THE THEORY AND INTERPRETATION OF NARRATIVE SERIES
I KNOW
THAT YOU
KNOW THAT
I KNOW

Narrating Subjects from
Moll Flanders to Marnie

GEORGE BUTTE

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Columbus
Contents

Preface vii

Part One: Theory

1. STARTING OVER: INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND NARRATIVE 3
   Starting Over 3
   The Disappearance of the Transparent Word 8
   The Subject: Performance or Embodiment? 17
   The New Intersubjectivity: Espousal, Shame, and the Quarrel between Merleau-Ponty and Sartre 24

2. REPRESENTING DEEP INTERSUBJECTIVITY: NARRATIVE PRACTICES 39
   The Subject Encounters the Other: Moll Flanders and Great Expectations 39
   The Intersubjective Subject: Pamela and The Turn of the Screw 63
   Others Encounter Others: Intersubjective Omniscience: Tom Jones and Middlemarch 81

Part Two: Case Studies: Deep Intersubjectivity and Genre

3. COMEDY, FILM, AND FILM COMEDY 105
   Austen, the Intersubjectivity of Anxiety, and Emma 108
   Film, Film Comedy, and Deep Intersubjectivity 122
   Hitchcock’s Cary Grant Films: Theatricality, Gender, and the Intersubjective Gaze 130
   Woody Allen’s Broadway Danny Rose: The Fool and the Mutual Gaze 151
## CONTENTS

4. DEEP INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND THE SUBVERSION OF COMEDY  163
   - The Intersubjective Failure of Intersubjectivity: Henry James’s
     *The Awkward Age* and the Shadow of the Body  163
   - Howard Hawks’s *His Girl Friday*: Laughter as Comedy’s Saboteur  181

5. DEEP INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND MASQUERADE  193
   - Masquerade, Monstrosity, and *Jane Eyre*  200
   - Hitchcock’s *Marnie*, the Maternal Gaze, and Masquerade  219

Epilogue  235
Notes  241
Bibliography  253
Index  263
This book is about how stories narrate human consciousness. In fact, it is about how stories narrate human consciousnesses, and so in the title phrase, “Narrating Subjects,” “subjects” is the object of the action of narrating. My real interest is the way narrative interweaves characters’ perceptions of each other. The special idea here claims that the way stories portray consciousness of consciousness—intersubjectivity—changed fundamentally around the time of Jane Austen. My title is grammatically diverse, perhaps intersubjective, because it allows for two functions of the word “narrating”: It can be both verb and adjective. In the first way of reading, to which I’ve alluded, “subjects” (as the object of the verb) are narrated; in the second, “subjects” do the narrating. Both readings are appropriate for a study of intersubjectivity in narrative, which is a study of the ways human subjects narrate and get themselves narrated, and how a new form for representing consciousnesses, what I call “deep intersubjectivity,” emerged for us to see, clearly, first in Jane Austen’s novels.

This book is also about a kind of reading that allows us to see deep intersubjectivity better. That reading grows out of a tradition in phenomenology that has to some degree been discredited, but which I wish to recuperate in a new form, grounded in what I call a poststructuralist phenomenology. Explaining that recuperated way of reading—and practicing it—are the items on my agenda.

As befits the preface to a book about intersubjectivity, I acknowledge, with deep gratitude, the help of many people over some years who have read parts or all of this work and who often replied with an enormous generosity that I have in turn repaid as well as I could by making this writing better. If I did not, the failure is mine. I wish there were a way to make that hoary cliché of academic writers fresh, because behind the cliché is a real experience. Some of those readers to whom I
owe so much are Laura Doyle, Susan Fraiman, Eric Gould, Jonathan Lee, J. Hillis Miller, Beth Newman, Dorothea Olkowski, Constance Penley, Barry Sarchett, Irene Tayler, and Kay Young. Garrett Stewart’s final review of the manuscript was exacting and insightful, and I will always be grateful that he understood what this book is about. The editors and staff at The Ohio State University Press have in every case been enormously helpful as well. I must single out the editors of the Theory and Interpretation of Narrative series, Jim Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz, whose elegant and always pertinent criticism pointed toward the more coherent book they believed they could see inside the earlier versions. I cannot imagine better readers for a manuscript being born.

Thanks for permission to reprint are due to The Hitchcock Annual, for pages in chapter 3 that it first published, and to Palgrave, Macmillan, for pages in chapters 1 and 3 that originally appeared in Jane Austen’s Business (St. Martin’s Press, 1996).

The film illustrations in this book are frames reproduced from each film. Most film illustrations are actually still photographs taken on the sets during filming and are subtly (or not so subtly) different in framing and mise-en-scène, often in ways that dramatically change the moment’s emphasis. For reproducing these frames so well I am most grateful to Andy Hutchison of Alexander Film in Colorado Springs, Jan Enright at Colorado College, and Jennifer Shoffey Forsythe at The Ohio State University Press.

I am also grateful for many kinds of support over all the years from people at Colorado College, from deans to department chairs to library staff to department colleagues, including our department support staff. I want to thank my chair, Barry Sarchett, and my dean, Richard Storey, for time, money, and their belief in this project. Our recently retired department secretary, Donna Gianarelli, helped solve many minor and major difficulties in software, printers, paper trays, and recalcitrant footnotes. Sometimes the support was simply conversation. For example, my colleague Jim Yaffe, also recently retired, with whom I argued many times about His Girl Friday, still thinks my views are horrific and probably immoral (but he smiles when he says this). Then there were friends, like Elizabeth, Mike, and Kathryn Leslie, who gave me weekend afternoons to write when the revision had to be done.

But finally it’s my family I owe: Billie, Kate, and Reid: We share our lives, and you know the costs of the writer’s solitary craft. Thank you—above all to my wife, Billie, who believed in this work and made room for it in our lives for years.
PART ONE

Theory
Starting Over: Intersubjectivity and Narrative

The “there” is said to be a wall between us and others, but it is a wall we build together, each putting a stone in the niche left by the other.

—MERLEAU-PONTY, Signs

It did not surprise, but it grieved Anne to observe that Elizabeth would not know [Wentworth]. She saw that he saw Elizabeth, that Elizabeth saw him, that there was complete internal recognition on each side; she was convinced that he was ready to be acknowledged as an acquaintance, expecting it, and she had the pain of seeing her sister turn away with unalterable coldness.

—AUSTEN, Persuasion

STARTING OVER

Fixed as she is in Molland’s bakery shop, where only limited movement is possible with the rain outside and where her authorized companions are competing with Wentworth for her allegiance, Anne Elliot must use her keenest skills of navigation in this scene from Persuasion (vol. 2, chap. 7). Those skills allow her not only to watch others but also simply to watch those whom the others watch. Anne maps a longer and more remarkable series of exchanged, blocked, anticipated, and denied acknowledgments. Within her gaze, Wentworth and Elizabeth see each other, and they further recognize the sign in the other of being seen and of being seen seeing. As if this maze of perceptions were not intricate enough, Austen turns the screw yet again: Anne is “convinced” she tracks a specific negotiation (II7;176). To the woman whom his courtship of Anne had offended more than seven years earlier, Wentworth offers a compromise fiction that he is an acquaintance, as he leans forward to be acknowledged, but Elizabeth rejects his offer, breaking the chain of gestures. Austen frames each perception with yet another gaze or gesture, each trumping the previous one.
This scene in *Persuasion*, about the observation of observations, gives voice to a profound new way of shaping narrative that takes coherent form, at least in English literature, in the early nineteenth century. When Anne Elliot watches Wentworth and Elizabeth negotiating complex force fields of memory and protocol, the enabling strategy of her story is a new layering of human consciousnesses, or a new representation of those subjectivities as layered in a specific way. Deep intersubjectivity has made its appearance in storytelling in modern culture, and it has altered our sense of self and community and the discourses that construct and reflect them. To conceptualize credibly this sea change in narrative practices requires a different kind of reading of consciousness, a re-formed phenomenological reading, by means of a poststructuralist phenomenology, or at least a phenomenology attuned to poststructuralist questions that also attends to the situating of reader and text in a gendered world of class, race, and political power.

The most helpful theorist of languages, body, and consciousnesses in this project is the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose intricate reflections on the interfolding of (and gaps within) perceptions and discourses also suggests Mikhail Bakhtin’s thoughts about words amidst multiple intentionalities. In Merleau-Ponty, the “chiasm” of subjectivities is a knot that joins and separates bodies and their incarnated subjects. For Bakhtin, we always (and only) find words in the mouths of others, from whom we appropriate them for our own purposes, but without cleansing them of all traces of their source. From both writers we can begin to understand intersubjectivity as an experience of opacities and transparencies. But it is Merleau-Ponty who theorizes the new complex intersubjectivity—more than a hundred years after it altered the nature of narrative—with its dazzling, receding series of blindnesses and insights.¹ Merleau-Ponty enables a kind of phenomenological reading—hence the title of this chapter, “Starting Over”—without the assumptions about transcendental consciousness and transparent texts that characterized and later discredited an earlier generation’s “criticism of consciousness.”²

Reframing our reading of intersubjectivity—more accurately, intersubjectivities—matters because something new in narrative is transpiring in that bakery shop in Bath, among Anne and Elizabeth and Wentworth, something so fundamental that it has been difficult to grasp and describe. My project is to propose a newly useful phenomenology of narrative that can describe these changes in narrative practice and to trace some of the implications of these changes.
The new conventions of narration presuppose notions of the subject, self, and character that are not only Lockean or Lacanian, but both. The self does not precede others, barricaded inside its senses, so that defending against a potentially isolating solipsism becomes a major, or even impossible, task. Nor is the subject only others, a hall of mirrors reflecting images of itself and others that from the “mirror phase” on it internalizes and mimics in the performance (to itself and to others) of having a self. Subjects are both: a body, an experience of that body and its gestures, an intentionality grounded in that body—and a mirroring of other bodies, gestures, experiences, and discourses. This mirroring leads to more reflections, and reflections of reflections, often obscured and muddy, always mediated. Yet this mediation leads not to a Lacanian collapse of consciousness into the signifier, but to an experience of an embodied community, of a partial and always partly blinded transcendence of the subject body. Merleau-Ponty is the poet and student of these paradoxes. He moves us beyond our contemporary experience of the stubborn impasse between the claims of the subject and the object, the impasse between defenders of word and world, between claimants for the omnipotence of the signified or, in poststructuralism’s heyday, of the signifier. He moves us beyond not by means of transcendence or leaps of faith but by means of the body, as he explains in a chapter (of his last, unfinished book) tellingly titled “The Intertwining—the Chiasm”:

It is said that the colors, the tactile reliefs given to the other, are for me an absolute mystery, forever inaccessible. This is not completely true; for me to have not an idea, an image, nor a representation, but as it were the imminent experience of them, it suffices that I look at a landscape, that I speak of it with someone. Then, through the concordant operation of his body and my own, what I see passes into him, this individual green of the meadow under my eyes invades his vision without quitting my own, I recognize in my green his green, as the custom officer recognizes suddenly in a traveler the man whose description he had been given. (Visible 142)

Merleau-Ponty expands on this notion of knottedness in the earlier Phenomenology of Perception, with appropriate undertones of the knot as knitting together, reversing directions, and problematic b(l)inding.

The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense . . . where my own and other people’s [experiences] intersect and engage each other like gears. It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity. . . . We witness
every minute the miracle of related experiences . . . for we are ourselves this
network of relationships. (*Phenomenology* xx)

Here lurks a new paradigm for narrative and for readings of narrative. This paradigm makes no claims for transparency of consciousness or
discourse: The speaker does not possess the other’s image or even a repre-
sentation of the other’s image of the landscape, but through the
“operation of his body and my own” the speaker recognizes “in my
green his green,” in a moment of perception that is “imminent” (not
*immanent*), and even imminent “as it were.” The enfoldings of dis-
courses and gestures point beyond the binary of the lonely subject and
the only other. Despite all Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis upon discourse,
language, and the limits of representation, the signifier nonetheless
limps, by way of its own body, toward the signified.

If my left hand can touch my right hand while it palpates the tangibles, can
touch it touching, can turn its palpation back upon it, why, when touching the
hand of another, would I not touch in it the same power to espouse the things
that I have touched in my own? It is true the “things” in question are my
own . . . [but] when one of my hands touches the other, the world of each
opens upon that of the other because the operation is reversible at will. (*Visi-
ble* 140–41)

As Merleau-Ponty elaborates his gestural, embodied, and yet decoding
intersubjectivity, not only does he provide a kind of solution to, or at
least respite from, the endless contemporary theoretical inquiry, which
is first, word or world? (because he allows us to retain the signifier, dis-
course, *and* the body, and who is to say which engenders which?), but
he also makes it possible to theorize in a new way about the history of
narrative. That is, we can now think about a new complex intersubjec-
tivity and note its appearance in the history of storytelling.

The link between complex intersubjectivity and narrative is implic-
it in Merleau-Ponty’s paradoxical approach to consciousness (para-
doxical because it combines a postmodern sense of gaps and mediation
with a confidence in self-presence that seems almost Cartesian). The
paradox of consciousness, in which narrative will play a role, begins
with the way the subject, “the tacit *cogito*, the presence of oneself to
oneself, being no less than existence, is *anterior* to any philosophy, and
knows itself only in those extreme situations in which it is under threat:
for example, in the *dread of death*” (*Phenomenology* 404). This given self-
presence functions by way of gaps, absences, and the fractures of
perceptions of the other and others. But Merleau-Ponty’s decentering is not Lacanian. For Lacan, the mirror image a child perceives “situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction” (2) (my emphasis). Lacan continues,

> The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation—and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic—and lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject’s entire mental development. (4)

Or, as Jonathan Lee explains it, the subject’s “fragile and largely illusory identity is essentially bound up with the existence of others” and is “mediated by others, in particular by images of others,” so that in a sense “identity” is an “armour that prevents a grasp of anything beyond its inner world” (Lee 23, 26, 23). For Merleau-Ponty, subjectivity is always also intersubjectivity, but not in a way that erases that anterior experience of being a consciousness.

Narrative is intimately linked to subjectivity because the force that finally limits the centrifuge of the shattered cogito of postmodernism in Merleau-Ponty is time experienced in bodies and, more specifically, time in the form of intersubjective narrative. Subjects evolve in sequences, in narratives of recognition (however partial and muddied), espousal, and, yes, sometimes fear (why is that customs officer watching for a particular traveler?). The subject is stories, embodied and exchanged around “the circle of the touched and the touching” (Visible 143). Narrative permeates Merleau-Ponty’s language itself through and through: If (as I claim) a new shape for representing consciousnesses has made storytelling more intricately intersubjective, this new intersubjectivity is itself, in its constituting structure, narrative: “[M]y own and other people’s [experiences] intersect and engage each other like gears.” The intersecting and engaging can occur only in time and narrative; there is always a story here. After all, the customs officer did recognize—however fortuitous and absurd the moment of insight—the traveler whom he had been awaiting.

By defining a kind (or kinds) of narrative of complex intersubjectivity, I want to work in two directions: first, to practice a renewed and reframed phenomenological reading that may be germane nowadays, in my concern with the representations of consciousnesses and
the profound cultural work they do in stories. Phenomenological criticism has recently attracted more readers because, perhaps, as one response to the stringencies of both deconstruction and cultural studies it returns to the human subject or, in my case to human subjects, even if they are also always already written and writing. A renewed phenomenological criticism can posit consciousness as both spoken and speaking, as mediated by and preceding discourses. Second, this reading writes its own story of a fundamental and profound shift in the way narratives are constructed, at least narratives in English, which crystallized at the end of the eighteenth century. In these two senses, my project is about starting over.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE TRANSPARENT WORD

Given how postwar phenomenological criticism lost credibility in the 1970s, I feel the need to protest what this study does not assume. The most influential “critics of consciousness” in the 1960s were Georges Poulet and his young colleague J. Hillis Miller, and both approached writing as if language were a transparent medium through which an author’s consciousness and a reader’s could meet and join in an almost mystical sense. Poulet once described the process this way: “In short, the extraordinary fact in the case of a book is the falling away of the barriers between you and it. You are inside it; it is inside you; there is no longer either outside or inside” (Macksey and Donato 57). In fairness to Poulet, I should add that this joining does not erase the reader’s “I” or self-awareness, but when reading, “the subjective principle which I call I is modified in such a way that I no longer have the right, strictly speaking, to consider it as my I. I am on loan to another, and this other thinks, feels, suffers, and acts within me” (60).

In the almost forty years since the publication of those lines, the shadow of several scepticisms has fallen across Poulet’s sunny hopes; his faith in the transparency of the medium is now clouded by our stubborn attention to the signifier’s thickness, by rhetoric’s refusal to remain invisible, and by our stubborn attention to gendered, sexual, racial, and class identities in author, readers, and their cultural environments. Vivian Sobchack vividly describes the experience of writing a book of phenomenological criticism, published in 1992, in the shadow of these clouds. Little understood and even less read, “phenomenology” was
loosely conceived and associated with a multitude of precontemporary sins. It was regarded as idealist, essentialist, and ahistorical. It was also seen as extremely naive, making claims about “direct” experience precisely at a moment when contemporary theory was emphasizing the inaccessibility of direct experience and focused on the constitutive processes and mediating structures of language. (xiv)

The impressions that Sobchack outlines have some justification. It is difficult now to decide which of Poulet’s beliefs in immediacy is the more surprising, his belief in the immediacy of the author or that of the unwillful, ungendered, declassed, and anonymous reader. The function of language, whether the author’s or the reader’s, is not in doubt for Poulet, as Frank Lentricchia observes in *After the New Criticism*: “[I]t is this [inaugurating] cogito [of the author], active and cogent, which somehow makes its way into discourse, through discourse, out the other side, and into the pure receptivity of the critic’s ‘inner vacuum’” (72). The assumption of the transparency of discourse (for both writer and reader) seems naive now, as Poulet and Miller explore the experience of space and time in, say, Henry James and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Yet Poulet and Miller (and others, like Jean Starobinski) produced work of remarkable generosity, carefully attentive to the writing at hand, as even Lentricchia admits, guided by an admirable ethic of readerly self-effacement before the writer’s voice. This self-effacement echoes Lyotard’s account of thinking in “Can Thought Go on without a Body?” as a “soliciting of emptiness, this evacuation” so that the body and its world may give themselves to us (83).

Attentiveness and generosity are possible as particular choices, and we can recognize them as part of the critic’s performance and defend them as such, without implying that discourse is transparent. Indeed, my topic throughout this study is representation. It is marks on a page whose work I wish to examine. One of my guiding assumptions is a paradox, however, that representation claims to recover presence, while confessing to its artificiality as a kind of absence. The representation of subjectivities especially makes claims to presence because subjects, even in texts, famously have a way of desiring, of intending, and of focusing action and thought on the future. Hence the ease with which readers, in what has been seen as a kind of naiveté, discuss “characters” as if they were more than marks on the page, with histories, a subconscious, sometimes even a sequel. Complex intersubjectivity, as I describe it, raises the stakes in these controversies even further, as clusters of
subjects intend in more and more intricate ways, often disarming even the most ascetically postmodern reader. For me to emphasize a fundamental (and mostly unrecognized) source of this disarming in new resources of texts is not a sceptical move. I believe texts matter deeply, and readers must decide for themselves how much and why they and we may need these new stories of complex intersubjectivity to write our lives. I do not seek to demystify the experience of reading the experience of intentionalities. But neither can I make the transcendental step myself, from representation to a space beyond the word where “there is no longer either outside or inside,” or where, as Poulet continues, “this I who ‘thinks in me’ when I read a book is the I of the one who writes the book” (Macksey and Donato 61).

Another shortcoming of what we might call first-wave phenomenological criticism is its elaboration of idealized and abstracted conscious-nesses—in an author, one largely detached from sociohistorical grounding, and in the reader, one free of gender, class, or ethnic experience. The result was sometimes a curiously faceless account of the consciousness represented in texts, as in Poulet’s description of loss of self in “Henry James,” that identity that all of James’s writings add up to: “Nothing is more significant in Henry James than this loss of self caused by the very abundance of memories. If thought is disturbed and gets lost, it is not through diminution, it is through plethora” (Metamorphoses 308). In addition, the reading “I” that wills itself into submission to receive the writerly consciousness is as abstract in a way as this Jamesian “thought.” This reading “I” is apparently beyond gender, class, or historical location, though its freedoms presuppose extensive privileges, such as the space and time to be will-less, and a considerable confidence in resuming control of the “I” again, that suggest other reservoirs of power. To address the politics of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity must now be a fundamental component of a more conscious criticism of consciousness, to ask, what are the ideological moves of certain representations and of the reader of them. Such an address can avoid the occasionally “claustrophobic quality” that Daniel Schwarz, in The Humanist Heritage, finds in the readings of deconstruction and phenomenology that failed “to understand the fabric of social institutions, customs and conventions that constitute the context of English and American literature” (226). Nevertheless, a sense of the ways writing and reading are gendered and classed need not alter the wonderful generosity and attentiveness that mark the phenomenologi-cal criticism of Poulet and Hillis Miller, among others. The transcen-dental move is not essential and perhaps is even trivializing. Merleau-
Ponty returns us deeply and profoundly to the body, to subjectivities rooted in the flesh and in time and places.

A couple of instances can illuminate what is at stake in whatever approach we decide to take to what has been a tradition of transcendental intersubjectivity in phenomenology since Husserl. (I refer to the notion in Husserl that perceptions can be communicated to others, that knowledge among consciousnesses is possible, that the barriers of sensory apparatus and language between selves can be transcended.) The first example raises the question, what is the nature and function of desire in narrative? Poulet thematizes desire within the framework of a generalized human narrative (for “generalized” read free of specifics of gender, class, race, and sociopolitical structure), so that, for example, the poetry of Poe writes a story about sleep, dreams, loss, and death: “This is why the moment of awaking is for Edgar Allen Poe of paramount importance. It is the first moment of a new life. It is also the last of an old one” (*Metamorphoses* 184). For Hillis Miller, desire drives the narrative of a writer’s body of work, and again the framework for this desire is formed by the broad ontological categories of time, space, and nature. “At the beginning Browning is a huge sea—massive, limitless, profound, but, at the same time, shapeless, fluid, capricious. . . . Browning can convey in his poetry an extraordinary sense of the way consciousness flows out through the senses, plunges into the secret substance of the surrounding world, knows it from the inside, as one’s own viscera are known . . .” (*Disappearance of God* 81). A reader now is more likely to ask, “Whose senses, whose world, whose viscera?”

In contrast, students of subjectivity in texts now locate desire and narrative in specific, but also wider, terrain. The common use of geopolitical language, “terrain,” “mapping,” and “site,” for example, points out the interest in providing more precise social and historical referents for any particular account of subjectivity. Another, more Foucauldian, motive for attention to specific cultural terrain is to decode indirect assumptions that guide or even write accounts of the subject, if not the subject itself; such decoding of ideological taken-for-granted demystifies at least part of that micronetwork of categories along whose grid power is deployed. One assumption of these strategies is the subjection of subjectivity, as at the most extreme a “construction” of cultural forces whose “sites” and operation can be “mapped” and so surrounded, islanded as it were within borders of paper (the map) and so contained.

The most subtle cultural critics allow double roles to the subject, which is both mapped and mapping, both responding to and refining, redrawing, or even subverting ideology. Nancy Armstrong’s *Desire and*
Domestic Fiction (1987), for example, deploys all of these strategies in accounting for the role of desire in narrative. For Armstrong, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century narratives rewrite the desiring self to produce powerfully gendered “figures of desire” that promote the sociopolitical agenda of capitalist society. Armstrong’s “history of subjectivity” focuses then on very specific historical landscapes for the gendered subject. At the same time Armstrong allows for some agency to the writing consciousness, though its power to rewrite the self seems deeply compromised by the “political unconscious” it serves. Armstrong’s argument is too complex to untangle briefly, but here is an example of these strategies at work in locating consciousness:

It is because the Brontes have encouraged readers to seek out the meaning of fiction in a recognizably modern form of consciousness that their novels have played an important part in British history. . . . We can assume their fiction produced . . . figures of modern desire. These techniques have suppressed the political identity along with the knowledge of oneself as such. The production of the political unconscious has accompanied the production of the sexual subject, I believe, and in this way has constituted the repressive power actually exercised by a polite tradition of writing. (191)

The Brontës’ fiction then does enormous cultural work, in this view, even if largely to produce a “particular form of consciousness . . . so important to the stability of a capitalist society” (ibid.). Such an approach to subjectivity has certainly rectified the imbalance in first-wave phenomenological criticism, in which gender, race, and political forces were simply not on the radar screen. The issue now is not so much transparency. Cultural critics like Nancy Armstrong and Mary Poovey believe they can read the signifier with a confidence similar to George Poulet’s—but they see something else in it, or through it. Abstract, generalized accounts of desire and consciousness that, however specific to one writer, are generalized sociopolitically have given way to concretely gendered and historicized accounts.

My second example elaborates on these issues because it dramatizes how political indeed claims to represent consciousness are. In this example, a different sort of transcendental intersubjectivity raises its head—the claim not to transparency of language and selfhoods, but the claim to locate elements of human consciousness and culture that are “universal,” particularly in relation to ethnicity, gender, and social class. This example is the controversy surrounding novelist Charles Johnson’s use of phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty, specifically, to
frame the problem of racial difference in American and African American literature and culture. For Johnson, fiction like his *Middle Passage* may begin with the experience of a particular “other,” in this instance an African American experience of slavery, but it does not end there. Beyond difference is an encompassing humanity, as he explains in *Being and Race*: “To put this bluntly, language is transcendence. And so is fiction. They comport us ‘other [sic] there’ behind the eyes of others, into their hearts, which might make some few of us squeamish, for suddenly our subjectivity is merged with that of a stranger” (39).

The implications of this position for ethnic identity politics are explosive, as Johnson understands. “Doubters may object that it is racially impossible to strip themselves of their own historically acquired traits. Many black writers claim they cannot imagine what it is like to be white, that all they know is the ‘black’ experience. For my money, this objection is sheer laziness” (43). Johnson offers as a kind of philosophical authority for this transcendence not George Poulet, whose notion of “merging” is similar to Johnson’s, but Merleau-Ponty, whose notion of intersubjectivity is much more complex: “If we go deeply enough into a relative perspective, black or white, male or female, we encounter the transcendence of relativism; in Merleau-Ponty’s terms, ‘to retire into oneself is to leave oneself’” (44). Johnson then cites—and, as it turns out, significantly mis-cites—part of a paragraph from Merleau-Ponty’s *Adventures of the Dialectic* that seems to describe an intersubjective “totality” of perceiving selves, a version of the transcendence of gender and race to which he has just appealed. The citation is useful enough, especially with its omissions silent and explicit, to give in its entirety:

My own field of thought and action is made up of imperfect meanings badly defined and interrupted [sic]. They are completed over there, in the others who hold the key to them because they see sides of things that I do not see, as well as, one might say, my social back. Likewise, I am the only one capable of tallying the balance sheets of their lives, for their meanings are also incomplete and are openings onto something that I alone am able to see. I do not have to search far for the others; I find them in my experience, lodged in the hollows that show what they see and what I fail to see. Our experiences thus have lateral relationships of truth: all together, each possessing clearly what is secret to the other, in our combined functionings we form a totality which moves toward enlightenment and completion. . . . We are never locked in ourselves. (44)

Johnson flattens Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of an intercorporeal “interworld,” and it doesn’t help that the very language he quotes from
Adventures of the Dialectic is actually a paraphrase by Merleau-Ponty of the thought of his contemporary Sartre, which Merleau-Ponty is criticizing precisely for the starkness of choices that Johnson replicates. Indeed, in a profound mistake, Johnson erases Sartre’s voice in Merleau-Ponty’s text by omitting the quotation marks around the phrase “imperfect meanings, badly defined and interrupted,” words that Merleau-Ponty cites, in a careful footnote, from Sartre’s “Reply to Claude Lefort” in The Communists and Peace (compare Johnson, p. 44, and Merleau-Ponty, Adventures, pp. 138 and 96). Whatever the similarities in Sartre’s and Merleau-Ponty’s accounts of the subject’s phenomenological position, Merleau-Ponty’s intention here is to separate himself from Sartre. Johnson misses this intention and quotes Merleau-Ponty’s summary of Sartre’s thought. For example, this phrase, which modifies the language Johnson cites, follows the last words, “We are never locked in ourselves”: “However, the totality toward which we are going together, while it is being completed on one side, is being destroyed on the other” (Adventures 139). By omitting the “however” and its succeeding qualification, Johnson distorts Merleau-Ponty’s analysis dramatically. And two sentences further comes another complicating reflection: “The open, incompletely meanings that we see in the social world . . . are nearly empty diagrams. . . . These meanings lead an anonymous life among things” (Adventures 139). The symmetries of misreading here are remarkable: Johnson has gerrymandered Merleau-Ponty’s account of Sartre so that it articulates the transcendentalist position that both Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, for different reasons and in different ways, rejected.

That is, Johnson misreads not only this citation but also Merleau-Ponty’s approach to deep intersubjectivity generally. Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on the body, on language as gesture, and on gesture as language ensures the conclusion that although some degree of transcendental intersubjectivity between embodied selves is possible, a merging of subjectivities in the realm of universal human experience is not possible. Yes, there is what Merleau-Ponty calls an “interworld” (Adventures 200), but our participation in it is fragmentary. Merleau-Ponty articulates this subtle in-betweenness: For two subjectivities, each intending toward the other, “there is woven between us an ‘exchange,’ a ‘chiasm between two “destinies” ’ in which there are never quite two of us, and yet one is never alone” (In Praise 82). Subjectivities are not hopelessly isolated inside body and language, yet neither is an ideal fusion possible. Later on I discuss the function of the image of the wall in Merleau-Ponty, but here I hint at the significance
for Merleau-Ponty of a boundary that subjectivities construct together and that both connects and separates.

Because of the politics of multiculturalism in the United States, an appeal to the “universal” or transcendentally human often provokes dismay, anger, and accusations of betrayal. As George Kent observed long ago, the word “universal” has often seemed to be a code word for “white” in American cultural criticism (11). Or to assert the need to “transcend” race can seem to minimize the sufferings and aims of ethnic peoples, whose political efforts and language could be read to concentrate on the less “universal.” Molly Abel Travis phrases the challenge to Johnson this way: “Is Johnson’s notion of cultural synthesis simply another form of assimilation in which the dominant culture swallows up marginalized cultures?” (191) For Travis, Johnson’s use of phenomenology devalues otherness (“Charles Johnson has advised his fellow African American writers ‘to move from narrow complaint to broad celebration. . . .’”) and sabotages efforts to write the story so that readers must experience the discomforts of difference in African American lives: “Johnson’s novel [Middle Passage] seeks to transcend race and to suppress the feminine . . . and establishes a middle ground, a neutral space that denies the marginal and offers readers the familiar and the unthreatening” (190, 181, 193). “Intersubjectivity” has become another code word in this debate for “universal” and for a kind of de-differentiated human experience, almost an essence. It has become most definitely a political sign, even, or perhaps most, when Johnson believes he has moved beyond a political sphere.

“Transparency” and “transcendence” are sites, as they say, of powerful ideological contests. One result of the intensity of these contests is the tendency of competing voices to polarize positions, so that for example transparency becomes an all-or-nothing matter: no intermediate shades of opacity allowed. Either one can read and possess the word and the Other, or one is barred from intercourse, left only with Scrabble tiles to shuffle and peer at. It is precisely this stark set of choices about readability that Merleau-Ponty sought so poignantly to complicate, and to the degree he senses this revisionism, Johnson appeals to Merleau-Ponty fairly. Some critics have recognized more recently the dangers of essentializing otherness so completely that white people cannot “read” African American texts, or straight people gay writers, for example (those in positions of apparent power especially are unable to read texts of the marginalized). One thread in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s study of the paradoxical articulations of sex/class/gender/sexuality in contemporary culture is the costs and the rewards of “identification
with/as—it even when (or if) that cross-reading can with enormous difficulty be achieved—for, say, feminist straight women reading feminist lesbian texts (62). But Sedgwick’s work is a testament of faith in the face of that “if,” that “as a woman; as a fat woman; as a nonprocreative adult; as someone who is, under several different discursive regimes, a sexual pervert; and, under some, a Jew,” she can yet in some competent way read words by nonwomen, non-fat persons, non-Jews (63).

As these two case histories suggest, claims to represent subjectivities carry powerful ideological freight, for several reasons. These claims are usually accompanied by images and their narratives, which offer descriptions of qualities, behaviors, and even what may seem to be “essences” within subjects whose gendered, sexualized, or ethnicized formation is a much-contested topic. These subjectivities used to be situated on the edges of mainstream discourse and power but are no longer, as suggested by the widespread interest recently in what Joseph Boone calls the “crisis in male subjectivity—the crisis that by definition is occidental masculinity itself” (104). Laura Doyle argues eloquently about the gendering effects of hierarchicalized paradigms of subjectivity:

The ideology of mind over body, as we have seen, keeps the mother in her contained place as bodily producer of racialized bodies which themselves take their fixed places in the mind-body social and labor hierarchy. But if one collapses the distinction between mind and body, between subject and object, one begins to bankrupt the function of the race mother, for one begins to withdraw the capital invested in her differentiating body. (76)

One need not subscribe fully to any particular politics to see and endorse the “disruptive” potential of a “phenomenology of intercorporeality” (ibid.). Claims to represent intersubjectivities are also deeply political because they invariably project implications for rapprochement (or its absence) between self and other, between different others, and for community within narrative, with its inevitable analogies to community outside of texts.

Merleau-Ponty provides a model for an approach to subjectivity and intersubjectivity that claims that language and consciousness are neither characteristically transparent nor opaque. That is, I would like to reclaim some of the virtues of first-wave phenomenological criticism, while attending not only to claims for the groundedness of consciousnesses in the body and in cultural contexts and history, but also to traces of these grounded subjectivities that surface in texts, in the writ-
ers that write them (or in the communities that construct them, in the case of film), and in their readers (or, in the case of this book’s later chapters, their viewers). Merleau-Ponty was probably more interested in resisting the solipsism inherent in Enlightenment empiricism than he was in resisting a kind of transcendental idealism. Nevertheless, his emphasis on chiasm and the mediatedness of perception will be a helpful corrective to the yearning for “union” that is emerging as one thread in efforts to redress what are perceived as the excesses of deconstruction. It will remind us that the Derridian challenge to the transparent Logos, whatever its excesses, has taught us something as well.

In a rough sense, critical movements of the past fifty years have carried us from some notions of discourse’s transparency, whether Poulet’s, or the New Critics’ with their confidence in poetry’s rhetorical structure, or the historical positivists’, through (so to speak) the opacity of the Derridean signifier, to the body. Thinking the body, writing the body, performing the body, and their inverses, the body thinking and writing and performing, constitute the paradoxes of contemporary literary and cultural studies, especially in their feminist voices. I say paradoxes because the issue of origination is still deeply unresolved: Which is first, word or world, discourse or self, language or the body, performance or consciousness(es)? Does culture write the subject, or the reverse? Or does each manipulate discourse? Merleau-Ponty’s rejection of these questions and their enabling binary in his pursuit of a deeper grasp of the embodiment of consciousnesses can be enormously helpful at this juncture, as I suggested before, in at least two ways: by offering another way of reading, now, and by allowing us to decode, through that way of reading, the dramatic rewriting of intersubjectivity in the last two hundred years.

But before I describe the paradigm for a new reading of complex intersubjectivity, the vexed matter of the subject requires some attention.

**THE SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE OR EMBODIMENT?**

Subjectivity, its origins and constituting elements, calls forth the most interesting and problematic reflections of recent cultural criticism. What is this agency, or experience of agency, this force that seems to generate images, conversations, and stories? The initiating (and initiated) narrative emerges: We can see the residue of the act of initiation in the part-issue plans for *Little Dorrit* as a pen scratches out the earlier title, *Nobody’s Fault*, and in the storyboards for *North by Northwest*,...
where another pen draws a line for Thornhill’s flight away from the pursuing crop duster. In recent years better understandings and more subtle speculations have evolved about the elements within that initiation: the role of discourse and symbolic systems in the formation of the child’s consciousness; the mysteries of the unconscious and its shaping within the psychosexual matrix of the family; the material circumstances of social class and ethnicity that affect writer, publisher, film studios, readers, and viewers; economic constrictions and possibilities; micronetworks of assumptions about sexuality and difference that inform genre and audience—to name only the most significant topics.

For other critics, subjectivity is chimerical, especially in twentieth-century texts. One context for this study is the postmodern uncertainty about or even disappearance of the self. The loss of the self can be cause for mourning or celebration, as Gabriele Schwab writes: “Instead of mourning the loss of the self, poststructuralism and deconstruction privilege experimental fragmentations and (dis)figurations of language as open and dynamic processes of textualization” (5). Schwab distinguishes between the death of the subject and what may be (simply) its decentering. That is, what has been lost is a style (and I would add, a kind of storytelling) and the centering this style gave to the self. “The rhetoric of the end of the subject is, of course, directed against conventional notions of a subject defined as a bounded unity . . .” (ibid.). Schwab’s project is to recuperate subjectivity, especially a de-differentiated, fragmented self whose apparent dispersal may in fact “be a precondition for the flexibility and processual development of its boundaries” (11). But for the unbelieving reader, for whom the self is a fiction, or a series of fictions, intersubjectivity, except in the most mechanical, operational sense, must also be fictional, and for that reader this study may be a nostalgic account of a peculiar century (more or less) of faith, with its peculiar and recalcitrant remnant of twenty-first-century believers.

But reports of the death of the subject have been greatly exaggerated. The performance of the body, pressing pen or typewriter key or camera switch, is too difficult to explain, like trying to understand how Pinocchio’s carved sticks began to move. The semiotics of performance helps to illuminate the depth of particular gestures and their fields of encoding, as in Erving Goffman’s study of microperformances in Relations in Public, for example, which clarifies the choreographies of shared spaces. However, the puzzle of agency, of intentionality, remains. I use “intentionality” in a somewhat broader sense than our daily usage;
it incorporates not only the idea of conscious choices and purposiveness, but also the quality of consciousness that leans toward the world, that believes something, wishes for, works for. If you will, it is the “aboutness” of consciousness. Because the puzzle of intentionality remains, the body as mapped and mapping is a paradox in its roles as cultural, literary, and cinematic agent and product. Bodies display and enact intention, both outside of texts (as when they write them) and inside them; yet bodies are, manifestly, made as well as making—made biologically (out of a host of forces, genetic to environmental) and culturally (fed, schooled, gartered, belted, and trimmed to cues from a series of scripts). Embodiment only extends the double cues signaled by the word subject itself, the sign for a center of feeling and consciousness that also signifies subordination, as in subject to law, queen or (more usually) king, or fate.

Because my interest is in the representations of subjectivities, I can grant two discrete foundational principles that can be not only discrete but also logically inconsistent with each other. First, representations (and their initiating intentions) do cultural work and are also the products of previous cultural work (and workers). Second, various narratives imply, exhibit, and even articulate assumptions about subjectivities and their origins, assumptions or ideologies or beliefs that may resist or deny the implications of some sociohistorical data about their production. That is, narratives act in the world and may be more than the sum of their apparent environmental causes. I grant the power of circumstances, that stories are to some degree contingent—and contemporary cultural-historical study has written large these contingencies. But my interest is in narratives as agents and in stories’ structures and assumptions about subjectivities that give this agency its power.

A specific approach to the origins of the subject underlies this study of represented subjectivities. However powerful the forces of discourse (in the form of class, gender, “race”—power in its myriad expressions), the subject is more than an absence, a series of lacks, to be written by those forces. The subject is always already embodied in the world, as action and speech that incarnate intention, so that the structuralist binary of word versus world, like the binary of subject versus other, is largely deceptive. This principle explains why Merleau-Ponty rejects both questions—does culture write the subject, or the reverse? Merleau-Ponty prepares to articulate this approach when he paraphrases, in his essay “The Child’s Relation with Others,” the very different approach of Lacan (the immediate topic is the mirror phase):
To use Dr. Lacan’s terms, I am “captured, caught up” by my spatial image. Thereupon I leave the reality of my lived me in order to refer myself constantly to the ideal, fictitious, or imaginary me, of which the specular image is the first outline. In this sense I am torn from myself, and the image in the mirror prepares me for another still more serious alienation, which will be the alienation from others. (Primacy 136)

Lacanian critic Kaja Silverman emphasizes not so much loss, but the absence, the lack, which is the subject initially. She writes in Male Subjectivity at the Margins, “the images within which the subject ‘finds’ itself always come to it from outside,” and she cites Lacan’s conception of the ego as “‘the superimposition of various coats borrowed from . . . the bric-a-brac of its props department’” (6–7). Later, when she writes about World War II cinema, she returns to images of (violent) loss: “A number of films made in Hollywood between 1944 and 1947 attest with unusual candor to the castrations through which the male subject is constituted—to the pound of flesh which is his price of entry into the symbolic order” (52). But for Merleau-Ponty, the tragic narrative of loss in Lacan is replaced by a comic narrative, or at least tragi-comic, of recovery amidst, yes, some experience of separation:

The body is at once present in the mirror and present at the point where I feel it tactually. But if this is the case, the two aspects that are to be coordinated are not really separated in the child and are in no way separated in the sense in which all objects are separated in adult perception. (Primacy 139–40)

Among the enormous intricacies of Merleau-Ponty’s reading of Lacan and Freud, a few strands stand out for our purposes: The subject is not an absence, but from the beginning an embodied potential. The problem with Lacan’s mirror-phase scenario is that, in focusing on the image in the mirror, Lacan forgets the weight, the presence of the body in front of the mirror. So, the choice between origins of subjectivity in culture or the body is a false choice, and the response “Both” also ratifies the misleading binary. Instead, for Merleau-Ponty, consciousness (however nascent in focus and capacity) is always already embodied in culture, and especially in others, yet is self-sustaining as a stance, as intentionality directed from a place (a body) to the world. In The Address of the Eye, Vivian Sobchack gives an extended and extraordinary meditation on Merleau-Ponty, as foundation for her approach to film, and in the course of that meditation observes that Merleau-Ponty transforms the darkness of Lacan
by contextualizing the specular alienation of the mirror encounter within a 
primordial and immanent knowledge the infant always already possesses—a 
knowledge of the subjective body lived perceptively from within as
“mine.” . . . That is, the mirror encounter is less an originating act of mecon-
naisance [mis-taken knowledge] than of reconnaissance [knowledge re-taken in
a different modality). This reconnaissance or reflective knowledge is the
infant’s awareness that the subjective body can be perceived from without as
well as lived perceptively from within. (119)

Note Sobchack’s emphasis on “immanent” rather than “imminent”
knowledge, a difference with essentialist and transcendental overtones.
This emphasis reminds us that the siren song, or at least a siren hum,
of idealism still lingers seductively in the middle distance of some phe-
nomenological criticism. Indeed, readers hear this tone in the later
Merleau-Ponty of The Visible and the Invisible, even though this work
sought to move beyond the vestiges of Cartesian dualism in his own
earlier writing. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor see a thread in
Merleau-Ponty that speaks for a “univocity of being,” a gestalt that
reins in the world’s chaos (10, 11), and Françoise Dastur quotes Sartre’s
sardonic comment on Merleau-Ponty: “Reading him at times, it would
seem that being invents man in order to make itself manifest through
him” (Evans and Lawlor 47). Merleau-Ponty’s exposition of the chiasm
does sometimes speak of reciprocity between world and subject, as well
as between subjects, as if the inanimate world were part of some
“immanent,” but larger, consciousness. Yet he wished to avoid Husserl’s
transcendental idealism, though some Husserl scholars see in the later,
unpublished, “other” Husserl a more poststructuralist voice, one that
Husserl himself hoped would correct the misreading of his phenome-

nology by those who had fallen back into “the old philosophical
naivete.”

Whatever the truth about Husserl’s work, Merleau-Ponty certainly
wished to avoid an appeal to a universal ground of being beyond the
embodied subject. He rejected Husserl’s transcendental reduction or
“bracketing,” the well-known notion of separating the content of per-
ception from the experience of perception, with one effect of eventually
identifying a universal field of experience, what he called the tran-
scendental ego, that lies outside individual perceptions. Yet Merleau-
Ponty seems to allow for a more limited reduction, one that can identi-
fy a kind of “qualified essence” made up of the common “thematic”
threads in a community’s expression in the bodies of its experiences
(Sobchack 45). This edging back toward some universal essence, even
if of embodied experiences, allows Evans and Lawlor to speak of an extension of Merleau-Ponty’s thought into a notion of the “absolute Other” that would “take advantage of all the religious senses attached to Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy” (14).

This version of embodiment allows Sobchack to speak of the phenomenology of film as an exchange of consciousnesses between screen and viewer, by means of a “body” and intentionality that both film and spectator possess: “Although I am not suggesting exact correspondences between the development of the cinema and human lived-bodies, I am suggesting certain broad similarities between them...” (251). Garrett Stewart sees in Sobchack’s phenomenology an “absolutist” stance and reminds us again of the tendency for phenomenology to slide back into versions of an older idealism, and not only, I would add, in film criticism (123). I also discussed earlier, in footnote 5, what might seem to be excessively transcendental yearnings in Sobchack and Merleau-Ponty. But I am less interested than Stewart and Stanley Cavell (and André Bazin before them, among others) in the debate over the ontological status of subjectivity and image in visual culture. This debate occurs in the context of what we now call reader-response theory, in the argument over (in Stewart’s words) the “phenomenological thrall of cinema, its illusion of existential immanence” for viewers (104).

Audience response is one angle of phenomenological inquiry, but it is not my angle, at least not now. The way in which the consumer experiences as “real” the story, the film, the photograph, or the frieze/freeze frame (one of Stewart’s major topics) is beyond this book, and my hunch is that lots of different readers and viewers produce lots of different “realities” in their experience. I want to look at narratives and rescue a chiasmic subjectivity (actually, subjectivities), an enfleshed agency, as a credible assumption within those narratives (whatever their ontological frame). It has been difficult to see such subjectivities in recent years, given the discredited essentialisms of the past and the current scepticisms of either Lacanian or Foucauldian readers.

So I prefer the Merleau-Ponty of imminence, ironized by “as it were” (see p. 5 above). My emphasis is quite different from Vivian Sobchack’s, but I am grateful for her attentive reading of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of the body at a time when such readings in narrative studies were rare and unfashionable. Whatever Merleau-Ponty’s true thoughts about immanent transcendence, I choose to concentrate on the language that avoids both the transcendentalism that has discredited so much phenomenological criticism and the narrative of the fragmented
self, the Lacanian story of loss and aloneness. Laura Doyle, in her recent book, *Bordering on the Body*, reads the Lacanian narrative and Merleau-Ponty’s rereading in a way similar to Sobchack’s and mine:

[Lacanian] theorists are seduced by the tragic drama and heart-breaking romance of [the] split [between mothers and language, mothers and maturity, and mothers and author/ity]. . . . Body and language must part, it seems. . . . I suggest, by contrast . . . that this Lacanian drama of splitting is a social mirage which critics sometimes come to believe is fact; and that another phenomenology [of Merleau-Ponty] offers modern critics the terms for narrating another story. (Preface, unnumbered)

In Doyle’s view the Lacanian drama, as adopted by many influential Lacanian critics, has proved so powerful an account of subjectivity (perhaps especially in modernist and postmodernist culture) that it has dominated many quarters of cultural studies. There are other paradigms, even other versions of Lacan, though in my view the role of the body never becomes important enough. Nevertheless, Lacan’s later thought gives a larger role to “the real,” the rupturing force outside any language system that Jonathan Lee identifies with the unconscious. Lee even cites one moment in which Lacan identified it with the body: “[T]he real is ‘the mystery of the speaking body’ ” (135–36). Lee explains: “One way, then, to approach Lacan’s later thought is to see him trying to make a philosophically and scientifically satisfying case against the claims of linguistic idealism by showing that any such closed idealistic system simply cannot handle the paradoxical ruptures that crisscross it” (136).8

Slavoj Zizek meditates at length on the paradoxes of what Lee calls the “impossible real,” how the “answers of the real” function in symbolic systems: “The role of the Lacanian real is, however, radically ambiguous: true, it erupts in the form of a traumatic return, derailing the balance of our daily lives, but it also serves as a support of this very balance” (29). And so, Zizek continues, “This ‘answer of the real’ is necessary for intersubjective communication to take place. There is no symbolic communication without some ‘piece of the real’ to serve as a kind of pawn guaranteeing its consistency” (30). But there is not enough of the body, so far as I can see, in Lacan or Zizek or in Kaja Silverman’s recent efforts to “flesh out” Lacanian theory.9 So I turn to Merleau-Ponty, primarily, with occasional cues drawn from other students of the phenomenology of bodies like Bakhtin and, later, Erving Goffman. For my study, the subject in stories begins in a body, where an experience
of its agency, intentionality, and enworldedness in culture and discourse precede and are already the ground for our work with narrative.

The subject is furthermore already subjects. That is, subjectivity is fundamentally intersubjective. Embodied experience, with its kind of presence and fullness, takes its shape in primordial ways by contact with others. As Merleau-Ponty phrases it, “For we must consider the relation with others not only as one of the contents of our experience but as an actual structure in its own right” (Primacy 140; original emphasis). Sobchack’s summation emphasizes again the contrast with Lacan: “Merleau-Ponty’s system accounts for subjectivity as intersubjectivity, whereas Lacan’s schema accounts for subjectivity as objectified” (123). And so the question of origins has taken us, tangoing sideways, from subjectivity to intersubjectivity. There is no clean line to separate the subject and the intersubjective, their origins or consequences, in narratives in fiction and film, or in narratives about the production of these narratives, that is, in stories about writers, audiences, and film studios. In this project our primary “knowledge” about origins will be narratives about origins, whether Lacan’s or Freud’s or Henry James’s. These narratives become more and more intersubjective in a particular and complex way. My subject then is the embedded and embodied consciousness of modern narrative—modern, that is, since about 1700—and how their representations have fundamentally and profoundly changed.

THE NEW INTERSUBJECTIVITY: ESPOUSAL, SHAME, AND THE QUARREL BETWEEN MERLEAU-PONTY AND SARTRE

I . . . feel myself moved by my appearance in the gaze of others and . . . I in turn reflect an image of them that can affect them, so that there is woven between us an “exchange,” a “chiasm between two ‘destinies’” . . . in which there are never quite two of us, and yet one is never alone.

—MERLEAU-PONTY, In Praise of Philosophy

And though there was no second glance to disturb her, though [Henry’s] object seemed then to be only quietly agreeable, she could not get the better of her embarrassment, heightened as it was by the idea of his perceiving it.

—AUSTEN, Mansfield Park

When Fanny becomes the target of the gaze in Mansfield Park, as the victim of Henry’s generosity, she experiences a special kind of invasion.
When Henry looks at Fanny, he endangers her in an extraordinary way: “[S]he saw his eye glancing for a moment at her necklace [his gift]—with a smile—she thought there was a smile—which made her blush and feel wretched” (II, 10; 274). The danger is not only the smile and the arrogance of anticipated possession it probably implies. It is also the residue of that look that Austen traces to decipher a more complex threat in a series of exchanged gestures—exchanged regardless of whether Fanny wants to be part of that commerce. Fanny cannot regain her composure because her embarrassment is extended in the mirror of Henry’s eye “by the idea of his perceiving it.” Glances are exchanged in the heated air of the ballroom, but they are also exchanged in the interior theater of subjects who embody each other, even against their will or the will of one. Fanny’s image of herself is deeply implicated in Henry’s first look at her and also in his second look, which absorbs and acknowledges her response—her blush—to the first look. The mere idea that Henry continues to observe her response to him paralyzes Fanny, so that she is rescued only when Henry turns away “to someone else” to concentrate on another human subject. The astonishing power of this scene lies partly in Austen’s ability to articulate the frightening interiority of the intersubjective. The form of this articulation is extraordinarily significant because it reshapes our narrative of experience.

A sea change in the representation of consciousnesses in narratives in English becomes visible in the time of Jane Austen. It is a change so subtle and fundamental that it has been difficult to conceive and describe. It is a structural change in what we take for granted, like the new articulation of consciousness that Eric Havelock argues for in Plato’s language. One aspect of the change has received careful attention in recent years: the move into the interior of the self. Critics as diverse as Erich Kahler, Dorrit Cohn, Elizabeth Ermarth, and, more recently, Carol Rifelj have recounted the strategies by which novels have turned “inward,” yet through conventions of what Cohn calls “transparency” simultaneously to triumph over the solipsism that had seemed to separate self and other, a triumph enabled especially by the newly powerful omniscient narrator, and to generate a sort of consensus about the world. The other has still remained in some ways another country, especially when difference is filtered by gender, class, or ethnicity. Nonetheless, it has been possible to imagine the language and story that the other constructs within and to translate that experience as imagined for the privileged reader.

The new conventions of transparency have allowed narrators to calibrate different subtleties of distance and nearness, as narratives mod-
ulate their focus from first to third person and chart a range of otherness, close or far from the reader, more or less obscured. Even monstrosity yields to this translation of the interior, as when the novel takes us inside Victor Frankenstein’s creation as he learns to read, or inside Dickens’s Bradley Headstone as he relives the attempted murder of Wrayburn. What Tristram Shandy yearned for and yet feared, Momus’s window onto the soul set like a piece of glass into the body of the other, appears in his century like a dream made real in the body of the novel.

Yearning and fear—these are two of the key responses to the effects of the new complex intersubjectivity. They represent the fundamental disagreement between Jean-Paul Sartre and his contemporary Maurice Merleau-Ponty over the nature of the intersubjective. Because both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty were deeply interested in the phenomenology of the other, this difference suggests, for them and this study, profound implications for the politics and aesthetics of intersubjectivity in narrative. For Sartre, the other is primarily a cause for a deep suspicion, even terror; for Merleau-Ponty, the other is primarily an occasion for companionship, “espousal,” in a world people occupy together, however separately. This quarrel over the effects of the intersubjective recurs in many of the narratives in this study.

However, something else deepens the exemplary moments extracted from *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* earlier in this chapter. It is a fundamentally different representation not only of consciousness, but also of consciousnesses, of a newly framed intersubjectivity, which Jane Austen’s novels are among the first in English to speak of clearly in this new language within a language. Some further theorizing of intersubjectivity would be helpful at this point. A good place to begin is J. Hillis Miller’s description of what he claimed was a new rendering of human experience in nineteenth-century novels:

In Victorian novels, for the most part, the characters are aware of themselves in terms of their relations to others. . . . The protagonist comes to know himself and to fulfill himself by way of other people. A characteristic personage in a Victorian novel could not say, “I think, therefore I am,” but rather, if he could ever be imagined to express himself so abstractly, “I am related to others, therefore I am,” or, “I am conscious of myself as conscious of others.”. . . A Victorian novel may most inclusively be defined as a structure of interpenetrating minds. (5)

What exactly does it mean to say that the representation of human consciousness had become intersubjective? According to some criticisms of
Hillis Miller’s book, its formulations were so general as to apply to virtually all novels. Intersubjectivity does not seem to be a useful formal principle for understanding narrative if it deteriorates into the unremarkable notion that characters and even narrators perceive themselves by way of others. Miller himself admits that intersubjectivity is the stuff of all fiction and argues (only) that there is more of it in nineteenth-century novels, in a form altered by certain forces: the sense of the disappearance of God and the omniscient narrator, to name the two most important (11, 31–34, e.g.). Miller is correct about changed intellectual and formal conditions, but not only the conditions have changed. The fundamental paradigm, the inner matrices and microorganizations of intersubjectivity (to borrow Foucauldian language), have shifted.

Representations and understandings of intersubjectivity are not new. Bakhtin for example offers finely nuanced readings of the ways characters take the word of the other, carrying the traces of the other, and make use of that language themselves: For Bakhtin, the word is never virginal. All language is communal and exchanged. The recent interest in the politics of the body traces in many forms how body or culture as text writes other bodies in another kind of exchange of languages: Frances Burney describing the female body cannibalizing itself at court to follow a demanding script; Jane Eyre’s conviction of her own monstrosity.

The new conventions of narration that coalesce into our new paradigm in Jane Austen’s time avoid the stark choice between the self of Descartes or Lacan: between the fullness amidst isolation of the former or the absences filled with glittering mirages of the latter. Complex intersubjectivity posits Merleau-Ponty’s separated but initiating and embodied subjects, for whom “this circle which I do not form, which forms me, this coiling over of the visible upon the visible, can traverse, animate other bodies as well as my own,” so that “the field open[s] for another Narcissus, for an ‘intercorporeity’ ” (Visible 140–41). Even a Narcissus can touch another Narcissus in the circle of espousal, and so Merleau-Ponty’s gentle irony rebukes both Descartes and Lacan.

The new complex intersubjectivity places groups of these selves, Narcissus and Narcissus (or Narcissa and Narcissa), these centers of perceiving identity, into motion. That motion articulates a new dance of subjects. We can usefully describe the fundamental components of this intersubjectivity as the body and the gaze of one subject and of the Other(s), and then the consequent appropriations negotiated among these consciousnesses and intentionalities, appropriations that the gaze, the body, and their discourses enact. This process of negotiation
and embodiment is an enactment of power, and its agenda can be shame or espousal, humiliation and supervision, or mutuality and the passion of generosity. “Shame or espousal”: This is the debate as it were between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty over the consequences of the intersubjective. Shame or espousal: Such a binary runs the risk of oversimplifying our problem, but it also emphasizes how much is at stake. Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological paradigm opens the door for us to see more fully what has changed in nineteenth-century narratives, even to frame Sartre’s “shame” more clearly.

Intersubjectivity in Merleau-Ponty might be defined as the web of partially interpenetrating consciousnesses that exists wherever perceiving subjects, that is, human beings, collect. This web can “really” exist because of a process that occurs between these subjects, who are embodied users of language. For Merleau-Ponty, the process begins when a self perceives the gestures, either of body or word, of another consciousness, and it continues when the self can perceive in those gestures an awareness of her or his own gestures. Subsequently the self, upon revealing a consciousness of the other’s response, perceives yet another gesture responding to its response, so that out of this conversation of symbolic behaviors emerges a web woven from elements of mutually exchanged consciousnesses. This web is too intricate to be the product of only private or mutual delusion. Regardless of whether the gestures exchanged are verbal, the web is evidence of genuine, if imperfect, knowledge of other selves. This is Merleau-Ponty’s way of resolving the divorce between subject and object that has bedeviled epistemology since Descartes.

The community of perceiving subjects is not, of course, anything like an exact fit for its members. Merleau-Ponty writes, in the introduction to Signs, “There is said to be a wall between us and others, but it is a wall we build together, each putting his stone in the niche left by the other” (19). This language is full of its own revealing clefts. For example, if the “niche” is a blank, a lack to be filled by desire, then the “completed” structure has no space to generate desire and narrative; yet completion seems to be the goal, the smoothing of a surface without a niche. The wall as an image for the intersubjective is indeed deeply paradoxical. It reappears in “The Child’s Relation with Others,” from The Primacy of Perception, again as a boundary that enables the intersubjective:

[The child’s] egocentrism . . . is the attitude of a me which is unaware of itself and lives as easily in others as it does in itself—but which, being unaware of others in their own separateness as well, in truth is no more con-
scious of them than of itself. . . . After that the objectification of the body intervenes to establish a sort of wall between me and the other: a partition. Henceforth it will prevent me from confusing myself with what the other thinks, and especially with what he thinks of me; just as I will no longer confuse him with my thoughts, and especially my thoughts about him. (Primacy 119–20)

Once again, separateness prevents narcissism and confusion and clarifies intersubjective experience, once “me” is distinguished from “what he thinks of me,” and “him” from “my thoughts about him.” The circle of the intercorporeal can now be performed. Another poignant reflection on a distance and absence that are also intimate occurs in Signs: “For [others] are not fictions with which I might people my desert—but my twins or the flesh of my flesh. Certainly I do not live their lives; they are definitely absent from me and I from them. But that distance becomes a strange proximity as soon as one comes back home to the perceptible world” (15).

The distance between twins is both absence and presence, and the world is both “desert” and “home.” We have seen in a few examples with what depth Mansfield Park and Persuasion render these paradoxes of distance and of the wall, in exactly its qualities as barrier and intimate connection, and we will see similar complexity in Emma, Great Expectations, Jane Eyre, Henry James’s Awkward Age, Woody Allen’s Broadway Danny Rose, and Hitchcock’s Marnie, for example. The image that resonates throughout Merleau-Ponty’s work is the image of the “chiasmus,” the knot of interconnecting, reversible threads, rhetorical and phenomenological, that embodies his sense of bordered separate-nesses. Luce Irigaray ponders on precisely this knottedness and its possible duplicities in an essay on the chiasm in Merleau-Ponty, and so reminds us of the dark side to his image:

According to Merleau-Ponty, energy plays itself out in the backward-and-forward motion of a loom. But weaving the visible and my look in this way, I could just as well say that I close them off from myself. The texture becomes increasingly tight, taking me into it, sheltering me there but imprisoning me as well. (1993, 183)

For Irigaray weaving can separate, like Merleau-Ponty’s wall, but without as strong a confidence in the partner on the other side of the wall or at the other end of the loom.

A more detailed analysis of intersubjectivity in The Primacy of Perception serves as our paradigm:
If a friend and I are standing before a landscape, and if I attempt to show my friend something which I see, and which he does not yet see, we cannot account for this situation by saying that I see something in my own world and that I attempt, by sending verbal messages, to give rise to an analogous perception in the world of my friend. There are not two numerically distinct worlds plus a mediating language which alone would bring us together. This is—and I know it very well if I become impatient with him—a kind of demand that what I see be seen by him also. . . . From the depths of my subjectivity I see another subjectivity invested with equal rights appear, because the behavior of the other takes place within my perceptual field. I understand this behavior, the words of another; I espouse his thought because this other, born in the midst of my phenomena, appropriates them and treats them in accord with typical behaviors which I myself have experienced. . . . The body of the other—as bearer of symbolic behaviors . . . tears itself away from being one of my phenomena, offers me the task of true communication, and confers on my objects the new dimension of intersubjective being. (17–18)

The most significant conception here is Merleau-Ponty’s account of the intricate exchange of perceptions that occurs between embodied consciousnesses—in a sense, between bodies themselves, as each perceives “this behavior” of “the body of the other.” As a result of this interplay of responses, built at each point upon perception of the other’s perception, I begin to have some knowledge beyond my own consciousness. Merleau-Ponty would say that I begin to transcend myself, moving toward what Husserl in *Cartesian Meditations* called “transcendental intersubjectivity” (150). I can now begin to learn about myself from a new vantage point and, inductively and imperfectly, about other consciousnesses as their gestures enter the field of my perception. Thus other subjectivities become part of my subjectivity, and I become part of theirs.

The distinction between this model and Hillis Miller’s (and Poulet’s) is subtle but important. Miller describes the Victorian self as one who “comes to know himself . . . by way of other people,” as one who could say, “I am conscious of myself as conscious of others.” The self as center of perception bulks too large here and simplifies the network of perceptions. In the formulation growing from Merleau-Ponty’s thought, the nineteenth-century self could say, “I am conscious of others’ consciousness of me, and even of the way their gestures betray their appropriation of my appropriation of them.” Awkward as this formulation is, it describes more adequately the fabric of relatedness that is missing from earlier narrative.
This process of relatedness, however, may produce both terror and intimacy, especially when the body becomes the object of the other’s gaze. The gap between these outcomes is the gap between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty and can help us measure both the darker and the more comic strains in deeply intersubjective narratives. For Sartre, in his extended exploration of the Look and the Other in *Being and Nothingness*, the problem of the Other is shame, and shame is necessarily the result of being an object of the Look. “The Other is not only the one whom I see, but the one who sees me. . . . He is the one for whom I am not subject but object . . . .” (310). The Other excludes, endangers. “In so far as I am the instrument [of the Other] . . . to ends of which I am ignorant—I am in danger. This danger is not an accident, but the permanent structure of my being-for-others” (358). The cause of this threat is the Look, which makes one’s fundamental, primary experience of the Other that of becoming-a-Thing: “Being-seen-by-the-Other’ is the truth of ‘seeing-the-Other.’ . . . He is that object in the world which determines an internal flow of the universe, an internal hemorrhage . . . .” (345). All of Sartre’s images and examples of the Look express shame and fear, often in connection with blood and wounds, or with loss, de-centering: The Other’s appearance in my universe “is an element of disintegration . . . ; the world has a kind of drain hole in the middle of its being, and it is perpetually flowing off through this hole” (343). The danger is always already present, even before we can raise our defenses. The Other is first “the being toward whom I do not turn my attention. He is the one who looks at me and at whom I am not yet looking.” This moment is so embarrassing in Sartre because the I is looking—elsewhere, stooping at a keyhole, to look up at being spied spying. For Sartre, “Anyone may recognize in this abstract description that immediate and burning presence of the Other’s look which has so often filled him with shame” (360–61). The Other always catches you off guard. The Other is Emma watching Jane Fairfax across a crowded ball room.15

The Sartrean paradigm in a general sense has characterized discussion of the gaze and gender, especially in film and the visual arts, more widely than any other. In the work of the important film theorist Laura Mulvey, for example, women are the object of the male gaze in just this suspicious, aggressive way (Sartre’s analysis is itself innocent of feminist understanding). Mulvey’s model is Freud’s, whose notion of scopophilia defined a primary sexual drive in “taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze” (16). Mulvey does not discuss shame in the object of the gaze; she is interested primarily
in the complex fears, of narcissistic engulfment and castration, for example, in the men who must look. Shame, however, is not the only response conceivable in the person observed. Beth Newman rereads Freud’s reading of the Medusa to identify a fear in men of a woman who precisely recognizes and returns the gaze:

Perhaps the sight that makes the Medusa threatening to the male spectator may be understood as the sight of someone else’s look—the knowledge that the other sees and therefore resists being reduced to an approippiable object.

Newman conceives a project of “defusing the gaze” by resistance and defiance (1037). Charles Bernheimer’s analysis of Manet’s *Olympia* describes a more ambiguous resistance in the courtesan’s gaze, as she faces her client with such scandalous directness: “Is your dominance as bearer of the look [Bernheimer conceives her to be implying] still assured if I return your gaze in full awareness of what it conveys?” (15) Shame, self-defense, aggressive counterattack against the Look—these are the givens of the Sartrean paradigm, gendered, yes, by patriarchy, but perhaps not essentially and always so. As Sartre and Austen’s Wentworth know, shame and a feeling of the power of the other to control can be male experiences, too.

Common to all of these critics is the notion that the gaze is a site of struggle. A contest between gazes is exactly what occurs on the stairs from the beach at Lyme, in *Persuasion*, for example, when Anne passes between Mr. Elliot and Wentworth. Wentworth needs the shock of Elliot’s “earnest” and “exceedingly” admiring look to see Anne again: “Captain Wentworth looked round at her instantly in a way which shewed his noticing of [Elliot’s admiration]” (I, 12; 104). In a sense Elliot challenges Wentworth to see Anne through his eyes. For Anne, who stands between the competing gazes of two admiring men, it is a subtle matter to decide whether she gains or loses dignity and control as the object of their looks.

A very different notion of the gaze appears in Merleau-Ponty, whose thought was so often like and yet distinct from Sartre’s. Although the gaze of the Other can be frightening in Merleau-Ponty, it can also be something quite different: a beginning of reciprocity, of espousal. In his view, the poet Valéry could not comprehend how

I, who am irreducibly alien to all my roles, feel myself moved by my appearance in the gaze of others and that I in turn reflect an image of them that can
affect them, so that there is woven between us an ‘exchange,’ a ‘chiasm between two “destinies” . . . ’ in which there are never quite two of us, and yet one is never alone. (In Praise 82)

Merleau-Ponty agreed that the gaze can objectify, as when he speaks of the self’s experience “under threat: for example, in the “dread of death” or of “another’s gaze upon me” (Phenomenology 404), or when he speaks of the possibility that seer and seen can confront each other as “two ‘points of view’ with nothing in common—two ‘I think’s,’ each of which can believe itself the winner of the trial” (Signs 16–17).

But the gaze does not threaten necessarily and always. “In fact the other’s gaze transforms me into an object, and mine him, only if both of us withdraw into the core of our thinking nature, if we both make ourselves into an inhuman gaze . . . ” (Phenomenology 361). Otherwise, especially when gesture and language give context to the gaze, “vision is such that the obscure results of two glances adjust to each other, and there are no longer two consciousnesses with their own teleology, but two mutually enfolding glances, alone in the world” (Signs 17). Merleau-Ponty’s simplest expression for this mutuality is the architectural image I quoted earlier: “There is said to be a wall between us and others, but it is a wall we build together, each putting his stone in the niche left by the other” (Signs 19). The field of mutual consciousnesses certainly includes anger, hatred, and misunderstanding. But Merleau-Ponty’s model of the mutual gaze, of “mutually enfolding glances,” nevertheless moves us into a world very different from Sartre’s. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty’s less uniformly oppositional gaze, more multichanneled and polymorphously perverse and playful than Sartre’s, suits the evolution of gaze theory in film criticism in recent years, from presuming Mulvey’s unitary, commanding spectator (but lacking in the center, in the Lacanian way), to exploring multiple “viewing positions,” in Linda Williams’s phrase, so that the “spell of classical diegesis” is fractured, as (here Williams quotes Miriam Hansen) “an aesthetics of the ‘glance’ is replacing the aesthetics of the ‘gaze’ ” (12).

Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and even Sartre embarked on phenomenology’s project of understanding how human perception and the world are imbedded in each other, and Merleau-Ponty traveled farthest in exploring how intersubjectivity spins out from subjects’ mutual imbeddedness. Even Bakhtin does not discuss, in the borrowings of language, the reexchange of word, the trace upon trace built or erased, the reduplication, the reenactment, and further reenactments. We need another approach that will conceptualize a series of borrowings and tracings, of
word, and of body also, so that the writing of the body becomes a writing of bodies gesturing and re-gesturing and yet again gesturing.

Our new understanding performs two tasks. First, it combines both language and body as gestures and encodings, so that complex intersubjectivity includes imbeddedness, words in bodies, and bodies in words.16 "Imbedding" gestures toward the new and complex field of studies of what might be called "making the body." Since Foucault (or perhaps Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony”), the body has come to be read as a kind of text, read and categorized and shaped materially by other textual and cultural agents, especially in relation to its gender and its sexual orientation. Which words or whose words (remembering Bakhtin) and whose bodies are significant matters and will help complicate our understanding of complex intersubjectivity, its opacities and partialities of espousal. It is only fair to admit that Merleau-Ponty’s thought seems little interested in the effects of gendering on words, gestures, or bodies, as Judith Butler observed in an important critique in the 1980s: “[T]he potential openness of Merleau-Ponty’s theory of sexuality is deceptive.... [H]e manages to reify cultural relations between the sexes . . . by calling them ‘essential’ or ‘metaphysical’ ” (Allen and Young 86). The addition of these elements of intentionality to life in a material world and the framing of gender constructions in that life are inescapable for us now.

Another implication of this claim in our paradigm, that words in bodies and bodies in words help build complex intersubjectivity, is that silence (literally, the absence of spoken or lexical words) is a kind of action and sign, too. I can only gesture now toward the rich work of Elaine Scarry on the body, pain, and silence, in which she reflects on the incommunicability of physical suffering: “Whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and it ensures this unsharability through its resistance to language” (4). Scarry traces the escape from “unsharability” in the worked object that contains “within its interior a material record of the nature of human sentience out of which it in turn derives its power to act on sentience and recreate it” (280). That record of human consciousness, like Merleau-Ponty’s hands touching hands touching, has space within it for silence, whether the silence of pain and torture or ecstasy.

The second task our model performs is to expand the form of consciousness in the intersubjective, beyond consciousness of consciousness, to the all-important third (and exponentially different) layering, to one’s consciousness of the trace in the other of one’s own previous and now appropriated gesture, and so on down the long corridor of the
embodiments in subjects facing each other. Here lies the dramatic, profoundly structural change in narrative, with implications for topics from narratological rhetoric to the images of community in stories. Because to some degree subjectivity is narrative, the narratives of subjectivities at least cast a shadow on human culture and human lives, and these new narratives cast new shadows. The fundamental differences between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty appear in these narratives, in their approaches to the other as occasion for shame or espousal, or complex combinations and misperceptions of each. And beyond the Sartre/Merleau-Ponty binary, beyond shame versus espousal, other effects of deep intersubjectivity, as it complicates representations of power and community, begin to take shape as well.

Neither this new form of intersubjectivity nor its students are outside history. There is a politics to this complex intersubjectivity, and there is a politics to its reading. The layerings of gazes and gestures are for example gendered in subtle ways and help gender their narratives. Anne Elliott, Fanny Price, Jane Eyre, Esther Summerson, and Pip: All those observers of observation knew this fact of life long before Sartre and Mulvey. No better example in the nineteenth-century novel opens up the doubleness of power than the paradoxes of Fanny Price’s experience in *Mansfield Park*, in her use of the look (as unnoticed observer) and yet her vulnerability before the gaze of others like Crawford, who, so to speak, penetrate the fourth wall behind which she has hidden. Now, however, we can see the depth of the paradoxes of power, in the network of ever-moving gestures in which Fanny’s look takes its place and in which her fears multiply. Furthermore, Foucault has taught us to wonder about forms of culture and consciousness as themselves scripts that function as agents, as articulations of power. What sorts of power operate in the new scripts of intersubjectivity like Austen’s? Power, to follow one track of thought, could hardly ever for Foucault be comic, that is, the agent of comedy, although a nostalgia for the festival of execution colors the opening chapter of *Discipline and Punish*. Austen examines the power of power to be comic, measuring by way of complex intersubjectivity barriers to comic renewal and the degree to which they may be circumvented. It is the task of this book to look at some forms of such intersubjective scripts.

This modeling of deep intersubjectivity offers a different framework, a new range of coordinates in which to place the representation of humans experiencing in fiction. Narratives will still represent blindness, stupidity, comic and ironic and pathetic misunderstandings. Misknowing is after all as dramatic a matter for storytelling as knowing.
There will even be an intersubjectivity of scattered, dismantled, and deconstructed—decentered in Gabriele Schwab’s terms—selves. But it will be a different dispersion, an absence or disorientation against a different darkness. It will be a deeper failure. James’s *The Awkward Age* and Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* offer a different absence, a more deeply focused frame for isolation. Mrs. Norris’s self-absorption and Fanny’s isolation as observer are drawn against new axes. Sartre’s shame will appear, in the experience of what Erving Goffman called the stigma, for example, but shame and stigma are staged in a new mise-en-scène. These effects are the result of the fresh narrative strategies that deep intersubjectivity brings with it to model even opacity and narcissism. Elizabeth Ermarth has given us a rich study of the nineteenth-century novel of “consensus,” built on a sometimes-fragile belief in community, but “consensus” works on an even deeper foundation of mutuality than Ermarth allows. These new assumptions, perhaps hopes, about selves together, deepen the failures as well as the comic achievements of the will to connect in the narratives of complex intersubjectivity.

The studies that follow trace these assumptions in a variety of ways. In chapter 2 I describe the new networkings of selves in nineteenth-century narrative by contrasting pairs of texts with earlier and later narrative practices. I give accounts of the changing representation of webs of consciousnesses from several vantage points, beginning with the simplest narrative kernel, the encounter between a narrating subject and another (*Moll Flanders* and *Great Expectations*), and then moving inward and outward: inward to the subject’s stories of itself (and hence construction of itself) in *Pamela* and *The Turn of the Screw*, and outward to the significance of narrative omniscience (*Tom Jones* and *Middlemarch*), in whose gaze (so to speak) others encounter others.

The implications of this shift in narrative practices for the politics and aesthetics of narrative are enormous, and the second half of the book addresses those implications by way of genre, to examine the effects of deep intersubjectivity in the myths and archetypes of comedy, anticomedy, and masquerade. These case studies track not only the study of power along that continuum from shame to espousal, but also track an aesthetics of multiplicity, duplicity, and excess. For example, the effect of the new intersubjectivity on comedy is to deepen its dark side and to emphasize the strain on community that death, anxiety, and the expulsion of the scapegoat produce. Comedy now focuses on a complex struggle among shame, betrayal, renunciation, and espousal, as Jane Austen’s *Emma* and Woody Allen’s *Broadway Danny Rose* will show. (My approach to comedy is indebted especially to Freud and
Cornford.) In a different direction, this model of the new intersubjectivity will allow us to see more clearly an aesthetics of duplicity and to trace the body’s shadow in the intersubjectively drawn account of the failure of intersubjectivity in Henry James’s *The Awkward Age*. James and Hawks’s *His Girl Friday* are both examples of the subversion of comedy by way of an aesthetics of the body, whose intersubjective strategies make their subversions all the more troubling. Finally, the webbings of complex intersubjectivity make possible the multiplicities of masquerade in ways we have not understood so well, as I show in *Jane Eyre*’s study of monstrosity as masquerade and in *Marnie*’s mother-haunted narrative of wounded and masked lovers. This model of deep intersubjectivity offers some significant additions to masquerade theory, as well as to feminist narratology, by way of notions of authority in *Jane Eyre*, as developed by Susan Lanser and Allison Case.

In film studies, this paradigm of deep intersubjectivity opens up a new angle on the debate about subjectivities and gazes, about who looks and who looks at looking. I want to move beyond questions about the male or female or bisexual gaze to questions about the mutual gaze, an intersubjective gaze, and the network of embodiments (or failed embodiments) that film narrative can weave in its particular strategies of classical editing and mise-en-scène. The struggle among subjectivities and the intersubjective gaze in Alfred Hitchcock’s films take on various tones, to such an extensive and unique degree that Hitchcock looms especially large in this study. I explore in the comedy chapter Hitchcock’s study of theatricality in the Cary Grant films, from Alicia’s tragicomic gaze in *Notorious* to Frances and Robie’s recuperation of duplicity in *To Catch a Thief*, in contrast to the sadly ironic role of disguise and masquerade in *Marnie*, which I explore in the last chapter. *Marnie*’s intricate and deeply intersubjective masquerades offer a useful concluding point from which to measure our distance from Moll Flanders and the masquerades she deploys.

The story I want to tell about the reinventing of representations of consciousnesses will have somewhat different episodes in different national literatures, and my concentration on British fiction and narrative in English—partly strategic, to make the argument manageable, partly a result of my own limitations as a comparatist—determines the specifics of the story in this book. The shift in narrative practices occurs, nevertheless, whether one looks to Laclos and Stendhal in France, or Goethe and Gottfried Keller in Germany, or Cooper and Melville in the United States. Also, the change is more gradual than a “before” and “after” might suggest. Elements of deep intersubjectivity
occur in, say, Cervantes, or *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, or in Sterne and Richardson in England, as I point out in chapter 2.

These refinements do not fundamentally alter the larger argument, that representations of intersubjectivity in Defoe, Fielding, and most earlier novelists are different from those in Austen and Eliot and other nineteenth-century novelists and many twentieth-century writers and filmmakers. The rejection of deep intersubjectivity by modern novelists such as Robbe-Grillet is another story, but one that takes for granted these new ways of narrating subjectivities, which can then be subverted or negated. Subjects now may move in a new network of embodiments and (mis)readings of and by other subjects. Representing this interknitting changes stories, and changing stories affects everything and everyone, from small embodiments of identity to large narratives of community and history. My project is to explore some of these changes in narrative and some of their implications.