

Performing Liminality: Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day
and Anita Brookner's Look at Me

by

Tom Penner

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

© August, 1999



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-51785-3

Canada

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

COPYRIGHT PERMISSION PAGE**

**Performing Liminality: Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day
and Anita Brookner's Look at Me**

by

Tom Penner

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
of
Master of Arts**

Tom Penner © 1999

Permission has been granted to the Library of The University of Manitoba to lend or sell copies of this thesis/practicum, to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis/practicum and to lend or sell copies of the film, and to Dissertations Abstracts International to publish an abstract of this thesis/practicum.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither this thesis/practicum nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	Page i
Acknowledgments	ii
Introduction	1
1. Conjoining Iser and Turner	5
2. The Liminal Butler in Kazuo Ishiguro's <u>The Remains of the Day</u>	27
3. The Beggar at the Feast: Reflexive Liminality in Anita Brookner's <u>Look at Me</u>	58
Conclusion	85
Works Cited	88

Abstract

This thesis devises an interdisciplinary approach to literature that coordinates aspects of Reader-Response theory and cultural anthropology—specifically, showing how Wolfgang Iser’s conceptualizing of a “literary anthropology” can be usefully supplemented by anthropologist Victor Turner’s liminal theory through the reading of two modern British novels. The first chapter of the thesis outlines the various ways in which Iser’s formulation of Reader-Response theory can be conjoined with Turner’s analysis of ritual to produce a performative approach to literature. In the second, this approach is employed in a reading of Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel The Remains of the Day, suggesting that the protagonist’s journey of self-discovery in many ways mirrors that of the reader. In the third chapter, this performative approach is further applied in a reading of Anita Brookner’s Look at Me, a text suffused with the kind of self-reflexive elements foregrounded in both Iser and Turner’s theories.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is an established truism that no work can come into its own without the efforts of many people beyond the one whose name appears on the title page. In the case of this thesis, and in variegated ways, that nostrum holds very true indeed.

I would like to express my deepest thanks and appreciation to my thesis supervisor Professor Evelyn Hinz, who took on a relative stranger and provoked him into considering a variety of new ways to discuss literary issues. For her kind words, assiduous editing, and always challenging questions. I owe her the admission that without her wisdom and guidance this thesis would never have been completed, much less have made any sense.

I also wish to thank the members of my defense committee, Dr. John Teunissen and Dr. James Forest, whose provocative and lively questions made the oral examination a thought-provoking and enjoyable experience.

Among my other teachers, I also owe a profound debt of thanks to Professor Deborah Schnitzer, who accompanied me on some early liminal excursions, and to Professor David Williams, for continuously encouraging and supporting my work as an academic.

Finally, to my wife Sharon and son George, who have been my touchstones of sanity in what turned out to be a rather challenging year. I wish to say thank you for your patience, love, and unwavering support, particularly at bath-time. Thanks also to rest of my family, particularly my mother, who came through with child care arrangements that demanded flexibility from us all. It is not an exaggeration to say that without their support and understanding I would never have had the time or energy to complete—to steal a phrase from Spalding Gray—this “monster in a box.”

INTRODUCTION

Interdisciplinary scholars have often turned to Victor Turner's anthropological exploration of cultural performance as a model for the study and analysis of literature. Turner was particularly concerned with ritual performance and with the way that ritual spaces are a fundamental weave in the cultural fabric of both pre-industrial and industrial societies. A key component of this ritual process is the moment of liminality, a betwixt-and-between state that is a crucial articulation of cultural conflict and renewal. Modern cultural critics have broadened Turner's definitions of liminality and, in critical collections such as Kathleen Ashley's 1990 volume Victor Turner and the Construction of Social Criticism, have shown how the theorizing of the liminal can span many critical boundaries.

Barbara Babcock's contribution to that collection is a particularly instructive example of the transcritical applicability of Turner's liminal approach, since the interstitial aesthetic that she explores in Virginia Woolf's work is grounded initially in the theories of Turner, and is developed later in her essay through the writings of such disparate critics as Lser, Lacan, and Cixous. Other critics have explored frontier literature in terms of an aesthetic of marginality/liminality and the theatre as a space of performative ritual (and hence, in Turner's terms, a liminal space), while broader cultural studies have placed social phenomena (such as the carnival) within the framework of Turner's processual anthropology. Each of these approaches, in various ways, relies on Turner's delineation of the dialectical nature of the performance—i.e. his theory that when cultural phenomena are enacted (through theatrical performance or the act of reading, for example), there is a

dialectic of meaning set into play which depends on the indeterminacies manifested within the artifact itself.

As I see it, this dialectical model affords an evocative description of cultural production generally, and of textual processes specifically; that is, acts of reading and writing depend on textual indeterminacies which allow the reader entry into the world of the text, much like a ritual participant might enter the framework of the ritual. In other words, texts work because we perform them, bringing them into meaning; texts function not as static artifacts of cultural authority but as processual instruments in our own ritual of reading/thinking. In this way, Turner's theories can be seen to parallel those of Wolfgang Iser, for whom the text is a series of organized indeterminacies which engage the reader in a dialectic process that refuses closure. Arguing that what was formerly called the "unreliable narrator" is an instance of this kind of indeterminacy, my purpose in the following thesis will be to show how the theories of Turner and Iser can be conjoined to provide an interdisciplinary approach necessary to discuss the cultural "meanings" encoded in texts by later twentieth-century novelists about post-WWII society—with Anita Brookner and Kazuo Ishiguro being my cases in point.

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel The Remains of the Day (1989) presents the reader with what amounts to a textbook case of liminality: the erstwhile butler undertakes a journey through the English countryside, encountering guides and personal enlightenment en route. Ishiguro has structured the narrative around Stevens's self-delusive voice, and assigns the reader the task of reading through the textual inconsistencies and indeterminacies to re-construct the story that the butler is (not) telling.

Brookner's Look at Me (1983) is also saturated with the elements that are associated with the liminal moment: a protagonist who finds herself betwixt and between being regarded as an insider and outsider; a narrator who provides a meta-narrative about the actual writing of the novel that the reader is reading; and a haunting sense throughout that the story being told is riven with indeterminacies, and that any subtle reading of the text must somehow account for them. Narrative events and the reader's growing awareness of the manipulations at the heart of this monologic insistence provide, ultimately, the sense of dialectic indeterminacy upon which the liminal moment is founded.

My thesis will consist of three chapters. In the first, I will outline the key components of Reader-Response theory and show how its tenets can be made more culturally responsive and productive when infused with insights from Turner's theories of ritual. In the second chapter, I will then set this critical framework into play in the context of The Remains of the Day, dealing with this novel first because it employs the physical journey into liminality as a structuring device as well as providing a gaping chasm between what the reader is directly told by the butler and what he/she is forced to reconstruct from this knowledge. In the third chapter, I will attempt to demonstrate the broader metafictional applicability of this interdisciplinary approach through a critical reading of the more internalized dynamics that characterize Brookner's Look at Me. In addition to the key cultural anthropology texts of Turner—The Ritual Process (1978), From Ritual to Theatre (1982), and Blazing the Trail (1985), I will be giving central attention to Iser's The Act of Reading (1978) and Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology (1989), which includes his exchanges with Norman Holland, Wayne Booth,

and Stanley Fish. There are as yet only a few studies of Brookner and Ishiguro themselves, a situation that may indeed be owing to the lack of a critical framework for dealing with their complexities which my study should thus help to rectify.

Overall, I intend this thesis to build upon and clarify the existing methodologies to which Turner's writings have given rise, by bringing them into play alongside literary approaches that complement and expand them. My approach will be two-fold: to explicate the theory through the reading of two appropriate novels, and to explicate the novels through the building of the theory. In this way, I hope both to contribute to the articulation of a "liminal poetics" that is currently evolving within interdisciplinary studies, and to highlight the various liminalities in Ishiguro and Brookner's novels, in the spirit of ludic exploration that marked the work of Victor Turner throughout his career.

CHAPTER ONE

Conjoining Iser and Turner

Reader-Response criticism, as Elizabeth Freund notes in her survey of the field entitled The Return of the Reader, is marked by a “plurality of voices and approaches” and by a “theoretical and methodological heterogeneity” which confounds attempts to reduce it to a singular, easily defined totality (5). Similarly, while Susan Suleiman distinguishes six main categories of audience-oriented criticism, she also notes that whether it is the rhetorical concerns of Wayne Booth, where the reconstruction of the “implied author/reader” is paramount, the phenomenological “concretizations” of Wolfgang Iser, or the “community” of readers in Stanley Fish’s model, reading is “far too rich and many-faceted an activity to be exhausted by a single theory” (8-31). What tends to unify these various approaches is their common opposition to the set of critical positions which fall under the rubric of New Criticism, an approach that placed an emphasis on the text itself as an autonomous object for reflection. Cleanth Brooks’s The Well Wrought Urn is an (in)famous example of how a suffocatingly close reading of Keat’s “Ode to a Grecian Urn” can show the poem to be about nothing other than itself. This focus inevitably privileges the objectivity and self-sufficiency of the literary text to the detriment of the reading subject, and in the process places any discussion of the affective realities of the reading process outside of the realm of respectable interpretive discussion.

Reader-Response theories set about to re-think the harsh subject/object dualism which New Criticism tended to posit, stressing instead the “self-reflexiveness” which is

characteristic of the evolution of the humanities in this century and which according to Suleiman “necessarily shifts the focus of inquiry from the observed—be it defined as text, psyche, society, or language—to the interaction between observed and observer” (4). In literary studies, this has meant a renewed attention to the other side of the reading dialectic, a “turn” as Freund calls it, towards questions such as “*why* do we read and what are the deepest sources of our engagement with literature? what does reading have to do with the life of the psyche, or the imagination, or our linguistic habits? what what happens—consciously or unconsciously, cognitively or psychologically—during the reading process?” (5).

Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby usefully define reflexiveness as “the capacity of any system of signification to turn back upon itself, to make its own object by referring to itself” (2). This blurring of the presumed dichotomy between subject and object is evident in any attempt to think about literature (particularly the novel) in interdisciplinary terms. Different systems of signification can and do have important things to say, not only about themselves, but each other as well. Thus as Barbara Babcock observes, the reflexivity of both the novel and ritual opens up “the discursive space of any semiotic system, thereby providing a framework in which perpetual change through the addition of new forms of expression and new meanings may occur” (“The Novel and the Carnival World” 913). Like Reader-Response theory, then, reflexivity blurs the assumed lines of demarcation that separate observer from observed, text from reader.

Iser’s foundational works, The Implied Reader and The Act of Reading, were primarily concerned with the role of textual indeterminacies in the reading process. His

theorizing was primarily focused on how individual readers encounter, and then account for, the “blanks” or “gaps” that literary texts contain. In doing so, Iser was building upon the work of Roman Ingarden, who saw in the literary work a series of “schematized aspects,” descriptive textual modes which the reader “actualizes” in the act of reading. In Ingarden’s example, a novel that “takes place” in the “streets of Paris” will force the reader—who may or may not have personal knowledge of the streets being described—to draw nonetheless on the “contents of other formerly experienced concrete objects” (265). This process of actualization can never finally submit to closure, since the represented object—be it a table, person, or abstract concept—“is not universally, unequivocally determined” (250). Instead, the representational schema contain “spots of indeterminacy” that “cannot be entirely removed” through the processes of reading and actualization. In Ingarden’s terms, it is the role of the reader of a text to “concretize” these gaps through various cognitive and aesthetic processes, which offer a contingent “fulfillment” of the spots of indeterminacy that allows for a satisfactory (though provisional) understanding.

Iser initially adopted but also adapted Ingarden’s conceptualization of textual gaps in order to allow the reader a privileged role in the construction of textual meaning. As Robert Holub points out in his discussion of the roots of Reader-Response theory, this adaptation was not without significant critics (most famously Stanley Fish) who criticized Iser for an apparent misreading of Ingarden’s theorizing of indeterminacy, claiming that his reconception of the term renders both indeterminacy and determinacy irrelevant, dependant as they are in Iser’s theory on a “pure” text which would stand somehow unmediated by perceptive bias (103). Significantly, in his more recent study, Prospecting:

From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology. Iser himself addresses these concerns and clarifies his arguments substantially.

One of Iser's stated ambitions in Prospecting was to develop a heuristic model with which to explore the underlying anthropological functions of literature, those functions which might explain "why we find an insatiable pleasure in making ourselves into our own possibilities" (284). The task of literary anthropology, he says, would be to develop a literary theory that would "cease merely to provide models of interpretation, and instead will enable us to ask and perhaps to understand why we have this medium, and why we continually renew it" (264). As he sees it, such a literary theory would examine the broader implications of literary acts, thereby leading to a more general "theory of culture" that could explore the ways that literature is implicated in anthropological dispositions over time. This would require much more than simply applying the heuristic precepts of anthropology to the study of literature—precepts developed, according to Iser, to "investigate the structures of archaic civilizations" (265)—but would instead examine the "interplay between the fictional and the imaginary," an interplay that Iser sees as a fundamentally human activity (279).

Iser assigns three possible objectives to this literary anthropology. It would, he says, have a "pragmatic" component, which would see the text as a "cultural object" that offers insights into the human condition, through its revelation of the fantastic, imaginary components that are indicative of broader social features. Its second aim would be to collapse the "assumed clear distinction between imagination, reason, and the senses" and so explore cultural change through analysis of the "transgressive" relationship between

literature and social imagination. Finally, literary anthropology would have an historical aspect, which would allow a critical evaluation of cultural modes and standards by triggering a “chronic process of self-reflection that would no longer seek its fulfilment in some kind of ideal” (281).

Throughout Prospecting Iser continues his attack on the New Critical belief in the “treasure-chest” model of literary interpretation, wherein the text is reduced to a closed vessel for a meaning presumably placed there by its author. The nature of Iser’s assault is predicated on the necessary dynamism of the reading process, the extent to which “meanings in literary texts are generated in the act of reading . . . [and] are the product of a complex interaction between text and reader” (5). The text, then, should not be identified as coterminous with the illusively “concrete” words on a page, nor should its meanings be taken as precious aesthetic gifts from the author. Reading fiction is a performance, and its meaning(s) is/are contingent on the culturally embedded idiosyncracies of the individual reading.

Iser’s early formulations had been criticized (by Suleiman, among others) for their “vagueness” on the question of idiosyncratic readings, since his theoretical approach seemed to suggest a primary freedom for the reader which is, however, simultaneously structured in advance by the determining patterns of the text. The apparent result is paradoxical, since the reader is free to create only whatever interpretation(s) the text will allow (23). In Prospecting, however, Iser attempted to move from a purely phenomenological perspective, where abstract categories of thought are privileged, to one which includes the cultural, performative aspects of reading, and in doing so he resolved

some of the ambiguities of his argument. In The Act of Reading he had argued that “the ultimate function of the strategies is to defamiliarize the familiar” (87), and in Prospecting he clarifies how textual indeterminacy in his model has a crucial anthropological function, since it places the reader within a broader social context within which to experience the defamiliarizing effects of the reading process..

At the heart of Iser’s theorizing of the act of reading is the role of indeterminacies in mediating the schematized social aspects found in fiction with the phenomenological world of the reader. Following Ingarden, Iser asserts that the “schematized views” of the literary text cannot, by their very nature, form a seamless narratological unity. The sequential nature of writing and reading means that, for example, various plot lines may not be presented simultaneously whatever their synchronous aspect in the story. The text thus contains interstices which defy attempts to develop a final, reified meaning or interpretation. It is this “no-man’s-land of indeterminacy” which allows for and demands the performative acts of meaning creation by the reader:

Gaps are bound to open up, and they offer a free play in the interpretation of the specific ways in which the various views can be connected with one another.

These gaps give the reader a chance to build his [sic] own bridges, relating the different aspects of the object which have thus far been revealed to him.

(Prospecting 9)

As he goes on to explain, “Whenever the reader bridges the gaps, communication begins,” since these gaps “leave open the connection between textual perspectives, and so spur the reader into coordinating these perspectives and patterns—in other words, they induce the

reader to perform basic operations *within* the text” (34).

These operations, however, are ineluctably conditioned by the dialectic of constraint and reformulation of culture. Similarly, the reader in Iser’s model is given extraordinary freedom to “ideate” the textual material, but this freedom is simultaneously constrained by the regulative features of the text. Yet even though these features may regulate, they do not “formulate the connection or even the meaning” that is brought into play by the act of the reader reading” (35); this constitutive function is reserved for the reader engaged in the process of reading.

For Iser the presence of indeterminacy is not a negative element, but an essential part of the process of meaning creation. He suggests that the act of reading is marked by a process of “consistency building” which is not, as might be assumed, a finalized elucidation of “Meaning” that a New Critic might discover, but rather the formation of a provisional gestalt. These are not finalized accounts, as Iser points out: the groupings of “gestalt sequences” in the act of reading “contain traces of illusion in so far as their closure—since it is based on selection—is not a characteristic of the text itself, but only represents a configurative meaning” (The Act of Reading 124). Attempts at eliminating the “gaps” which allow the reader to produce these “gestalt groupings” through authorial overdetermination or cultural stasis are doomed to failure, since

the novel opposes the desire for consistency which we constantly reveal If we try to break down the areas of indeterminacy in the text, the picture that we draw for ourselves will then be, to a large extent, *illusory*, precisely because it is so determinate. The *illusion* arises from a desire for harmony, and is solely the

product of the reader. (Prospecting 27, emphasis mine)

“Illusion” is used here by Iser in two distinct, yet complementary ways. In the first instance, illusion is invoked as the necessary fiction that allows textual consistency to be provisionally constituted and accepted by the reader. In the second, “illusion” refers to the elusive and mythical pursuit of a New Critical grail: the complete and final analytical word on a text.

To Iser, these gaps are “a basic element for the aesthetic response,” since the reader “removes them by a free play of meaning-projection” (Prospecting 9, 11). That this is an intrinsic part of the process of reading is made clear in his discussion of Thackeray’s Vanity Fair: “If the reader of Vanity Fair connects the many positions offered him in the text, he [sic] will not find the ideal critical stance from which everything will become clear; he will, rather, find himself frequently placed in the very society that he is to criticize” (22). In Vanity Fair, then, the social hypocrisy that Thackeray satirizes is replayed within the reader in a process that Iser termed “passive synthesis.” As Iser had explained in The Act of Reading, passive synthesis refers to the process by which the textual schemata (related to irony, in this instance) mobilize the “subjective knowledge present in all kinds of readers” and “direct[. . .] it to one particular end” (143). In order to understand Thackeray’s biting irony, then, the reader must bring his/her own frame of reference to bear on the elements of the text within which that irony is subtly announcing itself, with the result that his/her own subjectivity is actively brought into the reading process.

Iser’s reading of Joyce’s Ulysses is similarly hinged upon the effect of textual

indeterminacies in conditioning the response of the reader through their foregrounding of the reading subject. For Iser, Ulysses is a “revolutionary” text, since it embodies, in literary form, the struggle against interpretive modes which privilege the unity of authorial intention (Prospecting 131-32). In its steadfast refusal to bow to the traditions of mimetic representation, indeed by parodying and “defamiliarizing” those assumptions, the novel forces the reader to make “projections onto the work in order to restore those dimensions that it seems to have lost.” In doing so, however, the reader must also come to terms with the inadequacy of these projections to bring the sort of representational unity to the text that might make it more amenable to a New Critical approach. What is made present in its place, according to Iser, is “the demise of representation” (Prospecting 134), understood as the possibility of “re-presenting” a world which might exist in some way anterior or prior to the subjective translation of it into phenomenological effect. In this critical model, then, Ulysses acts to indicate self-reflexively its own non-mimetic relationship to the “world” with which the reader may attempt to compare it.

According to Iser, transformation “comes to full fruition through the recipient’s imaginative participation in the games played The more the reader is drawn into the proceedings by playing the game of the text, the more he or she is also being played *by* the text” (Prospecting 258). It is in such statements that Iser moves most closely to the anthropological world. In the rest of Prospecting he is content to sketch out tentatively what the outlines of a “literary anthropology” might look like. His hesitation here is symptomatic of the way in which both the rhetorical and phenomenological strains of Reader-Response criticism tend to downplay the social, performative basis of fiction, the

way in which texts are performed in the act of reading by individuals who nonetheless share the social encoding necessary to read. In doing so, such criticism slights the fact that, as Daniel R. Schwartz points out in The Case for a Humanist Poetics, “rhetorical convention depends upon an author creating a social reality based upon the possibility of implied mutual understanding of author and reader” (10). Indeed, nowhere does Iser specifically enlist an anthropological critic or theorist, which suggests a certain figurative nature to his use of the term. A more vigorous literary anthropology might adopt this as its starting point, and look to the insights of Turner regarding liminality as a starting point for discussion of textual performance.

Turner’s work was deeply concerned with the ritual process, and specifically with its central phase, which he called the liminal. As Turner has suggested in On the Edge of the Bush, one of the key roles of indeterminacy in the liminal phase of ritual is to allow for the “defamiliarization” of cultural symbols and structures in order that they may be reconfigured in novel ways:

. . . the essence of liminality is to be found in its release from normal constraints, making possible the deconstruction of the “uninteresting” constructions of common sense, the “meaningfulness of ordinary life” . . . into cultural units which may then be reconstructed in novel ways, some of them bizarre to the point of monstrosity . . . [these liminal figures] reveal the freedom, the indeterminacy underlying all culturally constructed worlds.
(161)

Indeterminacy in the ritual liminal moment thus has a fundamentally reflexive aspect.

Through a playful presentation of the symbolic elements of culture (in the form of deliberate mis-representations of such things as social roles, proscribed spaces, or proscribed behaviours) in a context where novelty and play are given free reign, the liminal figurations thus comment on the social constructions which underlie and inform them. They are in this sense self-reflexive, offering cultural commentary obliquely or directly through the performance of a ritual that may ostensibly be about the unmediated inculcation of social norms.

The social dramas which Turner saw in ritual arise in response to two distinct, yet intertwined cultural needs: the often transformational redress of breaches in the “expectable regularities of group living” (*Edge of the Bush* 230) and the necessity of acculturating individuals into renewed social status. In the first instance, cultural crisis (and, in certain cases such as carnival, moribundity as well) is resolved through periods of group reflexivity, in which quotidian social constraints are broadly loosened to allow new perspectives to be brought to bear upon the renewal or “redressive” movement necessary to address both breach and stagnation. It is in this phase, according to Turner, that the “society, group, community, association . . . is at its most ‘self-conscious’” in an attempt reflexively to renew its own foundational terms (*Dramas* 41). In the second type of social drama, individuals (such as adolescents) aspiring to a change of status within the social order must undergo a period of ritualized and transitional reflexivity in order to be deemed ready for such a shift. In both cases reflexivity, accompanied by a high degree of temporary liminal indeterminacy, allows for cultural and individual renewal.

Liminality, a concept which Turner eventually broadened to include both

anthropological and aesthetic contexts, is a useful term for describing both a subject's performative position within a specific phase of ritual, as well as the self-reflexive nature of a state which exists both within and outside of the realm of the governing symbolic order. His writing on the liminal arose from extensive analysis of ritual performance, based initially on tribal social dramas and later on a broader spectrum of social drama (including theatre). In studies like On the Edge of the Bush and Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors Turner identified a pattern of self-reflexivity implicit in the ritual process, in which the social narratives of ritual both repeat and comment upon the cultural codes operant in the ritual. This pattern was most strongly evident in the state of "betwixt-and-between" he termed the liminal, because it represented a state of being which was in transition, on the threshold of a new social signification such as full adult membership in the social group. The liminal state, which is often characterized by a paradoxical reversal or denial of social status, is clearly manifested in the case of the chief who is stripped of office for a day and subjected to a series of ritual humiliations that serve a larger social goal, or in the case of adolescents, who, before they may enjoy the social status of the adult, are ritually removed from the group and spend a liminal period in which they are neither child nor adult. The basic premise of Turner's liminal analysis of ritual is the necessity for a period of ritual re-alignment of signification, a period of being/non-being/ "both at once" that ultimately leads to a transition to a new (or renewed) status within the social/symbolic order.

The temporary nature of the liminal period is a key aspect of its social function—it must come to an end, it is not the end itself. It performs a crucial, albeit temporary and

provisional, role in the renewal of the symbols of cultural understanding, for it creates a necessary space of de-familiarization in which the (re)creation of culturally conditioned meaning can take place. As Turner writes in From Ritual to Theatre, the essence of the liminal state is the way in which “people ‘play’ with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them” (27). In many cultures, this interrogation of the cultural syntax is typified by existential questions such as “What does it mean to be an adult in this culture? What is the relationship of the individual to the group?” Yet this state of defamiliarization, cannot, by its definition, remain permanent. By providing the necessary ludic anti-structure, where alternatives can be explored and recaptured, the liminal sets up the dialectic of meaning within ritual manifestations of cultural performance.

Turner characterized ritual activities as having a profound importance for every society (both pre- and post-industrial) as they seek to comprehend and assimilate change. Rather than posit some sort of timeless significance to ritual as his structuralist predecessors had, whereby ritual performance seeks only to recreate events of the mythic past, Turner refocused attention on the elements of seeming disorder and change within ritual, a refocusing which led him to an understanding of performative ritual as an agent of social change, rather than a static reiteration of existing social structures. Building on the work of the Belgian anthropologist Arnold van Gennep, who had delineated three distinct phases within ritual, Turner identified the central phase (called the *limin*, or threshold phase) as the fertile centre for the operations of the cultural production of significance and renewal. He based this observation on the elemental structures of ritual, which typically involve some sort of removal from the social group in order to facilitate a later

reintegration, as in tribal rituals of adolescence which remove the child and return the adult. It is in this phase, where the ritual participant has lost his or her previous status (that of child, for example) and has yet to gain the new one (adulthood as a fully functioning member of the social group) that he or she most fully inhabits the realm of the liminal. The participant is neither this nor that (or, sometimes, both at once) and the liminal space that he or she inhabits is full of terrifying possibility:

The novices are, in fact, temporarily undefined, beyond the normative social structure. This weakens them, since they have no rights over others. . . . They are dead to the social world, but alive to the asocial world. . . . Liminality may involve a complex series of episodes in sacred space time, and may also include subversive and ludic (or playful) events. The factors of culture are isolated . . . with the aid of symbol vehicles—such as trees, images, paintings, dance forms, etc., that are each susceptible not of a single meaning but of many meanings. Then the factors or elements of culture may be recombined in numerous, often grotesque ways, grotesque because they are arrayed in terms of possible or fantasied rather than experienced combinations . . . in liminality people “play” with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them. Novelty emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar events. (From Ritual to Theatre 27)

Turner here isolates the key features of the liminal operation: removal from the world of the quotidian or profane, the symbolic overturning of previously normalized “reality,” and a process of defamiliarization grounded in the socially sanctioned processes of ludic reversal.

These three features form the touchstone for an understanding of the liminal as a place of what Turner terms the “subjunctive mood of culture” (From Ritual to Theatre 84), the realm of the “what if.” This insight is also closely linked to Turner’s understanding of culture and signification as processual, dialectical conditions, rather than static formations existing anterior to human participation. The structuralist anthropologists who were Turner’s contemporaries sought to identify exactly those static formations that governed a society, and for them the ritual process could only re-present those symbols and structures which the participants inherited. In the subjunctive mood of culture, however, those received culture elements are viewed through the lenses of conjecture, anti-structure, and play.

Turner’s conceptualizing of the chaotic aspect of ritual, which he termed “anti-structure,” was meant to provide an alternative to this monolithic analysis: the continuance of the structure is dependent on the presence of its opposite, the liminal phase of socially sanctioned play. The two exist within a dialectic of integration and disintegration that is the condition of any healthy social system. In this sense anti-structure is the self-reflexive aspect of structure, in that it provides a performative commentary on the society from which it draws its symbolic components, a commentary enacted within the culturally sanctioned format of the ritual process. As Sarah Gilead points out, liminal anti-structure offers a “critique of structure-bound behaviors or norms” that allows it to come to terms with existing social patterns and relationships and provide a “a safe game-space for the putting-into-play of values or behaviors inimical to a given power structure” (183-84).

According to Turner, anti-structure (or *communitas*) consists of the series of ludic

oppositions to the normative social structure which nonetheless define and provide the basis for that structure. Thus, while tribal rituals of status reversal or initiation may seem to threaten or question the social structure, they contrarily provide the basis for its renewal. This was one of Turner's founding premises in response to the structuralist dilemma of 1960's anthropology. If a structure is not a determinate "thing" what exactly is it? Taking his terminology from legal anthropologist Sally Falk Moore, Turner points out in On the Edge of the Bush that social structure is "processual," not fixed, and that the dialectic that exists between social structure and its opposite "anti-structure" is a fluid and regenerative one (159). Moore asserts that indeterminacy is a fundamental aspect of social life, and that the "patterned aspects" of social "structures" are "temporary, incomplete, and contain elements of ambiguity, discontinuity, contradiction, paradox, and conflict" (232). In suggesting that every attempt to fix a structural "meaning" admits the possibility of its mutability, Turner and Moore provide a powerful argument and explanation for the presence of indeterminacies in ritual and social processes.

The anti-structural aspects of ritual also problematize conventions of history, what Turner calls "human cultural time," since social drama is a "time outside time" that allows cultures leeway to "play with the factors of social experience" of which notions of time are a central organizing principle (Edge of the Bush 227, 236). Time, which is often conceived as linear, a succession of events or acts, is shown in ritual to be more elastic than that model allows. In the liminal period of ritual in particular, sequential time is suspended, in order that the participant may more readily comprehend the socially constructed nature of the linear time model. Just as other elements of social structure are

laid open to scrutiny in the subjunctive mood, this narrative of human history is thus experienced as cultural metaphor rather than as immutable fact.

Another key aspect of the liminal phase is its transitory nature. As a condition of indeterminacy this state of flux is a central operation of the dialectic between structure and anti-structure. Thus the participants who are rendered socially invisible must return to the social world with renewed and modified status, a different understanding of the world they inhabit, or the liminal process has been a failure. As Turner points out in On the Edge of the Bush, an adolescent who remains eternally so, never making the transition to adult life, becomes a social liability, dangerous to the social order that he or she inhabits (159). This danger is always present in the liminal moment—the danger that the ship may leave port but never return. As we have seen, the liminal personae, tainted as they are by representations of death, reversals of taboo, and evasion of the social classifications, are dangerous, a potential pollutant to the social world. The transitory nature of the liminal period is crucial, for if the dialectic does not reach some sort of resolution (however temporary and provisional) it would cease to be a socially useful act of signification transformation.

The first two aspects of liminality (tropes of departure/return and spatial interstitiality) are those most often used by literary critics, who tend to read the narrative elements of the text (specifically character and plot) as examples of its liminality. Robert Daly, for example, sees the novels of James Fennimore Cooper and others as examples of how an author may situate a novel within liminal periods of time and/or geography, in

order to emphasize the “betwixt- and between-ness” of their characters and settings. Daly’s point is that these authors “attempt to use and transcend this condition [of liminality] in fictions that can ground perception and discourse less in the isolated individual person than in a community, and that their fictions both embody and foster such communities” (83). He argues that by framing fiction within a liminal setting (such as “frontier” America), the ambiguity of this setting becomes another textual player, which opens the story to the dialectic of structure/anti-structure. Quoting from Turner’s The Ritual Process (95), Daly describes liminal *personae* as “necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there: they are betwixt-and-between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention” (70-71). The Leatherstocking characters in Cooper’s novels, then, become textually liminal entities, and act therefore to embody liminality within the plot. The characters act as tropes for a broader communal liminality, and this becomes a way for the critic to discuss their various positions within the text.

Randolph Parker extends the possible uses of Turner’s theory in a theatrical context, a context that Turner himself saw as highly susceptible to liminal analysis. Parker’s reading of J.M. Synge’s Playboy of the Western World approaches the play from a variety of liminal possibilities, ranging from character, setting and audience. His discussion focuses on how “actual gaps in the diegetic world of the play and in the thematic paradigms which inform it . . . affect our comprehension of the play . . . whether

or not we recognize them as part of its system of signification” (69). While Parker’s analysis is in many ways more theoretically sophisticated than Daly’s, it also largely slights the self-reflexive aspects of the text, an omission that hinders the overall force of both arguments.

How then to articulate more fully the various ways in which liminalities may function within a literary text? Barbara Babcock, in her study “The Novel and the Carnival World,” provides a useful point of departure:

Just as ritual may combine and recapitulate the cultural repertoire of performance types and communicative relationships, so the novel is sufficiently flexible and “open” that it may introduce the different voices of any and all literary genres, not to mention extra-literary ones. (912)

This passage, which calls to mind immediately Mikhail Bakhtin’s theorizing of the “heteroglossic” nature of the novel in The Dialogic Imagination, underscores the way in which a novel, like ritual, opens up the liminal moment through the self-reflexivity of performance. Paraphrasing biological philosopher Gregory Bateson, Turner elaborates on this metalingual phenomenon in On the Edge of the Bush: the bizarre figures of the liminal rite “reveal the freedom, the indeterminacy underlying all culturally constructed worlds, the free play of mankind’s [sic] cognitive and imaginative capabilities (161). By exposing the socially constructed nature of cultural “worlds”—worlds that are reiterated in the reader’s experience of texts—the liminal space also exposes the complicity of the participant in the creation of those worlds. The cultural structure is no longer an “out there” but an “in here/out there” dialectic for the participant. As Colin Turnbull puts it in

his discussion of the connection between anthropological and theatrical states of liminality as transformative phenomena, “‘this-ness’ becomes ‘that-ness’” (81).

And certainly indeterminacy fulfils the same role in Iser’s theorizing of the act of reading, for it is within the gaps that the text reveals itself—both explicitly and duplicitously—as a fiction to the reader, thereby inviting entrance into the reading process. Barbara Babcock has explored this aspect of reflexive indeterminacy thoroughly in her essay “Mud, Mirrors, and Making Up,” offering Virginia Woolf’s frequent use of mirrors and meta-narrational technique in Between the Acts as a prime example of the way a text’s interstitial elements may serve to reveal the reader’s role in the act of textual performance. For Babcock, the reflexivity in Woolf’s novel “is as much about the performance of the reader and about the creation of the text in reading as it is about the performance of the writer” (104). In her reading, Woolf’s novel succeeds in foregrounding “the drama of the interrelationships of the two dramas [the one staged by Miss LaTrobe and the events surrounding it] themselves, which is in turn a reflection of the relationship between ourselves and the novel” (102).

This processual model of social structure has obvious affinities with Iser’s Reader-Response theories, particularly the importance of the dialectic outlined by Turner between structure and indeterminacy which makes the social production of meaning possible, since it helps account for the fluid nature of symbol systems within their cultural context. Turner is careful to define ritual symbol as a category which, while not exclusive of, operates in certain ways distinct from its construction by linguists and cognitive

structuralists. He distinguishes symbol from sign through the “multiplicity (multivocality, polysemy) of its signifieds, and by the nature of its signification.” He argues that symbols are semantically “open,” and so their “meaning is not absolutely fixed, nor is it necessarily the same for everyone who agrees that a particular signifier . . . has symbolic meaning” (*Edge of the Bush* 171). The reflexive processes by which ritual lays these social systems open to question through liminality are similar, then, to the operations of the reader, who is forced by textual indeterminacies to place his or her own symbolic categories into the dialectic of meaning embedded in the reading process. Just as the ritual participant must, over the course of the ritual period, enter into a transformative dialogue with the cultural elements, the reader, too, must engage on some level the cultural processes and contexts that have given rise to the text in order to develop a satisfactory reading that also has transformative potential. While the social code which in many ways governs interpretation is shared by individual readers, its symbolic elements are sufficiently pliable to allow for the possibility of variant readings.

The implications of this anthropological articulation of indeterminacy become especially important in the context of Iser’s articulation of the narrative gaps found within texts. In Iser’s model indeterminacies are identified with the textual gaps which the reader is called upon to fulfill or account for in the reading process. This is different from, although not inimical to, the post-structuralist conception of textual indeterminacy as the inherent condition of any product of language, which is shown to be un-fixed to any centering or final term other than its own context. In this sense, however, a literary anthropology might bridge the technical terminology of Iser with the insights of both post-

structuralism and liminal analysis, since for Turner the liminal moment is an opening of both the ritual participant and his or her cultural context to the interrogations implied by a temporary release from determinate fixities.

The concept of liminality thus offers at least two fruitful avenues for discussion of literary texts. First, through its articulation of the necessity of periods of “betwixt-and-betweenness,” Turner’s approach to ritual allows discussion of how characters may themselves undergo rituals of passage and renewal. This may usefully be called a narratological stance, as it focuses on elements of plot and semiotic structure to produce a reading of how the “shared communal drama of liminality makes fluid the arbitrary boundaries . . . between classes of individuals, between structurally high and low, powerful and powerless, male and female” (Gilead 183). A second textual element that the liminal approach foregrounds is the self-reflexive aspects of fiction, the extent to which they are stories about stories or story-telling. Just as the liminal moment within ritual offers the participant the opportunity to reflect and reconfigure the givens of culture, the self-consciousness and self-reflexivity that are a hallmark of the novel serve to foreground its own fictionality, thereby reconstituting the human, cultural inscription of its readers. In this respect the dialectical process reflects the operations taking place in the act of reading, where provisional reconciliations of indeterminacies produce what Iser calls “transformations” (*Prospecting* 259), and in this we arrive at what might be called a performative approach to literature, which sees both character and reflexivity as important mediators of the reader and the cultural constructions that are elaborated in the process of reading.

CHAPTER TWO

The Liminal Butler in Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day

The liminal experience functions as a necessary time of reflexivity that allows both the individual and the social system access to the productive dialectic of indeterminacy, a dialectic that Turner suggests sustains the transformative properties of any cultural system. But what, then, is to be done with the initiate who will not enter the liminal realm of the ritual, and is thereby consigned to futility as a non-person within the culture? Forever external to the workings of society, this person remains permanently liminal, an asocial mannequin, condemned merely to go through the motions of human interaction without partaking in them as though they were nothing more than a pantomime. This figure, having never gone through the exacting period of introspection and renewal offered by the socializing operations of ritual, is profoundly handicapped by this lack of initiation, for the language of social encoding that is learned within this period is that of the adult, fully functioning member of society. By short-circuiting the dialectic whereby both individual and culture sustain and integrate change, he or she poses a unique challenge to both the ritual and the reading process.

Exactly such a figure is masterfully rendered in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel The Remains of the Day. The butler/narrator Stevens, a man for whom even the small mysteries of casual banter are a source of frequent discomfort, represents a duplicitous narrative persona that may be more readily understood as an overgrown adolescent, who

has never fully entered the social realm as an adult. His often embarrassing mannerisms are reflective of the nervousness typical of an adolescent, while the ethic of servility and stoicism that he worships seems to inhibit him from accepting any moral responsibility. His life is a monument to “dignity,” a defining characteristic of the “great” butler that he struggles to explain and ultimately resorts to defining as something that “comes down to not removing one’s clothes in public” (210). In a figurative sense, this is the defining proposition of Stevens’s life: removing ones’ clothes, resonant as they are with social coding and status, represents a risk to the butler’s position, a position which itself is deeply saturated with the social constructions of power and prestige. Stevens, while physically mature, is emotionally immature, and the novel is constructed as his personal perspective of a trip that is both physical and, as Brian Shaffer notes, psychological (83).

From an anthropological standpoint, his narrative is from the outset one of the adolescent experiencing a journey that is both personally revelatory and socially integrative. As he drives to his meeting with Miss Kenton, he reflects upon his past, and in the process undergoes a change from his previous understanding of his role and responsibilities in society. It is thus possible to distinguish three distinct subject positions occupied by Stevens in the novel. The first is his persona of the past as represented within his various reflections. The second is the journeying, reflecting self, who looks upon the Stevens of the past with a more or less detached, critical eye. The third is the Stevens we meet at the end of the novel, dissatisfied with his heretofore sufficient social posture, and possibly intent on changing his conception of and relationship to society. Just as the adolescent in ritual must analyze where he or she has come from before becoming re-

invented as an adult, so Stevens must move beyond his initial stage through critical self-reflection.

Upon undertaking a journey beyond the walls of the house that has been his long-time home (and, in certain ways, a prison) Stevens undergoes a series of experiences and introspections which bring him, at the end, to some sort of deepened understanding of the social realm that has by and large escaped him. This, in short, becomes a socializing experience, marked by moments of creative anti-structure and self-reflection, which leaves him changed and, perhaps, more fully realized within the suffocating routine which had been his life. The essential elements of the liminal phase—contained chaos, meetings with figures of wisdom, introspection—are all present in his journey to visit his old colleague, Miss Kenton. The narrative itself reflects his liminal state through both the indeterminacy that characterizes the unreliable narrator and the reflexivity of his own commentary upon his reconstruction of his life, since this also involves the reader's consistency-building process. The combined effect serves as an effective example of the reading process as a performance that brings forward the reading subject at the same time that it blurs the distinctions between reader and text.

The "voyage out" of course, is an old theme in literature. From Odysseus on, it seems that literary figures have frequently attempted to "go beyond" the strictures of the quotidian in search of novel experiences, experiences which are usually attended by personal growth or change. The travel narrative offers a convenient medium for the journey within and without the norms of society, and so is deeply associated with the formalized and stylized journeys undertaken by the ritual initiate. The descent into

unknown geographies, populated by strange and knowing figures of wisdom, and ultimately, a return, are elements shared by both literary and ritual narratives. As Turner points out, it is the “ritual and esoteric teachings [i.e. the codes of culture] which grows girls and makes men” (*Forest* 102); in other words, the passage from immaturity into properly understood adulthood is marked by both a transformative journey and the helpful guidance of wisdom figures.

At the outset, Stevens understands only that he will undertake his “expedition” alone (3), and thus, apparently for the first time, be left to his own devices for an extended period. This has obvious affinities with the processes of reading as well as the ritual journey, both of which are characteristically individual experiences involving a movement into strangeness that allows for the “factors or elements of culture to be recombined” (Turner, *Edge of the Bush* 27). This movement becomes increasingly apparent to Stevens as he moves beyond familiar territory into an “unrecognizable” terrain where he goes “beyond all previous boundaries.” Leaving behind the familiarity of Darlington Hall, which he has rarely left since taking up employment there, Stevens becomes a little frightened by the first spasm of novelty, the fear that he might be going down the wrong road: “I must confess I did feel a slight sense of alarm—a sense aggravated by the feeling that I was perhaps not on the correct road at all, but speeding off in totally the wrong direction into a wilderness” (24). This is the first insight given the reader that the journey that Stevens is to undertake is both one of novelty—the defamiliarized countryside—and chaos—the untamed, unknowable wilderness.

Once on his way, he chances on a little old man, the first of a series of figures of

wisdom, each of whom points in some way to the natural, fructive world. As Turner suggests, “an important component of the liminal situation is . . . an enhanced stress on nature at the expense of culture,” since the journey into nature is one which serves in ritual to underscore the constructed nature of cultural fictions (*Dramas* 253). This first meeting is presented in diction redolent with childhood story, and suggestive of both the cautionary and instructive aspects of the fairy-tale genre:

A little way further up the road on the opposite side, I could see the start of a footpath, which disappeared steeply up into the thickets. Sitting on the large stone that marked this spot was a thin, white-haired man in a cloth cap, smoking his pipe. He called to me again and though I could not quite make out his words, I could see him gesturing for me to join him. (24)

What this Rumpelstiltskin figure offers Stevens is a bit of advice about the view to be had by following a certain path, advice at which the butler initially balks. But the odd little man continues to prod him, suggesting that “you’ll be sorry if you don’t take a walk up there. And you never know. A couple more years and it might be too late Better go up now while you still can” (25). Taken somewhat aback by this apparent rebuke, Stevens decides to take the walk. Like the ritual initiate in Turner’s figuration of the rite of passage, he is “compelled to obey implicitly the apparently arbitrary commands of the elder or instructor” (*Blazing* 137). What Stevens finds is a pastoral cliché of England’s finely constrained nature, with rolling fields bounded by hedges and trees, suggesting that, at this point, he sees nature not as wilderness but rather a further example of the structuring impulses of society; he can recognize in nature only those elements that

replicate his experience within the civilizing walls of Darlington Hall. Even so, he experiences a minor epiphany and is able “for the first time to adopt a frame of mind appropriate for the journey” that he is about to undertake. This “healthy flush of anticipation” for the “many interesting experiences” (26) in store en route comes over him as he gazes over the green valley, suggesting that the initial stage of this ritual journey has been entered.

Here, however, we should also recall the crucial ways in which for much of his life Stevens has been like the formless, status-less, novice, for whom the process of ritual allows entry into the world of the adult life. Like a novice, Stevens has been powerless, immobile, sexually unaware and immature. Inseparable from the house he runs, he has spent his life seeking to serve his master uncritically, as he emphatically claims:

If a butler is to be of any worth to anything or anybody in his life, there must surely come a time when he ceases his searching; a time when he must say to himself: This employer embodies all that I find noble and admirable. I will hereafter devote myself to serving him. (201)

Of course, for Stevens, up to this point there has never been a time of real searching, merely acquiescence. There is little else in Stevens’s life to define himself outside of his role as butler, a role that he has sought to “inhabit . . . utterly and fully” (169). While this meek acceptance of one’s role may be touching in its childish simplicity, it is not, in Western society, considered a sign of mature, individuated adulthood. Stevens must therefore undergo what Turner calls the “ordeals and humiliations” of the rite of passage, in order to prepare him for his “new responsibilities” in a new, more mature, social

position (Ritual Process 103).

Stevens's acquiescence has meant an obvious denial and repression of his own personal growth, manifested clearly in his prepubescent elision of all things concerning sex. This asexuality is a significant element of the liminal figure, whose "undifferentiated character" is marked, according to Turner, by "the discontinuance of sexual relations and the absence of marked sexual polarity" (Ritual Process 104). Stevens's awkwardness in situations of intimacy (of all kinds, although most often of a sexual nature) reflects his own immaturity and unpreparedness to cope in social situations generally thought of as common.

Turner suggests that the ritual process demands a leveling of social rank and status, and participants find themselves "stripped during their time of seclusion of all the attributes of their former social-structural status" in order to receive the intended gnosis of the ritual (Blazing the Trail 137). This has typically been true of the hero in Western romance, which has been structured, as Barbara Babcock points out, along an "exile-and-return pattern [which] emphasizes the necessity for the hero to go beyond the margins of society and there undergo a liminal experience to find his sense of self and thus realize (often with the aid of mediating figures) symbolic power through victory in his tasks" ("Liberty's a Whore" 107). It is this pattern that is simultaneously echoed and parodied in The Remains of the Day, from the picaresque inversions of Stevens's travelogue to his poignantly rendered insights at the close of the novel.

Beginning with the farm girl whose hen he avoids running over (68), and most keenly in the cottage scene with the villagers (182-93), Stevens adopts a number of poses

and pretenses which mark him as a ritual participant who, as Turner emphasizes, must “play with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them” (Ritual to Theatre 27). In Stevens’s case the familiar social role is that of the life-long servant, condemned by the vicissitudes of his profession to a lifetime of servility and humble silence, so that by adopting the clothing and transport of the master, and riding into the countryside posing, however inadvertently, as a nobleman, Stevens is putting into play one of the most fundamental inversions of social ritual: the “king for a day” or “world turned upside down” motif. That he feels the need to wear the appropriate “costume” and that “it is important that one be attired at such times in a manner worthy of one’s position” (11), suggests both that Stevens—perhaps unconsciously—wishes to adopt the social position of Lord Darlington, and also his sense that posing and disguise will be part of the journey to come. Acting and speaking as one to the manner born, he does little to disabuse those he meets of the idea that he is somehow of a social station befitting his grand travelling suit.

A crucial part of the liminal process, which according to Turner is marked by a “mirror inversion of mundane life” such that “political inferiors may be liminally endowed with the marks of political authority” (Edge of the Bush 162), role reversal is played to the hilt by Stevens; he drops the name of Darlington Hall when it suits him, and enthusiastically warms to his assumed status when regaling the villagers with deceptively modest tales of Churchill and Eden (188). This scene is tellingly paralleled and reversed in his recollection of an earlier time, when Lord Darlington’s friend Mr Spencer had taken pains to show up his presumed ignorance of world affairs through his own interrogation

(195-96). Taken together, the two interrogation scenes provide a mirror image of one another. In the earlier examination by Mr Spencer, Stevens is presumably shown to be a mutely uninformed “commoner,” a stereotype that Spencer believes would be unfit to share political power with social superiors. In the scene with the villagers, however, Stevens—clothed in the suit of the ruling class—adopts as well their casual disposition and close acquaintance with power. Thus doubled, the two scenes neatly demonstrate how Stevens’s journey involves him in an inversion that is crucial to his later insight into the historical role of Lord Darlington, making him better able to see that role from both inside and out.

In the liminal journey that he has undertaken, however, Stevens also engages in other types of identity switching: not only does he pose as an aristocrat when necessary, but also denies his social background when circumstances demand it. His encounter with a chauffeur on the second day of his trip (120), in which he denies his association with Lord Darlington, is moreover “not the first of its kind” (122), and indeed prompts him to recall the time that he denied to a visitor of Mr Farraday’s that he had worked for Darlington, a denial which causes considerable embarrassment to his present employer. In turn, both this act of denial and admission of it seem to belie his insistence that a “butler of any quality must be seen to *inhabit* his role, utterly and fully; he cannot be seen casting it aside one moment simply to don it the next as though it were nothing more than a pantomime costume” (169). The effect on the reader of this disjunction between stated intent and actual behaviour is itself one of defamiliarization: the ostensible narrating subject is known to a certain extent, yet his frequent oscillations of identity and ambition

undermine whatever stability has come to be expected of the narrative.

Insofar as initiation represents a rite of passage, in which the passageway is the liminal space itself, it is significant that corridors— located interstitially between the rooms where things are “really” happening— are the site of Stevens’s most poignant hesitations. For him, the corridor is a site of safety, a place where he can escape from involvement in (and, hence, responsibility for) activities for which he is not prepared. It is fitting, therefore, that it is to the corridor outside Miss Kenton’s room that he escapes upon learning of her aunt’s death:

I paused out in the corridor, wondering if I should go back, knock and make good my omission. But then it occurred to me that if I were to do so, it might easily intrude upon her private grief. Indeed, it was not impossible that Miss Kenton, at that very moment, and only a few feet from me, was actually crying. The thought provoked a strange feeling to rise within me, causing me to stand there hovering in the corridor for some moments.” (176-77)

His unease in the face of uncomfortable personal experience is not unlike that of the adolescent, who fails to discern in moments of gravity the appropriate response, and so flees the risk of embarrassment and humiliation. Stevens’s emotional stasis is foregrounded again later in the novel when he learns that Miss Kenton is leaving. Again faced with the possibility that Miss Kenton might be crying, Stevens pauses “in the dimness of the corridor” as he considers his course of action. What he decides upon, of course, is inaction, unable as he is at this point to understand the human ramifications of his actions:

I do not know how long I remained standing there; at the time it seemed quite a significant period, but in reality, I suspect, it was only a matter of a few seconds. For, of course, I was required to hurry upstairs to serve some of the most distinguished gentlemen of the land and I cannot imagine I would have delayed unduly. (227)

The structural characteristics of corridors, which lead from one place to another yet are not considered “places” unto themselves, are ideal sites of liminality, a condition which is also a passageway, not a destination. For Stevens, in contrast, they are frequently a convenient escape route by which to avoid the perceived perils of interpersonal relationship.

Sexlessness and androgyny play important roles in the structural invisibility of the initiate. According to Turner, ritual participants are “either sexless or bisexual and may be regarded as a kind of human *prima materia*—as undifferentiated raw material” (Forest 98). Initiation into the social order which condones (while at the same time constructing and constraining) adult sexuality is often an implicit or explicit aspect of adolescent ritual. Stevens, in his awkwardness and elisions regarding sexuality, displays all the characteristics of the virginal adolescent, unable to understand or empathize with its various manifestations in his life. Certainly his two abortive attempts to “educate” the prenuptial Reginald Cardinal (83-85, 90) are the most biting (and hilarious) cases in point. In his second attempt, having announced a discussion of the “very special change” that will attend the springtime flowering of the “glories of nature,” Stevens proceeds with highly embarrassed obliqueness to say nothing at all about the matter at hand (90).

Cardinal's response would seem at home in a British sexual comedy: "Well, I shall look forward to it, Stevens. Though I'm more of a fish man myself. I know all about fish, fresh water and salt." Setting aside the stereotypes about the English predilection for embarrassment, this moment brings into focus what is a major conundrum for Stevens: he hasn't a clue about sex.

This, however, does not mean that he lacks interest but rather that he is fearful of such encounters. Thus, as Miss Kenton teases him, he does not like to have "pretty girls on staff," for fear that he will become "distracted," just as he is shocked and embarrassed when Farraday suggests that his trip concerns a romantic liaison. Moreover, he covertly reads romantic novels, as Miss Kenton discovers in a highly charged scene, which is saturated with the most poignant elements of Stevens's fallibilities as a person: self-deception, fear of sex and women, and a painful inability to recognize the irony in his self-justifications. He derives, he says, an "incidental enjoyment" from the books, and in a moment of supreme irony, asks why one should not "enjoy in a lighthearted sort of way stories of ladies and gentlemen who express their feelings for each other, often in the most elegant phrases" (168). The counterpoint with his own benighted ineloquence could hardly be more pointed. The reflexive nature of the text, too, is highlighted in this scene, with Stevens wondering "just how much that incident contributed to the large changes our relationship subsequently underwent, it is difficult to say," and going on to place it in the context of the larger estrangement connected to her consequent engagement and marriage. What goes unsaid, here as elsewhere in the novel, is again more indicative to the reader of what happened than what is overtly said. Stevens's reticent yet revealing anguish over this

incident suggests that even at the stage of reminiscence he has a deeper emotional engagement than he is ready to accept.

To appreciate the way that his journey into the wilderness—a world of “nature” which is constructed as a site of disorder, chaos, and self-reflection—plays a key role in his development, it is important to recognize the various ways in which the supremely organized world fiction of *Darlington Hall* is valorized as the site of order, planning, and self-abnegation for Stevens. As head butler, Stevens is profoundly concerned with the orderly running of the house, to the extent that he often sacrifices its welfare over his own. His obsessive organisation of personnel and their tasks is a case in point: “I spent many hours working on the staff plan, and at least as many hours again thinking about it as I went about other duties or as I lay awake after retiring” (8). In many ways the house serves as the constitutive paradigm for the social confinement that Stevens has undergone. His escape from the house offers him the possibility of release, both physical and mental, from that suffocating order.

Stevens and his father are both confined within the constricted social roles that they “inhabit,” and this confinement is also concretely reflected in the character of their living spaces. Stevens’s “pantry” is spare to the point of monkishness, suggesting the self-denial of an ascetic, on the one hand, and the deprivations of an inmate on the other. His living quarters, as Miss Kenton describes them are “stark and bereft of colour” (52), a mirror image of his father’s room, which Stevens himself likens to a “prison cell” (64). Miss Kenton, indeed, uses this analogy when she comments pointedly in the scene where she discovers Stevens with the romantic novel, a scene that Stevens calls a “crucial turning

point” in their relationship (164): “Really, Mr Stevens, this room resembles a prison cell. All one needs is a small bed in the corner and one could well imagine condemned men spending their last hours here” (165). Since Miss Kenton’s voice is constructed in the novel as that of verity and lucidity, her comment here serves to underscore the sense that Stevens is more constrained, even condemned, than he is able (at the stage he is recollecting, at any rate) openly to admit to himself.

The reader is repeatedly given examples of how being an effective butler and the effective running of the house are Stevens’s primary goals. Despite his pretensions to the contrary—his inflated sense of the importance of his role in international affairs is the most salient example—the social status that Stevens occupies is little more than a hollow position, which apparently demands that he remain a perpetual role player with none of the characteristics generally associated with adult responsibility. Stevens is “[p]art of the package” (242), a “genuine old-fashioned English butler” in a “genuine old English house” (124): an ironic description, given his own insistence that the dignity of a butler is in many ways dependent on the suppression of any *genuine* emotion or thought. He is indelibly objectified within the parameters of Darlington Hall, like the “chinamen” and silver, and has thus not been, in any real sense, an adult at all. The journey that he undertakes, however, since it removes him from that context into one where he is forced to deal with the exigencies of adulthood (even fairly trivial ones such as keeping a car supplied with gas) brings him into contact with the realm of the social in much the same way that a ritual is meant to. He must leave the socially constructed world of the hall in which he is configured as an object in order to examine both his own life and his place within the

culture, just as the liminal adolescent in ritual is provided with the opportunity to see inside the operations of culture in order later to play a meaningful part within them. In this way his journey, which is marked by a growing reflexivity, also parallels the entry of the reader into the text, as subject/object binaries are broken down to reveal the performative subject at the centre of cultural constructions.

His “descent” into nature thus provides him with many liminal opportunities for self-reflection, so much so that he states “it is perhaps in the nature of coming away on a trip like this that one is prompted towards such surprising new perspectives on topics one imagined one had long ago thought through thoroughly” (117). There are several instances in which he is guided by strangers to places of solitude in order to reflect quietly on his circumstance. The first such scene is the encounter with the old man on Salisbury Plain on the first day of his journey, but it is another which brings out the self-reflective aspect of nature even more effectively: his encounter on day two with the “batman” where he first admits to denying his relationship with Lord Darlington and then, at Mortimer’s Pond admits to his deception. Trapped on a side road, Stevens notes in a slight panic that “I found myself in a narrow lane, hemmed in on either side by foliage so that I could gain little idea of what was around me” (117). This passage makes clear the extent to which nature is semiotically constructed in the novel as a site of passage and self-knowledge, like the liminal phase of ritual itself. Stevens is confused and disoriented by his surroundings, which mirror the deliberately bewildering geographies of ritual. What the defamiliarizing foliage leads to, ultimately, is the chauffeur—amused by Stevens’s unawareness that he has run out of gas—who suggests that Stevens visit the local pond. Again, Stevens is

given instructions by a stranger, and this time they lead to an even more tortuous journey. He finds himself “getting lost down narrow, twisting lanes,” surrounded by foliage “so thick as to practically blot out the sun altogether” (120). What he finds there is an “atmosphere of great calm” which enables him to “ponder all the more thoroughly these thoughts which have entered [his] mind” (121). Clearly, the purpose of the diversions into nature serve to allow Stevens, as a self-described “novice” (160), to begin a process of self-reflection, one which at all times conscripts the reader as a witness.

Stevens’s early position as something of a social outsider is manifested in many ways, the most keen perhaps being his unfamiliarity with humour. The only type of humour that Stevens seems comfortable evincing is the oddly inappropriate “small laugh” that inevitably serves as his response to situations of intimacy or emotional discomfort. As his father lies dying, for example, anxious to effect some sort of reconciliation with his son, Stevens responds with the bemused discomfort of a child: “He [Stevens’ father] went on looking at his hands for a moment. Then he said slowly: ‘I hope I’ve been a good father to you.’ I laughed a little and said: ‘I’m so glad you’re feeling better now’” (97). Later, unable to address directly the grief of Miss Kenton upon the news of her aunt’s death, Stevens elliptically approaches her with an unrelated staffing matter, and once again accompanies it with “a small laugh” (177). Yet again, when Reginald Cardinal comments that Stevens seems upset by the news of Miss Kenton’s leaving, he replies “with a small laugh” that he is “perfectly all right” (220). Freud has, in discussing the psychological significance of humour generally, suggested that this “humorous displacement” is a type of “defensive process” that “perform[s] the task of preventing the generation of unpleasure

from external sources” (299). Certainly, for Stevens, the innocuous little laugh circumvents any real participation in the gravity of personal intimacy, and leaves him outside of any authentic responsibility to his social world.

Conversely, bantering seems to act in the novel as a trope for spontaneity, a certain kind of freedom in self-expression, both of which are intensely problematic for Stevens. Indeed, Stevens’s entrance into the true realm of the social may be traced along the lines of his acceptance of this activity. This bewildering spontaneity (which relies nonetheless on custom and routine), which he imagines a sort of “affectionate sport” (14) between American employer and employee, at first was a mystery to Stevens, fraught as he felt it to be with the “catastrophic possibility of uttering a bantering remark only to discover it wholly inappropriate” (16). He speaks of the “hazards of uttering witticisms,” and hopes someday to become “proficient given time and practice,” yet “such are the dangers” that he decides not to “discharge this duty” until that proficiency has been gained (131-32). Like the adolescent who frequently blurts out inappropriate comments (or who remains silent for fear of doing so) Stevens is unready for the demands of mature social intercourse. This asocial unreadiness is made most painfully clear both in his choice of models from which to learn and in his halting attempts at practiced spontaneity:

I have been studying this programme [a radio comedy] because the witticisms performed on it are always in the best of taste and, to my mind, of a tone not at all out of keeping with the sort of bantering Mr Farraday might expect on my part. Taking my cue from this programme, I have devised a simple exercise which I try to perform at least once a day; whenever an odd moment presents itself, I try to

formulate three witticisms based on my immediate surroundings at that moment.

Or, as a variation on this same exercise, I may attempt to think of three witticisms based on the events of the past hour. (131)

The futility and irony of Stevens's comic calisthenics serve only to foreground the constrained, undeveloped nature of his sense of interpersonal relationships. At the same time, they underscore the necessity of his learning how to cope with situations of immediacy and authenticity, which demand some sort of ability to be spontaneous and enter into the cultural give and take of humour. It is fitting, therefore, that at the end of the novel Stevens's increased self-awareness—that is at the same time an increased insight into his social structure—is marked by his resolution to “look at this whole matter of bantering more enthusiastically” since it just might be that “in bantering lies the key to human warmth” (245).

The fear that Stevens has of being misunderstood points out another prevalent dilemma present in the novel: communication, or the lack of it, is an act saturated with the possibility of misunderstanding, and therefore is best not risked at all. This serves also to foreground the self-reflexive nature of his recollection/confession, evidenced in the way that Stevens is constantly interrupting his narrative to clarify, expand upon, or in some way nuance what has been said earlier. This uncertainty is mirrored in his own careful, measured obliqueness in conversation—certainly an asset for his job and relationship with Lord Darlington, but a handicap in situations requiring any amount of interpersonal intimacy. His narrative, like his reported speech, is full of hesitations and clarifications—“I should make clear You can perhaps understand I am sure you

will agree”—that parallel and foreground the problems that Stevens has with interpersonal communication. As Kathleen Wall points out in her discussion of the unreliable narrator in the novel, Stevens’s various narrative “tics” point to a deeper handicap regarding social intimacy that is revealed in the attempt to conceal it. The danger of misunderstanding is rendered both humourously and poignantly during his confrontation with Miss Kenton over his romantic novel, in which she makes what Brian Shaffer calls an “unmistakable sexual ‘advance’” (72). While Stevens is unironically relating the event to the reader, his version of events clearly downplays (just as it has concerning their evening meetings in his pantry) the romantic tension that exists between himself and Miss Kenton. His own communication, then, self-consciously announces itself as flawed, indeterminate, and so poses a challenge to the reader, whose process of consistency building is shown to be as problematic and provisional as Stevens’s version of events.

It is in this scene with Miss Kenton that Stevens’s fear of sex (symptoms of which also appear in his terror of spontaneous social intercourse in the form of bantering) takes on its most directly physical form. As Miss Kenton “advances” upon him Stevens becomes aware that the “atmosphere” undergoes a “peculiar change,” such that he feels as if the pair “had been suddenly thrust on to some other plane of being altogether” (167). The unmistakable sexual tension, clear enough to the reader, confounds Stevens as he recalls the scene, admitting that:

“it is not easy to describe clearly what I mean here. All I can say is that everything around us suddenly became very still; it was my impression that Miss Kenton’s manner also underwent a sudden change; there was a strange seriousness in her

expression, and it struck me she seemed almost frightened. (167)

Miss Kenton then proceeds to “prise the book away, practically one finger at a time” until Stevens surrenders it, a process that to Stevens “takes a very long time.” The almost erotic nature of this scene is undercut by the awkward posture that he maintains throughout, as he strives to avoid contact with Miss Kenton by twisting his head away at an “unnatural angle.” Indeed, he attempts to circumvent the incident in the first place by locking the novel into the drawer of his desk, suggesting that perhaps he would prefer that all such matters remain hidden and suppressed. What the incident with the “sentimental love story” demonstrates, finally, is the incompatibility (for Stevens) of sexuality and his carefully constructed (constricted) role as butler. The “important principle” that he stresses in connection with the scene is the fact that he was “off duty” at the time, a status which “any butler who cares about his dignity” would allow only “when he is entirely alone” (168-69). To be revealed as unguarded, out of “costume,” constitutes for Stevens an assault on his “dignity.” Considering his own contorted dumbness in describing his feelings for Miss Kenton, it is ironic that this scene of abrogated intimacy would occur while Stevens is attempting to “maintain and develop” his “command of the English language” by reading a book whose “elegant dialogue” might be useful “in the course of one’s normal intercourse with ladies and gentlemen” (167-68).

As Stevens moves through his journey of self-discovery, his growing awareness of his self-deception is paralleled by the reader’s own deepening understanding of the text. The frequent gaps and elisions in his narrative force the reader to come to terms with what is “actually” going on. Examining the “motivations” for this unreliability, Wall concludes

that “the novel may be seen to be *about* Stevens’ attempts to grapple with his unreliable memories and interpretations and the havoc that his dishonesty has played on his life” (22-23). His journey is, after all, one of self-reflection, but ineluctably tainted with his own tendency to dissemble, embellish, and distort, in order that his comfortable world construction is left un-interrogated. His inability to shed (at least deliberately) the “hindsight colouring [his] memory” (87) is the central theme of his self-defense. Yet what his narrative actually repeats again and again is the insufficiency of this self-defense for living out the “remains” of his days, and from this unstable premise—his struggle to come to terms with the distortions of his own recollections—comes the demand of the reader to reconstruct the text in terms other than those overtly offered.

The many gaps in his narrative are indicative of the incompleteness of his own personal life. As a man who “has found it necessary to bracket off large areas of feeling, experience, and desire because of the huge investment he has made in a certain image of himself and of his place in life” (Wall 22) Stevens must reconstruct “what really happened” in the shaky terms of his own nuanced memory. The “building blocks of culture” that Turner regards as open to interrogation in the ritual act are in Stevens’s case the qualities which he privileges as foundational. Of these, the notion of “dignity” which informed his career as a butler is pivotal, since it has served as an organizational principle for both his life and his narrative. That Stevens is undergoing some sort of self-questioning is plain from his frequent denials or off-hand dismissals of a growing self-awareness, denials which we have come to expect from such an evasive narrator. At times, he worries that he is “becoming unduly introspective” (179), uncomfortable perhaps

that such self-examination is at odds with the code of behaviour of his father, whose apocryphal story about the tiger under the table is “as close as [he] ever came to reflecting critically on the profession he practiced” (36). Yet this introspection is a crucial indicator of the reflexivity demanded by processes of ritual and reading, as Stevens and the reader struggle to come to terms with the story through the “gestalt groupings” and consistency building that function to produce meaning in narratives both personal and textual.

As Stevens reconstructs his past through the myriad memories that he reflects upon on his journey, he enters a process of indeterminacy which both complements and reverses the activity of the reader. Iser suggests that one of the ways in which a reader may “counterbalance” textual indeterminacies is to “reduce the text to the level of his [sic] own experiences” (*Prospecting* 8). What Stevens seems to be doing is the reverse: he is “reducing” his own experiences to the level of narrative, and thereby is able to engage his life experience in a process, which, like the reader/writer dialogue, “diverges from the ordinary experiences of the reader . . . [and] offers views and opens up perspectives in which the empirically known world of one’s own personal experiences appears changed” (Iser, *Prospecting*, 7). In this context, the novel may be seen as a lengthy paralleling of the ritual process and the process of reading, both of which involve indeterminacies which are provisionally dissolved and resolved through sustained engagement. Reading, as Elizabeth Freund suggests, is an “active process of becoming conscious of otherness” that “brings about a questioning and probing of the validity of received norms and systems” (147). His travel narrative, by exposing Stevens to new perspectives through which he is able to contemplate and contextualize his lived experience, similarly opens his past to revision and

reconstruction. In reconstructing his past, and thereby opening it to the same “questioning and probing” that operate in the reading process, Stevens is able to reflect critically upon the foundational concepts and presuppositions that govern his behaviour.

Reading, of course, is an activity that is foregrounded on many levels throughout the novel. Stevens’s journey is inspired and then shaped by two significant pieces of writing: Miss Kenton’s letter and Mrs Jane Symons’s travel guide The Wonder of England. The guidebook, which serves as his introduction to an England he has never seen, also points out the contrast in social and cultural history. In this case, the map featured in her book is definitely not the territory through which he passes; even though, as Stevens notes, “German bombs” may not have “altered our countryside so significantly” (11), the cultural, political and social landscapes of England certainly have shifted since the writing of her book.

Miss Kenton’s letter is perhaps the most directly intertextual item, as entire passages become part of the novel. Stevens’s continual re-reading of the letter, coupled with his occasionally avowed uncertainty about what Miss Kenton might be trying to say, neatly suggests one of the central concerns of Reader-Response criticism: namely, to what extent is the reading of a text a projection of self? His initial observations on the letter are emblematic in this respect. Despite the lack of concrete statements in her letter, Stevens assumes that her marriage has ended and that she desires to return to Darlington Hall, wishes which are more likely wishful thinking on his part. Most significantly, however, he somehow imputes from her letter that Miss Kenton seeks a relief from “a life that has come to be so dominated by a sense of waste” (48). This assertion, apparently found

nowhere in her letter, can only be a subtle cue to Stevens's own sense of desolation, which surfaces more overtly towards the end of the novel.

What becomes clearer, too, is the process of self-correction that he undergoes, as he checks his first interpretation of the text and finds it insufficient. Even though Stevens initially insists that "there is no possibility that I am merely imagining" Miss Kenton's desire to return to Darlington Hall (10), he later finds this first reading to be perhaps "wishful thinking of a professional kind"—another example, too, of his conflation of personal desire with so-called "professional motivations." Upon re-reading the letter, he is forced to confess that "there is nothing stated specifically in Miss Kenton's letter . . . to indicate unambiguously her desire to return to her former position" (140). He admits that he may have "exaggerated what evidence there was regarding such a desire on her part;" indeed, he finds it difficult to "point to any passage which clearly demonstrated her wish to return." The novel thus parallels Stevens's re-interpretation of his past with his re-interpretation of Miss Kenton's letter, and in so doing underscores the extent to which reading is an activity that profoundly involves the self in a reflexive act.

At the same time that Stevens is grappling with his own past, the reader is simultaneously constructing a picture which differs markedly from his highly selective and nuanced memory. What Wall calls the "conflict between scenic presentation and Stevens's commentary" (22) represents a significant challenge to the reader, who must struggle with the dichotomy between what is related and the narrative presentation of it. His reaction to Miss Kenton's "moodiness"—brought on by her romantic involvement with Mr Benn—although carefully couched (as always) in professional terms, is

nonetheless obviously that of a jealous man. He begins to pay extra attention to her mail, going so far as to notice that it comes from the “same correspondent” and bears a local postmark, surely the actions of a man with more than a professional interest in Miss Kenton’s affairs. Stevens eventually confronts her with his observations, explaining that he “has the welfare of the house” to look after, and upon learning of her involvement with Mr Benn, he soon seizes (rather spitefully) the opportunity to end their own meetings over hot cocoa. Yet the reader is given no direct indication from Stevens himself regarding his emotional state, and instead must deduce it using what Iser might call his or her “repertoire” of emotional logic (Act of Reading 53 ff.). In this way, the reader balances what is related (Stevens’s “professional” motivations for acting in the way that he does) with what is more consistent with the behaviour described, which appears more suited to a jealous, slightly vindictive ex-lover. His entire relationship with Miss Kenton is inscribed within similar ellipses.

His actions here seem clearly to be those of the spurned lover, yet he insists in his commentary that his motives were, again, purely professional. It is only later, recollecting the scene, that he begins to question his own version of the events he has just finished relating:

Naturally—and why should I not admit this—I have occasionally wondered to myself how things might have turned out in the long run had I not been so determined over the issue of our evening meetings I only speculate over this now because in the light of subsequent events, it could well be argued that in making my decision to end those evening meetings once and for all, I was perhaps

not entirely aware of the full implications of what I was doing. (175)

It seems here that Stevens is engaged in an interpretive process which mirrors that of the reader, as he or she attempts to sift the significance of events from the nuancing of Stevens's recollections. At the same time, as Wall notes, his own attempts to come to grips with "what really happened" problematize the entire notion of the reliable/unreliable narrator dichotomy, by showing the "impossibility" of an entirely reliable version of events (37).

Stevens ends his narrative at twilight on a pier in Weymouth, two days after his meeting with Miss Kenton. He gives the reader no hint about his activities in the intervening time period—instead the bulk of this chapter is concerned with the meeting itself, thus leaving a significant gap in his recollection during which the reader can only surmise that he was recovering from his emotional exchange with Miss Kenton. As he recalls it, their conversation had hinged upon a central conjecture of "what if," with Miss Kenton admitting that she had at times considered what kind of life she might have led with Stevens. This admission prompts what is perhaps the most unmediated and spontaneous statement that Stevens gives the reader in the entire novel: "Indeed—why should I not admit it—at that moment my heart was breaking" (239). This statement ties together several of Stevens's earlier conjectures about the relationship of events in the past to his current life, most saliently perhaps his musings regarding the significance of the ending of the meetings for cocoa. Taken together, these moments in which the present is portrayed in light of past events constitute a powerful movement in the novel toward what Turner called the "subjunctive mood" of culture, in which the people and cultures play

with possibilities rather than presumably established facts.

Indeed, this movement in the novel underscores its broader themes of political responsibility and accountability. Just as Stevens attempts to account for his own actions regarding Miss Kenton, he simultaneously is forced to recognize his complicity with Lord Darlington's own culpability in the appeasement movement in pre-war England. His growing awareness as he continues along his journey that he might have, in fact, been responsible for Miss Kenton's departure through his distant and socially handicapped manner is mirrored by a parallel understanding of the dark side of Lord Darlington's diplomatic manoeuvring. As he sits upon the pier he wonders if he is doubly betrayed, first by Lord Darlington, whom he trusted blindly (though willfully), and second by himself, as he finally comes to understand how his selfless devotion was actually a form of self-abnegation:

He [Lord Darlington] chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. . . . All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really—one has to ask oneself—what dignity is there in that?" (243)

It is significant, also, that this moment of insight is also the first time that Stevens has willingly and openly confided to another about his relationship to Lord Darlington rather than denying the association as he had previously.

By paralleling the growing personal awareness of Stevens with a concomitant insight into his position within the social structures which have governed his life, The

Remains of the Day deftly portrays the processes of social regeneration and transformation that Turner sees as central properties of the ritual journey. In the final stage of his journey Stevens enters what Turner calls the redressive, semiogenetic (meaning-assigning) phase of the ritual process, in which the experiences undergone by the ritual participant serve to aid in their renewed understanding of, and position within a social order which itself experiences a form of regeneration and redress as a result (On the Edge of the Bush 243).

The structure of Stevens's recollections makes the reader acutely aware of how time is ordered as a narrative construction. While the strict ordering of the chapter headings suggests a linear progression of time and place ("Day One—Evening, Salisbury" for example), as his narration continues he disrupts this neat succession by recalling events in the past, commenting on the present and speculating about the future. Adding to the challenge of reconstructing a narrative continuity is his tendency to revisit—and revise—the events that he is recollecting, and the way that in so doing he often admits to uncertainty regarding the "actual" (historical) location of these events. His conflation of Miss Kenton's entrance into his room on the night of the book incident is a useful case in point: he confesses that he "cannot remember with certainty" why she entered his room, and "may be getting confused with the time she attempted the same thing years earlier" (164). In this way he collapses several events into one, in order to give what happened a personal, if not chronological, representation. At the same time, he disturbs conventionalized notions of linear historical time which presume to stand somehow outside of human cultural construction.

By admitting that his previous appeals to dignity and "professionalism" were

insufficient to justify his quiet complacency in the face of the broader social and political issues raised by Lord Darlington's pre-war activities. Stevens begins to move beyond the defensiveness that characterized his earlier position. There is a major shift away from the man who felt that "if a butler is to be of any worth to anything or anybody in his life there must surely come a time when he ceases his searching" something he defines as "loyalty *intelligently* bestowed" (200-01). Yet the defensiveness remains in place until just before his meeting with Miss Kenton, since up to then he has not yet been able to come to terms with the understandings he has acquired in the course of his ritual journey. In a curious mix of defiant self-justification and dawning horror, Stevens's final defense of Lord Darlington is a little masterpiece of Ishiguro's prose:

How can one possibly be held to blame in any sense because, say, the passage of time has shown Lord Darlington's efforts were misguided, even foolish? It is hardly my fault if his lordship's life and work have turned out today to look, at best, a sad waste—and it is quite illogical that I should feel any regret or shame on my own account. (201)

Coming as it does before his final admission (that he had not even been able to make his own mistakes) this passage underscores Stevens's as-yet-incomplete movement towards an understanding of his past that would take into account his simultaneous complicity and detachment.

On the pier at Weymouth, his recollections of his meeting with Miss Kenton are interrupted by an old man, the last of the anonymous wisdom figures who have been part of his journey. The man, a retired footman, initially engages Stevens in a conversation

about his work, which elicits from Stevens the most candid analysis yet of his life and role at Darlington Hall. Stevens admits that since the arrival of Mr Farraday he does not “have a great deal more left to give,” indeed, that he “gave it all to Lord Darlington” (242-43). Once again, the reader is given indirect reportage of his weeping, as the old man offers him a handkerchief. In this revisiting of his relationship with Lord Darlington, Stevens concludes that his talk of dignity amounted more to a self-abnegation than a worthy goal for which to strive.

His next observation indicates how far he has moved from the self-justification of his earlier comments to a position of social responsibility, even re-integration along the lines of the fourth phase of ritual that Turner identified, wherein the participant moves back into society with the benefits of the experiences undergone in the liminal stage. Stevens’s extended conversation with the old man—his first in the novel—is followed closely by his observations of the people gathering on the pier. As he turns on his bench “to study more closely these throngs of people laughing and chattering” he comes to a surprising conclusion, one that would have been unlikely to come from the Stevens who began the journey with distant bemusement over the customs of social activity:

As I watch them now, they are laughing together merrily. It is curious how people can build such warmth among themselves so swiftly. It is possible these particular persons are simply united by the anticipation of the evening ahead. But, then, I rather fancy it has more to do with this skill of bantering. (245)

At this final point in his journey, then, Stevens has come to understand more clearly that he is a part of this social realm, not as a passive, silent (ob)server, but instead as an active

participant to whom the doors of social participation have been opened by the insights gained along his journey.

Ultimately, this is one of the fascinating effects of the novel. The reader, given only the highly biased and problematic account of a narrator who seems at all times to be hedging his bets concerning veracity, is, nonetheless, able to construct a reasonable version of events by contrasting what Stevens recalls with his or her own repertoire of logical surmises. Stevens the narrator is figured throughout as unreliable, and this foregrounds the necessity for the reader to enter into a determined engagement with the narrative in order to render a satisfactory reading. As Stevens recollects (and reads, and reflects upon) what the reader is reading, he, too, is engaging his experiences on a subjective level, but with his own subject position constantly being brought into relief. The meaning that he derives from it, therefore, is overtly rendered as a subjective experience of a reader reading. Like any literary text, then, his recollection “contains intersubjectively verifiable instructions for meaning production, but the meaning produced may then lead to a whole variety of different experiences and hence subjective judgements (Iser, Act of Reading 25). The variation between that which is told (his own inflected version of events) and the reader’s appraisal of “what really happened” is the structuring indeterminacy that makes meaning production, in this case, possible. It is in the interstices, of both text and constitutive culture, that both Stevens and the reader are able to come to terms with his flawed, and very human, story.

CHAPTER THREE

The Beggar at the Feast: Reflexive Liminality in Anita Brookner's Look at Me

"Look at me." Within this phrase is a wistful demand, an urge to relationship, a request for attention. All writing (indeed, all art) depends on this deceptively simple formulation for the production of aesthetic effect. It is also the leitmotif of Frances Hinton, protagonist of Anita Brookner's novel Look at Me, who recurrently admits that her main motivation in writing is subtly to invite the attention that her solitude denies her. In doing so she also enacts a metafictional process which, as Robert Siegle suggests in The Politics of Reflexivity, "uncovers a great deal about the whole narrative circuit—the codes by which we organize reality, the means by which we organize words about it into narrative, the implications of the linguistic medium we use to do so, [and] the means by which readers are drawn into narrative" (3). Yet it is this same narrator who feels imprisoned by her writing, set apart from the world of action and participation that she imagines constitutes the "real" world, like the Lady of Shallot, ensconced fatally within the tower of a reflective aesthetic. Her experience, as Frances relates it in the novel, is one of trial and passage, of movement from solitude to participation and back, with the tension between passive observing and active participation always present.

The insistent reflexivity of Look at Me (beginning evocatively with its title) serves also to foreground the role of the reader in actualizing the novel through the act of reading. Linda Hutcheon, in her study of the metafictional, self-reflexive aspects that

generally characterize novels, notes that in works that foreground their own status as fictional objects “the reader or the act of reading often become thematized parts of the narrative situation, *acknowledged* as having a co-producing function” (37). Frances Hinton’s frequent appeals to the reader, either as observer or sympathetic ear, amount finally to a subtly couched interrogation of reading strategies based on the conventions of narrative stability and realism. The result is an increased awareness on the part of the reader that Frances’s story is a nuanced, subjective construct, which will require some concomitant restructuring strategies on the part of the reader to meet the challenge of the narrator .

We are introduced to Frances in her workplace, a library where they have “problems of human behaviour . . . properly filed” (5), a fitting analogy for the attempts to control others that is a central theme of the novel. Her job as archivist of the human condition consists of obtaining (and providing captions for) examples of visual representations of pathologic human behaviour from museums and galleries. Having been left a comfortable inheritance, she is financially secure, and one of her main reasons for keeping her job seems to be her need to find a ready supply of material for her satiric writing in the lives and foibles of its patrons.

Indeed, her relationship to the “real” world is in many ways informed by her need for access to more “material.” Her collector’s quest for living specimens of human behaviour is nicely illustrated by her description of Nick Fraser as a “rare perfect example,” one which “demands that one lay down one’s pen and stalk it, study it, dissect it, learn it, love it” (42). Rather than pinning her butterflies to a board, she obviously

intends to capture them in writing, making them into material for her oft-deferred novel. Her workplace is the most fruitful stalking ground, since her own home is a “kingdom of the shades” (33), a sort of *necropolitan* apartment complex whose inhabitants are notable only for their seeming antiquity.

At the library she works intimately with images of mental illness, images of individuals whose behaviour has been nominated bizarre or antisocial enough to deem them insane. As a writer, she is attracted to these visual representations of madness and melancholia, enjoying the manipulative control she seems to have over their potency, just as in writing she is able to rearrange the lives of the people about whom she writes for satiric effect. In pictorial terms, Frances sees herself on the other side of the frame, in control of the image, in a way that is similar to her attempt to control her own image through the act of writing. The “me” to which she is calling attention through this act, is of course a fiction, a representation in written form, a “me” that is deceptively manipulative of the reader, since she is in control of the elements presented to her reading audience. Her “control” over the images at the library, however, is overshadowed by the occasional lack of control over the images which come unbidden into her head, from, as she says, “some basement area of my personality” (102).

At the outset of the plot, her existence is drab, controlled by routine, and it is the absence of social intercourse that leads her to a surrogate form of communication:

That is why I write, and why I have to. When I feel swamped in my solitude and hidden by it, physically obscured by it, rendered invisible, in fact, writing is my way of piping up. Of reminding people that I am here. . . . If my looks and my manner

were of greater assistance to me I could deliver this message in person. "Look at me," I would say. "Look at me." But since I am on my own in this matter, I must use subterfuge and guile, and with a bit of luck . . . this particular message will never be deciphered, and my reasons for delivering it in this manner remain obscure. (19-20)

Wanting to be known is what motivates her to write, at the same time that she wants the loneliness that impels her to be kept secret. In this way, as Michael Boyd observes about the impact of the reflexive novel, Brookner "makes use of the essential subjectivity of all experience to focus the reader's interest on a mind that, although it exists in the novel, is engaged in the process of structuring experience" (32). This written aspect of her narrative distinguishes it from Stevens's stream-of-consciousness recollections, and her avocation as word-specialist serves to underscore the self-reflexivity of the novel. What is also foregrounded here is the tension that Frances repeatedly articulates between the implicitly solitary, self-enclosed activity of writing and the presumably active world of social intercourse, between the watcher and the watched, the author and the novel.

Until the entry of the Frasers into Frances's life, and the concomitant "awakening" that she experiences, she has been relatively content within her status as a child-woman in the flat that she shares with Nancy, the "girl" her parents have taken in as a maid. Nancy is the supervisor of the morbid rituals of eating and sleeping that have survived the death of Frances's mother, rituals which are at the extreme opposite of the performative, fructive kind outlined by Turner. Instead of serving as the wisdom of the past or as the structure that demands anti-structure, these routines have left Frances "deficient in the sort

of knowledge that protects and patronizes one's ventures The old pattern still flourishes, because it was so complete, because everything here conspires to prolong it" (31). For Frances, her home environment offers no stimulus to grow, and so she must seek her stimulation, both physical and literary, outside its musty confines.

Her "anachronistic" apartment (21), in fact, operates in the novel in much the same way that Darlington Hall does in The Remains of the Day. Just as Stevens must leave his perpetual home in order to seek experience and spontaneity beyond its confines, so Frances must escape from Maida Vale in order to engage in social life. And just as Stevens is at first reluctant to venture out, so Frances muses "If life were suddenly to change and I were to make a completely new circle of friends I should have to do some radical rearranging" (23). Yet as much as she realizes the extent to which the apartment and its routines hold her captive, and despite her "dream of a candid attic somewhere," she feels beholden to the memories and patterns of Maida Vale, and believes that she will always stay where she is, writing in solitude (27).

Her construction of the Frasers as "impervious," a couple that "could not be hurt," is illuminating in the insights that it gives into Frances's own self-image and questionable objectivity. She feels that the "world was theirs" (40): "What impressed me was . . . the fact that they would obey any summons . . . answer any invitation, go anywhere, do anything" (41). Their invulnerability is, to Frances, bound tightly with their spontaneous nature, which operates in this novel, as in The Remains of the Day, as a resource of the presumed mature, powerful members of society. Frances announces that "I need those impromptu meals, those last minute decisions, that ease," contrasting as they do with the

“cautious, prudent, safe” nature of Maida Vale (32). Just as Stevens’s search for bantering spontaneity represents his quest for the social growth that has eluded him, Frances seeks entry into what she perceives to be the effortless social grace of the Frasers.

The powerful personalities of Nick and Alix, their physically intimidating presence, with its conflation of power and health, is the basis of Frances’s respect for them. Believing that their “greater strength” is “never in doubt,” she initially feels that the “only danger to be feared from them was that they might find one insufficiently amusing, that they might be bored, that they might pass one over.” Their presence (even their larger than life existence) is a token to Frances of her own inferior position within the social order, leading her to despise “every reminder that the world was old and shaky, that human beings were vulnerable, that everyone was, more or less, dying” (43). Representative of this scorn is her contempt for Dr Constantine, who becomes for her symbolic of all that is helpless, “without recourse” (45).

The extent to which the Frasers have brought out a latent contempt in Frances for the weak and the downtrodden is, of course, ironic, considering how closely she allies herself with this level of society, and doubly and metafictionally so since the ironic detachment which Frances exhibits in her role as a “merciless interrogator,” also places her satirical writing in the Juvenalian mode, which as William S. Anderson notes, is characterized by “vitriolic indignation” at the vices of society (158). Her biting musings on the social activities of her aging neighbours (21-22), her “sharp tongue” (43) are indicative of her general disillusionment with other people, as is her contemptuous dismissal of Mrs Halloran and Dr Simek throughout the novel. The Horatian mode of

satire, in contrast, is marked by a more generous, optimistic view of human nature, and aims to correct through laughter rather than scorn. This mode operates with less detachment than the almost anti-social Juvenalian, perhaps because it recognizes that the observer, for better or worse, is a product of and complicit in the society being critiqued, and ultimately it is toward the more humane stance that Frances moves. If one notes in turn that satire derives from the latin *satura*—i.e. stew—one can see why food is so central to the ritual process enacted in the novel.

Both Frances's attraction to and fear of the Frasers underscores the extent to which the economy of food consumption is intricately one of social power. The powerful eat more than the weak, and, in certain respects, Frances's writing is a response to her own powerlessness. Indeed, she finds the Frasers' "physical triumph" so "stunning" that she immediately feels "weak and pale, unfed by life's more potent forces, condemned to . . . tiny meals, and an obscure creeping existence which would be appropriate to my enfeebled status and which would allow me to gently decline into extinction" (37). Taking her language from a social Darwinist model of culture, Frances believes that she is in the presence of the "fittest," whose presence renders the other inhabitants of the library fit only for "unreproductive obscurity" (37) an obscurity she hopes to avoid through her writing.

In this way, however, civilization is ambiguously linked with self-reflexivity and the natural world with unself-consciousness. Combined with their untempered appetite and raw physicality, Frances's description of the couple—Nick is a "hunter" (38) and Alix his partner—situates them within a brutish social order, which serves not to ameliorate the

excesses of the natural order (defined in this sense as chaotic, brutal, and dangerous) but to justify them. Look at Me therefore presents quite a different construction of the natural world than The Remains of the Day. Stevens's journey into the wilderness, while fraught with a certain kind of confusion and chaos brought on by its unfamiliarity, is nonetheless an escape from a civilizing impulse which opposes authenticity and self-reflection.

Frances, in contrast, sees in the apparently unfettered social order of the Frasers an alternate, "natural" social model that is superior to the "artificial" constraints on behaviour typified by her routines and habits. There is no attempt, in the cultural milieu of the Frasers, to "correct" the instinctual social appetites that lead Alix to manipulate her social dramas of rupture, crisis, and redress.

In this sense, however, the fact that Alix has "come down in the world" as she repeatedly mentions, places her below Frances, who as the beneficiary of a large inheritance would seem to enjoy a position of relative privilege. Yet Frances sees herself beneath the primal power of the Frasers and Alix's comparative financial disadvantage is set off by her seeming social prestige. Alix thus engages in ritual behaviours of reversal (the carnival dinners) which typify and embody the chaotic aspects of anti-structure, and her reduced economic status can be seen as the factor that forces her to seek alternate manifestations of social power and control.

Look at Me features a number of highly-charged scenes where acts of eating occur, or are deferred, to mark the relationship of the individual to the power structure. Beginning with Dr Simek's unsuccessful attempts to have dinner with Nick Fraser, and on to Frances's ecstasy at being allowed entrance into the Frasers' rituals of eating, the dining

table is constructed as the site of access to power and cultural integration. Before joining the Frasers, in fact, Frances is not allowed by Nancy to eat at the Mother's dining room table (64), signifying the extent to which she has yet to make the journey from the child being fed at the table to the adult in control of the scene.

Elsewhere in the novel offerings of food take place in highly charged overtones of social relationship: the circumspect courting of Frances by Olivia's brother David via invitations to polite family meals; Dr Sydney's boxes of chocolates, proffered to her dying mother; and of course Frances's curious visits to Miss Morpeth, at which food is prepared and solemnly eaten within parameters dictated by tradition and routine. Each, in its own way, indicates some sort of social relationship. Unlike Stevens, who has been present (albeit on the periphery and in a serving capacity) at large social dining occasions, Frances is used to dining alone at Maida Vale. When Frances is allowed in to the inner circle of the Frasers' dining companions, then, it is with overtones of cultural initiation and status elevation similar to those found in ritual.

Food, of course, is a central component of carnival, a time of social licentiousness which acts, as Barbara Babcock suggests, as "an ensemble of rules for the manipulation and transformation of the various semiotic systems which constitute a given culture" (921). Suggesting the way that carnival has its roots in medieval rituals of social inversion and satire, Frances describes the Frasers as 'lords of misrule,' and thus allies them with the forces of anti-structure and inversion that are given voice in ludic ritual. For Frances they represent society stripped of its masks, revealing a presumably authentic, "natural" side beneath.

In contrast to the Frasers stands Miss Morpeth, in whom Frances sees a possible reflection of herself as an old woman. It was her position at the library, after all, that Frances assumed upon Miss Morpeth's retirement, and their visits are marked by a series of small "rituals" which are nothing more than recapitulations of the same stultifying routine which mark Frances's time at Maida Vale. In her final visit, the parallels between the two librarians are strongly made: they exchange gifts that turn out to be identical, prompting Frances's realization that they both "evidently thought of each other in exactly the same way" (140).

Both of them exist in a structured world of "dissimulation" that Frances contrasts to the presumably authentic, unfettered world of the Frasers and their powers of arrangement. Unlike the constraints of routine politeness and consideration that mark her relations with Miss Morpeth, their social dramas are characterized by rude exchanges, sexual gossip and innuendo, and an openness that Frances relates to "those encounter groups, in which people are encouraged to criticize each other, or confess" (60-61).

As much as Frances may be like Miss Morpeth, however, she also has certain affinities with Alix Fraser, who, it turns out, has a similar drive to control, although it is manifested somewhat differently. What is for Frances the acquisition of material for her writing, is for Alix an elaboration of her personal system of social control and power. Whereas Frances equivocates about the morality of using others as material for her writing, Alix is ruthless in demanding that others "look at me," turning the usual plea for attention into an act of coercion. More than that, Alix has a will-to-direct the social dramas that she scripts, and it is here that the similarities and differences between her and

Frances acquire a metafictional dimension. Frances indeed repeatedly describes Alix's social maneuverings as "dramas," and contrasts their excitement and gregarious vivacity with her solitary activity of writing. In doing so she suggests that the active participation demanded by the social "theatre" of the Frasers' dinners is somehow more humanly authentic than her comparatively passive writing. The "audience" that Alix and Nick command, however, is privy to a staged performance—they "exhibit" their marriage to Frances, for example (57)—suggesting a similarity to theatre, with its own abundance of self-reflexive aspects. As Frances sees it, furthermore, to Alix "some lives were more interesting than others, and most could be discounted" (68) and in the absence of overt drama, she is able script one to make it more interesting.

There is even an "audition" for one of Alix's social dramas, when James Astey is given entry into the cultural realm of the Frasers, and during which Frances becomes aware that her own "function had been altered by this addition to our original group," at the same time that she feels herself gaining a "new status." As she watches James enter the restaurant and join the Frasers' social dining ritual, Frances "[sits] back, like the oldest inmate of a prison or hospital ward, watching the initiation ceremonies being undergone by the latest arrival, eager to congratulate the new recruit on having comported himself correctly . . . [and] gained his passport to life on the inside" (75). Just as in ritual, where one must meet certain performative criteria before acquiring new social status, so James must go through the initiation procedures put in place by Alix Fraser.

Alix's need to direct these dramatizations is directly related to what Frances calls the "boredom" which causes her to become depressed (67). In fact, the Frasers are not

nearly as self-sufficient as Frances imagines them to be, since their marriage is dominated by a sense of ennui which they address by creating dramatic entertainments out of social engagements. *In this way they seem to act fully as forces of anti-structure, foregrounding in a double sense what is problematic in the ordering impulses of social structure.* As Frances observes:

some element in that perfect marriage was deficient . . . [and] ritual demonstrations were needed to maintain a level of arousal which they were too complacent, perhaps too spoilt, even too lazy, to supply for themselves, out of their own imagination. I was the beggar at their feast, reassuring them by my very presence that they were richer than I was. Or indeed could ever hope to be. (57)

The self-sufficiency that the Frasers represent seems inadequate, even to them, without some sort of audience to bear witness to their presumed perfection.

The distancing and satirical power of her position as writer, upon which Frances has relied up to this point, is no match for their taste for blood, as she slowly begins to realize. Her fear is not entirely misplaced, however, for as Mervyn Nicholson notes in his discussion of the power relationships metaphorically embedded in social rituals of eating, to enter the process of eating is to open oneself to the possibility of being eaten as well (196). By surrendering her writerly observational distance, and joining the Frasers at table, Frances not only gains entrance into the social world hitherto denied her, but is also “cast . . . in the role of their apprentice” (59), as Alix takes greater and greater control over her life by scripting Frances into their meals and romantic machinations. She thus enters what seems to be a new social role of gregarious participation freed from her

previous, non-participatory role. The social involvement that the Frasers represent, however, is much more deceptive and risky for Frances than it at first appears, since it puts in place a false dichotomy between observer and observed, rather than a circumventing of it.

In this way the self-defined observer role in which Frances casts herself as a satirist, also becomes the stage of non-involvement in the “social drama” (in Turner’s use of the term), a stage of “invisibility” (*Forest* 95) that marks the liminal status within ritual processes. Unable to return to the old modalities of existence, and not yet re-integrated into the social order, the liminal personae is forced into self-reflection. Thus while Frances has repeatedly avowed her “outsider” status, and despite the feelings of control and mastery that she has found in the process of observing, she admits that it enforces an estrangement from that which she observes, which is mostly, for her, the social world: “Being an observer . . . does not always help one. Sometimes the scenes and people one observes impart their own message of exclusion” (42). The challenge Frances faces will be to engage the participatory processes she sees embodies in the Frasers without simultaneously losing her ability to write.

Frances is able to write about events only to the extent that she remains outside of them. “People like Nick attract admirers, adherents, followers. They also attract people like me: observers” (14) she explains, and goes on to suggest that her “invisible” nature is really the grounding for her writing (20). By successfully engaging the “speculative gaze” (40) of Nick and others she hopes to gain status as an equal, an initiate into their world of invulnerable spontaneity and action: “And I did, of course. Wish to join in, I mean. Why

pay the price for being outside it all? I was no writer. I decided, dismissing that fictive outcome which was somehow encoded into my imaginings and therefore doubly shameful” (77). By entering their rituals, Frances is given the opportunity to participate in society in a way that her detached position as observing writer has prevented.

Yet Frances’s participation in the Frasers’ ritual has direct consequences for her writing abilities. Several times as she eats with them she is tempted to draw upon her writerly resources of analysis and distance, and when she does, she is able to realize the extent to which she is being emplotted into Alix’s script: “The novelist in me took over for a moment, and I plotted the whole thing out; then I accused myself of the most suspect form of calculation—crude, louche, cynical—and I dismissed the whole fantasy” (76). On another occasion, she similarly observes: “The writer in me turned over again, scripting that original plot, and then, once again, I shook myself, and, forcing my gaze outwards, perceived . . . the good humour that was available for anyone who wished to join in” (77). The problem being addressed in Frances’s ritual of initiation, in short, is the firm dichotomy she sees between the writer’s life of detached observation and the active life of social participation exemplified by the Frasers, and it is this dichotomy that seems under challenge as she participates in their social rituals.

Not only does she feel that participation in Alix’s world of “reality” has left no room for her reflective self but also memories of the past, which in turn seem to be allied with sadness: “There were no images in my head. I did not write. I was happy” (96). Conversely, however, not being able to articulate means not being able to express and counteract pain, as Frances explains with respect to her growing estrangement from

James:

What preoccupied me was the fact that I could no longer *describe* it. Having dismissed the merciless interrogator, the note-taker, that I had once been, I seemed to have precluded the possibility that I might simply have told James that I was not happy. Quite literally, I had no voice in the matter. (103)

The resulting loss of her ability to express herself through writing—an ability she calls her “penance for not being lucky” (84)—reinforces Frances’s insistence that the two worlds are mutually exclusive. In this way her critical satirizing of those around her is the mirror image of Stevens’s detached uncritical nature as a servant in The Remains of the Day: whereas he refrains from criticism in an attempt to avoid analyzing his personal beliefs, she uses criticism as a defense mechanism to *preserve* her detachment from the society around her, including her participation in the power structure that she had previously admired from afar.

Like Stevens, in turn, far from providing the reader the comfort of omniscience, Frances as framer of the story continually problematizes the illusion of narrative reliability. She sees herself as an “unblinking eye” (164), a dispassionate observer and recorder of events, yet, as Deborah Bowen points out, the “[f]raming, cutting, labeling [and] classifying” that are Frances’s responsibilities at the library are narrative techniques as well, and “must also be suspect as truth-telling” (132). Her opening refrain, which is repeated twice in the novel, is that “Once a thing is known it can never be unknown. It can only be forgotten. . . . It is wiser, in every circumstance, to cultivate the art of forgetting” (5). Similarly, as in the case of Stevens, it is at once fitting and disconcerting

that Frances, the scrupulous note-taker and observer, will nonetheless confess that her memory is fallible, open to suggestion and fabrication. She admits at one point to confusing an imagined scene of Nancy weeping after the death of Frances's mother with an actual event:

It did not strike me until much later that this scene, which was so vivid to me, had not yet taken place. I saw no significance in the fact that this episode, pieced together from elements observed at disparate moments . . . seemed to be a memory but was in fact a conjuration. The fact that two sets of time had come together in this way I accepted as perfectly normal. (71)

Through such presumably candid admissions of narrative fallibility, Frances foregrounds the rather tenuous status of the "truth" of the text and the events it describes, which forces the reader to reconcile both this and other truth-claims that it makes. Her narrative thus contains, like Stevens's, markers which point to its own subjective status, and hence also raises the possibility of other, more subtle, confluences of memory and "conjuration."

The liminal is very often seen to operate within the gaps that a narrative contains. Their presence constantly disrupts a stable interpretation, foregrounding the slippery nature of textual signification that deceives even while it invites the reader into its illusion. As Iser asserts, "gaps or holes in the text" are "places of indeterminacy" that the reader "must fill in with [his/her] own imagination" (*Prospecting* 104). These "places of indeterminacy" are essentially liminal spaces, areas where the determinacy of structure gives way to the ludic play of its own anti-structure.

Frances's distortion of the narrative time-frame offers a signal instance of this

indeterminacy—since it raises the question of exactly at what point in the sequence of events she is writing (Bowen 133). Frances frequently suggests that this is a retrospective narrative, yet she frequently includes observations that suggest the immediate present: “After that last sentence, I moved to the bed and switched on the bedside lamp” (191). At which point in time is “that,” and how do we situate it within her action of picking up the pen again in order to “start writing,” as she does in the novel’s last sentence? Frances also suggests that “I exaggerate, of course” (41), leaving open the question of just what the “of course” implies.

Unanswered questions of this nature function as the “gaps” and “holes” that provide a liminal space for the reader, who must engage the text in this process of its own self-conscious configuration and structuring to arrive at a satisfactory reading. The defining gap in the novel is her elision of “that time of which I never speak” (121). In this way, Frances encloses an absence at the heart of her narrative around which the reader must draw conclusions which are of necessity flawed by the dearth of information provided. The contexts in which she mentions this allegedly unmentionable occurrence suggest that it is connected in some way with a romantic failure. This intentional frustration of any attempt at a satisfactory reading serves both to provoke the reader and to elevate him/her in the reading process.

And, just as Stevens’s growing personal and social awareness in The Remains of the Day is mirrored by growing insight on the part of the reader, Frances’s social transformation, related in a narrative inscribed with self-reflexive elisions, calls attention to the reader’s role in reconstructing the profoundly elusive “her” to which the “me” in “look

at me” refers. As she moves from periods of greater or lesser introspection, the reader can begin to see the constructed, formal aspects of her narrative from a perspective that foregrounds its existence as a written object. In this way the novel is more clearly self-reflexive than The Remains of the Day, which is narrated as a series of recollections rather than an in-process piece of writing. At the same time, Frances’s sometimes bewildering mix of self-disclosure and authorial concealment draw attention, not to any ostensible “person,” but rather to the process by which the narrator constructs and camouflages a story that, as Margaret Stetz suggests, shows how Frances “has grown into the writer of the kind of novel which the reader has just read” (106). The more Look at Me repeatedly locates and announces itself as a written text, the more it posits a reader, and calls attention to the gaps in the narrative, just as the more the narrator insistently denies them, the more their presence is emphasized.

Of course, as is characteristic of Brookner’s novels, there is no “happy” ending, for the “romance” with James is doomed by Frances’s reticence—a reticence which also prevents the reader from getting a clear grasp of exactly what *is* going on insofar as Alix is the force behind James’s estrangement from her. What seems to be the cause is the failure of Frances and James to adhere to the script that Alix had plotted, whereupon she simply re-scripts the drama to include her more vivacious friend Maria and makes Frances redundant. In this way, while Frances’s relationship with James and entrance into the Fraser’s world served as a destabilizing experience, her actual rite of passage comes later, when her failure to maintain Alix’s interest results in her regression from participant back to observer: “Above all, the thought of reverting to the role of observer rather than

participant filled me with dread and sadness . . . Where once I had thought to say Look at me, I must now turn the attention of others away from myself” (133). She phrases her rejection by James (and, by extension, the Frasers) in terms of the pre-adolescent, anxious for inclusion in the adult world: “I had nothing else to do, because I was a child and I was waiting for the adults to come back from what was so mysteriously keeping them and to allow me once again into their company” (131). Clearly, then, she has yet to undergo the ritual that would allow her unqualified entry into the mature social world.

Throughout Look at Me Brookner is playing with generic expectations, alternately conflating and deflating commonly held suppositions about the romance and satirical forms to produce the perfect liminal beast: a hybrid somewhere betwixt-and-between the two. Frances’s description of the Frasers and their social world evokes the romantic mode, through wishful diction that is almost elegiac, and certainly not critical in the satirical modes that characterize many of her other observations. The satiric mode is similarly undercut by her growing resistance to “the sharp tongue” that has tended to distance her from the people around her. The subjunctive properties of romance—its “what if” or wish fulfillment aspects—are married with the socially self-reflexive criticism of satire to produce a close cousin of the liminal moment, itself suffused with both subjunctive and critical qualities. Thus the sharp distinction that tends to separate the two genres becomes blurred—just as in the liminal period of ritual the presumed split between structure and anti-structure is revealed as a dialogue, not a dichotomy.

Of course this generic blurring has broader implications for the reading of the novel, since critics such as Ann Fisher-Wirth assert that self-knowledge for Frances, as for

all of Brookner's heroines, "is a mortifying business," since it "comes at last to the bitter realization that the self is founded—or not founded—on emotional chaos and . . . emotional deprivation" (5). Yet where Fisher-Wirth sees Frances remaining on a plane of stasis and deprivation, Stetz sees a "gradual triumph over despair and suicidal impulses through the act of writing" (103). Expectations such as Fisher-Wirth's tend to be grounded in the author's reputation for creating protagonists of persistent despair, and are subverted by novels such as Look at Me, in which Brookner insistently destabilizes them by writing a novel which is a generic hybrid: neither pure romance nor pure acerbic satire.

It is of course fitting that Frances's departure from Alix's script is played out at the "last supper" she shares with James and the Frasers. What she is consuming along with the meal, apparently, is the humiliation that Alix has carefully concocted through a rescripting of the romantic plot of James's life. En route to the dinner, Frances's "new resolve" is rendered irrelevant by the "unusual abilities" that she recognizes in Alix, the same abilities to demand attention that she had admired earlier (157). Once at the restaurant, upon seeing the "avid crowd, their eyes glistening with mockery and pleasure" and being left out of their "extraordinary conversation," she has a sense of experiencing a "nightmare" (159)—a repeat of the images of exclusion and solitude which marked her previous life. The scene reaches its climax as Maria doles out the pudding, which to Frances is a "yellow and white mass" that makes her nauseous, and it is the sight of the others feeding which is most disturbing. On her solitary walk home, she recalls the "intent and flushed faces, the oozing custard, the sucking inhalations of cigarettes . . . the watchers." As she sees it, if this represents the "correct atmosphere in which love might

flourish,” it is also one which foregrounds “naked competition” (163).

It is in this context that Frances finally rejects (and is rejected by) the gustatory participation which had marked her temporary immersion into the corridors of Alix’s power. In doing so, she also rejects the crude power relationship within which Alix has sought to inscribe her. As Nicholson notes, “refusing food=rejecting coercion: one is refusing to *be* food—the material of another’s power” (197). Frances sees her supposed new friends “turned into spectators, demanding their money’s worth, urging their rights to be entertained,” and concludes that she “no longer wanted to be available for that particular function” (105). She begins here to find being the object of the attention of others uncomfortable, since it has been reversed and revealed as a construct of power.

Initially Frances’s response to being written out of Alix’s story involves returning to writing, insinuating herself back into the production as the controlling force:

Of course, my status would be changed. I would be humbler, more subordinate.

That was the price to be paid. And I would pay it. . . . But if, at the same time, I were to make notes for a satirical novel . . . ? If they were to meet their fate at my hands, and all unknowing, would this not be a very logical development? (184)

Her reconsideration of her previous role as outsider also stimulates what had become dormant impulses to write: “[t]he idea excited me . . . Already I could feel that chemical sharpness beginning to take command . . . I was hungry now, and thirsty, the motor of my appetite running again” (184-85). At this point, Frances seems intent on a rapid retreat to her previous, non-participatory role as detached social critic, but as she walks home she undergoes a liminal experience, one that profoundly affects her relationship to both writing

and the social world.

In this rite of passage she is reduced, like Turner's initiates, to the status of "biological non-entity," to being a creature to whom the "laws of the universe no longer applied . . . since [she is] outside the normal frames of reference" (163). In this ritual walk she is "surrounded by vacancy" which prepares the way for her self-reinscription into the role as writer, although now inflected by the social, public implications of her work. In the park, with "no evidence of life" around her, she regains—to a point—the writing capabilities that her temporary performance with the Frasers had denied her.

Like Stevens in The Remains of the Day, she meets "guide" figures on this journey, although in her case they are mute and terrifying. Determined to "accomplish this ritual on foot" she overcomes her fear of and revulsion from a monstrous drunken figure with his "darkish purple face" and "greet[s] the wax nurse in her spectral uniform like an old friend" (169). In this final stage of her journey she is engulfed in the "blackest night" where "[n]o sound, no light" exist, and where she feels the "vital forces ebbing away, even the memory indistinct" (171). On the one hand she is now "like a pilgrim who at last reaches the place of his pilgrimage" (171), but on the other hand the liminal space through which she has just passed represents the beginning of a new stage in another type of social drama, one which will lead to her ultimate assumption of renewed status as satirical writer of the human condition.

In shock from the performance that she witnessed at the restaurant, when she reaches her flat Frances is taken in hand by Nancy, who seems to understand without explanation what needs to be done. Ritually reinscribing Frances into the space which

heretofore had belonged solely to (her memory of) her dead mother. Nancy serves Frances tea, runs a bath, and sets the stage for Frances to assume the role of the centering mother in the rituals of the apartment. Nancy then disposes of Frances's "discredited clothes" and supplies her with a nightgown that had belonged to the mother, and, in her own quiet way, begins to prepare Frances for her new role as ruler of the apartment:

When we reached my door, I made as if to kiss her goodnight, but she said, "No, dear, no", and went on walking, urging me forward with her. I said, "What is the matter? What's the matter?" She went ahead of me, her step more purposeful now. "Nancy," I called after her, "What is it?" Then she turned, her expression guileless. "You said you wanted a change," she said, "so I've put you in Madam's room. Such a nice room. I've made up the bed." (176)

Frances reverts to feeling "a child's innocence," finds her body "lacking . . . adult qualities, so flat, so unremarkable, so humiliated," and has the impression that she is being "programmed for the task that lay ahead" (177, 178, 179).

That task is to reassume the role of consumer, but now of a mental or imaginative kind: "[i]t seemed to me appropriate that I should dwindle, that I should shed my biological characteristics. In future I would become subsumed into my head, and into my hand, my writing hand" (179). Sitting in her bed, "neither very young nor very old, but in fact a mind destined to grow older in a body destined to appear ever more childish," Frances seems to be condemning herself to perpetual exile from the social order, never moving beyond her strict dichotomy between observer of the human condition and participant in it.

Yet at the same time Frances cannot fully let go of the anti-structural possibilities that the Frasers represented to her:

I needed to study them, I needed them for material. . . . I needed to watch them at Christmas; I needed to see their grasping hands, their infallible appetites; I needed their profligacy . . . I needed their gusto, so appropriate to the Christmas season, when eyes glisten with covetousness and excess, when appetites expand and are never sated, when affection is extended to the watchers at the feast. I wanted, quite simply, to spend Christmas with those lords of misrule, in heat and noise, amid platefuls of sucked bones and the collapsing ruins of puddings. (182-83)

These bloated images of endless appetite and consumption neatly sum up Frances's dilemma. She still wonders if she can return to their world, if "the position could not be retrieved" (183), yet this return would be impossible, since, as she insists several times, "once a thing is known it can never be unknown." She cannot return to her previous status within the social structure, aware as she now is of the carnivalesque anti-structure which softens her satirical edge.

Frances then sees in her mirror an image—of an image—that seems to reinvigorate her writing self:

. . . as I looked into the glass I congratulated myself on my steadiness. I saw no ghosts. And beyond my reflection in the glass I caught sight of a framed, tinted engraving hanging on the opposite wall. I . . . went over to the engraving and gave it an approving tap. The doll-like faces, preserved in an eternal youthfulness, totally devoid of expression or emotion, stared back at me, reminding me that I too

was young, and not without resource. (184-85)

The Shallot imagery is powerfully at work here, recalling again a woman condemned to view only the aestheticized reflection of the outside world, and who escaped at her own peril. What Frances calls the “singularly apposite” epitaph—“*Glissez mortels; n’appuyez pas*” (“the ice is thin, so skate over the surface, don’t look for support,” as Deborah Bowen translates it (136)) recalls the individualistic status of complete self-sufficiency that she had to this point inhabited.

The reflective surface of the ice, too, provides an evocative trope for narrative art. At once opaque and reflective, it provides the illusion of depth and support while at the same time turning the image of the onlooker back on itself. In this way the image of the ice mimics the operations of the text brought forth in the act of reading—a novel, too, may contain “realistic” elements to a greater or lesser degree, yet as Iser points out, these are illusory and a projection of the desire for mimetic representation in the reader (Prospecting 27). The engraving (itself the result of an artistic process of inversion) emphatically denies this elusive desire for realism; as its epitaph suggests, there is nothing other than a thin surface that will reflect, but not support, the demands placed upon it by an onlooker—or reader—who seeks more than it can offer.

Ultimately, Frances returns to her dead mother’s bedroom. She feels it is “quite natural” for her to be there, and begins to write, “skating over the surface, jazzing things up, playing for laughs.” When she gets up and looks in the window, all she can see is her “own self, reflected in the black glass” (190). And she begins to recall her “store of images,” a store that contains the humiliated and cast off denizens of the library, and,

ultimately, herself:

The window, black with night, shuts me in, and I see in its reflection Dr Constantine, crouched over the telephone, his brown eye vacant and without resource. I see Dr Simek braced against his chair . . . I see Mrs Halloran, becalmed on her bed . . . I see Miss Morpeth, writing to her niece. I see myself.
(192)

Frances finally sees herself within her store of images. And in so doing she lets “down th[e] final barrier between [her]self and the truth” (191), and begins again the project of writing from her peculiar space. This new stance also represents a decisive shift from the vitriolic satirical Juvenalian mode of satire to the Horatian, in that Frances’s “merciless” edge is tempered somewhat by her newfound understanding of her own role within the social order. Ensnared in her mother’s room, an encouraging voice murmurs the maternal refrain of comfort and support: “My darling Fan.” Her response? “I pick up my pen. I start writing.”

The essence of her social transformation, then, may be seen as an escape from the pure narcissism of the Frasers (which had a precedent in her earlier self), through to actually seeing herself within the store of images that make up her pool of written humanity. She thus is able to become a participant in the social drama that she is writing, and not wait for an Alix Fraser to come along and conscript her into a romantic farce. At the same time, her move to a gentler, less vitriolic satire demonstrates how she has progressed from a purely detached, ironic perspective that seeks to inflict upon others the misery she herself feels to a humour which sees human foibles as universal, shared by the

observing writer. From this, she can draw again on the maternal strength that her literary onanism had denied her, and write from a position of true strength, based not on impervious observation, but instead on a recognition of the subject's ineluctable relationship with that which is observed.

CONCLUSION

Karlheinz Stierle, discussing the processes and operations at work in the act of reading, suggests that “the text as textual space where potential relationships infinitely multiply is, from the reader’s perspective, a space or medium for reflection, which he [sic] may explore further and further, but without exhausting it” (96-97). I have attempted in this study to show how this observation, made in the context of literary criticism, has a direct and powerful affinity with anthropological theories of ritual, which also outline the importance of the socially condoned and inscribed creation of liminal spaces that allow for personal and social renewal. Through this mirroring, the two processes (reading and ritual) have, I hope, been shown to be crucially linked in their self-reflexive capacity to show us about ourselves as individuals and the cultural order that surrounds us.

In exploring works of fiction in this way, it becomes clearer that the way in which they possess “transformational” qualities—in both Iser’s and Turner’s senses of the term—is not reflected merely in the elements of plot which chart the educational or pedagogical development of an individual from one state to the next: any introductory psychology textbook could do as much. Instead, the status of the novels as self-reflexive objects, which makes the story of their own becoming as important a link in the narrative chain as the rough details of character, scene, and action, forces the reader into some sort of engagement with his/her own problematic role in the activity of reading. By foregrounding the process—reading—which brings them into play, novels like The Remains of the Day and more overtly, Look at Me also bring into relief the cultural constructions of the reader, who, through this process, becomes more aware of the

foundational assumptions and structures that inform his/her reading.

Thus the suspended, liminal status of the text, which depends upon the reader's sustained performance to bring it into being, has an anthropological dispensation as well as a purely aesthetic one. An interdisciplinary approach that would place this performance within its proper cultural context would strive to avoid the hermetic separation of text from context, a tendency that Clifford Geertz, in his discussion of the collapsing of strict disciplinary boundaries, calls "an isolation of the meaning-form aspects of the matter from the practical contexts that give them life" (48). Geertz suggests an interpretive strategy that would no longer ignore the cultural contexts which provide for the apprehension of meaning in the first place, a project he calls a "social history of the moral imagination." In writing this thesis, I hope to have shown how the novels at hand demonstrate an acute awareness of their social character, a character that takes shape within a performative process similar to ritual and its inscriptions of liminal spaces.

In the works of both Ishiguro and Brookner one finds novels that are profoundly concerned with the problematic relationship between the individual and the wider social realm that conditions, transforms, and, sometimes, threatens to overwhelm them. In another Ishiguro novel, The Artist of the Floating World, for example, the aging artist Ono struggles to come to terms with how a society which once revered him has come instead to despise (or worse, ignore) him for his pre-war art. Similarly, another Brookner novel, Hotel du Lac, centres on the novelist Edith Hope, who attempts to reconcile her solitary existence with the perils of social interaction. Their novels share a concern with the treacheries of memory, the deceptiveness of recollection, and, in their use of narrators

who are also artists, the reflexivity of the novel form.

It is to writers like these, then, that I have turned in order to shed some light on a critical operation founded on the socio-cultural properties and implications of the act of reading. In doing so, I hope to have shown how the anti-structural possibilities inherent in social structures find their fructue counterpart in the limin of written texts. Rituals and novels both possess transformational qualities, qualities that bring them together as similar in process if not in form. Liminal theory, far from subscribing to the “isolation” that Geertz sees in many “hermetic” critical approaches, is instead seeing its influence expand across the disciplinary spectrum—most provocatively perhaps in the post-colonial work of Homi K. Bhabha, for whom the bordering conception of liminality serves (in The Location of Culture) as a useful trope for the negotiation of cultural hybridity within systems of power. It is this disciplinary cross-pollination that makes liminal theory so exciting, as it offers the possibility of a trans-critical approach that illuminates the social implications of performative acts like reading by placing them in their cultural context.

WORKS CITED

A. Primary Texts

- Brookner, Anita. Look at Me. 1983. London: Triad/Panther, 1985.
- Iser, Wolfgang. The Act of Reading. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978.
- . Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo. The Remains of the Day. 1989. Markham: Penguin Books, 1990.
- Turner, Victor. Blazing the Trail: Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols. Ed. Edith Turner. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1992.
- . Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1974.
- . The Forest of Symbols. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1967.
- . From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play. New York: PAJ Publications, 1982.
- . On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience. Ed. Edith Turner. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1985.
- . The Ritual Process. Chicago: Aldine, 1969.

B. Secondary Sources

- Babcock, Barbara. "Liberty's a Whore." The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society. Ed. Barbara Babcock. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978. 95-116.
- . "Mud, Mirrors, and Making Up: Liminality and Reflexivity in Between the Acts." Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism. Ed. Kathleen M. Ashley. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990. 87-116.
- . "The Novel and the Carnival World: An Essay in Memory of Joe Doherty." *Modern Language Notes* 89:4 (1975): 911-37.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. The Dialogic Imagination. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
- Bowen, Deborah. "Preserving Appearances: Photography and the Postmodern Realism of

- Anita Brookner." *Mosaic* 28.2 (1995): 123-48.
- Boyd, Michael. The Reflexive Novel. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1983.
- Brooks, Cleanth. The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947.
- Daly, Robert. "Liminality and Fiction in Cooper, Hawthorne, Cather, and Fitzgerald." Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism. Ed. Kathleen M. Ashley. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990. 71-85.
- Fisher-Wirth, Ann. "Hunger Art: The Novels of Anita Brookner." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 41.1 (1995): 1-15.
- Freud, Sigmund. Jokes and Their Relationship to the Unconscious. The Penguin Freud Library vol. 6. Ed. Angela Richards. Trans. James Strachey. London: Penguin. 1991.
- Freund, Elizabeth. The Return of the Reader. London: Methuen, 1987.
- Geertz, Clifford. Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology. New York: Basic, 1983.
- Gilead, Sarah. "Liminality, Anti-Liminality, and the Victorian Novel." *English Literary History* 53 (1986): 183-97.
- Holub, Robert C. Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction. New York: Methuen, 1984.
- Hutcheon, Linda. Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier UP, 1980.
- Ingarden, Roman. The Literary Work of Art. Evanston: Northwest UP, 1973.
- Moore, Sally Falk. "Epilogue." Symbol and Politics in Communal Ideology: Cases and Questions. Ed. Sally Falk Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975. 210-38.
- Myerhoff, Barbara, and Jay Ruby. "Introduction." A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology. Ed. Barbara Myerhoff and Jay Ruby. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1982. 1-38.
- Nicholson, Mervyn. "Eat—or Be Eaten: An Interdisciplinary Metaphor." *Mosaic* 24.3 (1991): 191-209.

---. "Food and Power: Homer, Carroll, Atwood and Others." *Mosaic* 20.3 (1987): 37-56.

Parker, Randolph. "Gaming in the Gap: Language and Liminality in Playboy of the Western World." *Theatre Journal* 37.1 (1985): 65-85.

Schwartz, Daniel R. The Case for a Humanistic Poetics. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1991.

Siegle, Robert. The Politics of Reflexivity: Narrative and the Constitutive Poetics of Culture. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986.

Shaffer, Brian. Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1998.

Stetz, Margaret Diane. "Anita Brookner: Woman Writer as Reluctant Feminist." Writing the Woman Artist. Ed. Suzanne Jones. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1991. 96-112.

Stierle, Karlheinz. "The Reading of Fictional Texts." The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation. Ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crossman. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980. 83-105.

Suleiman, Susan. "Introduction." The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation. Ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crossman. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980. 3-45.

Turnbull, Colin. "Liminality: A Synthesis of Subjective and Objective Experience." By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual. Ed. Richard Schechner and Willa Appel. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. 50-81.

Wall, Kathleen. "The Remains of the Day and Its Challenges to Theories of Unreliable Narration." *Journal of Narrative Technique* 24.1 (1994): 18-41.