the editor who is credited with building the Washington Post's feature section into a profitable, and influential, arbitor of daily newspaper feature style. Kendrick says he "demurs" when Newfield calls "participation and advocacy" the "touchstones" of New Journalism, then adopts Wolfe's (who is, after all, a Post alumnus) New Journalism forms as the ones the Post accepts. "There is nothing wrong in 'exploiting the factual authority of journalism' and no necessity to take license with fact," Kendrick argues, in terms that have become standard in feature textbooks. "And there is no reason that much information cannot be conveyed entertainingly [and] newspapers are to survive" (xi).
It was within the specific social context of the political vs. formal ruptures of New Journalism, then, that Wolfe, using his "method acting" technique of subjective objectivity, climbed on the psychic bus with Kesey and the Pranksters and tried to imagine how it would be to be a best-selling novelist and fugitive from justice. The bus's destination was "Further"; its warning sign, "Weird Load Ahead." Wolfe was on tight deadline as he sat down to write Acid Test in two frenzied months while he attended to his seriously ill father in Richmond. It seems he wasn't so sure the counterculture that the Pranksters represented had much staying power. "See, there was a time problem in writing that book, too. It looked as if the whole psychedelic, hippie phenomenon was disappearing. So there was pressure just to get it done," he told Bellamy in 1974. "This was before Woodstock, and, you know, I believed people who said, 'Well, nobody wants to read about this anymore'" (59).

In final preparation for his two-month writing blitz, Wolfe traveled to Buffalo, where a friend gave him a 125-milligram dose of LSD "for research." Wolfe described the experience as "tying yourself to the railroad track and seeing how big the train is, which is rather big" (Reagan 196) and on a later occasion went into more detail:

At first I thought I was having a gigantic heart attack--I felt like my heart was outside my body with these
big veins.... As I began to calm down, I had the feeling that I had entered into the sheen of this bobbly twist carpet—a really wretched carpet, made of Acrilan—and somehow this represented the people of America, in their democratic glory. It was cheap and yet it had a certain glossy excitement to it—I even felt sentimental about it. Somehow I was merging with this carpet. At the time it seemed like a phenomenal insight, a breakthrough. (Thompson 212)

Toby Thompson, in her *Vanity Fair* article, quotes Wolfe as saying that his carpet hallucination doesn’t signify "a goddamn thing" (212), but Wolfe’s contradictory sensations of community and catastrophe repeat the escape/recapture fantasy and are everywhere in *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. For the promise of a new frontier by which Wolfe’s subjects (and, by implication, his readers) could re-define and free themselves from the clutches of conventionality is soon circumscribed by their arrest and recapture, even as Wolfe sought in his theoretical writings of the early-1970s to apprehend the deep challenge to corporate journalism that his writing had helped to unleash.

When we last left the Pranksters hurtling toward "Edge City," they were a community "deep into intersubjectivity," starting to rap (53), "soaring doubledy-clutch, doubledy-clutch to the Westernmost edge—" (101). The latter half of the book traces a tortuous path from community toward disillusionment, if not catastrophe. By
the time the Pranksters had reached Millbrook, Wolfe had already summoned these dangers, if only briefly, with the mental collapse of Kathy Casano, her "Stark Naked" psychic innocence laid bare as the Pranksters pulled up to novelist Larry McMurtry's house in Houston in a "risk-all balls-out plunge into the unknown." Wolfe has symbolically prepared his readers for this scene by recounting the Pranksters' response when a live microphone had fallen off of the bus to bounce on the highway. Instead of being concerned about its capital or use value, as Sandy Lehmann-Haupt would have them do, they sacrifice property value and responsibility for sensation and experience as they "grok" over the sound the mic makes as it bounces behind them on the asphalt:

"Wowwwwwwww! Did you--wowwwwww"--as if they had synched into a never-before-heard thing, a unique thing, the sound of an object, a microphone, hitting the American asphalt, the open road at 70 miles and hour, like it was all there on tape they would have the instant, the moment, of anything anyone, ripped out of the flow and hitting the great Superhighway at 70 miles and hour--and they had it on tape--and played it back in variable lag skakkkkkkk-akkk-akkkk-akkkkooooooool. (76)

When Stark Naked cracks mentally, Wolfe's narration stays outside her point of view and, instead, traces a sort of Prankster group-think response not dissimilar to their reaction to the fallen microphone. There are roads to cover and sensations to sense, the group response seems to
suggest: "Stark Naked had done her thing. She roared off into the void and was picked up by the cops by and by, and the doors closed in the County psychiatric ward, and that was that, for the Pranksters were long gone" (78).

If Stark Naked's fate is recounted outside of her point of view, it serves as a rehearsal for the first deep look at what happens when the bill for the Pranksters' binge begins to come due. Sandy Lehmann-Haupt, Wolfe now reveals, had been injected with DMT at Millbrook. For both thematic and structural reasons, Wolfe could not disclose this fact in the Millbrook chapter because he was far more concerned then with painting the Learyites as up-tight Eastern acid mystics than as the authors of Sandy's demise. He will save that role for Kesey and the Pranksters in what is one of the book's best and most fully dramatized passages. Sandy is beginning to slide into paranoid delusions, particularly centered around his growing feeling that Kesey wants to control his thoughts and actions. He mentally "unpaints" the bus in a DMT flashback, disassociating himself from its "Further-Weird Load" agenda. On a group outing, sickened by the "violence" of a Tom and Jerry cartoon, Sandy leaves a movie theater, only to be confronted when he returns:

"Where the hell have you been? Kesey is looking all over for you." Sandy runs back into the theater. Kesey! He looks up on the screen--and the mouse, Jerry, tricks the cat, Tom, and the cat
goes off a cliff and hits, flattened in an explosion of eyeballs, thousands of eyeballs. (107-08)

Wolfe's writing is at its very best here, multileveled, compelling, rocketing, rocketing, "toward—what?" (104). Images of the edge become images of falling; Sandy's sense that Kesey wants to control him becomes an omen for later scenes in the book in which Kesey, himself, will demand more overt control over his followers:

Sandy falls off the bed, dead, lying on the floor, and he leaves his body in astral projection and sails out over the Pacific, out from the Esalen cliff, out for 40 or 50 miles, soaring and the wind goes in gusts, huhhhhhhhnnnh, huhhhhhhhnnnh, huhhhhhhhhhnnnh, and he is the wind, not even a compact spirit flying but a totally diffuse being, dissolved in the upper ethers, and he can see the whole moonlit ocean and Esalen way back there. Then he comes to, and he is on the floor of the cabin, breathing hard, huhhhhhhhnnnh, huhhhhhhhhhnnnh, huhhhhhhhhhnnnh. (108)

With a panicked Sandy picked up by police and turned over to the custody of his brother, Wolfe has implicated his readers in an effective, but subtle, way. By going so deeply inside Sandy's thoughts during the "Dream Wars" chapter, he has made most of his readers care deeply about Sandy's fate. From then on, many of those readers will understand that the Pranksters' seductive fantasy extracts a potentially steep price.

With that cautionary overlay, in the following chapter, "The Unspoken Thing," Wolfe introduces in a much
more formal way his thesis that Kesey is, in fact, a religious mystic and that the Pranksters' experience is a new religious movement. One effect of that choice is to allow Wolfe to bracket his story within a trajectory that he can manage, allowing him to "predict" the responses that he (as an historical author writing after the fact in a tactic similar to the one I traced for Reed in Ten Days) already knows will occur. For example, Wolfe cites Joachim Wach, a sociologist of religion, as predicting that "in all these religious circles," the group becomes tighter and develops its own symbols, words, and styles; rituals of music and art; and ecstatic experience (115-16). Some ninety pages later, then, Wolfe can introduce Kesey's concept of the "acid tests" and fulfill (complete with typographical pyrotechnics) his (and Wach's) own "prediction":

as it has been written: . . . he develops a strong urge to extend the message to all people . . . he develops a ritus, often involving music, dance, liturgy, sacrifice, to achieve an objectified and stereotyped expression of the original spontaneous experience. (205)

Wolfe also introduces, and subtly undercuts, the Pranksters' growing replacement of language by ecstatic experience, their Intrepid Traveler and His Merry Pranksters Leave in Search of a Cool Place movie (136), their desire to close the 1/38th of a second gap that traps
them in the movie of their own lives. Wolfe here shifts his language into overdrive in an attempt to capture through words Kesey’s postverbal mission. Umberto Eco, in a description of west coast wax museums published in Travels in Hyperreality, writes what could be a dust jacket blurb for this section of Acid Test: "For historical information to be absorbed, it has to assume the aspect of a reincarnation. The 'completely real' becomes identified with the 'completely fake.' . . . The sign aims to be the thing."

To paraphrase Eco, the reader of Acid Test’s "The Unspoken Thing" chapter sometimes is left to wonder whether the book is a "real reincarnation" of Kesey’s experience or a surreal evocation of Wolfe’s struggle to make sense of the hours and hours of films and tapes and Kesey raps that make up the Prankster archives and Wolfe’s research. Or it may be both, indistinguishably, as it is when Quentin and Shreve sit down to make sense/nonsense of history in Absalom, Absalom. Like Eco’s museums, Wolfe seduces his reader into the literary theme park and locks the doors, projecting layers of simulated facts upon screens of factual simulations until nothing seems certain at all. Ultimately, the completely real becomes identified with the "completely fake" in an "aspect of reincarnation":

Experiments of all sorts savored here, like putting contact microphones up against the bare belly and listening to
the enzymes gurgling . . . And then they play a tape against a television show [ . . . ] the picture of the Ed Sullivan show and the words on the tape suddenly force your mind to reach for connections between two vastly different orders of experience. On a television screen Ed Sullivan is holding Ella Fitzgerald's hands with his hands sopped over her hands as if her hands were the first robins of spring and his lips are moving, probably saying, "Ella, that was wonderful! Really wonderful! Ladies and gentlemen, another hand for a great, great lady!" But the voice that comes out is saying to Ella Fitzgerald --in perfect synch--"The lumps in your mattress are carnivore spores, venereal butterflies sent by the Combine to mothproof your brain, a pro-kit in every light socket--Ladies and gentlemen, plug up the light sockets! Plug up the light sockets! The cougar microbes are marching in . . ."

Perfect! The true message! -- although this kind of weird synchronization usually struck outsiders as mere coincidence or just whimsical, meaningless. (124-25, bracketed ellipsis is mine)

The passage is a paradigm for Wolfe's inside/outside, escape/recapture methodology—a reincarnation of the Prankster's synchronicity/non-synchronicity. Ed Sullivan's real (scripted/televised) speech is imagined, his imaginary speech is real. All is proclaimed "true message," yet all could be weird, wired, whimsical, meaningless. A traditional metaphor is brewed into the mix (Sullivan caressing Fitzgerald's robin hands). The Combine—lamp socket—cougar microbes rap might be Wolfe's imagination of what the Prankster rap sounds like, his notes of Kesey's
memory of what he thinks the Prankster rap sounded like, or a verbatim tape of the Prankster rap played in Wolfe’s mind against a real or imagined Ed Sullivan show.

Ultimately, the scene segues into a somewhat unhinged evocation of Jung’s theory of synchronicity ("the entire harmonies of the universe from the most massive to the smallest and most personal—presque vu—all flowing together," etc.), then is undercut by a parody of Jung’s constructs that would do Thomas Pynchon proud as the universe’s synchronicity is harnessed to explain the movements of a gasoline tanker: "(—AND WHEN THE CHEVRON TANKER FOLLOWS THE BUS INTO . . . NOWHERE . . . ONE GETS A GLIMPSE OF THE PATTERN, A NEW PATTERN . . . MANY LEVELS HERE . . . )" (126).

Taken as a whole, the scene is meant to reveal the level to which the Pranksters are deluding themselves, the path that will take them toward an ever-tightening, ever-irrelevant circle wherein rites "grow out of the new experience and seemed weird and incomprehensible to those who have never had it" (Wolfe, quoting Wach, 115-16). Wolfe wants to assure us that, as outsiders, the events would strike us as simple "coincidental, meaningless" and to assure us, with Wach, that we’ve all been here before. But, as a whole, the passage emits an almost-lethal steam, a quality that Wolfe (much less Kesey) can’t quite tame, the possibility of a synchronicity deep and menacing.
The Hell's Angels visit to Kesey's La Honda compound tightens that menace even further. Wolfe introduces the Angels by reputation ("Ahor, the ancient horror, the middle-class boy fear of Hell's Angels, Hell's Angels, in the dirty flesh . . . that dark deep down thing" (152, my ellipsis) and then by sound, their Harley choppers descending from Hell's heaven like a runaway train:

It was like a locomotive about ten miles away. It was the Hell's Angels in "running formation" coming over the mountain on Harley-Davidson 74s. The Angels were up there somewhere weaving down the curves on Route 84, gearing down—thraggggggggh— and winding up, and the locomotive sound got louder and louder until you couldn't hear yourself talk any more or Bob Dylan rheumy and—thraaaaaagggghhh—here they come around the last curve, the Hell's Angels, with the bikes, the beards, the long hair, the sleeveless denim jackets with the death's head insignia and all the rest, looking their most royal rotten, and then one by one they came barreling in over the wooden bridge up to the front of the house, skidding to a stop in explosions of dust, and it was like a movie or something—each one of the outlaws bouncing and gunning across the bridge with his arms spread out in a tough curve to the handlebars and then skidding to a stop, one after another after another. (152-53)

The powerful "othering" attraction of the scene implicates most readers in a sticky web of complicity. We can't turn away; yet the scene's inescapable menace draws us. At first, the Hell's Angels visit reassures us in an admittedly unorthodox way; they don't really ever bash
heads, most find LSD a mellowing trip, Mountain Girl soon has them into her movie. But Wolfe is there to remind us that this movie has another reel: "At big routs like this the Angels often had a second feature going entitled Who Gets Fucked?" (157). Tonight the target is "one nice soft honey hormone squash" of a "blonde" from "out of town."

Though Wolfe assures the reader that the woman is a willing participant, he holds his readers' faces to a scene they can't quite watch and from which they can't quite turn as the woman's ex-husband is brought in and "the girl rises up in a blear and asks him to kiss her, which he does, glistening secretions, then he lurches and mounts her and slides it in, and the Angels cheer Haw Haw--" (157).

The scene continues the developing theme in Acid Test of the manner in which responsibility may be sacrificed at the altar of sensation and how Kesey's "movie" is upstaged by a lurid second feature. Yet Wolfe is not ready to draw the curtain just yet, for the chapter ends with a moment when Kesey verbally disarms a hostile Sonny Barger, chief of the Angels' Oakland chapter, in a manner that other Pranksters determine to be further proof of Kesey's mystical power.

In a 1983 interview with Ron Reagan Jr., for Geo, Wolfe said the gang bang scene was the only one to which Ken Kesey has ever objected, and that was because Wolfe was too "nice." Wolfe's comments reveal both the manner by
which nonfiction can implicate real-life writers and readers and his recognition that the scene, as originally written, did not convey the sense of "tragedy" for which he was aiming in exploring the downward spiral of the Prankster experience:

When I wrote *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Ken Kesey was asked what he thought of it. He said, "It was okay. It was accurate, except for where he tried to be nice." Then he put his finger on the one place in the book where I had pulled my punch a little bit. This was a scene with a gang bang within the Hell's Angels. I couldn't bring myself to name the member involved or her former husband. It's a horrible scene. Kesey said that by not naming the individuals I had turned this tragic moment into a scene of low comedy. He was right. I just couldn't bring myself to do it, and it had nothing to do with libel. For some reason, I couldn't walk over that line. But strictly in terms of the standards I set for myself in writing now, I should have. (195-96)

In *On The Bus*, Hunter S. Thompson, who unlike Wolfe actually witnessed the scene, reveals that the ex-husband was "Neal" (Cassady), a fact that he says he has never disclosed before. Even 25 years later, Thompson wonders why he didn't leave the shack where the gang bang occurred, but says as a reporter whose material was the Hell's Angels, he felt compelled to be a witness.  

The interrelationship of sensation, witness, and control is further developed as the Pranksters begin to stage the "acid tests" that Wolfe believes are their
attempts to institutionalize original religious ecstasy. The Pranksters build a Panopticon-like tower to house the lights, tapes, loops, strobes, and projectors by which they (unseen) can master for their followers the movements and ecstasy of the re-created experience. The tower also assumes Babel-like dimensions in that it reaches upwards in an effort (hence Wolfe’s choice of the verb "mans" for Kesey’s moment of control) to replace the power of the godhead:

Kesey looks out upon the stroboscopic whirlpool--the dancers! flung and flinging! *in ectasis* gyrating! levitating! men in slices! in ping-pong balls! in the creamy bare essence and it reaches a SYNCH he never saw before. Heads from all over the acid world out here and all whirling into the pudding. Now let a man see what CONTROL is. Kesey mans the strobe and a twist of the mercury lever UP and they all speed up. (217)

The Pranksters disintegrate physically as well as spiritually as Kesey and then others are forced either by legal hassles or by internal feuding to join the diaspora. By now, Wolfe notes with evident satisfaction, the politics of sensation has replaced the politics of engagement, even in Berkeley: "Some kid who could always be counted on to demonstrate for the farm workers . . . [or] work for CORE in Mississippi turns up one day--and immediately everyone knows he has become a head" (318, my ellipsis). The old activist ways are gone.
For his part, Kesey is in Mexico, mired in his "rat" fantasies, while other Pranksters try to continue the acid test recreations in their master’s absence. One of those scenes sets in even bolder relief the choice between sensation and responsibility that has dominated the latter half of the book. At the Watts test, a nameless girl freaks out on acid and begins to scream "Who Cares?"
Rather than intervene, Ken Babbs—who has taken over as leader for Kesey—sticks a microphone into her face and broadcasts her tortured question over the tape loops and through the strobospheric, time warped, lag lifted, brew for the benefit of the revelers:

Romney looks at Babbs and Who Cares—well, Babbs cares, with one part of him, but with another his devotion is to the Test, to the Archives, a freakout for the Archives, freaked out on tape in the Archives, Who Cares in the Prankster Archives, and the cry wails over the hall, into every brain. (251)

The book ends with the Acid Graduation and with a final gig at The Barn near Santa Cruz. Wolfe can now fulfill his (and Joachim Wach’s) prophesy: the religious circle, tighter and tighter (115) until even the true believers begin to drift off, spurning Cassady’s interactive raps that had opened the book (even if only a few days before in chronological time) with such menacing promise. "They just stare at [Cassady], freaking nuns, full of peace and tolerance and pity" (362).
And Kesey, what of Kesey?—the Kesey who has served as Wolfe’s alter ego in a fantasy of escape, who has provided a conduit to prank those pesky politicos strung out on activism, who has proven to the Richmond-born author that it is no longer hip to be black, who has bent the linear forms that rule the news rooms and publishing houses and exploded them into so many freaking Day-Glo bits—what of Kesey? He sits at the center of the ever-diminishing circle as Wolfe drifts out away from him, out of the book, far away toward increasingly circumscribed reporting and writing:

"WE BLEW IT"
"... Ten million times or more! ..."
"WE BLEW IT"
"... it was perfect, so what do you do? ..."
"WE BLEW IT!"
"... perfect! ..."
"WE BLEW IT" (368)

Despite this ending, The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test spawned a generation of implicated and powerfully resistant readers who tuned into all of the cultural and political rebellion at its core and tuned out Wolfe’s efforts to recapture that rupture with the book’s ending scenes. For despite Wolfe’s confident predictions within the text that the "heads" had ruined politics and then themselves, and despite his fear that the movement would be over before his book could be rushed to print, events like the Vietnam Moratoriums, widespread draft resistance, May Day, and Woodstock, were still to come. And stashed in many a
rucksack at these moments were well-thumbed copies of Wolfe's book.

Even his best scholarly readers were mixed as to what Wolfe meant by the book, with perhaps only John Hellmann (1981) capturing the full flavor of the book's "maelstrom" force, its sense of the "inevitable doom of Kesey's attempt to embrace all experience" (121), though not the cultural work for which Wolfe harnessed its theme. Ronald Weber (1980), on the other hand, insists that Wolfe seems to side "with the Pranksters own interpretation of the trip they were on—that it was a risk-all adventure into human consciousness" (96) and concludes that Wolfe views them as "only the latest in an American procession of pioneers seeking" (97). And even so late a reader as Barbara Lounsberry (1990) still insists that Acid Test is "one of Wolfe's most hopeful portraits of American revolutionaries, revolutionaries with the potential for expanding the American experience" (48). Lounsberry reads past the "We Blew It" ending to Wolfe's concluding author's note, wherein Wolfe presents an updating to 1968 of his characters' lives. She argues:

the final vision Wolfe gives us is not of Kesey's defeat, or of Neal Cassady's ominous death—although they are close by—but of the spring, and the return of the faithful, and, most of all, of Further the bus parked beside the house, like Wolfe, ready to go once again. (53)
But the evidence suggests that Wolfe means to contain
that next trip. If *Acid Test* fulfilled Wolfe’s fantasy of
flight, the one he imagined from the loneliness of a Sunday
School lie into the brother and sister Pranksters and the
fugitive artist at their core, then one of the finest and
most rebellious books of his career seems to have been
enough for him. For as he lay with his alter ego on the
jungle floor of Mexico, a Method Act in hot flight, the
F.B.I. in close psychic pursuit, he had stared over that
edge and, apparently, didn’t like what he saw:

THEY close in to slam you away for
five, eight, twenty years ... driven
at last out onto the edge of your
professed beliefs. You believed that a
man should move off his sure center out
onto the outer edges, that the outlaw,
even more than the artist, is he who
tests the limits of life and that--THE
MOVIE : : : : by getting totally into NOW
and paying total Attention until it all
flows together in the synch and
imagining them all into the Movie, your
will will determine the flow and
control all jungles great and small.
(272)

He stared at that edge, and then he pulled back, for the
only king of the jungle Wolfe will allow Kesey to be is the
king of the dry Mexican jungle he holds in his own mind.
The immunity Kesey desires and promises himself is betrayed
both by Wolfe’s ironic narration and by the forces of
history that will re-capture Kesey (as surely as it will
Wolfe) both inside the book and out:
And now that I've got your attention—
if he sits very still, the rush lowers
in his ears, he can concentrate, pay
total attention, an even, even, even
world, flowing into now, no past
terrors, no anticipation of the future
horror, only now, this movie, the
vibrating parallel rods, and he can
feel them drawn into the flow, his,
every verruga fly, velvet ant, murine
fleas and crabs, every chinch and tick,
every lizard car, palm, the very power
of the most ancient palm, held in his
will, and he is immune. (272)

Wolfe showed his readers that he had learned from
Kesey's lesson, if he were still tempted by its thrust,
when in 1973 he penned a "manifesto" for the New
Journalism. Despite nearly 50 pages in which he wrote its
history from his own experience as a developing reporter;
traced the publication of the "big" books of the late 1960s
like his Acid Test, Norman Mailer's The Armies of the
Night, Hunter Thompson's Hell's Angels, and Joan Didion's
Slouching Towards Bethlehem; evaluated progenitors as far
back as Daniel DeFoe, Charles Dickens, and Henry Mayhew;
declared the experimental novel a dead form and American
novelists a dying breed; Wolfe declared that he would
refuse to form a religion and ended the body of his
manifesto with the following caution:

With any luck at all the new genre will
never be sanctified, never be exalted,
ever given a theology. I probably
shouldn't even go around talking it up
the way I have in this piece. All I
meant to say when I started out was
that the New Journalism can no longer
be ignored in an artistic sense. The
rest I take back. The Hell with it
. . . Let chaos reign . . . louder
music, more wine. . . . The hell with
the standings. . . . The top rung is up
for grabs. (35)

But like any good journalist, Wolfe never forgot his
lead. And so later, much later in 1989, when he was
writing fiction, Wolfe recovered the old chestnuts of his
long-since-forgotten manifesto and re-cast them as
"Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast," his new manifesto for
his new realistic, fictional novel. Despite the breathless
delivery of "Stalking," and a reception that prompted
Robert Towers, the former chair of Columbia University's
writing program, to conclude that he couldn't recall,
offhand, an article in a small magazine "making a bigger
splash in the literary pool," Wolfe watchers whistled.
Splash and splash redux. For the new article lifted whole
sections verbatim from his 1973 "New Journalism" essay,
only this time in the service of realistic fiction. One
example among many:

The introduction of realism into
literature by people like Richardson,
Fielding, and Smollett was like the
introduction of electricity into
machine technology. It was not just
another device. It raised the state of
the art to a new magnitude. The effect
of realism on the emotions was
something that had not been conceived
of before. No one was ever moved to
tears by reading about the unhappy
fates of heroes and heroines in Homer,
Sophocles, Moliere, Racine, Sidney,
Spenser or Shakespeare. But even the
impeccable Lord Jeffrey, editor of the
Edinburgh Review, had cried — actually blubbered, boohooed, snuffled, and sighed—over the death of Dickens’ Little Nell in The Old Curiosity Shop. ("The New Journalism" 34)

The introduction of realism into literature in the eighteenth century by people like Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett was like the introduction of electricity into engineering. It was not just another device. The effect on the emotions of everyday realism such as Richardson’s was something that had not been conceived of before . . . No one was ever moved to tears by reading about the unhappy fates of heroes and heroines in Homer, Sophocles, Moliere, Racine, Sidney, Spenser or Shakespeare. Yet even the impeccable Lord Jeffrey, editor of the Edinburgh Review, confessed to having cried—blubbered, boohooed, snuffled, and sighed—over the death of Little Nell in The Old Curiosity Shop. ("Stalking" 50-51)

Like his trademark, hand-tailored white suits, Wolfe doesn’t change his styles so much as press them into new service. The central theses of the two essays were the same: that contemporary American novelists have lost their way in the thicket of postmodern academic and Continental theorists and surrendered to a new contender. The new contender in 1973: the nonfiction novel (Acid Test was in multiple paperback printings and Wolfe used his own work as a central example). The new contender in 1989: the realistic novel (Wolfe had just written Bonfire of the Vanities, his realistic novel, and used his own work as the central example).
In both cases, Wolfe (indeed, like the Kesey he portrayed in *Acid Test*) assumed a "hipper-than-thou" pose to attack left-leaning contemporaries as hopelessly square. In 1973, Murray Kempton and Jack Newfield, perhaps the two greatest exemplars of the left-leaning drift of New Journalism that Wolfe feared, were posed as examples of "two reporters hobbled by fear." Of Newfield, Wolfe said, "The only strangers Newfield apparently feels comfortable about approaching are people like this month's revolutionary macho of the century who has been previously assured that the reporter is friendly" (51). And in 1989, the culprits were left-leaning academics and experimental novelists.

But, despite the similarities in the two manifestos, their differences might be even more revealing. Ultimately, Wolfe's discarded rhetoric provides a grammar of both practical and theoretical retreat. For example, this stage from Wolfe's 1973 booster rocket was jettisoned from his 1989 manifesto. It describes the New Journalist's reporting of detail:

Often you feel as if you've put your whole central nervous system on red alert and turned it into a receiving set with your head panning the molten tableau like a radar dish and you're saying, "Come in, world," since you only want all of it. . . . Some of the nicest times are when Pesky Danger rises, and the adrenaline flows, and the whole riot is on, and the shitfire rains from on high—and you discover
that your set is still on! you're combing the chaos for the details! the creamy stuff you can use! (52, my ellipsis)

By contrast, the 1989 version says this about a writer's proper mastery of details:

The answer is not to leave the rude beast, the material, also known as life around us, to the journalists, but to do what journalists do, or are supposed to do, which is to wrestle with the beast and bring it to terms. (55, my emphasis)

Wolfe's metaphorical shift from "panning the molten tableau" to "wrestling the beast" to the ground signals the manner by which Wolfe's sense of form finally catches up to his social positioning. Never among those journalists who wished to mount a full-scale critique of the manner by which information is brokered in North America, the early Wolfe seemed content to insist that his revolution was one of form and style, not content and passion. And so when those styles changed, Wolfe could move easily to the next fashion. Tom Wolfe undressed: a writer reveals himself more by the wardrobe he has discarded than by the clothes he still wears.

His books after Kesey and the Merry Pranksters became devastatingly effective satires against the sort of hip, smug liberals that he parodied as "sport shirts" in Acid Test. In Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers, Wolfe's targets were the Black Panthers and Great Society
social workers. The modern art establishment came in for a good tweaking in From Bauhaus to Our House. Along the way, the same political strands that are apparent in Acid Test come to the front as the stylistic experimentation fades. As Wolfe told an interviewer in 1978, after the publication of The Right Stuff, his final book-length nonfiction narrative:

I've always insisted that there was no set Tom Wolfe style, that I was trying to make a style fit the event. So many of the things that I wrote about in the 1960s were so wild in themselves that a wild style seemed to fit. The world of military pilots was different, a world that seemed to me to require a different tone. (McLeod 182-83)

And so I shall leave Tom Wolfe at the finale of The Right Stuff, embarked with Chuck Yeager in the cockpit of a NF-104, pressing two-and-a-half times the speed of sound, tight against the envelope, yet another fantasy of escape. This time, Yeager, predictably, has been hassled by the equal-opportunity boys, those paper-shuffling bureaucrats who want to leapfrog African-American pilot Ed Dwight above the good ol' boys so as to hold out hope for a black astronaut. The "unspoken premise," to Yeager (and Wolfe), had always been that "you either had the right stuff or you didn't, and no other variables mattered," and that idea that all of the first seven astronauts were white and Protestant was "wholly benign evidence of their Small-Town American values" (354).
But times have changed. And so Wolfe’s narrator climbs into the cockpit with Yeager, into the world’s fastest rocket-powered jet, to leave the liberal dross in the lurch. "The squinting and hassling was still going on the day the NF-104 arrived," Wolfe tells us. "Perhaps that was one reason the monster looked so good to Yeager. All the world’s accumulated political cunning wouldn’t be a dogscratch in the NF-104" (354-55). Higher and higher, "weightless, coming over the top of the arc . . . 104,000 feet . . . It’s absolutely silent . . . twenty miles up" (355). But together—Yeager and Wolfe’s narrator—drop back from the envelope. The problem, it seems, is that they can’t get their rocket jet’s nose out of the air:

. . . He’s dropping and the nose is still pitched up . . . The outside of the envelope! . . . Well, here it is, the sonofabitch . . . It doesn’t want to stretch . . . and here we go! (355)

And so he drops back to earth, where Russians still hold records for high flight (355); where McNamara’s boys cancel funding for rocket-powered toys (362); where "the desert, the mesquite, the motherless Joshua trees are rising slowly toward him" (360). And Tom Wolfe, whose only fugitive desire ever had been to escape the gravity of recapture, falls with his hero, burning, burning, to an earth where bureaucrats worry over quotas and editors over quotes and hardly anyone--most especially Wolfe--will write out on that edge any more.
Footnotes

1. Wolfe habitually uses ellipses and/or emphases; unless otherwise noted all such devices in Wolfe quotes in this chapter are his.

2. Paul Perry's On The Bus account--published in 1990 with copious photographs of the original Pranksters taken during the 1960s by Ron "Hassler" Bivert, quotes from many of Kesey's contemporaries and associates, as well as presenting narrative "flashbacks" by former Prankster Ken Babbs. The book both readjusts, and in some respects, enhances, the Prankster record and in that way reveals the manner by which nonfiction affects its subjects. The strong sub-text of the book, though never overtly stated, is that the lives of each of these people have been construed not only by their experience with Kesey, but by their experience of being named characters in a book that by 1990 had gone through 31 printings.

3. Weber's collection of contemporary articles from New Journalism's leading practitioners provides a valuable look at the theories and practices of New Journalism and, as such, is the only booklength work specifically about New Journalism published during the 1960s or 1970s that really helps the current scholar explore the form's social and political controversies.

4. "It was too grim to be a spectator sport, that's for sure," Thompson said in 1990. "I left my tape recorder running inside where the action was taking place, but I didn't stand there and watch it all the time. But I had to record it because that's the stuff you use when you write" (Perry 135).
[I]n ever occurred to me that I would not sooner or later—most probably sooner, certainly before I ever grew up or got married or went to college—endure the moment of its happening: first the blinding white light, which appeared in my imagination as a negative photographic image, then the waves of heat, the sound, and, finally, death, instant or prolonged, depending inflexibly on where one was caught in the scale of concentric circles we all imagined pulsing out from ground zero. Some years later, when I was an undergraduate at Berkeley... I could look up the hill at night and see the lights at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, at what was then called "the rad lab," at the cyclotron and the Bevatron, and I still expected to wake up one night and see those lights in negative, still expected the blinding white light, the heat wave, the logical conclusion. (Didion, After Henry 122)

I tell you this not as aimless revelation but because I want you to know, as you read me, precisely who I am and where I am and what is on my mind. I want you to understand exactly what you are getting: you are getting a woman who for some time now has felt radically separated from most of the ideas,... a woman who somewhere along the line misplaced whatever slight faith she ever had in the social contract, in the meliorative principle, in the whole grand pattern of human endeavor. (Didion, White Album 133-34)
I was supposed to have a script, and had mislaid it. I was supposed to hear cues, and no longer did. I was meant to know the plot, but all I knew was what I saw: flash pictures in variable sequence, images with no "meaning" beyond their temporary arrangement, not a movie, but a cutting-room experience. In what would probably be the middle of my life I wanted still to believe in the narrative and in the narrative’s intelligibility, but to know that one could change the sense with every cut was to begin to perceive the experience as rather more electrical than ethical. (Didion, White Album 12-13)

In many ways writing is the act of saying I, of imposing oneself upon other people, of saying listen to me, see it my way, change your mind. It’s an aggressive, even a hostile act. . . . [S]etting words on paper is the tactic of a secret bully, an invasion, an imposition of the writer’s sensibility on the reader’s most private space. (Didion, "Why I Write" 5)

For a writer who, since childhood, has walked the waking bad dream, alert for the "blinding white light" that will signal the world’s end, the stroboscopic pulse is the flash of the negative, of cataclysmic ends, of undoing. And so Joan Didion sits in a nearly empty restaurant along Miami’s Biscayne Boulevard, buildings swimming free against the sky, causeways adrift, angles oblique, surfaces "reflective, opalescent" (Miami 31) and listens to a reporter and a prosecutor chat up fraud cases within ever larger, ever more fluid, fraud cases: money washed, diverted, channeled, submerged, bodies rising to the
surface. And as the voices rise and fall, the rains begin once more; sheets of warm rain wash across the windows. And over Biscayne Bay, the white light flares, all around her:

The lightning was no longer forking now but illuminating the entire sky, flashing a dead strobe white, turning the bay fluorescent and the islands black, as if in negative. (38)

And Joan Didion has been here before, ever in her waking dreams, crouched under her desk at school, covering her eyes and brain stem, waiting, waiting, waiting for "the blinding white light," the "negative photographic image," the "waves of heat, the sound, and, finally death," a "seductive reversal of the usual associations around 'light' and 'white' and 'radiance,'" the "logical conclusion" (After Henry 122-23).

The subtext of Joan Didion's nonfiction—a subtext that she has nourished like a cool blue flame over 25 years even as it threatens to erupt in blinding flash—is its desire to snare her readers by the illogic of "logical conclusions," that white vision of apocalypse by which Didion herself has been implicated. She will admit the stakes of that transaction, as she did in her essay "Why I Write," will admit that her intentions are "aggressive," even "hostile," an "imposition of the writer's sensibility on the reader's most private space" (5). And, therefore, Didion would pull us inside a shifting, liquid world where
the flashes burn brilliant and reversed, inside a stroboscopic vision from which we cannot escape.

Didion's own positioning as writer, and her positioning of the reader within that vision, offers both a transition from and a suggestive contrast to Tom Wolfe, who also makes consistent use of the strobosphere image, particularly in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. But there, despite Wolfe's seductive narrative mannerisms (sweeping lights, flaming loudspeakers, strobes exploding, black lights and Day-Glo paints), the writer's presence remains outside and above the maelstrom, looking down through Ken Kesey's mind to Kesey's human hand firmly on the controls in the swirling, stroboscopic dome:

Kesey looks out upon the stroboscopic whirlpool--the dancers! flung and flinging! in ecstasis gyrating! levitating! men in slices! in ping-pong balls! in the creamy bare essence and it reaches a SYNCH he never saw before. Heads from all over the acid world out here and all whirling into the pudding. Now let a man see what CONTROL is. Kesey mans the strobe and a twist of the mercury lever UP and they all speed up. (217)

Even when he gives voice to a subject on the floor, caught up in the intensity of the white flash, Wolfe's narrative presence remains safely past tense, reassuring us that Clair Brush has been recaptured, even as she mouths the memories of escape. The strobe, Brush recalls for Wolfe, "disturbed that part of me that was trying to hang onto
reality . . . playing with time-sense was something I'd never done . . . and I found it irresistible but frightening" (246). By contrast, the white strobe for Didion is all around: "flash pictures in variable sequence" (White Album 13), the flash of the apocalypse; no hand is on the control, and the flash is always most menacing when it is least expected. Fire, rain, wind, race riot, assassination, mass murder--all are the manifestations of the flash by which Didion will implicate her readers.

Behind them lies the constant threat of the blue pool in the nuclear reactor. The pool for Didion is unfathomable, seductive, and forever poses a challenge to the dynamo of infinity and human progress that Henry Adams in his Education had discovered on his journey to the 1900 Paris Great Exposition. Then, Adams had contemplated the great gallery of machines as a moral force. Didion recalls in her article, "Pacific Distances," that Adams studied science as he had studied Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres, and she plots that Chartres image to her own post-nuclear devices. When she first visits the TRIGA Mark III nuclear reactor in the basement of Berkeley's Etcheverry Hall, she muses:

It had been thirty-four years since Robert Oppenheimer saw the white light at Alamogordo. The "nuclear issue," as we called it, suggesting that the course of the world since the
Industrial Revolution was provisional, open to revision, up for a vote, had been under discussion all those years, and yet something about the fact of the reactor still resisted interpretation: the intense blue in the pool water, the Cerenkov radiation around the fuel rods, the blue past all blue, the blue like light itself, the blue that is actually a shock wave in the water and is the exact blue of the glass at Chartres. (After Henry 124)

If the logical conclusion of that "blue past all blue" is the white light of sudden death, then it is by illogic that Didion will contest its presence. Hence, she tells us that actuality, even if it can be glimpsed, is a story for a madwoman to tell, and she parades her qualifications in no less than her own psychiatric report that she reprints in her article, "The White Album." Emotionally alienated, regressive libidinal, conflicted, devious, preoccupied with the distorted and bizarre: this is the diagnosis by which Didion implicates herself, both as an historical and as a narrative presence, about as personally as any writer can. "It is as though she feels deeply that all human effort is foredoomed to failure," her psychiatric work-up concludes (White Album 14-15). What other "illogical" response is possible to the "logical" conclusion of the white blast, Didion seems to wonder, then concludes, "By way of comment I offer only that an attack of vertigo and nausea does not now seem to me an inappropriate response to the summer of 1968" (19).
In both her fiction and nonfiction, Didion is obsessed by the illogical, even hallucinatory status of the teller of the tale. In *A Book of Common Prayer*, the voice of Grace Strasser-Medana shoves its way onto the stage to present and contest the story. "I hadn't intended there to be a narrator," Didion told novelist Sara Davidson in 1977. "I was going to be the female author's voice. . . . But the 'I' became so strong that it became a character" (17). And, so, Grace Strasser-Mendana's effort to reconstruct Charlotte Douglas' history moves beyond simply unreliable narration to a narration that, indeed, negates the very possibility of reliability. The novel begins with Strasser-Mendana's promise, "I will be her witness" (3), and ends with her confession, "I have not been the witness I wanted to be" (280). In her novel *Democracy*, Didion, after the manner of Trollope, creates herself as a character to tell the tale ("Call me the author. Let the reader be introduced to Joan Didion, upon whose character and doings much will depend" [6, Didion's emphasis]), but still is seen confessing that she is unable to "save the shards" of the ephemeral narrative she writes (15).

Didion's most often-quoted description of her own work, offered to an audience at the University of California during Didion's 1975 return to her alma mater and reprinted as the essay "Why I Write," also raises the image of insanity as a qualification to witness the
postmodern world. The description concerns the sketches of cats drawn by a patient in varying stages of psychosis:

This cat had a shimmer around it. You could see the molecular structure breaking down at the very edges of the cat: the cat became the background and the background the cat, everything interacting, exchanging ions. People on hallucinogens describe the same perception of objects. I'm not a schizophrenic, nor do I take hallucinogens, but certain images do shimmer for me. Look hard enough, and you can't miss the shimmer. It's there. You can't think too much about these pictures that shimmer. You just lie low and let them develop. You stay quiet. You don't talk to many people and you keep your nervous system from shorting out and you try to locate the cat in the shimmer, the grammar in the picture. (7)

Although Didion is not herself a schizophrenic, she seems to suggest that the post-nuclear world creates in human beings the quality of the schizophrenic condition. The shimmer, therefore, is the flash and menace of the radioactive universe, a universe where everything is destabilized, interacting and exchanging ions.

Many of Didion's best readers seem to underestimate the image, preferring to discuss it as a rhetorical strategy toward elusive truth rather than as an image of the danger (and even insanity) of presenting uncontested "truth" in a post-nuclear world. For example, Chris Anderson in *Style as Argument* discusses Didion's "shimmer" as a virtual synonym for formal resonance or ambiguity,
evidence of "her capacity to project apocalypse in rhetorically effective and engaging ways" (152). He sees no crisis of underlying fact for Didion. She, like Orwell, "believes in the inextricable relationship between words and ideas . . .," Anderson concludes, "that words can corrupt ideas, that the truth or falsity of ideas is directly reflected in the truth or falsity of the language used to express them" (165).

Similarly, Barbara Lounsberry in The Art of Fact suggests that Didion can find the "truth" behind experience and present it to her readers. Hence, even though Didion "locates 'truth' obliquely, in the slippage or breakage, between the lines and over the border" (108, my emphasis), Lounsberry argues that "her effort to discipline her illusions likewise becomes a model for reader behavior" (136). And, finally, Mark Muggli, in his essay "The Poetics of Joan Didion's Journalism," argues that Didion enacts an "emblematic" significance to her work that finally imposes a meaningful order to a work such as Salvador.

Each of these readings is most helpful in establishing certain of Didion's formal strategies, but none is adequate to describe the core of her deep challenge to the "sanity" of a factual hierarchy whose logical conclusion is a tangible threat of annihilation. (Granted, the article in which Didion discusses most overtly her obsession with the
nuclear holocaust was not collected until the 1992 *After Henry* collection, since the publication of the critical studies I have cited.) The shimmer of the blue pool and the shimmer of schizophrenic vision are not merely Didion's self-selected artistic methods; she presents them as the only way possible to write about the insanity of an air raid drill that would tell a child to protect her brain stem function by crossing her fragile arms against the fury of a 50-megaton bomb. And so, Didion recalls

listening all one Sunday afternoon to a special radio report called "The Quick and the Dead," three or four hours during which the people who had built and witnessed the bomb talked about the bombs and "by extension" their own eerie and apparently unprecedented power, their abrupt elevation to that place from whence they had come to judge the quick and the dead ..."

(*After Henry* 122)

Where unprecedented power over the future of the universe is presented as scientific discourse by calm and rational discussants, Didion stakes out a resolutely post-humanist course beyond that suggested by any of her published critics: "You are getting a woman who somewhere along the line misplaced whatever slight faith she ever had in the social contract," she tells us, "in the meliorative principle, in the whole grand pattern of human endeavor" (*White Album* 133). Normal definitions of sanity and insanity, Didion suggests, are reversed in the shadow of the bomb, as journalist Ron Rosenbaum noticed when he
traveled to ICBM launch sites somewhere near South Dakota for Harper's Magazine in search of the government-certified "sanest men in America," whose fingers are on the trigger:

No one would think that a man able to participate in the launch of up to thirty separate nuclear warheads and help extinguish human civilization with a twist of his key would be a bull goose loony. . . . The implication here is that sanity in a launch means not thinking about this reality, sanity means the kind of studied insanity or fugue state that ignores one's true relation to the world. (288)

Didion, on the contrary, will serve as a doomed witness to that doomed world, plunging to its depth, writing inside its turmoil, even if it costs the privileged position of authorial sanity. In one of her earliest-published articles, "On Morality," Didion seems to define and symbolically prefigure her role as post-nuclear reporter. She recalls the tale of Nevada sheriff's deputies diving for ten days into a dark, apparently bottomless pool in an effort to recover a "drowned boy" while the boy's 18-year-old pregnant widow stands silent vigil and stares into the black water. The divers have found

no bottom to the caves, no bodies and no trace of them, only the black 90 degree water going down and down and down, and a single translucent fish, not classified. The story tonight is that one of the divers has been hauled up incoherent, out of his head, shouting--until they got him out of the there so that the widow could not hear
about water that got hotter instead of cooler as he went down, about light flickering through the water, about magma, about underground nuclear testing. (Slouching 160)

Didion will be that witness, even if she must dive again and again into the hot radioactive light and even if it robs her of her coherency upon return. For it is the only way she can report "the monstrous perversion to which any human idea can come" (161). And her readers will be those silent watchers, waiting for the word, pregnant with possibilities. The transaction is a harsh one, as her "moral" lesson suggests, sometimes so harsh that the witness and the one who waits for the word must be forcibly separated. Didion recognizes in this, one of her earliest published pieces, that the transaction's stakes are both intensely moral as well as intensely implicating:

Of course you will say that I do not have the right, even if I had the power, to inflict that unreasonable conscience upon you; nor do I want you to inflict your conscience, however reasonable, however enlightened, upon me. (161)

As if to respond to the domestication of the New Journalism project that Wolfe had underway by the publication of his theoretical essay, "The New Journalism" (1973), Didion further explores the demands and limits of reporting history in the title essay of The White Album (1979). Initially, Didion seems to be making the case that Anderson, Lounsberry, and Muggli would have us accept--that
the creation of story ("We tell ourselves stories in order to live" [11]) is the highest human act imaginable in a chaotic age:

We look for the sermon in the suicide, for the social or moral lesson in the murder of five. We interpret what we see, select the most workable of the multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the "ideas" with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience. (11)

But no sooner has Didion created this notion of story than she deconstructs it with an "or" clause and opts out of the promise of intelligible story: "Or at least we do for awhile" (11, my emphasis). But then we lose the script, all we can see is "flash pictures in variable sequence" (13), and in the most extreme cases, we learn that the stories we tell ourselves in order to live often are merely delusions of sensation, new narrative circuitry, scar tissue to cover the raw nerve:

During the years when I found it necessary to revise the circuitry of my mind I discovered that I was no longer interested in whether the woman on the ledge outside the window on the sixteenth floor jumped or did not jump, or in why. I was interested only in the picture of her in my mind: her hair incandescent in the floodlights, her bare toes curled inward on the stone ledge. (44)

Even then, Didion will not stop at the altar of pure aesthetic sensation, rightly dismissing it as the essay
continues as "sentimental, . . . equally meaningful, and equally senseless" (44). Her writing will insist on the social context of a teller and a hearer, together by the pool; indeed that is part of the reason why, it seems, she has chosen to present so many of her stark narratives as nonfiction: a form that, as this study argues, almost inevitably links its readers and writers in a social and historical—as well as in an artistic—transaction. From the ashes of an "equally meaningful, equally senseless" narrative condition, she will rebuild the possibility of reporting informed by, if not quite adequate to, the imminence of apocalypse as well as the intertextuality that complicates our interactions.

This chapter, therefore, will explore the ways that Didion's body of writing has remained constant and the ways in which it has changed. Her constants seem to be those of the postmodern era: charting the possibility of meaning/non-meaning in a world under the nuclear cloud and exploring the realm of hyperreality whose narrative strands are layered on and modified by each other. Those constants will be discussed during the first half of this chapter through samples of Didion's reporting in her three collections: *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1968), *The White Album* (1979) and *After Henry* (1992). This analysis will explore how Didion's themes of apocalypse and hyperreality contest the increasingly comfortable post-1960s acceptance
by the mass media marketplace of the sort of narrative realism theorized—if not always practiced—by Tom Wolfe and accepted virtually wholesale by mainstream editors and reporters.

The latter portion of the chapter will document changes in Didion's approach over the years that are equally fascinating and seem not to have attracted the attention of scholars. For the trajectory of Didion's nonfiction career shows the increasing evidence of her willingness to research and report the facts and nuances of postmodern America and to burrow beyond her ironically surreal set-pieces toward reporting that is more complicated, if potentially more illuminating. A contrast between Didion's two book-length reporting narratives, Salvador (1983) and Miami (1987), and to a lesser extent two of her longest articles, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" (1968) and "Sentimental Journeys" (1990), will help to document these changes.

At the beginning, Didion tells us in "Why I Write," her work was an act of self absorption. Had she been blessed "with even limited access to my own mind," she would not have needed to write. Her motivations seemed to probe her own fears: "Why have the night lights in the [nuclear reactor] bevatron burned in my mind for twenty years? What is going on in these pictures in my mind?" (6, Sison'a emphasis). Like the ever-present flame, many of
those pictures—both early and late—are images of apocalypse. In "The Santa Ana" (1965), published in the Saturday Evening Post and reprinted as part of "Los Angeles Notebook" in Slouching Towards Bethlehem, Didion elevates the facts of Los Angeles’ frequent dry-season fires to an explicit image of the end times foretold in earthquake, fire, flood, and riot:

The city burning is Los Angeles’s deepest image of itself: Nathaniel West perceived that, in The Day of the Locust; and at the time of the 1965 Watts riots what struck the imagination most indelibly were the fires. For days one could drive the Harbor Freeway and see the city on fire, just as we had always known it would be in the end. (220)

The fires are fueled by earthquake weather, the desert-driven Santa Ana winds when the Pacific turns ominously glossy and "one woke in the night troubled not only by the peacocks screaming in the olive trees but by the eerie absence of surf" (217-18). It is a time when, as Didion quotes Raymond Chandler, "meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands’ necks" (218). California climate, Didion reports, is characterized by violent extremes, each capable of bringing on the end in mass destruction: "subtropical rains which continue for weeks and wash out the hills and send subdivisions sliding toward the sea" and the Santa Ana, which "invariably means fire" (219):
The violence and the unpredictability of the Santa Ana affect the entire quality of life in Los Angeles, accentuate its impermanence, its unreliability. The wind shows us how close to the edge we are. (221)

In part, what Didion is doing here is satisfying journalism's need to present an emotionally compelling "other" of untamed weather and menace for the substantially East Coast and Middle American reading audience of the Saturday Evening Post. But she moves beyond that to reveal the theme of the cataclysm ("how close to the edge we are") that will haunt her writing and her readers as characters in the edge-drama of apocalypse.

A later article, "Quiet Days in Malibu," is collected in The White Album and undercuts any positive direction that Didion may have provisionally suggested in that book when she and her husband move away from a crime-ridden Sunset Strip neighborhood to the supposed safety of Malibu. Here, Didion is even more explicit in her parallels between wind-driven California fire and nuclear Armageddon. A brush fire catches in Agoura, in the San Fernando Valley:

Within two hours a Santa Ana wind had pushed this fire across 25,000 acres and thirteen miles to the coast, where it jumped the Pacific Coast Highway as a half-mile fire storm generating 2500 degrees Fahrenheit. Refugees huddled on Zuma Beach. Horses caught fire and were shot on the beach, birds imploded, as in a nuclear strike. By the time this fire storm had passed 197 houses had vanished into ash. . . . (222-23)
The nuclear implosion, the flaming horse in the last days, even the huddled refugees waiting in the sand for the end time, blend images from the Book of Revelations with then-popular, post-nuclear Armageddon narratives such as Nevil Chute's *On The Beach*, wherein the final holocaust victims wait to die in doomed love and longing on the beaches of Australia.

A holocaust scene also provides the ending to *The White Album* collection, which had begun by chronicling Didion's emotional breakdown and suggesting that madness is the only way properly to respond to an age where the "logical conclusion" is mass death. The force of the Malabu catastrophe in the ironically titled "Quiet Days in Malibu" is all the more powerful because it serves to undercut the hope for a "safe house" that typified the dreams of the middle-class suburban readers who purchased the magazines in which Didion published her early 1970s-era articles: *Life*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Travel & Leisure*. To understand the depths of the approaching holocaust, Didion suggests by this implicating strategy, her readers must feel the depth of what they will lose.

Taking advantage of the "real-life" narrative posed by nonfiction and playing off the conventions of both "home and garden" and "travel" journalism, Didion visits Amado Vasquez, an orchid grower. She finds the grower and his wife in a "safe" greenhouse, far away from both the city
and the orientalism of the Malaysian rain forest wherein "seedlings are crushed by screaming monkeys and the orchids live unseen and die young" (219). In this "safe house," Vasquez nurtures seedlings "with sterile gloves and sterile tools" (219):

We were standing in a sea of orchids, an extravagance of orchids, and he had given me an armful of blossoms from his own cattleyas to take to my child, more blossoms maybe than in all of Madrid. It seemed to me that day that I had never talked to anyone so direct and unembarrassed about the things he loved. . . . Amado Vasquez loved orchids. "You want to know how I feel about the plants," he said as I was leaving. "I'll tell you. I will die in orchids." (221)

But after the holocaust of the Malibu fire which ends "Quiet Days in Malibu," Didion finds the orchid grower standing in the ruins of the main greenhouse at the Arthur Freed Orchids nursery, which Vasquez in the best tradition of corporate expansion had hoped to merge with his own. As in her earlier articles collected in Slouching Towards Bethlehem, Didion explicitly compares the destruction of the California firestorm to the implosion of nuclear attack, the implosion that will destroy the "safe," fertile space:

The place was now a range not of orchids but of shattered glass and melted metal and the imploded shards of the thousands of chemical beakers that had held the Freed seedlings, the new crosses . . . and for an instant I thought we would both cry. (223)
Finally, Didion, her husband, and daughter visit a nearby house on the Malibu cliffs, their own suburban "safe house" where Didion had gone to escape her madness and the screaming monkeys in the trees of Los Angeles' Sunset Strip. She discovers that

The fire had come to within 125 feet of the property, then stopped or turned or been beaten back. It was hard to tell which. In any case it was no longer our house. (223)

Three articles published in *New Yorker* during 1988 and 1989 and collected in Didion's *After Henry* show that the end times are still much on her mind and contradict Mark Z. Muggli's contention in a 1992 critical essay that a "rather subdued" Didion "has considerably distanced herself" from many of her earlier New Journalism devices (188). In "Los Angeles Days," Didion discusses California's earthquakes, particularly a series of hard tremors along the Garlock Fault that remind Los Angelinos that "the Big One" still is due. As a series of aftershocks rumbles across the land, Didion registers the dread, not surprisingly in terms of the white light that flashes across her writing, both early and late. The stakes of the nonfiction narrative are nothing less than the world as it has been known:

[T]his time people did register them, and they lent a certain moral gravity to the way the city happened to look that weekend, a temporal dimension to the hard white edges and empty golden light. At odd moments during the next few days people would suddenly clutch
at tables, or walls. "It is going," they would say, or "I think it's moving." They almost always said "it," and what they meant by "it" was not just the ground but the world as they knew it. (146)

In "L.A. Noir," her article about the lurid "Cotton Club" murder case that merges Hollywood's obsession for the big "deal" with its easy and almost random violence, Didion draws a subtle, but direct parallel between Los Angeles' movie deals and the "stealth" weapons industry that underpins its economy. Both are presented as symptoms of late capitalism, a world in which causes don't logically follow effects, in which the sale precedes the market, and in which violence can, like the Manson murders, explode at random. Didion notes that Los Angeles is a city "largely conceived as a series of real estate promotions" now supported by "a series of confidence games." It is, she says, a world whose possibilities are devoid of logic,

a city even then afloat on motion pictures and junk bonds and the B-2 Stealth Bomber, the conviction that something can be made of nothing may be one of the few narratives in which everyone participates. A belief in extreme possibilities colors daily life. Anyone might have woken up one morning and been discovered at Schwab's or killed at Bob's Big Boy. (207, my emphasis)

Finally, in "Fire Season," a third New Yorker letter from Los Angeles collected in After Henry, Didion again reports on the sorts of natural cataclysms that have
permeated her writing since "The Santa Ana." This time (showing her latter-day propensity for more detailed reporting, which this chapter will outline later) she researches California’s fire emergency preparedness system, but again links the holocaust explicitly to nuclear attack. In 1978 at the Mandeville and Kanan fires, she recalls that she "stood at the window and watched a house on a hill above Sunset implode, its oxygen sucked out by the force of the fire" (210). At the L.A. County Fire Department, she finds that the language of nuclear warfare permeates the disaster plans. She learns about "Red Flag Alerts," about "burn indexes," about the "big hitters," against which the firefighters have no choice but to make a defensive attack. "You can dump everything you’ve got on that fire," one firefighter says. "It’s still going to go to what we call the big blue break" on the last beachhead on the Pacific. (216). Didion concludes:

People who live with fires think a great deal about what will happen "when," as the phrase goes in the instruction leaflets, "the fire comes." These leaflets, which are stuck up on refrigerator doors all over Los Angeles County, never say "if." When the fire comes there will be no water pressure. The roof one watered all the night before will go dry in seconds. . . .

(217-18)

"Alamogordo," Jean Baudrillard wrote of the nuclear test site in his 1986 journal translated and published two years later as America, is "the first atomic-bomb test
against the back drop of White Sands" (4). In terms that almost exactly re-enact Didion's own obsessions, Baudrillard writes that Alamogordo is a "pale blue backcloth of the mountains and hundreds of miles of white sand," at once "the blinding artificial light of the bomb against the blinding light of the ground" (4). And, thus, with similar obsessions, Baudrillard's journal carves out a beat almost precisely that which Didion carved for herself as many as two decades earlier:

I went in search of astral America, not social and cultural America, but the America of the empty, absolute freedom of the freeways, not the deep America of mores and mentalities, but the America of desert speed, of motels and mineral surfaces. I looked for it in the speed of the screenplay, in the indifferent reflex of television, in the film of days and nights projected across an empty space, in the marvelously affectless succession of signs, images, faces, and ritual acts on the road; looked for what was nearest to the nuclear and enucleated universe. . . . (5)

If the inevitable white flash of the apocalypse is the trope that controls Joan Didion's attempts to report the postmodern era of late capitalist America, then, like Baudrillard, to do so she will need to negotiate a path which recognizes that the notion of "truth" is increasingly destabilized, not only by its impermanence but by its mediation and remediation. Over the span of 25 years, Didion's writing has never strayed far from that
recognition. Even before Baudrillard's "Simulacra and Simulations" (1981) was written or translated into English, Didion was exploring how the "mapping" of an image controlled, hid, or replaced the "actual" and how the seduction of surface will challenge those theories that would purport to find a stabile truth inside. This theme permeates her work, but perhaps never as starkly as in a 1976 article later collected in The White Album.

Here, Didion travels to the Los Angeles office of Caltrans, where traffic engineers sequestered in a windowless room ponder a flashing red board triggered by sensors embedded at half-mile intervals along the 42-Mile Loop circumscribed by the intersections of the Santa Monica, the San Diego and the Harbor freeways. "The Loop has its own mind" (79), a Xerox Sigma V computer that prints out, every twenty seconds around the clock, evidence of "heart attacks" (accidents) and "gawk effects" (resulting traffic tie-ups) and other burps and squeaks of the freeway monster. Didion is here at Caltrans' 120 South Spring headquarters, ostensibly, to report on the city's new "diamond lane" system of rush hour traffic flow, but it is not long before she is noticing (in a manner that almost exactly prefigures Baudrillard's theorizing of the simulacra) that the mapping of the freeway's activity has, in fact, subsumed the freeway itself.
When an accident occurs on the Loop, it is not "verified" in the world of the traffic engineers until the engineers can turn on the monitor that receives transmissions from a television camera out on the freeway and watch it on a television screen in their windowless room. "As a matter of fact," Didion notes, somewhat sardonically,

there is a certain closed-circuit aspect to the entire mood of the Operations Center. "Verifying" the incident does not after all "prevent" the incident, which lends the enterprise a kind of tranced distance, and on the day recently when I visited 120 South Spring it took considerable effort to remember what I had come to talk about. . . . (80)

Baudrillard would later write in "Simulacra and Simulations" that the "map precedes the territory" and that the only allegory sufficient to explain it is the "allegory of the Empire. For it is with the same imperialism that present-day simulators try to make the real, all the real, coincide with their simulation models" (167). For Didion's part, she notices in "Bureaucrats" that the Caltrans planners are making decisions about traffic flow from their mappings in the windowless room that dictate the "reality" of the freeways their maps are supposed to reflect. In the name of control, she writes, they have disrupted traffic throughout Los Angeles, tripled the number of accidents each day on the Santa Monica Freeway, prompted a pair of
lawsuits, and caused "large numbers of Los Angeles County residents to behave, most uncharacteristically, as an ignited and conscious proletariat" (82). Again, prefiguring Baudrillard, Didion construes the tyranny of the engineers and the response of the citizenry in terms of imperialism:

Citizen guerrillas splashed paint and scattered nails in the Diamond Lanes. Diamond Lane maintenance crews expressed fear of hurled objects. Down at 120 South Spring the architects of the Diamond Lane had taken to regarding "the media" as the architects of their embarrassment, and Caltrans statements in the press had been cryptic and contradictory, reminiscent only of old communiques out of Vietnam. (82)

The arrangement may not yet have entered Baudrillard's fourth realm of the hyperreal (where the map subsumes the original until the original fades), but it seems to be well on its way. Didion ends the article by reproducing a freeway drive, an experience she knows will implicate many readers, not only in Los Angeles, but in other urban and suburban freeway cultures. It is both seductive and, quite typically for her, potentially apocalyptic, evoking as it does the "rapture" of the last days:

Actual participants think only about where they are. Actual participation requires a total surrender, a concentration so intense as to seem a kind of narcosis, a rapture-of-the-freeway. The mind goes clean. The rhythm takes over. A distortion of time occurs, the same distortion that characterizes the instant before an
accident. . . . The moment is dangerous. The exhilaration is in doing it. (83)

Against that narcoleptic "real-life" experience, Didion ends her article by staring at the red flashing board in the windowless room until it tells her she can safely drive on the Santa Monica Freeway. She does so, remembering that she is watched all the way by Xerox Sigma V and studying the flashing message boards that allow the computer to communicate with her. For it is the computer and the electronic map, she tells her readers in a conclusion with fully developed overtones for both politics and philosophy, that are creating, rather than reflecting, the real:

As I left the freeway it occurred to me that they might have their own rapture down at 120 South Spring, and it could be called Perpetuating the Department. Today the California Highway Patrol reported that, during the first six weeks of the Diamond Lane, accidents on the Santa Monica, which normally range between 49 and 72 during a six-week period, totaled 204. Yesterday plans were announced to extend the Diamond Lane to other freeways at a cost of $42,500,000. (85)

As a relatively brief catalogue of her writing will demonstrate, the aura of hyperreality, defined by Baudrillard as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality . . . the map that precedes the territory" (166) is at least tentatively suggested by Didion's earliest writing and is fully explored in
succeeding decades. Like her obsession with holocaust, the hyperreal stage hovers above and below her work and accounts for much of its distinctly postmodern edge.

As early as 1967, in an article that no doubt owes a debt to Tom Wolfe's "Las Vegas (What?)" (1965), Didion is telling her Saturday Evening Post readers that Las Vegas was a town with "no night and no day and no past and no future." But her evocation of the desert mirage, collected in Slouching Towards Bethlehem, is more menacingly drawn than anything Wolfe wrote early in his career when verbal playfulness dominated his work. Instead of gleefully deconstructing Las Vegas' sign culture, as does Wolfe, Didion fixes her gaze on one or two signs until they fade into the imaginary. Didion places her readers "in the middle of a vast hostile desert looking at an eighty-foot sign which blinks 'STARDUST' or 'CAESAR'S PALACE'" and states, almost flatly, that "what happens there has no connection with 'real' life" (STB 80-81). One expects, in fact, to spot Yeats' "shadows of indignant desert birds" reeling about the signs, for it is the same year that Didion in "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" would find a country in which families vanish, "trailing bad checks and repossession papers. Adolescents drifted from city to torn city, sloughing off both their past and future as snakes shed their skins" (84).
In San Francisco, where the center will not hold, Didion observes the media covering themselves: *Time, Look, Life*, CBS interchanging their myths that the street culture represents "no politics, no ego" until it overwhelms the evidence that Didion finds all about her. Convinced of the "atomization" of the real (another echo of her familiar post-nuclear dread), but not yet arrived at the later stage where she will allow herself to speak only of "competing narratives," Didion tells her readers that "imaginatively anarchic" activists had long ago grasped the reality which still eluded the press: we were seeing something important. We were seeing the desperate attempt of a handful of pathetically underequipped children to create a community in a social vacuum. Once we had seen these children, we could no longer overlook the vacuum, no longer pretend that the society's atomization could be reversed. (122-23, my emphases)

But by the end of the 1960s, in the earliest pieces collected in *The White Album* and possibly in part as a reaction to Wolfe's published confidence in realistic narrative, Didion seems much less willing to assert a reality by which a mediation could be measured and arbitrated. Like the California freeway in which all memory of the real has been overwhelmed by the Imperial map, Didion increasingly scans the hyperreal space. She tells her readers the story of Nancy Reagan, a "real-life" movie star and governor's wife, then shows those readers
how manufactured text overwhelms "real-life." Didion travels to the Reagans' rented Sacramento home in "Good Citizens" with the aim of watching the wife of the California governor "doing precisely what she would ordinarily be doing on a Tuesday morning at home" (90). A television crew has arrived with the same intention, and Didion draws a scene in which

the television newsman and the two cameramen could watch Nancy Reagan being watched by me, or I could watch Nancy Reagan being watched by the three of them, or one of the cameramen could step back and do a cinema verite study of the rest of us watching and being watched by one another. I had the distinct sense that we were on the track of something revelatory, the truth about Nancy Reagan at 24 frames a second, but the television newsman opted to overlook the moment's peculiar essence. (90)

Didion, of course, will not overlook that essence, and so in her account, the television newsman will direct Nancy Reagan to pick flowers in her garden, suggesting that might be something she would "ordinarily do"--a plan to which the governor's wife agrees with spirit--and suggesting that she "nip a bud" while he asks her a question:

"Nipping a bud," Nancy Reagan repeated, taking her place in front of the rhododendron bush. "Let's have a dry run," the cameraman said. The newsman looked at him. "In other words, by a dry run, you mean you want her to fake nipping the bud." "Fake the nip, yeah," the cameraman said. "Fake the nip." (91-92)
Even more traditionally mediated realities, those penned by the authors of books, reverberate for Didion. When she travels to Hawaii, it is hard for her to see Hotel Street in Honolulu "without a sudden blurring, a slippage, a certain vertiginous occlusion of the imagined and the real" (147) because she has already encountered the place through James Jones, a dislocation made particularly acute because she must now report that Jones has died within the week. And, as an author herself pinned by a growing literary reputation, Didion will find herself framed by cameras and on-air interviews into an amorphous "flow," a hyperreal space. In one jet-lagged day, she encounters heat in Houston, snow in Chicago, and magnolias in Boston; everywhere studio-constructed voices, including her own, are "those of manic actors assigned to do three-minute, four-minute, seven-minute improvs" (173).

Didion's book tour nightmare is constructed in "On the Road," its title an ironic allusion to Jack Kerouac's voyage across America with Neal Cassady. Although like Tom Wolfe's Acid Test, the trip updates Kerouac's road myth, Didion writes from inside the disorienting, mediated, and re-mediated experience of air travel and media presentation. Even though it is a spare article instead of a book, Didion's "On the Road" culminates the hyperreal subtext that she increasingly draws on during The White Album years. A generation of American intellectuals
subsequently weaned on translations from Baudrillard and other French theorists will find much to recognize in Didion's dreamlike voyage across mid-1970s America. She sees America from eight miles high, like "a child's map over which my child and I could skim and light at will" (176). The two speak not of cities (destinations and potential depth) but of airports (transience and surface). Time and motion, and finally speech itself, are commodified as money and progress (176). Mass mediations, including those born from suffering and despair, jockey for landing space in the crowded marketplace:

I began to see opinions arcing in the air. . . . I began to see the country itself as a projection on air, a kind of hologram, an invisible grid of image and opinion and electronic impulse. There were opinions in the air and there were planes in the air and there were even people in the air: one afternoon in New York my husband saw a man jump from a window and fall to the sidewalk outside the Yale Club. I mentioned this to a Daily News photographer who was taking my picture. "You have to catch a jumper in the act to make the paper," he advised me. He had caught two in the act, but only the first had made the paper. The second was a better picture but coincided with the crash of a DC-10 at Orly. (178, my emphasis)

Only a year earlier, though his essay was not translated into English for another decade, Italian semiologist and novelist Umberto Eco had cited the hologram, "a kind of virtual object in three dimensions
that exists ever where you don’t see it, and if you move you can see it there, too" (4), as the central image for his landmark essay, "Travels in Hyperreality." Defining the hologram as a hyperreal copy of an imaginary original, Eco claims that it could prosper "only in America, a country obsessed with realism, where, if a reconstruction is to be credible, it must be absolutely iconic, a perfect likeness, a 'real' copy" (4).

In the articles collected in *After Henry*, Didion returns to the hologram image in "Down at City Hall." Here, she sees a hologram of Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, telephone at his ear, in the corridor at Los Angeles International airport. In keeping with the trajectory of her work, many of *After Henry*’s articles are about more overtly political topics than the pieces collected in her first two volumes. And so, Didion will present the Bradley hologram as the icon of American political culture, which like Eco’s hyperreal space, can be presented as real only if it is perfectly fake. Didion can’t seem to resist evoking the holographic mayor’s symbolic response to a reporter who began her career writing movie reviews for William F. Buckley’s *National Review* and who, by the 1989 publication date of the article, found herself a regular contributor to *The New York Review of Books*. And more seriously, as in many of the articles I have traced so far in this chapter, Didion saves the color blue for the
ineffable beyond, the now-you-see-it, now-you-don't threat that lies behind the illusion:

If the viewer moved to the right, the mayor could be seen to smile; if the viewer moved to the left, the mayor turned grave, and lowered his head to study a paper. From certain angles the mayor vanished altogether, leaving only an eerie blue. It was this disappearing effect, mirroring as it did what many say as a certain elusiveness about the mayor himself, that most often arrested the passing citizens. (175)

The hyperreal politics of mediation lie everywhere in Didion's After Henry reporting, though by the 1980s the theme certainly was by no means unique to her. Richard Ben Kramer's What It Takes: The Way to the White House or the Fund for Investigative Journalism's "Campaign '88" report published in Columbia Journalism Review are two examples of perceptive and pointed studies of the interrelationship of politics and media-manufactured history. But what strikes a reader of Didion's twenty-five years of nonfiction is how consistently and how early she has developed these themes and how well they fit into her theoretically grounded understanding of hyperreality.

Her Nancy Reagan "nips the buds" vignette was early evidence of that gift, and it travels across the years to culminate in Michael Dukakis' "ball-tossing" episode and its subsequent coverage by American journalists. In her "Inside Baseball" article for The New York Review of Books,
Didion watches as Dukakis emerges from a Boeing 737 onto the 115-degree tarmac at the San Diego airport to toss a baseball back and forth with one of his aides and then with his daughter. While the press corps bakes, Dukakis pegs the ball back and forth until a television cameraman says, "OK, we got the daughter. Nice. That's enough. Nice." Didion surmises that, after all, the cameras must roll in case the would-be president has an accident, but assumes (at least in her narrative strategy) that the press corps will recognize a fake event when it sees one:

Not until I read Joe Klein's version of these days in California did it occur to me that this eerily contrived moment on the tarmac at San Diego could become, at least provisionally, history. "The Duke seemed downright jaunty," Joe Klein reported. "He tossed a baseball with aides. He was flagrantly multilingual. He danced Greek dances. . . ." (53)

Then Michael Kramer in U.S. News & World Report catches the ball and tosses it on:

It was under a noonday sun in the desert that Michael Dukakis was indulging his truly favorite campaign ritual—a game of catch with his aide Jack Weeks. "These days," he has said, "throwing the ball around when we land somewhere is about the only exercise I get." (63)

And finally, David Broder, in the Washington Post Spears the hot potato and fires it over the hyperbolic fence:

Dukakis called out to Jack Weeks, the handsome, curly-haired Welshman who goodnaturedly shepherds us wayward
pressmen through the daily vagaries of the campaign schedule. Weeks dutifully produced two gloves and a baseball, and there on the tarmac, with its surface temperature just below the boiling point, the governor loosened up his arm and got the kinks out of his back by tossing a couple hundred 90-foot pegs to Weeks. (64)

What Didion is recognizing here is the way that the mass media industry in the United States, both print and broadcast, has by the 1990s thoroughly institutionalized what had begun two decades earlier as a revolt against traditional, "inverted pyramid" journalism. Gone are the days that Rolling Stone's Tim Krause has reported in The Boys on the Bus, when a press corps too timid to write anything but Associated Press style had crowded around the A.P.'s Walter Mears to see how he might siphon a complex news event into the terse lead, add-lead, and nutshell that would rule "objective" newspaper accounts across the nation. Some twenty years later, each of the reporters is in the business of constructing realistic narrative on the run, exploiting the conventions of point-of-view, scene and status detail that were once trumpeted as revolutionary by Tom Wolfe in the "New Journalism." Nowadays, Didion suggests in response, mediators construct running narrative, but efface the meta-details, the manner by which the event has been scripted:

What we had in the tarmac arrival with ball tossing, then, was an understanding: a repeated moment
witnessed by many people, all of whom believed it to be a setup and yet most of whom believed that only an outsider, only someone too "naive" to know the rules of the game, would so describe it. The narrative is made up of many such understandings, tacit agreements, small and large, to overlook the observable in the interests of obtaining a dramatic story line. (64-65)

Didion would seem to prefer to deconstruct for her readers the political narratives she witnesses on the campaign trail: how when Newsweek reports that Dukakis' acceptance speech "electrified" the audience, what really happened was that Dukakis' "same series of sequential clauses" were beamed out to a "darkened" floor, "swept with laser beams, and flooded with 'Coming to America,' played at concert volume with the bass turned up" (66).

Similarly, in "Shooters Inc.," she will report that George Bush's advance team requests that the Jordanian army marching band change its uniforms from white to a more telegenic red; that the Jordanians borrow helicopters from their historic enemies, the Israelis, to carry the press; that the Jordanians provide a dramatic scenario by staging maneuvers at a sensitive location overlooking the Golan Heights; that camels be procured for the backdrop of every stop on the itinerary; even that Bush be photographed studying "enemy territory" through binoculars, "a shot ultimately vetoed by the State Department since the 'enemy territory' at hand was Israel" (88).
Throughout the *After Henry* stories, Didion presents herself as the "outsider" willing to reveal what the "insiders" are at pains to conceal. Those insiders have been trained on latter-day New Journalism techniques by textbook authors, journalism schools, and mainstream newspaper and magazine editors to market substantially uncomplicated, coherently presented "real-life" narrative. The format, particularly popularized by "city magazines" like *New York* and *Washingtonian*, and imitated throughout the United States, eventually served as a model for increasingly popular television "magazine" shows like *Sixty Minutes* and "20/20," and finally for a host of network and cablecast television imitators.

The sort of reporting that Didion had exposed and satirized in her deconstruction of the Michael Dukakis "tarmac arrival with ball tossing" (AH 61) soon overwhelmed the standard inverted pyramid structure in all but the most conventional daily newspapers. Magazine racks, book stalls, and television listings exploded with nonfiction narrative forms, particularly the "true crime" case that satisfied both audience demands for a deeply "othering" plot line as well as enabling writers to avoid potential libel and to guarantee ready access to material by relying on the expertise of professional police investigators and public, legally privileged court or police records. By the publication of *After Henry* in 1992, syndicated news
magazine shows, television talk fests, and the networks themselves were vying for such stories as the Amy Fisher's "Long Island Lolita" tale of illicit lust and attempted murder, which had the distinction of debuting on three network schedules in a week.

Didion examines what she calls the "invented narrative" form that drives this sort of "realistic" reporting and presentation in some detail in her article, "Insider Baseball." She suggests that "invented narrative," even the term an echo/modification of the traditional "inverted narrative," relies on an "abiding if unexamined faith" (66-67) that events (particularly political events) are "personal odysseys" (67) with spiritual benefits for those who survive their tests. "The narrative requires broad strokes" (67), she continues, and often summons the broadest possible racial, class or ethnic stereotypes to the service of its plot development:

All stories, of course, depend for their popular interest upon the invention of personality, or "character," but in the political narrative [it is] designed . . . to maintain the illusion of "consensus" by obscuring rather than addressing actual issues. (69)

It is this sort of critique that prompts David Eason in his essay "The New Journalism and the Image World" to count Didion among those journalists he terms "modernists," those who "describe a world where reality and image are so
intertwined that they call commonsensical views into question" (192). Eason argues that Didion, like Norman Mailer and Hunter Thompson, examines the manner by which "cultural assumptions legitimate ethical decisions and the way storytelling works as a cultural practice to make a common world" (192-93). By contrast, Eason classifies writers like Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, and Truman Capote as "realists": those who believe that reality, though elusive, waits to be discovered; who believe that observing is a professional act that ultimately can locate reality; who have faith in the story form as a traditional model of interpretation and expression (192-193).

Eason's model provides a useful starting point for how Didion's work fits as a cultural phenomenon with that of other journalists who use their reports partly to deconstruct their complicity in the project of writing history. But Eason unnecessarily collapses the strong ambivalence and repositioning across time in both Wolfe's and Didion's work and tends to blur distinctions by his use of the term "modernism" for what others might call "postmodernism" or "post-structuralism." In fact, Eason seems not to really "read" The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test or Wolfe's ambivalence toward that text and the journalism profession so much as to take Wolfe's word for his theory. Similarly, Eason doesn't register the changes that Didion, herself, made away from the uncomplicated "story form."
One example might show how such classification becomes reductive, particularly if it is considered only in formal rather than in social terms, and especially if it is applied equally to Didion’s and Wolfe’s earlier and later work. Eason suggests that "realists" like Wolfe describe "well-ordered social dramas" while "modernists" like Didion describe "disrupted spectacles . . . where the roles of actor and spectator are no longer clearly defined" (197). But his dichotomy simply doesn’t explain Wolfe’s reporting in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* of an LSD trip that is nothing if not a disrupted spectacle:

Suddenly he is like a ping-pong ball in a flood of sensory stimuli, heart beating, blood coursing, breath suspiring, teeth grating, hand moving over the percale sheet over those thousands of minute warfy woofings like a brush fire, sun glow and the highlight on a stainless steel rod, quite a little movie you have going on in that highlight there, Hondo, Technicolours, pick each one out like fishing for neon gumballs with a steam shovel in the Funtime Arcade, a ping-pong ball in a flood of sensory stimuli, all quite ordinary, but . . . revealing . . . themselves for the first time and happening . . . Now. (37, Wolfe’s ellipses and emphases)

Nor does it explain Didion’s reporting that same year of an LSD trip in a scene that is nothing if not "well-ordered social drama." In "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," Didion watches as three Haight-Ashbury residents get high; her positioning as a narrator is outside and above that which
she reports, and nowhere does she contest her own position:

At three-thirty that afternoon Max, Tom, and Sharon placed tabs under their tongues and sat down together in the living room to wait for the flash. Barbara stayed in the bedroom, smoking hash. During the next four hours a window banged once in Barbara's room, and about five-thirty some children had a fight on the street. A curtain billowed in the afternoon wind. A cat scratched a beagle in Sharon's lap. Except for the sitar music on the stereo there was no other sound or movement until seven-thirty, when Max said "Wow." (106)

Strictly as a matter of form, Eason has placed Didion and Wolfe in the wrong camps. But read in the more fully communicative context of their authors' cultural rituals, Eason is right (given his terminological system) to term Didion a "modernist" and Wolfe a "realist." For Didion, even in "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," explicitly critiques those who, like Wolfe, who would seek to reduce the whole experience of Haight-Ashbury to commonly explainable phenomena. She quotes with some irony a "hip" San Francisco psychiatrist, whose words in fact recall Wolfe's overall thesis in Acid Test: "It's a social movement, quintessentially romantic, the kind that recurs in times of real social crisis," the psychiatrist tells her. "The themes are always the same. A return to innocence. The invocation of an earlier authority and control. The mysteries of the blood. An itch for the transcendental, for purification" (120-21).
Even more tellingly, the two authors outside the text have strikingly differing reactions toward the marketing of their accounts. Both Wolfe and Didion recall being told that the counter-culture phenomenon might be out of fashion before they could get their nonfiction accounts into print. Wolfe takes professional delight in suggesting in an interview with Joe David Bellamy in *Writer’s Digest* that his narrative ordered the disorder of Kesey’s Prankster experience and captured a strong reading market by its timely approach:

It looked as if the whole psychedelic, hippie phenomenon was disappearing. So there was pressure to just get it done. This was before Woodstock and, you know, I believed people who said, "Well, nobody wants to read about this anymore." And I said, "Well, I’d better crank it out." (59)

Didion, on the other hand, bristles at those readers who fail to understand that the reason she wrote "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" was not to pin down a passing fad in prose, but to explore the continuing "disorder" of contemporary America. As she wrote in the preface to the *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* collection:

If I was to work again at all, it would be necessary for me to come to terms with disorder. That was why the piece was important to me. And after it was printed I saw that, however directly and flatly I thought I had said it, I had failed . . . to suggest that I was talking about something more general than a handful of children wearing mandalas on their foreheads. (xiv)
She recalls that disc jockeys telephoned her house and wanted on-air interviews about the "filth" in the Haight-Ashbury, and that acquaintances congratulated her on having finished "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" in the nick of time because 'the whole fad’s dead now, fini, kaput':

I suppose almost everyone who writes is afflicted some of the time by the suspicion that nobody out there is listening, but it seemed to me then (perhaps because the piece was important to me) that I had never gotten a feedback so universally beside the point. (xiv)

Didion wants to suggest that her nonfiction will do more than market reality in timely fashion. For her, all writing, especially the nonfiction writing of human beings in "disorder," is a potentially moral, if often desperate, act. In "On Morality," Didion says morality became concrete in the story of a talc miner who had stayed on the highway through the night to guard the body of an accident victim while the miner’s wife drove 185 miles across the desert and three mountain ranges for help. Had he not stayed the coyotes would have torn the corpse’s body and eaten its flesh. Didion concludes,

One of the promises we make to one another is that we will try to retrieve our casualties, try not to abandon our dead to the coyotes. If we have been taught to keep our promises--if, in the simplest terms, our upbringing is good enough--we stay with the body, or have bad dreams. (158)
Given that concrete example of moral behavior, how difficult it must have been in 1982 for Didion to turn her back on a young Salvadoran civilian near the Boulevard de los Heroes as soldiers herded him into a van, "their guns at the boy's back" (36). Didion is the reporter who has come to El Salvador to bear witness to the desapariciones, to document the atrocities committed by the regime supported by her American readers' government. But when the lad is kidnapped before her eyes, she can tell those readers only that "I walked straight ahead, not wanting to see anything at all" (36).

From that start, as the 1980s progress, Didion burrows toward a more deeply implicated reporting capable of recognizing political and cultural desapariciones of the late twentieth century. She may be no more sure of an over-arching truth than before, no more certain that either she or her readers will escape the blinding white flash of the apocalypse, no more certain that it is possible to pull apart the strands of competing narratives to get at something hard and fast. But in the 1980s Didion moves beyond her confession in Salvador that she will turn her back on deeply implicating material. It's as if she has concluded, along with Jane Tompkins, that recognizing that facts always are embedded in narrative does not excuse a writer or reader from trying to sort out those facts. For as Tompkins reminds us in her essay, "'Indians':"
Textuality, Morality, and the Problem of History":

[I]f you are convinced . . . that there really are no facts except as they are embedded in some particular way of seeing the world, then the argument that a set of facts derives from some particular worldview is no longer an argument against that set of facts. If all facts share this characteristic, to say that any one fact is perspectival doesn't change its factual nature in the slightest. It merely reiterates it. This doesn't mean that you have to accept just anybody's facts. You can show that what someone else asserts to be a fact is false. But it does mean that you can't argue that someone else's facts are not facts because they are only the product of a perspective, since this will be true of the facts that you perceive as well. (76)

And so, while the latter Didion never changes her obsessions with holocaust and hyperreality, the author of Miami has seemed to equip herself for writing a serious nonfiction capable of burrowing into the postmodern world of intrigue and shadowy plots amid the stroboscopic flashes of white light. Throughout this evolution, Didion continues to open her reporting to her readers, allowing them to see the quality of her evidence, the constructedness of her narrative, and to compare its validity to that of competing narratives. And somehow, through it all, she becomes an artist who might be worthy of being called a reporter, as well as a reporter who might be worthy of being called an artist.
We know from Didion's own words that the courage to press her reportage did not come easily. In the preface to *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, Didion tells of mornings sitting in "some Best Western motel bed somewhere and try[ing] to force myself to put through the call to the assistant district attorney" (xvi). We know from the story, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," that she was not successful at getting beyond the public relations curtain at the San Francisco Police Department or in gaining access to the counterculture leaders in the "Diggers" collective who might have shed light on her topic. "Maybe that's why we chose this work of writing," Didion told PBS correspondent Susan Stamberg in "Cautionary Tales," a 1977 radio interview. "So we could disappear, in a way. . . . In my case, I wasn't a very good reporter" (26).

While her shyness no doubt caused her to work harder to gain access to her material ("so neurotically inarticulate that people tend to forget that my presence runs counter to their best interests" [STB xvi]), Didion is also honest enough to confess those moments (as in the San Salvador kidnapping) when her nerves or her natural reserve cause her the bad dreams of immoral inaction. At the end of her "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" tale about Haight Ashbury's wasted dream, Didion sees a three-year-old child, who had burned his arm playing with fire, chewing on a live electric cord while the mother's "macrobiotic friends" are
busy "trying to retrieve some very good Moroccan hash which had dropped down through a floorboard damaged in the fire" (128). Didion ends the long article about the Haight Ashbury culture with that vignette, the chillingly ironic note about a culture that promises to love in principle, but is selfish in practice, a culture that would rather see a child abused than lose good drugs.

More than ten years after she filed the story, Didion shows she has not forgotten that boy and his burned arm; the odor of burned flesh implicates her (and any reader who can recognize the distinction between the odor of "actual" and "fictional" flesh) across time as no fictional situation could. Like many reporters, she recognizes that she might have reached out to save the boy, but had she done so she would have lost not only her detachment, but perhaps the vignette that perfectly captured her theme. She still doesn't rest easily with that decision and confesses to Stamberg:

I was terribly worried, because my child was almost that age. His mother was yelling at him in a kind of desultory way. There had been a floorboard damaged in the fire, and some hash had dropped down through it, and everybody else was trying to dash around and get this hash back. I wanted to take the child out, but I had no business doing that. (25)

The fact that Didion can recognize both the fiction-like power of the evocative narrative detail as well as the
manner by which the writing of actual characters and events forces both writer and reader into moral choices that leap off the printed page into history is without doubt her greatest dilemma as well as her greatest achievement.

Her book-length nonfiction narratives, *Salvador* and *Miami*, force their readers into a similar dilemma, particularly those readers who are citizens of the United States and who are exploring the details of policies carried out in their names. In *Salvador*, the mimetic pull of the narrative—the tension of a plot in which its reporter/protagonist is placed in a milieu where weapons are brandished and eye contact is avoided—plays against the recognition by many readers that a reporter who fears eye contact will leave San Salvador without being the witness she should have been.

The reader caught up in the book’s narrative present follows Didion as she tries to discover information about the deaths and disappearances in El Salvador. She tries to make sense of death statistics whose numbers never add up and which seem to change every day; she looks through photo albums containing the photographs of dead bodies. She learns that vultures "go first for the soft tissue, for the eyes, the exposed genitalia, the open mouth" (21). She even visits a well-known body dump one morning to see the bodies for herself; when she gets there she finds a man giving a woman a driving lesson in the sort of truck that
has been linked to the deaths and disappearances. The truck inches back and forth while three small children play in the wet grass. The reporter, meanwhile, walks down the steep mountainside—which itself is the subject of a tourist bureau boast as El Salvador's most beautiful natural attraction—and finds "what is left of the bodies, pecked and maggoty masses of flesh, bone, hair" (21).

The sense of generalized danger that has complicated Didion's reporting soon is directed more specifically at the reporter herself. She goes for a walk, opens her handbag to check an address, and hears "the clicking of metal on metal all up and down the street" (22). One night, while she and her husband are dining alone on the porch of a restaurant, she sees two men, one carrying a rifle, crouched between the pumps at a gas station next door. She fights an urge to blow out the candle on her table, "in a single instant demoralized, undone, humiliated by fear" (26).

At first, Didion tells us that she maintains her work habits in spite of this sense of now-personal, as well as generalized, danger. She interviews the country's president, the U. S. ambassador, reads histories and embassy reports. She is able to draw metaphorical connections, such as the fact that only the U. S. Embassy with its inflexible foundation is damaged badly by an earthquake that rocks the ground under her feet; other
buildings shift with the shifting earth and are not damaged (53). But she no longer seems ready to face the facts that a reporter is expected to report. She has already, on one occasion, closed her notebook and turned her back on the obvious kidnapping (36); language (65) even verdad itself, is "a degenerated phrase" (66), has come to mean "the truth according to Roberto D'Aubuisson" (67), the government official widely believed to be behind the majority of the killings. Finally, Didion wrangles an exclusive interview with Victor Barrière, grandson of the demented Salvadoran former dictator General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez, and the namesake of the country's most notorious death squad. She interviews the grandson, learns that he reads Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, that he lives with his "Mommy" and keeps an 18-year-old peasant boy (whom he is teaching to be a primitive painter) as a companion, that he equates the martyred Archbishop Romero with Adolph Hitler. Faced with an unparalleled opportunity to engage her reporting, Didion declines to ask the grandson any questions, even though he seems eager to talk. She confesses:

It occurred to me that this was the first time in my life that I had been in the presence of obvious "material" and felt no professional exhilaration at all, only personal dread. One of the most active death squads now operating in El Salvador calls itself the Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez Brigade, but I had not asked the grandson about that. (56)
She travels, instead, to the cathedral where the Archbishop Romero has been shot and finds it a "vast brutalist space" with an unlit altar that "seemed to offer a single ineluctable message: at this time and in this place the light of the world could be construed as out, off, extinguished" (79). In her last act as a reporter, Didion asks an embassy staffer about an obvious distortion in U. S. Ambassador's Deane Hinton's speech, but the staffer assures her that it won't matter; he guesses correctly that the ambassador's speech will still be front-page news in both The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times (98).

In one of Didion's last days in El Salvador, the sense of generalized dread that implicates and defeats her as a reporter becomes even more specific. A car in which she is riding is surrounded by young men on motorcycles, one of whom caresses a machine gun propped between his thighs. No one says anything; the young men smile, but will not make way for her car. While her driver maneuvers the car out of the tight spot, she can only study her hands and conclude that it was "a pointless confrontation with aimless authority" and that "any situation can turn into terror" (104-05).

The growing tension keeps Didion awake during her last night in the country as she listens to a band blare "Malaguena" until dawn; on the way to the airport she is
sure she is being kidnapped. And once there:

I sat without moving and averted my eyes from the soldiers patrolling the empty departure lounges. When the nine A.M. TACA flight to Miami was announced I boarded without looking back, and sat rigid until the plane left the ground. I did not fasten my seat belt. I did not lean back. (106)

On the plane she meets a student missionary who has brought the Good News of Jesus to the people of Belize, another Central American nation. From an immediate perspective, his mission of witness has been successful while the reporter’s witness has not. The young man has renewed his commitment to bring Jesus Christ as personal savior (salvador) to the world. Didion has been undone. Once back in the United States, she can report only that "the State Department announced that the Reagan administration believed that it had ‘turned the corner’ in its campaign for political stability in Central America" (107-08).

Although Didion is deep into irony here, the government’s is the last word of the book; she must depend on an ironic effect for the evidence of United States government complicity in the events of El Salvador that her reporting cannot uncover.

To understand the manner by which Salvador has implicated many of its North American readers, it might be worthwhile to try to imagine the narrative as if a reader knew nothing of El Salvador in the 1980s nor of the United
States' policies toward Central American dictatorships that El Salvador reflects. For that reader, Didion has emerged alive from a situation when there was a real chance that she would not. She has plunged at the story's beginning "directly into a state where no ground was solid" (13) and come out alive. On the other hand, a reader purely inside the text, with no knowledge of external events, would seem to be aware that her safety comes at some cost, that she seems less free to communicate the truth as she sees it than she hoped to be able to do at the beginning of the book.

Even more important, that reader would be drawn to a rather unambiguous conclusion: the United States, a nation which the reporter, as a citizen, has a right to believe will protect her, has in fact done nothing to assure her of its protection. In the world inside the narrative, the reporter's nation clearly is aligned with evil. It is protecting the terrorists of El Salvador while it has largely abandoned her.

That sort of reading, of course, becomes much more complicated for the vast majority of Salvador's audience. These are readers who might know something of the history of El Salvador (whether a supporter of U. S. policies during the 1980s or not), readers whose taxes may have paid for the elaborate appointments at the United States embassy where Didion is told that her nation is making strong
progress in its efforts to "save" El Salvador. That sort of reader—as this dissertation has argued throughout—would be "implicated" by the events of the text, in that those events would assume an "actual" dimension for that reader outside the book as well as a "narrative" dimension inside the book.

Ever more disconcertingly, Didion undermines at every turn any attempt at an uncomplicated historical or narrative reading of the text. "[N]o ground is solid, no depth of field reliable, no perception so definite that it might not dissolve into its reverse. The only logic is that of acquiescence" (13): Didion will repeat that essential message from the first page to the last. The visitor to El Salvador is told unambiguously that to survive he will need to function exactly opposite the manner in which a reporter should: by concentrating only on present details, by averting eyes from danger, "to the exclusion of past or future concerns, as in a prolonged amnesiac fugue" (14).

Thematically, Didion is on familiar turf here, that which pervades her work from beginning to end. The mass destruction represented by the body dumps and disappearances is El Salvador’s holocaust, while the pervasive intertextual propaganda of the Salvadoran and U. S. governments is its hyperreality. Official statistics, official reports (perhaps even those in the
newspapers that an actual reader might value) are exposed as worthless, but no worthwhile figures are put in their place. Government memos (most likely paid for by a vast majority of the book's actual readers) use other discredited government memos to support their statistics; such memos are in turn used to buttress (actually undermine) the factual basis of the text the implicated reader is reading. Even presumably actual places such as the Puerto del Diablo body dump are rendered not so much as evil, but as "a place [which] presents itself as pathetic fallacy" (20).

Signs and significance are unhinged: the simple act of checking an address is read as menace; a candle on a dinner table is insupportable danger. The face of Ronald Reagan (commander-in-chief to many of the book's actual readers at the time of its publication) saluting the Salvadoran commitment to freedom and political self-determination dissolves into the televised image of actor Ronald Reagan (complete with Spanish overdubbing) playing opposite Doris Day in The Winning Team, a movie that any member of the book's actual reading audience could--and maybe has--rented at a local video store or watched on a cable movie channel.

Meanwhile, Reberto D'Aubuisson takes part, wittingly or unwittingly, in an actual performance of a cinema verite scene shot by a Danish film crew for a (fictional) movie about a foreign correspondent
in which the actor playing the correspondent "interviewed" D'Aubuisson, on camera, in his office. This Danish crew treated the Camino Real not only as a normal location hotel (the star for example was the only person I ever saw swim in the Camino Real pool) but also as a story element, on one occasion shooting a scene in the bar, which lent daily life during their stay a peculiar extra color. They left San Salvador without making it entirely clear whether or not they had ever told D'Aubuisson it was just a movie. (62)

The effect of Salvador seems markedly different than it would be if, say, the reader were involved in a narrative with no "actual" dimension. The almost pointless government regulation, the uneasy sense of generalized menace without clear cause, the mixing of realistic detail and surreal effects like the D'Aubuisson filming or the Reagan-Doris Day movie make Salvador's plot read like a modern-day Kafka novel, to be sure, but it is a Kafka novel that the majority of its readers are living as well as reading. The props in this narrative--the chilled wine in crystal at the U. S. Embassy, the fish on American Eagle porcelain--are supplied in the names of the U. S. citizens who make up many of the book's actual readers when Didion is told (against all evidence) that U. S. interests are prevailing in Salvador.

Ultimately, Didion leaves those readers hanging in Salvador, depending for ironic effect on her refusal to make final sense out of the hyperreal, terrorist society
she has encountered. The *Heart of Darkness* epigraph will instead be her testament. In it, Marlow reflects on the power of Kurtz's language, the report that "vibrates with eloquence," that "soars," that makes the reader "tingle with enthusiasm" born of "burning noble words" and the "magic current of phrases." It is that sort of message that at least some portion of *Salvador*'s readers might want, the eloquence that will assure us that some savage customs in El Salvador are being suppressed in our names or at least that the artist/reporter can make some sense of the experience.

By making a reader care about her narrator on the mimetic level Didion is following the conventions of latter-day New Journalism: realistic narrative that promotes reader identification. But by denying that part of many readers who want to be reassured by this technique, she is striving to be adequate to the facts even as she undermines her text's ability to present facts:

This was a shopping center that embodied the future for which El Salvador was presumably being saved, and I wrote it down dutifully, this being the kind of "color" I knew how to interpret, the kind of inductive irony, the detail that was supposed to illuminate the story. As I wrote it down I realized that I was no longer much interested in this kind of irony, that this was a story that would not be illuminated by such details, that this was a story that would not be illuminated at all, that this was perhaps even less a "story" than a true
noche obscura. As I waited to cross back over the Boulevard de los Heroes to the Camino Real I noticed soldiers herding a young civilian into a van, their guns at the boy’s back, and I walked straight ahead, not wanting to see anything at all. (36)

Didion, it seems, will refuse the Kurtz solution. She will refuse to produce the searingly beautiful, the elegantly ironic text about extermination. Hers, finally, is the voice of confession. She has played her readers’ desire to engage in the text’s suspenseful narrative against our desire to escape from its history. And if the reader is not implicated directly and historically by this nonfiction text, he might complete it by being satisfied with its achingly ironic artistry and turn to the next book on his reading list.

But for the fully implicated reader, Didion’s confession that she is not up to turning terror into unambiguous art comes at a cost. She has made that reader the witness to an actual kidnapping in this pivotal scene; an actual boy has disappeared, a gun at his back and Didion will not, and will not let her reader, stay and bear witness against the coyotes who would rip the boy’s flesh. She has made metaphorical and artistic use of the kidnapping’s terror, but has finally turned her back on it and, moreover, has made the reader an accomplice in her project. She implicates us even as she frustrates us. We have come to understand Kurtz’s brutes in a new way, Didion
suggests by this strategy, and a vast majority of Salvador's North American audience might be intimately acquainted with the brutes that act in its name.

A brief contrast with journalist Tina Rosenberg's depiction of El Salvador in her recently published Children of Cain will serve to point the way toward Didion's changing strategy in Miami. Unlike Didion, Rosenberg actually interviewed key members of the D'Aubuisson's ARENA party. Her writing about El Salvador seems to be a virtual response, and indeed even a critique of Didion. Rosenberg says that it is far more possible to document atrocities than to burrow behind their facts to get at the complicities that make them possible:

[A]fter a while the names began to sound the same and the teary widows with children clinging to their skirts and the endless funerals blurred together. The stories, including the ones I wrote, were factually true. They described the violence. But they did not help me understand it. They did not give me the truth about El Salvador. (222-23)

In Miami (1987), published in book-length form some four years after Salvador, Didion brings her tropical topics that much closer to the bulk of her North American reading audience. As the discussion at the beginning of this chapter documents, the book is set in the liquid world of political intrigue, gun running and drug trafficking. As in Salvador, challenging a dominant political ideology
might have its stern consequences: Didion documents bombings at Kennedy Airport, at the Venezuelan Mission to the United Nations and at the Cuban Missions to the United Nations in two separate Manhattan locations (101), as well as car ignition bombings (100), beatings (107), and plastique dynamite (103). Most are linked to the Cuban exile community in Miami, which Didion covers in detailed fashion.

The reader coming to Didion's *Miami* after reading her four other book-length collections of nonfiction narrative immediately notices the depth of her reporting: the scores of interviews that bolster its research, the numbers of government documents, and the reams of official and semi-official records. Didion presents some fifteen pages of scrupulously detailed notes after the main body of the narrative, each designed, chapter by chapter, to establish her narrative's factual status. And yet *Miami* also remains demonstrably within the Didion tradition: the eerie apocalypse of lightning's white flash; the ever-shifting, ever-slippery versions of official "truths"; and the layers of lies and half-truths that both support and undermine those claims.

I first want to focus on Didion's presence in the book, particularly suggesting the ways in which it differs from her presence in *Salvador* and ultimately discuss what those differences tell us about Didion's nonfiction as the
end of the century approaches. Like John Reed, in his nonfiction narratives *Insurgent Mexico* and *Ten Days That Shook the World*, Didion almost seems destined to replay pivotal scenes from *Salvador* in an effort to establish the changes she has made by Miami.

If Didion closed her notebook during the interview with Victor Barrière in El Salvador, no longer interested in "material" but only in her own "personal dread" (56), she will keep that notebook resolutely open in Miami. In a chapter that details the pervasive terrorism to which Cuban exile groups have subjected those few Miami-based Cubans who have dared to suggest *dialogo* with Castro, Didion unflinchingly lists the names of those who have died: Carlos Muniz Varela, Eulalio Jose Negrin, Luciano Nieves. Varela was murdered in San Juan by a group calling itself "Comando Cero" (114), Negrin by two men in ski masks who surprised him and his son in a Union City, New Jersey parking lot (114), Nieves shot and killed in the parking lot of Variety Children’s Hospital in Miami (106).

Despite this menace, Didion will interview Bernardo Benes, the architect of the proposed dialogo with Castro, and "its principle surviving victim" (111). He tells Didion that he is construed by the exile community as "the Captain Dreyfus of Miami" (112), that he has lost all his car dealerships and his positions on bank boards because he dared to suggest that Miami-based Cubans might be better to
talk to those Cubans back home rather than to prepare endlessly to invade the island. As the interview progresses, the stakes of the narrative deepen as its participants begin to comprehend the implications of Benes and his wife talking to a reporter on the record about political repression in Miami:

We were sitting at the kitchen counter, drinking the caffeine and sugar infusion that is Cuban coffee, and as Bernardo Benes began to talk about the *dialogo* and its aftermath he glanced repeatedly at his wife, a strikingly attractive woman who was clearing the breakfast dishes with the brisk, definite movements of someone who has only a limited enthusiasm for the discussion at hand. (112)

It is the sort of increasingly tense and implicating scene that would be much more difficult to imagine were the text fiction and the characters imaginary. "[P]eople tend to forget that my presence runs counter to their best interests," Didion had said of her nonfiction as long ago as in the introduction to *Slouching Towards Bethlehem.* "And it always does. That is one last thing to remember: writers are always selling somebody out" (xvi). Benes and Didion continue to talk about the way the Spanish-language radio stations in Miami have routinely denounced him as a Communist, or at best a *idiota util,* or useful idiot, for Castro (113).

"This is Miami," Benes finally tells Didion. "Pure Miami. A million Cubans are blackmailed, totally
controlled." It is, he says, the same condition that Castro has imposed on Cuba: "Total intolerance. And ours is worse. Because it is entirely voluntary" (113). He tells Didion how he could not go to a restaurant without people coming to his table and calling him names, how the friends of his children were forbidden to visit because their parents did not want them there "when the bomb went off" (114), how a Burdines clerk had refused to accept the credit card offered by Benes' daughter (115). As he talks, he continues to glance at his wife, who stands now against the kitchen sink, her arms folded. Didion reports,

From the windows of that house it was possible to look across the bay at the Miami skyline, at buildings through which Bernardo Benes had moved as someone entitled. Mrs. Benes spoke only once, to interrupt her husband with a protective burst of vehement Spanish. "No Cubans will read what she writes," Bernardo Benes said in English. "You will be surprised," his wife said in English. "Anything I say can be printed. That's the price of being married to me. I'm a tough cookie," Bernardo Benes said in English. "All right," his wife said, in English, and she walked away. "You just make your life insurance more." (115)

In another carefully drawn scene, Didion interviews Raul Masvidal in his "cool and immaculate office on the top floor of one of the Miami banks in which he has an interest" (84). As the hard-line exiles' choice for Miami mayor who once had trained with the Brigada 2506 del Exilio
Cubano troops for the Bay of Pigs invasion and was intimately acquainted with "the more fluid strategies of CIA/Miami" (88), Masvidal not only would be the sort of figure who might menace Benes, but the sort of interview for which Didion's reporter nerve was not yet ready in Salvador. But here she listens carefully and quotes liberally as Masvidal tells her that "the entire Kennedy family" is more hated by Cuban exiles than anyone but Castro. Masvidal is "wary, almost impassive" (92), and Didion laces the interview with evocative detail. To speak in this society is to risk; to listen is to risk; silence can be purchased at the point of a gun. Yet, unlike in Salvador, Didion will speak and listen, listen and speak, as Masvidal opened and closed a leather folder, the only object on his marble desk, then aligned it with the polished edge of the marble. On the wall behind him hung a framed poster with the legend, in English, YOU HAVE NOT CONVERTED A MAN BECAUSE YOU HAVE SILENCED HIM, a sentiment so outside the thrust of local Cuban thinking that it lent the office an aspect of having been dressed exclusively for visits from what Cubans sometimes call, with a light ironic edge, the mainstream population. (85)

Despite this sort of vignette, Didion will not paint the exile Cuban community of Miami in flat tones. In careful detail she shows how their passion to regain their homeland has been teased and sold out by three decades of U. S. presidents; how their desire to speak their own
language is considered a threat by Dade County's English-speaking residents; how they are allowed to climb the financial ladder in Miami only if they remain invisible to all but the most stereotyped "Latin" assimilation myths. Didion cites commentaries on Cuban exiles by George Will ("fried bananas and black bean soup . . . a new installment in the saga of America's absorptive capacity"); George Gilder ("more effervescently thriving than its crushed prototype" of Havana, . . . "percolat[ing] with the forbidden commerce of the dying island to the south"); the Miami Herald ("role models for a community determined to assimilate"); and George Bush ("The most eloquent testimony I know to the basic strength and success of America") (60). Meanwhile, she also documents how the exiles are punished politically if they dare to answer their telephones in Spanish and are considered but a "spice" in the flavor of Miami even though they make up more than half of its population.

Didion also shows an increased willingness to burrow more deeply when she is on her most familiar turf: the manner by which a hyperreal, or intertextually pervasive, system of information control construes the official language of society. In Salvador, she had satisfied herself with ironic effects--D'Aubuisson's hyperreal movie adventure, Reagan starring opposite Doris Day in The Winning Team played out against his Salvadoran political
pronouncements—but in *Miami*, she shows herself willing to dig much more deeply.

For example, in the book's fifteenth chapter, Didion plays out a typical day in the Washington press corps, in which the press ignores the potentially most significant story of the day—Reagan's meeting with Dominican president Salvador Jorge Blanco and their possible discussion of the mining of the Nicaraguan harbor—to concentrate on the manufactured news: Reagan's rambling telephone call to the shuttle astronauts and his meeting with the "Celebrities for Fair Housing" (173). The only opportunity the press corps has to see Reagan and Blanco comes at a non-speaking photo opportunity, summarized later by Vic Ostrowidzki of Hearst Newspapers in a daily White House press pool report reprinted by Didion:

> [T]he President suddenly looked up, saw us staring at him expectantly and stopped in mid-sentence. To a question, "Are you going to discuss the mining of ports?" Reagan responded "no questions at photo opportunity" and L. Speakes shouted, "lights out." (174)

Didion uses the occasion for a carefully detailed report on the Reagan Administration's strategy of daily "talking points," a strategy carried on by the Bush regime, in which ten senior staff meetings a week are convened for "creation and strategic management" of information: what David Gergen, then-White House communications director, "had characterized as 'the story line we are trying to
develop that week or that month’” (175). Whereas in Salvador, Didion had satisfied herself with reporting the government’s confident assumption that Ambassador Deane Hinton’s misleading speech would lead the major U. S. newspapers that day, in this book Didion shows how, exactly, the administration can be so confident. Its information flow is an arrangement guaranteed by denying access to all but the daily and weekly "talking points" and consistent summoning of the president as its chief sales agent. Didion suggests that:

It was taken for granted, above all, that the reporters and camera operators and still photographers and sound technicians and lighting technicians and producers and electricians and on-camera correspondents showed up at the White House because the President did, and it was also taken for granted, the more innovative construction, that the President showed up at the White House because the reporters and camera operators and still photographers and sound technicians and lighting technicians and producers and electricians and on-camera correspondents did. (177)

Finally, Didion uses the occasion of Miami for the sort of close reporting on U. S. Central American policy that had been absent from Salvador. For example, here she details the creation of A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties, the so-called "Santa Fe" document that served as the blueprint for Reagan Administration policy in the region and a document that, among other things, called for
the replacement of "human rights" with "political and ethical realism"; a campaign to counter "liberation theology"; and the insulation of police formation from "general and specialized media which is inspired by forces specifically hostile to the United States" (182-83).

Didion also attends and reports on meetings of the White House Outreach Working Group on Central America during 1984 and 1985, including a memorable one in which the Freedom Research Foundation’s Jack Wheeler presents slides of Nicaraguan contras. One contra, Didion reports, is "a full-breasted young woman carrying a rifle" that elicits Wheeler’s comment: "I wouldn’t mind her fighting alongside me" (191). Didion concludes,

On such afternoons the enemy was manifold. And often within. The "Red Empire" was of course the enemy. "Christian communists" were also the enemy. "Guilt-ridden masochistic liberals" were the enemy, and "the radical chic crowd that always roots for the other side," "the Beverly Hills liberals with their virulent hatred of America." I recall a briefing on the 1984 Salvadoran election in which "people like Tom Brokaw" were the enemy, people like Richard Meislin of The New York Times and Sam Dillon of the Miami Herald, people whose "sneer was showing," people who "did not need to be in El Salvador to write what they did." (191-92)

Despite, or indeed perhaps because, of such carefully drawn polemics, Miami has so far not attracted the scholarly attention shown to Salvador. In initial
reviews, the manner by which the nonfiction *Miami* implicated its audience is evidenced by the ideological lines in its response. Writing in *New Republic*, Nicholas Lemann concludes that "Miami is of less concern" to Didion "than her own mood, in which the ordinary becomes sinister, in which the hand of a nefarious right-wing conspiracy is subtly evident" (37). Attempting to "conjure a sinister relationship," Didion topples into "outright ludicrousness" (37), Lemann charges.

Many of its readers are correct in noting that *Miami* presents a vast amount of sometimes only partially digested information, perhaps too much for some of its literary critics who are more comfortable with Didion's trademark minimalistic irony. Mark S. Muggli is typical of this response; he worries that the book neglects a consistent "central registering figure" who can produce the sort of disquieting narrative effect of *Salvador* and is uncomfortable with the Didion he finds construed as an "ideal reporter" who just might be up to Miami's complex task (185):

> Didion has in her novels and factual pieces explored the epistemology that underlies modern empiricist journalism. But even an experienced and self-conscious writer like her has to struggle with her journalistic environment as she constructs a book like *Miami*. . . . *Miami* is weakened precisely by her inability to aesthetically incorporate the investigative journalism. . . . (192)
Certainly, the book lacks the elegant structure of *Salvador*, where the narrative begins and ends with the arrival and departure of the ultimately undone reporter and frames her increasing sense of personal danger and moral dread. *Miami*, by contrast, is sprawling. In the words of Peter Elbow in another context: "it does its cooking out on the table" (237). But enfolding all of this research are the sorts of novelistic effects for which Didion is justly celebrated: the emptiness of its postmodern Miami milieu, the heels clicking on the marble floors of half-empty buildings, the "young woman in the black taffeta dinner dress drumming her lacquered fingernails" (28). If her reporting is more deep, she has not essentially changed the nuances of intertextual menace that have drawn in many readers since her earliest nonfiction publications.

The book begins and ends with the figure of Maria Elena Prio Duran, a portrait of doomed glamour and failed intrigue. Didion first presents her in a snapshot from 1952. There, the infant lies in the arms of her deposed father, President Carlos Prio Socarras, as he flees from a Havana coup. Beside the child in the photo is her mother, "beautiful, boarding the plane in what appears to be a raw silk suit, and a hat with a black fishnet veiling. She wears gloves, and earrings. Her makeup is fresh" (11). The book ends with Maria Elena Prio Duran at a dinner table overlooking Biscayne Bay, the same Biscayne Bay over which
lightning has flashed "dead strobe white, as if in negative" (37). Grown now, the daughter of the deposed president is "quite beautiful" (163), as was her mother. She and other Cuban exiles speak of the way that the United States encourages, arms, yet always contains, the exiles’ desires to reclaim their homeland. As evidence, Didion remembers a letter she had once read in which Major General John K. Singlaub, later implicated in the Iran-Contra scandal, encouraged donations for "plastique" explosives for "freedom fighters" (204) and suggests that whatever terror the Miami exiles have cooked up may have as much to do with their North American sponsors. She presses that point with a telling detail. At the dinner, "I recall," says Didion, "watching Maria Elena Prio Duran that night as she pushed back her hair and reached across the table for a cigarette" (163). One of the exiles at the dinner, a prominent Miami architect named Raul Rodriguez, offers to define terror:

Cuba never grew plastique. Cuba grew tobacco. Cuba grew sugarcane. Cuba never grew C-4. Maria Elena Prio Duran lit the cigarette and immediately crushed it out. C-4, Raul Rodriguez said, and he slammed his palm down on the white tablecloth as he said it, grew here. (163)

If Didion has not yet fully integrated in book-length form her increasingly in-depth reporting with her trademark vignettes of end-times irony, an article like "Sentimental
Journeys," published in 1990 in The New York Review of Books and collected in After Henry, might suggest that direction. Here, Didion covers the trial of the New York City youths who are charged with the rape and disfigurement of the woman in a case that the New York press quickly dubs the "Central Park jogger." Didion, in fact, will deconstruct as much as cover the case, never shielding the reader from the severity of the crime--"[s]he had lost 75 percent of her blood . . . skull had been crushed . . . left eyeball pushed back through its socket . . . characteristic surface wrinkles of her brain flattened . . . [d]irt and twigs were found in her vagina" (254)--yet reading as well the context of its spoken and unspoken narratives.

Didion reports that police were told about 3,254 other rapes in New York that year, including one involving "the near decapitation of a black woman in Fort Tryon Park" and another in which a black Brooklyn woman was "robbed, raped, sodomized, and thrown down an air shaft of a four-story building" (255). Those crimes were not covered in the New York press; by contrast the Central Park jogger case elicited months of headline hyperbole: "Teen Wolfpack," "Rape Rampage," "Park Marauders," "One shouted 'hit the beat' and they all started rapping to 'Wild Thing,'" (255).

The case quickly coalesces into the master narrative of New York, in which residents talk in terms of domino
effect: falling back to Columbus Avenue and planting grass there (279) against the advancing hordes who already have taken the park. The victim in the narrative becomes "not the actual victim of an actual crime" but, indeed, virtually "a fictional character of a slightly earlier period," what Didion interprets as "the well-brought-up virgin who briefly graces the city with her presence and receives in turn a taste of 'real life'" (272).

With a subject as socially and politically lurid as Tom Wolfe's fictional *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, but with the edge of reporting actual, daily events about which people routinely shout, threaten, and argue, Didion carefully teases out the vastly divergent points of view in the narrative. Again, for the length of the article, her reporting is voluminous, ranging from histories of the social and tangible construction of Central Park to scrupulous documentation of the editorials and articles that, as much as the actual events, largely construe the popular interpretation of the case.

Writing in *National Review*, David Klinghoffer worries that "Miss Didion has turned into a media critic" and asks, "Won't someone pull the chair out from this woman?" and send her out to do some reporting (53). But Klinghoffer seems to miss her point. If the mediation overwhelms the event, Didion suggests, then a reporter must probe popular narratives as well as events. Unlike a television
docudrama or "real-life" crime book, Didion highlights the artificial constructedness of the master narrative rather than effacing or "naturalizing" its contradictions. She talks about what is not covered, what is not on the record, along with what is. She recognizes that many "New York stories" betray a sentimental attraction for broad narrative strokes: its huddled masses, its ticker-tape parades, its broken hearts, its eight million stories are, she says,

\[
\text{devised to obscure not only the city's actual tensions of race and class but also, more significantly, the civic and commercial arrangements that rendered those tensions irreconcilable. (280)}
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The deeply felt outrage at so brutal a crime as the Central Park rape, she understands, is also a way for New York's middle class to process its "growing and previously inadmissible rage with the city's disorder" (309) and even with its uneasy guilt at seeing an entire family sleep "in the discarded boxes in which new Sub-Zero refrigerators were delivered" at $2,600 per unit, to more wealthy families (310).

Finally, in the article's most riveting scene, Didion takes her readers outside the downtown Manhattan courtroom at which the case is tried, where the press corps gathers to process the day's events and supporters of the victim and defendants toss epithets like beach balls. The press, of course, controls the master narrative, but in the
background—insistent as the static on a video
transmission—is another voice, the voice of a woman
speaking inside the conviction that the judicial system is
out to get the young black men of the city. The woman
fixes on Bob Herbert, an African-American columnist for the
Daily News, in a scene that is as menacing as any in
Wolfe’s Bonfire, but one that names names and scratches the
racial scars of 1990s America open and raw:

"White slut comes into the park looking
for the African man . . . Boyfriend
beats shit out of her, they blame it on
our boy." . . . Glances could then
flicker among those reporters and
producers and courtroom sketch artists
and photographers and cameramen and
techs and summer interns who assembled
daily at 111 Centre Street. Cellular
phones could be picked up, a show of
indifference. Small talk could be
exchanged with the marshals, a show of
solidarity. The woman could then raise
her voice: "White folk, all of them
are devils." (297-98)

Like a Spike Lee film (most notably in the vernacular
of Do the Right Thing or Jungle Fever), Didion’s overheard
dialogue reports the tensions of race in urban America that
polite people are anxious to control, to contain, to deny.
Didion tells her readers that the reporters outside the
courthouse gaze through and beyond this outrageous woman,
her narrative precisely as unfair as is the master
narrative. Faces are blank; there is "no eye contact, a
more correct form of hostility and also more lethal" (298),
Didion tells us. And as the woman fixes her eyes on
Herbert, she calls him a disgrace "to my people . . . not even allowed in the room to see their sons lynched." She finishes, "Go ahead. Line up with the white folk . . . . Is that an African I see in that line? Or is it a Negro? Oh, sorry, shush; white folk didn't know, he was passing" (298).

Rather than presenting her quotes in the "he said, she said" tradition of objective journalism, or disguising their sources and their tensions through the devices of "realistic" nonfiction narrative, Didion allows the woman's hauntingly, even transcendentally, unfair words to reverberate, then offers their lesson to her readers:

In this city rapidly vanishing into the chasm between its actual life and its preferred narratives, what people said when they talked about the case of the Central Park jogger came to seem a kind of poetry, a way of expressing, without directly stating, different but equally volatile and similarly occult visions of the same disaster. (299)

One vision, "shared by those who had seized upon the attack on the jogger as an exact representation of what was wrong with the city," was of a city "systematically ruined, violated, raped by its underclass." In opposition was a vision favored by those who had seized upon the arrest of the defendants as "an exact representation of their own victimization," that of a city in which "the powerless had been systematically ruined, violated, raped by the powerful" (300).
Either one of these narratives is as potentially apocalyptic as are the Santa Ana winds, as is the rumbling along the San Andreas faultline, as are the fire and floods that tumble houses into the sea or implode their glass and timbers as their oxygen is sucked away. For the fire next time, Didion suggests—in this, the culminating piece of a collection published the same year as her own "Bethlehem" of Southern California burned in the wake of yet another trial that pitted the narratives of police and underclass—might indeed be that white flash that conceals and reveals the black shadow in its negative:

For so long as this case held the city’s febrile attention, then, it offered a narrative for the city’s distress, a frame in which the actual social and economic forces wrenching the city could be personalized and ultimately obscured. Or rather it offered two narratives, mutually exclusive. (300)

And if we are to save ourselves from this fate, Didion tells her readers, it will not be through the elegance of our fictions, nor through the formal unity of our nonfictions, but because we will have the courage to peel away the hard covers of our narratives and examine the manner by which our histories implicate our lives.

Footnotes

1. Rosenberg’s reporting from Colombia, Argentina, Peru, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Chile is compelling throughout. Published in 1991, her Children of Cain makes
particularly excellent use of reporting techniques as well as literary style, as Rosenberg manages to gain interviews with key Latin American leaders from the right and left.

2. Indeed, Miami is not mentioned in Barbara Lounsberry's recent chapter on Didion in The Art of Fact (1990), even though Lounsberry spends several pages speculating about the future of Didion's nonfiction following Salvador (concluding, "those following Didion's vision of lamplent light cannot help but be apprehensive about the future direction of her work" (135-36).
The theory that "Writing Outside/In: The Stakes of Nonfiction Narrative" sets out to demonstrate is that the social and literary transaction between the writer and reader provides a more ready explanation of nonfiction narrative than do more standard genre definitions that primarily rely for classification on a determination of the "truth" of the text. Underlying this theory is the recognition that questions of "truth" and "actuality" are never foreign to nonfiction, but that their determination will be the result of a far more complex social transaction than any that could be measured by "objective" empirical standards. Scholars of nonfiction narrative, in my judgment, have spent more time on questions of genre and classification (Can we call this narrative "true" as opposed to this one? Is this "true" text really a "nonfiction novel," or should we simply call it "literary journalism" or "realtor narrative" or "autobiography") than on examining the forms and ideologies of communication that underlie the production and consumption of nonfiction. This dissertation set out to explore that production.
and consumption transaction by recognizing that communication is as complex as culture itself: that its proper study means more than examining an intentional, encoding/decoding model to measure the effectiveness by which messages are initiated and received. Rather, communication is carried out through social and cultural interaction: a recognition that opens for discussion such features as not only its content and its form, but also its social positioning and the specific sites of its dissemination and reception. Further complicating this cultural communications model is the recognition that the scholar's work itself will be affected by that same sort of cultural matrix and, moreover, that many of the variables of a text's communication change over time. Thus, a nonfiction text that mediates, and is mediated by, some actuality outside the text is never quite fixed. Its readers will always bring something new to their readings, something to complicate the transaction.

This dissertation thus tried to answer the invitation of communications scholar John J. Pauly, who recommends that nonfiction narrative be examined for "the way the reporting process implicates writer, subjects, and readers in relationships beyond the text" while at the same time one can also read inside the text for its "play of meaning" (112). This strategy brings to the question of nonfiction the fullest possible resources of the sorts of tasks that
many literary scholars traditionally have done (narrative and textual analysis, close reading and the like) as well as broader models of cultural studies and communication theory.

The theoretical portion of the dissertation primarily asked two questions: in what way does the project of nonfiction narrative implicate its authors as both producers of text and of history and in what way does it implicate its readers as both consumers of text and of history? Without ever claiming that such a transaction never takes place in fiction (clearly, even fictional accounts are not written or read in a social vacuum and may make use of "actual" names, settings, social mores, histories and the like), this dissertation's theoretical introduction found that the nonfiction text—one that purports to re-enact for the reader an experience that is at least potentially also available elsewhere—forces both writer and reader into a multi-referential plane where each experiences the event both within and without the text. For purposes of explanation, I call that multi-referential plane "implication" in the sense that the word means "deeply involved, even incriminated" and for the manner by which it explodes more traditional and tidy literary notions of "ideal" or "implied" authors and readers.

Reading nonfiction for the manner by which it implicates its author, this study found, will examine the
narrator of the text (located by close reading and many of the traditions of literary analysis) against the grain of what we know of its actual author (produced by social or historical analysis) or, at least, what we might intuit about the limitations and possibilities of an actual author. This method brings into play such questions as: How does a narrator know what she knows of a character’s thoughts and speech patterns? Whose language patterns do those thoughts and speech represent and why? What access could the actual author have had to the events he purportedly recreates?

Many of the properties and powers we routinely grant to a narrator in fiction—an ability to read minds, to foretell the future, to be omnipresent, to reproduce speech verbatim, and the like—are purchased at great price in nonfiction. These powers must be socially negotiated because the characters and events cast a shadow outside the narrative as well. Thus, a narrator who purports to give voice to the deepest feelings of a character who, the narrative suggests, never would share those feelings with anyone must account for how she has produced those thoughts. A narrator who purports to analyze within the text the "exact words" of a character who, inexplicably and against all evidence, speaks just like him has, in fact, raised the sorts of questions about his methodology that implicate him, that cut against the grain of his voiced
intent and reveal his ideology. The intent of this sort of analysis is not to throw up our hands and transfer the narrative into the category of "fiction" as soon as discrepancies of intent and practice are revealed. It is rather to examine those discrepancies for what they say about the cultural relationships of author, subject, and reader. How does the author position himself toward his subjects? Does he dominate them or liberate them? Is he frightened by them or does he celebrate them? In extreme cases, for sure, the discrepancies that we find might cause us to abandon the text or to read it as fiction or fantasy, but far more often such a reading will bring a broader dimension to, and even a more deep appreciation for, the text, for its position within literary or cultural history, and for the way it works to re-enact the experience of actuality in compelling narrative form.

If nonfiction, in my judgment, requires that we read a narrator against the grain of its author and his history, it will also implicate the reader by causing her to meet herself inside a text that also casts a shadow over her outside experience. But since this dissertation attempts not to posit some "ideal" reader by which to measure these responses, the findings are more suggestive than proven. In any event, the analysis of literary expression has long ago taught us that a reader's sympathies or fears might be engaged by reading the thoughts of others and by sharing in
their hopes, dreams, fears, and experiences. When those "others" are nonfiction characters that (outside the text) also might be experienced as exotic, alien, or even menacing, complex and potentially incendiary reactions are produced.

The journalism industry has long since known of the sensations produced in the reader by encountering this "real-life" other in a text: sensations which inform the standard marketing news values of prominence, impact, conflict, immediacy, and timeliness. Within standard forms of nonfiction narrative—newspaper and magazine accounts, network television, popular films, and the like—the sensation of "othering," and its recapture and release, normally is safely maintained. More adventurous forms of nonfiction (as well as other forms of reality brokering outside the scope of this dissertation such as theme parks, thrill rides, virtual reality games, interactive video, and the like) may produce a more disquieting effect on the consumer, one that is more resistant and may be less likely contained by the intentions of producers and the market.

Nonfiction narratives implicate readers by producing a textual identification with an "other" that cuts against the grain of any reader's history or "self." When that "other" is a Bolshevik, as in John Reed's Ten Days That Shook the World, its textual power to produce identification might disturb the vast majority of its
American or Soviet readers, who would not outside the text identify with such a character. But because of the power of imaginative reading, such identifications may be as keenly felt as any offered by more technologically advanced media. When an author never recoups such a deeply othering implication—as when close textual identification is produced by nonfiction narrative with an enemy of the reader’s nation, or with a criminal who is not punished, or with individuals who are not easily managed within the reader’s social positioning—nonfiction may produce a reaction even more powerful than that of fiction. Such reactions have caused nonfiction books like Ten Days to be repressed or banned; other such powerful reactions have contained or excluded nonfiction authors like John Reed from the literary canon.

When the reader is unable to recapture relatively firm ground in the consumption of such a text, his resulting social discomfort causes a "mirroring" effect. The intertextuality of contemporary, mass-mediated society has produced such an effect on many readers and has profoundly influenced the efforts of nonfiction authors to communicate with such readers. Therefore, previously "safe" boundaries between fact and fiction, reality and fantasy, are more and more contested, witnessed by such "hybrid" written narratives as Don DeLillo’s Libra or the film work of such directors as Oliver Stone. At the same time, however, the
communications industry has produced more and more mass expressions that deliver the sensation of nonfiction "othering"—reality-based TV crime shows, talk shows with lurid subjects, made-for-television crime dramas—only to safely recoup that "othering" sensation with endings that reinforce the status quo as well as narrative strategies that do not encourage readers to contest "truth" or to confront epistemological issues.

This dissertation has attempted to sort out the concepts of author/reader implication by the close reading of three authors who have derived a substantial portion of their literary reputation from the production of book-length nonfiction texts. My intent in selecting the authors was not to form a "canon," nor even primarily to discuss historical trends in nonfiction production. Rather, each of the three authors—John Reed, Tom Wolfe, and Joan Didion—has written in the twentieth century, each sites his or her writing in the realm of political or cultural struggle, and each has produced at least some fiction against which his or her nonfiction might be considered.

The chapter on Reed focused primarily on the manner by which he broke with the established nonfiction and journalistic traditions in the early twentieth century. Writing in the first blush of mass-produced and transmitted photography, Reed developed "word pictures" in print from
exotic locations of war like Mexico and Eastern Europe that were meant to compete with candid (as opposed to posed) news photography, which was only then beginning to be rapidly transmitted to American newspapers and magazines. Meanwhile, because of the radical influence of his Greenwich Village and bohemian roots, he showed an increasing willingness to break with the sort of cultural chauvinism exemplified by Richard Harding Davis or Stephen Crane.

In Reed’s first book-length nonfiction, *Insurgent Mexico*, he had not yet processed the contradictions of his marketing the experience of Mexico’s insurgents to an American reading public ready for the sensation of exotic rebels. Thus Reed lied about his access to material, transferring actual characters into fiction and making up fictional roles for characters to fill the gaps in his nonfiction. Despite that, Reed left traces of the manner by which his experience as a reporter and writer was changing him, particularly in his symbolic positioning of himself as the "Lucifer" in the midst of the Mexicans in the ultimate scene of *Insurgent Mexico*.

In part because Reed had re-captured most of the challenges which *Insurgent Mexico* had produced for its North American readers, his literary reputation was never higher than when the book was published. But Reed’s increasing radicalism—particularly his opposition to World
War I at a time when it became illegal to counsel against the draft or to oppose U. S. involvement—pushed him toward a position where he was more willing to implicate himself in his writing as both an historic individual and narrative character.

Ten Days That Shook the World, Reed’s book-length narrative of the Russian Revolution, virtually re-enacts many of the key scenes and dilemmas that Reed faced in Insurgent Mexico. But by this time, Reed makes his presence in the narrative more clear, more deeply implicated in the events he was covering. In part, the result was that Reed’s book was suppressed and/or virtually ignored in both the U. S. and the Soviet Union for decades after its publication. Many of its readers resented the way the text tried to force them to identify with people they could not accept in their extra-textual lives and, moreover, resented the manner by which Reed’s narrative made the events of revolution appear to be historically determined and inevitable. An analysis of Reed’s shorter articles documents this change in Reed, in his readers, and in his ever-shrinking literary markets, until by the end of his life he was writing as an author deeply alienated from the cultural, political, and legal power of his homeland.

Tom Wolfe, on the other hand, worked in the opposite direction in his nonfiction. Beginning from a position of deep discontent with the literary and journalistic
establishment of late-1950s America, Wolfe developed a style of journalism during the mid-1960s that posed a deep threat to the industry's most cherished traditions: predictable form, conservative word and grammar choices, and scrupulous division between fact and opinion. That rupture reached its apogee in the writing and publication of Wolfe's The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, which chapter four analyzes at length. Reading its narrative techniques against the trajectory of its plot and the subsequent words of its author, the chapter shows how Wolfe ultimately flirts with, but ultimately recaptures, the most revolutionary implications of his writing, indeed, how he spent vast amounts of intellectual capital in trying to rein in the epistemological rupture that New Journalism represented and that his own writing had once exemplified.

The chapter details Wolfe's attempts to define New Journalism as a revolution of form, not of content, and traces some of the disputes between Wolfe and contemporary nonfiction theorists. Wolfe's ideas, outlined in his 1973 essay, "The New Journalism," ultimately proved more palatable to the journalism industry in America than did the epistemological and social rebellion posed by Wolfe's detractors. In line with the positions that Wolfe had once argued, the lasting influence of New Journalism, therefore, primarily was domesticated as formal experimentation by feature writing textbooks, by journalism schools, and by
the editors of city magazines and newspaper "lifestyles" sections in Wolfe's wake. For his own part, Wolfe continued his move toward formal conservatism, by the end of the 1980s penning "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast," a poetics that not only contradicted his earlier assertion that a narratively imaginative journalism might shake the publishing industry from its slumber but now arguing that only realistic fiction of the nineteenth-century variety is any longer palatable. Consequently, although a close discussion of Wolfe's writings after Acid Test primarily lies outside the scope of this dissertation, Wolfe's writings seem to become more and more conventional.

The dissertation culminates with the discussion of Joan Didion's writing and the manner by which she adjusted the fashions of New Journalism that she inherited from Wolfe and from others. Underlying her writing, the chapter finds, is an obsession with nuclear catastrophe as well as substitute manifestations of holocaust. As a writer who has always been deeply concerned by the manner in which texts interact with other texts, Didion manifests an abiding interest in epistemological issues: how we know and by what right we express what we think to be truth. Both that interest—discussed as "hyperreality" in the chapter after Baudrillard and Eco's definitions—and post-nuclear dread suffuse Didion's nonfiction, producing a deeply "othering" experience for her readers.
The chapter also details a change in Didion as her career moves through the 1980s. No longer willing to rest on her role of reproducing the effect of chaos and intertextuality of postmodern America for her readers, Didion began to evidence a deeper reporting style that probes competing narratives to see what they hide, what they express, what they contain. As such, she begins to write a form of nonfiction as semiotical analysis, very much in keeping with intellectual fashion of the late 1980s and 1990s, but capable of deconstructing narratives and reaching the anxiety at their core. Unlike Reed, however, Didion stops short of posing the most radical challenges toward the political and cultural establishment of the United States, although her *Miami* might be a step toward that direction were it more widely and seriously read.

The limitations of this study are many: its scope is perhaps overly broad in that it tries to do nothing less than to begin a full-scale cultural and literary analysis of nonfiction narrative. Thus, a reader of this dissertation might do well not to invest scientific certainty in the findings of a study that, admittedly, is more suggestive than definitive and, moreover, is subject to the same sorts of cultural and intellectual "fashions" as the texts its analyzes and explores. The three authors chosen for in-depth demonstration in the study's second half seem more arbitrarily drawn than I would like them to
be. Because it is impossible to read nonfiction narratives in the full cultural manner in which I argue without studying the history and culture they reflect, each of the individual chapters is simply too short to capture all the many media, cultural, and artistic influences with which these authors grappled. And there seems to be an important gap within the twentieth-century narrative that might be remedied, say, by contrasting James Agee's nonfiction evocation of 1930s-era poverty with George Orwell's.

Despite these flaws, I believe the dissertation makes valuable steps toward eliminating the artificial boundaries between media and literary studies: a boundary that my own work as a reporter and scholar has consistently tried to violate. I believe it suggests a model by which we might begin to read nonfiction narrative as fully cultural expression, seeing both that which it contains and that which it denies. For the source of nonfiction's most powerful theoretical significance, as this study argues, is that readers and writers of nonfiction are less able to suspend their ethical and social responses to the text. We inhabit a society in which notions of the truth, the means by which we can convey that truth, the means by which we liberate or subject others by our notions of the truth, are always in contest. And so we need to learn how to read in order to learn how to live.
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