Notes

Introduction

1. It is perhaps especially significant that this second request comes as a spontaneous interruption to the maid’s story: so caught up is Madame Blanchard in the narrative that her impatience to learn what happened next paradoxically leads her to slow down the progress of the narration by her expression of interest in having it move to the next stage.

2. For more on this definition see Barbara Herrnstein Smith and the reply by Seymour Chatman.

3. Deconstruction by now is a term whose meaning has widened considerably as it has been disseminated through our culture. It is not only Derridean philosophers and critics who deconstruct but also television personalities and sportswriters—indeed, anyone who questions anything is liable to be called a deconstructor. Within the realm of theory, to deconstruct sometimes now means to demystify or to show that what we thought was natural and immutable is actually constructed and changeable as well as to show how a given logic, when read rigorously, undermines itself. I am concerned with this last meaning of the term not only because I think it is closer to what was originally seen as radical in deconstruction but also because it is the one that bears most closely upon deconstruction’s attention to rhetoric.

4. Having offered these generalizations, I hasten to add some important qualifications. Barbara Johnson’s work, especially in her recent book, The Wake of Deconstruction, shows that deconstruction is neither passé nor incompatible with a politically engaged criticism. Furthermore, her statement—and demonstration—that “the point of a deconstructive analysis is not to treat intentionality as an ‘on off’ switch but to analyze the functioning of many different, sometimes incommensurable, kinds of intentionality” (18) moves deconstructive practice closer to the kind of rhetorical analysis I attempt here, just as, in ways I will discuss below, my shift away from emphasizing intention moves my rhetorical analysis in the direction of Johnson’s. In other words, although Johnson remains more interested in incompatibilities among kinds of intentionality and I remain more interested in reconstructing coherences, I also find a greater overlap between the underlying conceptions of rhetorical
reading in her work and mine than I do in the work of the earlier, more widely influential Anglo-American deconstructors such as Paul de Man and J. Hillis Miller, whose conceptions I focus on here.

5. See especially *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1974), where Booth includes "intended" as one of the marks of stable irony and where he employs E. D. Hirsch Jr.'s distinction between meaning and significance throughout his argument; in addition, see the final—and longest—chapter of *Critical Understanding* (1979), where Booth employs different concepts of author as guides to rhetorical reading. In *The Company We Keep* (1988), Booth complicates his previous rhetorical model by introducing into it the concept of "coduction," the way in which readers' interactions with each other help modify their responses (especially their ethical responses) to narratives. With his sights set on the knotty problem of the "ethics of fiction," however, Booth does not directly address the question of how significant an adjustment he is making in his rhetorical model.

6. One recent strong example of the approach is Peter J. Rabinowitz's *Before Reading*, a study of the recursive relationships between interpretive conventions and textual details. Rabinowitz shows how these relations guide readers' efforts to fashion the text, which he metaphorically postulates as an unassembled swing set, into an intelligible whole.

Chapter 1

1. By "implied audience" here I mean what Peter J. Rabinowitz has called "the authorial audience," i.e., the hypothetical audience that possesses the requisite knowledge and interpretive skills to respond as the author intended. Since most readers typically try to join this hypothetical audience, I shall refer to it here as "we." For more on audiences in narrative see Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots*; Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction" and *Before Reading*; and chapter 7 of this book.

2. Friedman goes on to employ psychoanalytic theory to uncover the gendered dimensions of the opposition she posits and to discuss how elements of lyric in Barrett Browning's "Aurora Leigh," H.D.'s *HER*, and Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* disrupt the traditional sequence of narrative plots. For a later, highly insightful development of Friedman's thought about plots and plotting, see her "Spatialization: A Strategy for Reading Narrative."

3. In what follows I am influenced by the work of Elder Olson and Ralph Rader, who both emphasize that the group of works generally given the label *lyric* needs to be understood as a collection of works that operate by distinctly
different constructional principles. Olson, focusing on the boundaries between what is conveyed in lyric and what conveyed in drama or narrative, describes three kinds: lyrics of expression, which convey a single mental activity or emotional response; lyrics of address, which convey a verbal act; and lyrics of colloquy, which convey an interaction between speakers. Rader, focusing on the relations between poet and speaker in different poems, distinguishes between the dramatic monologue in which the poet creates a character other than himself; the mask lyric in which the poet adopts a persona to speak for him; the dramatic lyric in which the poet re-presents his experience through a dramatic actor; and the expressive lyric in which the poet presents his own cognitive experience. By focusing on the role of character and of judgment in lyric, I am not so much interested in testing Rader's and Olson's distinctions as I am in identifying aspects of the implied audience's relation to lyric that they do not address. For a much different approach to the lyric, one which insists on the difficulty of definition, see Albright.

4. For more on this kind of relation between speaker and author, which eliminates one plank of New Critical dogma, see Rader.

5. The present tense, a feature common to dramatic lyrics, also contributes to maintaining the lyric mode: we find the speaker describing what he sees, not narrating what he did. But this technique itself could be used to great effect in narrative, as Faulkner proves in As I Lay Dying.

6. It is also possible for the speaker to be more individualized than Frost's speaker, but it seems to me that once we move to a situation where the primary work of the poem is the creation of the character of a speaker (the dramatic monologue), we leave the territory of the lyric and move into the region of drama.

7. Many critics (see esp. Freedman and Richter) have richly described the characters' traits, and so I am doubly aware that any brief sketch will be reductive. But to illustrate my point about their differentiation, I will risk that reductiveness: Bernard is the storyteller, the adopter of many disguises, the husband and father; Neville, the homosexual poet, is Bernard's opposite who loves order; Louis is the successful businessman who nevertheless remains insecure; Susan is the woman who loves and who hates, who turns her back on the city and finds some contentment in her farm; Jinny is the woman who lives by the energy of her body; Rhoda, an eventual suicide, is Louis's counterpart, uncertain, insecure yet highly imaginative.

Critics such as Richter, Freedman, and Graham who see the characters as part of a single consciousness very astutely point out the ways in which the characters are joined by interlocking motifs or how, taken together, they form an image of a complete, androgynous individual. The trouble with these
formulations, however, is that they deny the reading experience of the novel. In entering the lyric perspectives of each speaker, we are responding to them not as fragments of a larger symbolic whole but as individuals with separate perspectives on their experience.

8. Cf. J. W. Graham, who says that Woolf sought to establish a narrative "omnipercipience: a perception (not an understanding) of the characters' inner experience fused with a perception (not an understanding) of what they do not perceive—the background of time and the sea against which they are set" (204).

9. For a much different view of the thematic component of the novel, see Jane Marcus.

Chapter 2

1. I am acutely aware that in an essay of this length I cannot do justice to the complexity of the Showman's voice—especially when some of the essay is spent on matters other than analyzing the voice itself. I offer what I have developed here as a place to start on that much larger project, a place that offers some foundation in its general discussions of voice and of evaluation but that needs a lot more construction arising from extended analyses of the Showman's discourse, especially in relation to Amelia.

2. In part 2 of The Rhetoric of Fiction, "The Author's Voice in Fiction," still probably the most widely read discussion of voice in the Anglo-American critical tradition, Wayne C. Booth never seeks to identify the distinctive features of voice but instead uses the term loosely to refer to the author's presence and its overt manifestations through the commentary of a reliable narrator or its covert incorporation through the manipulation of an unreliable narrator. Booth's imprecision with the term does not impede his argument, which is really about authors' uses of different kinds of rhetoric for different ends, but the imprecision is, I think, symptomatic of the way Anglo-American critics have thought about the term.

Mikhail Bakhtin's work on "double-voiced" discourse provides the richest source for anyone who wants to delve into the concept of voice more fully, and in what follows I acknowledge an enormous debt to his discussion in the chapter entitled "Discourse in the Novel" in The Dialogic Imagination. Nevertheless, to adopt Bakhtin's work entirely means to view the novel only as a site of multiple voices. That principle has its uses, but here I want to retain the notion that voice exists alongside character, style, event, setting, and other distinct elements of narrative.
3. Here my interest in voice diverges from that of Peter Elbow, who wants to investigate what makes a voice distinctive and personal. His interest follows naturally from his purpose of teaching students of writing to develop distinctive voices, and I do not think our difference amounts to a serious disagreement. I would just point out that when a writer develops a distinctive personal voice or idiolect, he simultaneously develops a relationship to one or more sociolects as well. Elbow’s voice is distinctive—but distinctive within a broader sociolect of academic critical discourse.

4. For a discussion of how style functions relative to other elements of narrative, see my Worlds from Words.

5. Thackeray, Vanity Fair, 666. Hereafter references will be given by page numbers in parentheses in the text. The novel was first published serially in 1847–48 and in book form in 1848.

6. There are many exceptions, of course. Frequently, episodes cluster together into larger incidents that make the thematic point. Most noteworthy here is the mininarrative surrounding the end of Becky’s intrigue with Lord Steyne. And given the device of following the same cast of characters, Thackeray can, as the narrative progresses, return to material that he has used earlier and give it some new uses. He does this recycling most obviously at the end of the narrative when Becky shows Amelia the letter George wrote her before Waterloo and when Becky reattaches herself to Jos. For a somewhat different account of the pattern of organization, see Burch.

7. This point in a sense builds upon the case that Juliet McMaster has made for the importance of the Showman’s commentary.

8. For some worthwhile studies of Thackeray’s technique along lines different from the ones I am developing here, see Tillotson, Loofburrow, Wheatley, Sinha, Scarry, and Ferris.

9. In A Rhetoric of Irony, Wayne C. Booth has persuasively argued that all irony involves victims—or at least potential victims: those people who don’t get it. The difference between Thackeray’s ironic one-upmanship and, say, Austen’s treatment of Mrs. Bennet is that Austen’s narrator, unlike the Showman, never gives us ironic commentary about Mrs. Bennet that also announces her own superiority. Indeed, although Austen’s narrator frequently speaks ironically, she rarely gives direct ironic commentary in her own voice about any character but instead uses the irony to establish norms that can undercut a character’s speech (quoted or reported) or behavior. She is not showing off at the character’s expense the way Thackeray sometimes appears to do.

10. G. Armour Craig argues that in many cases the narrator’s coyness about Becky’s guilt, e.g., in her relationship with Lord Steyne, adds to the complexity
of the issue. McMaster makes a similar point. As will become clear, I do not think the coyness works that way in this passage.

Chapter 3

1. I borrow the term from Wayne C. Booth, who uses *distance* in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* to denote the relations between unreliable narrators and implied authors.

2. See Reynolds, *Hemingway's First War*, 56; and Oldsey, *Hemingway's Hidden Craft*, 64.

3. Behind this sentence is the assumption, now somewhat familiar to readers of this book, that in reading a fictionalized narrative we are asked to join two distinct audiences—the narrative audience that exists on the same fictional plane as the narrator and the authorial audience that seeks to understand the whole communication from the author, including the functions of the narrative audience. The question about voice here is tied up with a question about how the authorial audience is asked to relate to its simultaneous participation in the narrative audience. For more on these audiences, see Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction."

4. For a discussion along different lines of Frederic's "retrospective narration," see Nagel.

5. For more on this point, see Hamburger and Fleishman.

6. There are, of course, a few occasions when Frederic shifts from past to present and speaks with the vision he has at the time of narration: most notably when he talks about the priest knowing what he (Frederic) "was always able to forget" and when he articulates his knowledge of how the world kills everyone. But the vision and voice of these passages do not carry over into the rest of the narration, and they do not indicate that he has become a self-conscious narrator.

7. For further discussion of the passage, see Reading People, *Reading Plots*, 177, 184–85.

8. For another view on chapters 38 to 40, see Robert Lewis, *Hemingway on Love*.

9. The binary opposite of paraipipsis is paralepsis, a narration defined by Prince as one "giving more information . . . than should presumably be given in terms of the focalization code governing a narrative." I consider paralepsis in my discussion of Nick Carraway's narration in chapter 5 below.
Chapter 4

1. One of the more overt elements of this scene and, indeed, of the whole opening is the emphasis on Butler as an aging jockey. But I have chosen to focus on what I see Hemingway communicating just beneath this overt level, things like the discrepancy between the sweating while working out and failing to sweat while riding, which seem to me not fully explainable by Butler’s age.

2. Joe’s final sentence can also be read as applying to his father: he’s lost his life, and now they’re taking his reputation from him, too. But the main “guy” “they” have started on and left with nothing is Joe. The bettors’ negative words hurt Joe, not his father. Gardner’s words are an effort to comfort Joe. Joe’s “But I don’t know” indicates that he cannot take comfort in these words. Why? Because “they” have started on him and “they don’t leave a guy nothing.”

3. See especially Seymour Chatman’s essays in Coming to Terms entitled “The ‘Rhetoric’ of ‘Fiction’” and “A New Point of View on ‘Point of View.’” For an argument focused on the limits of the structuralists’ interest in sharp divisions between story and discourse, see Harry Shaw’s “Loose Narrators.”

4. The final sentences are in present tense rather than in the past. But the lack of any bridge in the narration from past to present indicates that the present tense functions to convey Joe’s continuing loss of faith in his father rather than an insight that his telling the story has suddenly led him to. That is, if we ask, when does Joe lose his firm belief in his father, the answer is after he has heard the bettors’ words. And if we ask, why does Hemingway shift to the present tense, the answer is that he wants to show Joe still feeling the effects of the experience, something he couldn’t do as effectively if he had Joe stay in the past: “But I didn’t know. Seemed like once they got started they don’t leave a guy nothing.”

5. For more on mimesis as conventional, see chapter 5.

Chapter 5

1. The trajectory of the commentary on Nick’s reliability is itself worthy of analysis. In The Rhetoric of Fiction, Wayne Booth cited Nick as an example of a “thoroughly reliable” first-person narrator. But since then, Nick has been seen as more and more unreliable. See, for example, Donaldson, Cartwright, and especially Lockridge. Of these essays, I find Donaldson’s to be the most illuminating, though his approach is very different from mine.

2. Although he does not comment on this segment of the narrative, Ron Neuhaus notes Fitzgerald’s effort to have Nick speak as an “omniscient I” in
the latter part of the book, and he finds that the split between the ironic Nick and the omniscient Nick creates an incoherent effect.

3. Lockridge, to his credit, is scrupulous enough to acknowledge that Nick's unreliability is such that we cannot know for sure that this buried plot is the real one, and so he thematizes the puzzle in his statement that "The Great Gatsby embodies a modern predicament: the belief that it is impossible to see or know anything absolutely" (179).

4. In effect, I am at this point building on Dorrit Cohn's work on consonant and dissonant narration (that is, narration in which the homodiegetic narrator identifies with the character and that in which the homodiegetic narrator judges the character). My point is that the reasons for mixing consonant and dissonant narration may have less to do with the character's ability to view his or her past than with the implied author's need to move between presenting the narrator as self-aware and presenting the character as acting in such and such a way. My discussion of Nick below should clarify this point further.

5. For an excellent recent example of such ideological critique, one that includes a fine discussion of Fitzgerald's representation of Daisy, see Tyson.

6. Again, it is important to point out that the logic of the narrative sets up the female character, this time Jordan, to be the site of evil and temptation.

Chapter 6

1. Mary Ann Dazey points out that the title is doubly ambiguous: the referent of sharer might be Leggatt or the captain, and secret can be either an adjectival modifying sharer or a part of a noun-noun compound analogous to such phrases as Conrad aficionado or pizza lover.

2. For a good discussion of the importance of titles in influencing readers' expectations, see Rabinowitz's Before Reading, 47–65.

3. For an extended treatment of the ethical dimensions of writing and reading narrative, see Booth, The Company We Keep.

4. It is this feature of the technique, I believe, that leads even such a perceptive critic as Steven Ressler to remark, "There is no retrospective sense, no time gap between the original events and their recounting" (97). In other words, though Ressler's claim runs counter to the narrator's remark about the "distance of years," it does capture the narrator's practice of presenting the events without commentary from his older, seemingly more mature self.
5. Keith Carabine finds documentary evidence to support the view that Conrad wrote the story between December 3 and December 15, 1909.

6. In this connection, it is worth noting that, despite considerable debate about the captain’s decision to protect Leggatt, most critics assume that, on the axis of values at least, the captain is a reliable narrator. Noteworthy exceptions are Troy and Murphy.

7. Identifying a subtext always has the attraction of making us feel that we are especially astute readers, the ones who “get it,” as opposed to, say, the benighted narrator and those flesh-and-blood readers who remain tied to the view of the narrative audience, unable to join us in the authorial. Before declaring that a possible subtext is part of the authorial design, it is helpful to remember that this attraction is quite strong and that the search for subtexts, if conducted with sufficient ingenuity, can almost always turn up a delicious finding. In other words, we may sometimes decide that some of what we catch as we go fishing under the overt text should be thrown back.

8. Other possible hidden meanings are suggested by Johnson and Garber’s wonderful, playful essay exemplifying the strategies of psychoanalytic interpretation.

9. For more on this moment, see Johnson and Garber.

10. The captain himself uses the word *queer* (in scare quotes)—“I don’t know whether the steward had told them that I was ‘queer’ only, or downright drunk” (121)—but, as far as I have been able to determine, this word did not have the associations with homosexuality in 1909 that it does in contemporary usage.

11. In “Betraying the Sender,” Peter J. Rabinowitz has argued that some texts that contain secrets—his main example is Nella Larsen’s *Passing*—are “fragile” because their appeal depends on their creation of two authorial audiences, one that does not get the secret and one that does. Once the secret becomes generally known, the power and appeal of the texts is, if not entirely lost, then altered. His essay offers a fascinating exploration of the ethics of teaching fragile texts. I do not think that “The Secret Sharer” is a fragile text in Rabinowitz’s sense because I think that its power and appeal remain even after the secret is revealed. Furthermore, as will become clearer in the next section of this essay, I also think that this particular secret is only a part of the text’s power and appeal.

12. I wish to acknowledge the helpful comments of Elizabeth Preston, Susan Swinford, Mark Conroy, Peter J. Rabinowitz, and Rick Livingston on an earlier version of this essay.
Chapter 7

1. A full analysis of the audience positions would also include some account of how the implied reader's position is part of the text's play with audience, but for purposes of clarity, I have not presented that part of the analysis (and, indeed, the text hardly deserves such attention).

2. For important earlier work on the technique, see Morrissette and Hopkins and Perkins. See also the recent special issue of Style (28, no. 3 [1994]), guest-edited by Monika Fludernik, devoted to second-person narrative, in which the present essay initially appeared.

In a sense, the theoretical section of this essay is also a revision of my discussion of the relation between narrative and characterized audiences in chapter 5 of Reading People, Reading Plots.

3. Although the sex of the "you" at this point in the narrative is not definitively marked, it soon will be: at a wedding, his mother "will introduce you as his girl" (56). For more detailed commentary on this beginning, see Richardson.

4. In "The Narratee Revisited," Prince admits that in the earlier essay, he "too often conflated" narratee, addressee, and receiver (302). To avoid a similar conflation here, I have included the alternative terms for these concepts. As Prince explains, "The narratee constitutes a special case of the enunciatee (to adapt Greimassian terminology): it is the enunciatee—the encoded or inscribed 'you'—in a narrative text and it may or may not coincide with the ostensibly addressee of that text and/or with the receiver of it: thus, I might explicitly address a narrative to X but (consciously or unconsciously) inscribe Y as a 'you' in it and (accidentally or not) Z may turn out to be its actual receiver” (302). In Lolita, for example, Humbert Humbert explicitly addresses (at least initially) a judge and jury; but by the end, Lolita herself is inscribed as his main audience, and John Ray Jr. turns out to be the actual receiver. Although this delineation of the different readerly roles increases the precision of our analysis, it also runs the risk of creating a terminological tangle around addressee when we discuss second-person narration. To avoid the tangle, I shall hereafter follow Prince's model and use enunciatee to designate the narratee and reserve addressee for the implied reader.

5. Whether this view of the authorial audience's beliefs can be demonstrated or not, the larger point is that our decision about where to locate the belief does have consequences for our understanding of the effects Brontë is after. In Wuthering Heights, by contrast, I would contend that Emily Brontë asks her authorial audience to view the supernatural events—the life after death of first Catherine and then Heathcliff—as genuinely possible. This demand on the ac-
tual reader is one reason so many people find the book both powerful and strange. Just how *Wuthering Heights* communicates this demand is a complex matter that would take a separate essay to demonstrate; for now, let me just say that the unreliable Lockwood’s commonsense faith in the impossibility of the life after death is one important (though not, of course, sufficient) indicator.

6. Note the similarity between structuralism’s implied reader and rhetorical theory’s authorial audience. These two concepts are largely interchangeable.

7. This is the insight upon which Robyn Warhol builds her useful study of “distancing” and “engaging” narrative address in nineteenth-century British fiction.

8. Although my primary concern here is with second-person narration, I intend the point about the complementarity of narratee, narrative audience, and ideal narrative audience to be useful when talking about homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration as well. To take just two examples: in Lardner’s “Haircut,” Whitey’s narratee is the customer in the barber chair; in the narrative audience, we observe the haircut and the storytelling, and we recognize that Whitey assumes the customer is the ideal audience simply because the customer is a man from out of town. This recognition, in turn, helps characterize Whitey and helps distance our position in the narrative audience from the position Whitey attributes to his ideal audience. In *Lord Jim*, the shifting of narratees and the difficulty of determining Marlow’s ideal narrative audience are both crucial parts of the narrative audience’s experience, because they signify how much the narrative is about Marlow’s effort to tell Jim’s story in a way that will then enable him to come to terms with it.

In chapter 5 of *Reading People, Reading Plots*, devoted primarily to Calvino’s *If on a winter’s night a traveler*, I discuss the narratees in “Haircut,” *Lord Jim, If on a winter’s night*, and a few other texts as examples of what I call a “characterized audience” and distinguished them from the narrative audience. Although I still find that those designations are helpful, I believe that employing the concepts of narratee, narrative audience, and ideal narrative audience as complementary allows for a fuller and more precise account of the narrative discourse of these texts.

9. This formulation has much in common with Wayne Booth’s concept of coduction. See *The Company We Keep*, 70–75 and passim. One of the Press readers for this book suggests that I am “overly impressed” with Moore and is not entirely sure that the genuine emotion I find in the story is there to be found. These comments strike me as the basis for a productive coduction; to the case that I make in the body of this essay, I will only add here that my general effort as a flesh-and-blood reader is to adopt an attitude of generosity toward implied authors. Whether I am overly generous to Moore is a judgment
Notes to Chapter 8

that I will continue to question—and something I hope to get some advice about from other readers.

10. The story is working against the standard “happily ever after” heterosexual romance narrative. Whether gay and lesbian readers will be able to move easily into the enunciatee position is, I think, highly debatable. The lesbian reader, however, may find it easy to join Moore’s authorial audience to the extent that they will be inclined to read against the imperatives of the self-help genre (“Begin by meeting him in a class”).

11. For helpful commentary on this essay, I am grateful to Jane Greer and especially Peter J. Rabinowitz.

Chapter 8

1. One feature of the debates about political correctness that seems to have remained is the practice of referring to these debates as the “culture wars.” I have refrained from that practice here because I think that the war metaphor itself helps generate more heat than light; it encourages people to think of themselves as fixed in one camp or another, and it encourages them to demonize those who disagree with them (their so-called enemies). Although I have deep disagreements with D’Souza, I have no interest in making him a demon, and I respect his own efforts to refrain from ad hominem arguments.

2. D’Souza writes 762 footnotes, citing university reports, campus newspapers, university press books, metropolitan dailies, weekly and monthly magazines, and scholarly journals.

3. Atwater’s ad also has the important function of combatting George Bush’s negative image as a “wimp” by projecting it onto Dukakis—but that dimension of the ad is part of another narrative.

4. Stanley Fish has long promoted the view that in literary criticism there are no facts independent of interpretation, and he has often seemed interested in extending this claim to the world at large. Yet, in one of the essays he wrote for his series of debates with D’Souza, he goes to great pains to argue that there are facts that all interpreters should recognize and that some of these facts refute some of D’Souza’s claims. See “Spaelung in Code, or, How to Turn Bigotry and Ignorance into Moral Principles,” esp. 94–98, in There’s No Such Thing as Free Speech.

See also Gerald Graff’s argument for the way that arguments such as D’Souza’s have highlighted problems in theorists’ commitments to and understandings of certain elements of poststructuralist theory.

Many antifoundationalist philosophers have been arguing that there are
no facts outside of some discursive framework for constituting them. I find that this description does not quite capture the complex relation between facts and interpretations. While I agree that any fact is a fact relative to some discursive framework, it seems to me that the significant larger conclusion is not that there are no facts independent of interpretations (Fish’s position) but that there are a plurality of facts, each of which has its intelligibility within its own system. Thus, although it would be possible to redescribe, say, the cases of Dolfman and Schaub within a system of intelligibility that interpreted their behavior as a system of neurons firing, that description would not be in competition with the descriptions that D’Souza offers. The coexistence of different facts demonstrates the plurality of our ways of conceiving of those facts, not their lack of existence.

5. Of course, the ways in which any particular narrative rises above the contestation and achieves a widespread acceptance are many and complicated, involving such things as the relation between one’s power to speak, the skillfulness with which one tells the narrative, and the audience’s assumptions about the speaker’s position. In short, to say that we must make our stands on the truth as we see it is not to suggest that those truths will necessarily prevail. I know that in the marketplace of ideas there is no such thing as the free, disinterested play of the best and truest that has been thought and said.

Chapter 9

1. Morrison’s novel, in the short time since its publication, has already attracted a significant number of very fine interpretive essays. In addition to the essays by Horvitz, Wilt, House, Rigney, Rushdy, and Wyatt that I draw upon here because they most directly address the question of Beloved’s identity, see also Finney, Holloway, Henderson, Schapiro, and the five essays published together in the autumn 1992 issue of African American Review by Bell, Demetrakopoulos, Page, Sale, and Sitter.

2. None of the numerous essays on Beloved I have read shows any significant debt to reader-response theory. One of the very attractive features of Steig’s fine book is how tightly he connects the experience of reading and the act of interpretation. Rabinowitz, as his title suggests, is primarily interested in the conventions that influence the experience of reading. Crosman is concerned with the different frames that we can bring to the act of interpretation. The contributors to Flynn and Schweikart’s collection offer a variety of perspectives on the difference gender makes in reading.

3. That Scholes’s book won the NCTE’s David Russell Award I would
like to read as a sign of both its excellence and a wide acceptance of its views. In his more recent Protocols of Reading, Scholes redescribes interpretation as having both centripetal (in toward the text and its intentionalty) and centrifugal movements (out toward the reader and her subjectivity); in making the space for the centrifugal, he allows more play for the reader's response, yet stops far short of locating interpretation in experience. His 1993 essay, "Responsible Extravagance: Reading after Post-Structuralism," calls for an even greater license to the reader's ingenuity. For a fuller discussion of the model Scholes sets forth in Textual Power, including some reservations about its heavy reliance on repetitions and oppositions, see my Reading People, Reading Plots.

4. The typical code consists of (1) categories that organize the numerous signals in the language of the text into fewer, more general units and (2) rules for combining the categories. Sometimes the categories are provided by the text (e.g., "rememory" or "claiming one's freedom" or "circling" in Beloved); sometimes they are provided by an interpretive system the critic brings to all texts (e.g., object relations; gender and power; dialogism); and sometimes they are provided by some combination of text and interpretive system (call and response; maternity and slavery). The critic then employs the rules for combining the categories and seeks to develop a coherent and comprehensive account of how the text's language (or at least some significant subset of that language) can be understood as signifying a particular set of meanings.

Standard accounts of interpretive adequacy such as those in Booth and Hirsch usually include a criterion of "precision" or "correspondence" in addition to comprehensiveness and coherence. I do not include it here because, unlike them, I am not trying to establish the philosophical grounds of interpretive adequacy but to describe what practical critics generally do under the umbrella of interpretation. For the same reason, I will not try to sort out—and create a hierarchy among—different notions of comprehensiveness, coherence, or precision.

For similar and fuller descriptions of interpretation along the lines I've sketched here, see Steven Mailloux's essay on the term in McLaughlin and Lentricchia, and Rabinowitz's discussion in the chapter in Before Reading called "Starting Points."

5. Stanley Fish, among others, has argued that at any one time the institution of criticism will sanction only a limited number of translation schemes (or in Fish's language, interpretive communities). Fish's point here, whatever reservations one might have about his larger account of the profession (see Battersby), is descriptively accurate. My point is that interpretation is potentially, not actually, infinite.

6. I recognize that this statement is open to the objection that such critics,
having been trained in a certain way, are in fact basing their interpretations on their reading responses, that, for example, they read with a knowledge of the cultural networks they trace in their interpretations and so respond accordingly. Objection sustained—and indeed, I have tried to account for this possibility in my description of reading. But my point here is that the ground of the appeal in, say, Stephen Greenblatt’s interpretation of King Lear in Shakespearean Negotiations, is not at all to the act of reading or viewing the play, but rather on his work of contextualizing and analogizing. His claim is not at all about how it feels to be in the audience at the Globe, but very much about what the play can be said to mean in its cultural moment. I admire his work, but want to ask a different question: what happens when we ground our interpretations in the act of reading?

7. The approach I am advocating here has links with the reader-response criticism of Iser and Rosenblatt and with the rhetorical poetics associated with Chicago School criticism. But I am more interested in the affective dimensions of reading than Iser or Rosenblatt, and I depart from the Chicago School’s treatment of the reader as, ultimately, a property of the text.

8. For a lively argument that recalcitrance itself is the basis of literary form and quality, see Wright. I find much of Wright’s argument to be appealing, but I stop short of accepting his strongest claims, which seem to make recalcitrance not just a means but also the purpose of literary form.

9. The category of the stubborn clearly has some affinities with the deconstructive notion of unreadability, especially as it has been developed by Paul de Man’s rigorous analyses. But I take the concept of the stubborn in a direction different from the one in which he takes the notion of unreadability. Where his rhetorical concerns focus on the figures of the text, mine move to questions of author-reader relations. Where his unreadability leads to the mise-en-abyme, my stubbornness leads to a paradoxical functionality within a larger system of what can be read (as I try to demonstrate below).

10. The fourth sentence reads, “For years each put up with the spite in his own way, but by 1873 Sethe and her daughter Denver were its only victims” (3), suggesting 1873 as the present. Then, in dating the departures of Howard and Buglar from 124, the narrator says, “Ohio had been calling itself a state only seventy years when first one brother and then the next stuffed quilt packing into his hat, snatched up his shoes, and crept away from the lively spite the house felt for them” (3). Since Ohio became a state in 1803, this sentence puts their departure in 1873, which could still fit with that fourth sentence. On the next page, the narrator says first that “Baby Suggs died shortly after the brothers left” and then that Denver “was ten and still mad at Baby Suggs for dying” (4). So Denver appears to have been born in 1863. Later in the chapter, in
present time, Sethe says to Paul D that Baby Suggs has been dead "Eight years now. Almost nine," which suddenly jumps the present action to 1891. That would fit with our learning that Denver is eighteen, but of course later we learn that Denver was born in 1855 during Sethe’s escape from Sweet Home, so the present action must be occurring in 1873. And indeed, after the first chapter all the signals point to 1873–74 as the time of the narrative’s present action.

11. Later on Morrison gives inconsistent evidence about how long Sethe was at 124 before schoolteacher arrives: sometimes she says three weeks, other times four. Since these dates often come through a character’s stream of consciousness, I believe that this inconsistency can be read as functional in its demonstration of the interaction of history and memory.

12. Introducing this distinction between the difficult and the stubborn or, more precisely, introducing a category called “the stubborn” (the difficult has long been our stock in trade) is not without its own potential problems. One critic’s example of stubbornness will be another’s instance of mild difficulty. The category of the stubborn could easily become a wastebasket into which tired critics—or those facing deadlines—to toss their recalcitrant data. But the abuse of a thing is no argument against it. Like all interpretive hypotheses, claims about the stubborn will be subject to the scrutiny of other interpreters; those that wither under such scrutiny will turn out to be, well, not so stubborn after all. Furthermore, given the pride of place currently accorded to the ability to produce innovative close readings, I doubt that critics will rush to proclaim any given textual phenomenon as an instance of the stubborn. The risks of being wrong are too great. If another critic shows that what I take to be the stubborn is actually the difficult, then I am in the embarrassing position of having to admit that I have not read closely enough. I am less worried about the possible abuses of the concept than I am hopeful about its potential to advance the cause of tightening the connections between the experience of reading and the activity of interpretation.

13. The key difference between narrative and authorial audiences at this juncture of Beloved is that the narrative audience believes in the reality of the character and events while the authorial audience knows that it is reading fiction. See Rabinowitz’s “Truth in Fiction.”