

ON LONGING

*Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic,
the Souvenir, the Collection*

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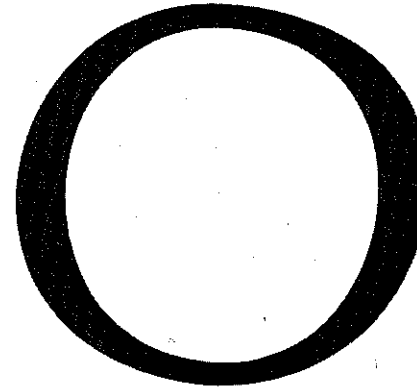
us, simultaneous and immediate. And yet always the problems of horizon and distance, the problems of depth and breadth. As we begin to traverse the field of vision, the tragedy of our partial knowledge lies behind us. The distance becomes infinite, each step an illusion of progress and movement. Our delight in flying comes from the revelation of countryside as sky and sea, from the transcendence we experience over vast spaces. Yet to see the thin and disappearing signature of the jet is to see the poverty of this flight to omniscience; in each photo appears the grim machinery of the wing. In the notion of return, of cycle, of the reclamation of landscape, lies the futility and productive possibility of human making.

To walk in the city is to experience the disjuncture of partial vision/partial consciousness. The narrativity of this walking is belied by a simultaneity we know and yet cannot experience. As we turn a corner, our object disappears around the next corner. The sides of the street conspire against us; each attention suppresses a field of possibilities. The discourse of the city is a syncretic discourse, political in its untranslatability. Hence the language of the state elides it. Unable to speak all the city's languages, unable to speak all at once, the state's language becomes monumental, the silence of headquarters, the silence of the bank. In this transcendent and anonymous silence is the miming of corporate relations. Between the night workers and the day workers lies the interface of light; in the rotating shift, the disembodiment of lived time. The walkers of the city travel at different speeds, their steps the handwriting of a personal mobility. In the milling of the crowd is the choking of class relations, the interruption of speed, and the machine. Hence the barbarism of police on horses, the sudden terror of the risen animal.

Here are three landscapes, landscapes "complete" and broken from one another as a paragraph is. And at the edge of town, the camp of the gypsies.

1. ON DESCRIPTION AND THE BOOK

Still Life



ut of these landscapes, the distinction of point of view. In a world where access to speed is access to transcendence, point of view is particularly a narrative gesture. The point of view of landscape is no longer still, is instead a matter of practice and transformation. Modernism's suspicion of point of view can be seen as a critique of omniscience, but a critique rooted in a self-consciousness that pro-

claims an omniscience of its own ontology, its own history. Point of view offers two possibilities: partial and complete. What remains silent is the third and anonymous possibility—blindness, the end of writing.

In allegory the vision of the reader is larger than the vision of the text; the reader dreams to an excess, to an overabundance. To read an allegorical narration is to see beyond the relations of narration, character, desire. To read allegory is to live in the future, the anticipation of closure beyond the closure of narrative. This vision is eschatological: its obsessions are not with origins. For Bunyan at the end of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, for example, the reader's failure at closure will result in repetition, a further inscription of the narrative upon the world. For Bunyan, repetition proclaims the cyclical and identical patterns of history. Each turn through the text will result in the same reading. The locus of action is not in the text but in the transformation of the reader.¹ Once this transformation is effected, point of view is

complete, filled out to the edges. And wherever we look, we see the work of this closure—the image is indelibly stamped upon the world.

This confidence in the circularity of history and the complete vision of closure is broken with the advent of the industrial revolution, the advent of a new kind of realism and a novel kind of "psychological" literature. As Ian Watt has told us,² two shifts in the concept of realism took place at the beginning of the eighteenth century. First, from the Renaissance onward, a tendency to replace collective experience with individual experience had evolved. And second, the particularity of everyday life and the individual's experience in *this* world became the locus of the real.³ Thus the realism of allegory has been displaced, has moved from the reader's "quickenings," an internal recognition of signs through reading, to the reader's apprehension of an immediate environment that is nevertheless external and continually changing. The reader is in an observer's position, yet his or her vision remains partial because of this externality of time and space. The eschatological vision of allegory makes the reader the producer of the text in the sense that closure can be achieved only through conversion. But the production of the eighteenth-century novel is divided between the author and his reader, and the reader's production is subsidiary to, and imitative of, the author's work. We may see the picaresque on the interface between these two forms, the picaro an outsider, a "reader" of a set of locations on the one hand, yet, on the other hand, simply another character, whose partial vision as an outsider makes him or her ridiculous. In this generic progression, the convention of the "wandering viewpoint" has emerged,⁴ a convention whereby the reader is situated *within* the text, moving alongside a diversely coordinated set of textual time systems. Thus a new process of reading evolves from this new form of realism, a reading which gives the reader the status of a character. The reader comes to "identify with" the position of Tom Jones, Pamela, Joseph Andrews, with the "proper name" and not with a lesson, a signified. The reader becomes a character, a figure who looks for signs or clues—not a reader of signs and clues that fit together into a moral puzzle solved through the eschatology of closure, but a reader of signs for their own sake, a reader of correspondences between the signs of the world, the immediate environment of everyday life, and the signs of the novel. Thus the sign in the realistic novel leads not to the revelation of a concealed meaning uncovered but to further signs, signs whose signified becomes their own interiority, and hence whose function is the production and reproduction of a particular form of subjectivity.

In this productive mapping of sign upon sign, world upon world,

reality upon reality, the criterion of exactness emerges as a value. And exactness, always a matter of a concealed slippage between media, is moved from the abstract, the true-for-all-times-and-places of allegory, to the material, the looking-just-like, that sleight of hand which is the basis for this new realism. The allegorical figure who moves in a binary fashion within a world by means of correct and incorrect actions is replaced by a member looking for signs. Exactness is a mirror, not of the world, but of the ideology of the world. And what is described exactly in the realistic novel is "personal space," the space of property, and the social relations that take place within that space. We must remember that Crusoe sees the social as a mark upon, a tainting of, his private space, and greets the trace of the human with "terror of mind": "Then terrible Thoughts rack'd my Imagination about their having found my Boat, and that there were People here; and that if so, I should certainly have them come again in greater Numbers, and devour me; that if it should happen so that they should not find me, yet they would find my Enclosure, destroy all my Corn, carry away all my Flock of tame Goats, and I should perish at last for meer Want."⁵ Yet the illusion of the emperor surrounded by his riches, the illusion of Crusoe, lord of the island, is the most inimically social of all illusions.

The movement from realism to modernism and postmodernism is a movement from the sign as material to the signifying process itself. The reflexivity of the modernist use of language calls attention not to the material existence of a world lying beyond and outside language but to the world-making capacity of language, a capacity which points to the arbitrariness of the sign at the same time that it points to the world as a transient creation of language. Like the first juncture between pre- and post-eighteenth-century fiction, this shift toward the sign itself can be linked to the development of the political economy. The exchange value of language, a value we see at work in oral genres even in modern society (e.g., the reciprocity of puns, the joke-swapping session), is replaced by a form of what we might, in analogy, call surplus value. Literary discourse is performed not within the ongoingness of conversation but in the largely private production and apprehension of the text, and the relationship between literary production and consumption becomes one of increasing distance in time and space. The forms of alienation arising from preferences for difficulty and the exotic as qualities of the modernist text reflect an increasing distance between the forces of literary production and those of literature's general consumption. At the same time, they reveal the concentration of those productive forces resulting in and from the hegemony of mass culture.

In his essay *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Dean MacCannell suggests that we see the relation between commodities as a "semiotic" one: "In Marx's treatment of it, the system of commodity production under capitalism resembles nothing so much as a language. A language is entirely social, entirely arbitrary and fully capable of generating meanings in itself."⁶ Yet to say that the system of commodity production "resembles" language is not enough; it is necessary to outline the nature of that resemblance, to note the symbolic nature of the commodity once it is transformed from use value to exchange value and defined within a system of signs and their oppositions. "It is possible to consider the exchange of commodities as a semiotic phenomenon not because the exchange of goods implies a physical exchange, but because in the exchange the *use value* of the goods is transformed into their *exchange value*—and therefore a process of signification or *symbolization* takes place, this later being perfected by the appearance of money, which *stands for something else*," writes Umberto Eco.⁷ Hence the notion of a "pure semiotic" realm of exchange; a realm analogous to the most reductive accounts of a pure "poetic language" (Hugo Ball, for example) would find its locus in the gift shop and in the deliberate superfluosity of "tokens of affection."

If we consider the relation between commodity production and the organization of fictive forms as part of an entire semiotic system, we can posit an isomorphism between changes in genre and changes in other modes of production. Not the least important implication of this relation is the influence of generic changes upon the prevailing notion of history as narrative. In other words, the distances between audience and performer in a culture's genre repertoire outline the place of the self as agent, actor, and subject of history.

Just as genre may be defined as a set of textual expectations emergent in time and determined by (and divergent from) tradition, so history may be seen as a convention for the organization of experience in time. Yet historical and generic conventions cannot be mapped upon the real; rather, these conventions are emergent in the prevailing ideological formations that are the basis for the social construction of the real. Here we might take our position from Vološinov:

Genres are definable in terms of specific combinations of features stemming from the double orientation in life, in reality, which each type of artistic "form of the whole" commands—an orientation at once from outside in and from inside out. What is at stake in the first instance is the actual status of the work as social fact: its definition in real time and space; its means and mode of performance; the kind of audience presupposed and the relationship between author and

audience established; its association with social institutions, social mores and other ideological spheres; in short—its full "situational" definition.⁸

Rooted in the ideological, the literary genre determines the shape and progress of its material; but, at the same time, the genre itself is determined by the social formations from which it arises. The relation between literary producer and consumer will be reflected in the form of the genre. Consider, for example, the rule of turn-taking, which plays such an important part in our concept of "conversation" and in the various "conversational genres": repartee, verbal dueling, riddling, punning, telling proverbs, telling jokes and joking, and constructing narratives of personal experience. The reciprocity of the utterance underlies both fictive and nonfictive forms in these conversational contexts. But with the creation of fictive worlds that are removed in time and space from the context of situation, an increasing distance is placed between producer and consumer and the symmetry of conversational reciprocity is replaced by the specialized values of performer and spectator. The spectacle, the stage play, the novel, exemplify this increasing distance between performer and audience.

In his careful exploration of these distances in relation to folkloric forms, Roger Abrahams has suggested that

at some arbitrary point in the unarticulated—but obviously unconsciously sensed—spectrum of performer-audience relationships, folklorists decide that there is too great a distance between the performer and his audience to call an enactment folklore. . . . A similar and equally arbitrary cut-off point is observable in the realm of material folklore. In this case, however, the relationship with which we are concerned is between *maker* and *user*, not performer and audience. At some point of the maker-user relationship spectrum, the removal between the two becomes so pronounced that we call it a product of technology, not material folklore.⁹

We might go on to address the historical and ideological formations underlying these shifts in genre. For example, in a reciprocal-exchange economy, performer and audience are functions of situation, functions into which (if only theoretically) any social member can step. But in a society in which these roles are specialized, the role becomes larger than the member who assumes it; the role is determinate. The mysterious power of our metaphor of "the person behind the mask, the person underneath all this 'role playing,'" arises from the stratification brought about by the latter phenomenon. Rather than being in time, in history, these latter and increasingly fictive genres are viewed as being outside time and unmodified by the

contingencies and responsibilities of historical time. The product of technology is not a function of a mutual context of making and use. It works to make invisible the labor that produced it, to appear as its own object, and thus to be self-perpetuating. Both the electric toaster and *Finnegans Wake* turn their makers into absent and invisible fictions.

An important dimension of these relationships between audience and performer, subject and agent, the collective and the individual, is the difference between speeds of performance. Conversational genres, and even, more generally, the genres of face-to-face interaction, are marked by the simultaneous and reciprocal experience of time and space undergone by both performers and audience. It is only with the advent of mechanical reproduction that this original temporal and spatial context has become physically manipulated. In his classic essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin outlined some possible consequences of this technological revolution. The authority of the object, the authority of the "original," is jeopardized, the object is detached from the domain of tradition, the work of art is emancipated from its dependence upon ritual, and, consequently, exhibition value begins to displace cult value, the increased mass of participants in the arts results in a new mode of participation: "A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. . . . In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art."¹⁰ Although Benjamin was concerned primarily with the impact of technological innovation in the visual arts, the impact of printing on the verbal arts also must be considered. Except for such children's genres as tongue twisters, visual puns, and feats of memorization, the verbal arts do not concern themselves with the manipulation of speed or with the manipulation of the physical space surrounding the utterance. With the invention of print, however, the material aspects of the discourse emerged as an aesthetic factor. While oral verbal art unfolds in time, written verbal art unfolds in time and space; the book offers a concrete physical textuality, an "all-at-onceness" of boundaries which the oral performance allows to elide into the surrounding context of situation. Yet, in the way it is bound, the book denies us a transcendent simultaneity; we must unfold the pages in time, and this unfolding bears little relation to the actual speed of the text. With print, the time of the performance becomes remote and the text's potential for the fictive is increased. We might consider that the fantastic possibilities the book presents have their antecedents in those oral genres—like the Irish *märchen* tradition—that take as their context the night lit only by fire. In Ireland, *Fiannaíocht sa ló* (storytelling in the daytime) was said to be

unlucky. While some learned tales while haymaking or digging potatoes during the daytime, the most prevalent context was the night: fishermen at sea at night as they waited to draw in their nets, or men and women passing the night, making fish nets and telling tales to one another.¹¹ The blank spaces of night, the blinding whiteness of the page before print, offer themselves to the fantastic, to a reading of fire or the tracks of animals. Although the technology of artificial light destroyed the context of the oral fantastic, the technology of the artificial word created a space for its eruption. In each case these storytelling contexts metaphorically and physically remove themselves from the immediate and historical context of everyday life.

The printed text is cinematic before the invention of cinema. The adjustable speed of narration, the manipulability of the visual, turns the reader into a spectator enveloped by, yet clearly separated from, the time and space of the text. Michel Butor has offered an illuminating discussion of the reader's position:

As soon as we can speak of a literary "work," and hence as soon as we approach the province of the novel, we must superimpose at least three time sequences: that of the adventure, that of writing it, that of reading it. The time sequence of the writing will often be reflected in the adventure by the intermediary of a narrator. We generally assume a progression of speeds between these different "flows": thus, the author gives us a summary, which we read in two minutes (he might have spent two hours writing it), of a narrative which a certain character might have told in two days, of events extending over two years. Thus we have organizations of narrative of different speeds.¹²

Butor goes on to say that in reading dialogue and in reading letters embedded in the text, we are aware of "going the same speed as" the characters of the novel. Hence we have the problem of speaking/reading plays—a reading which borders on enactment and performance. In the simultaneity of print, with its rather remarkable capacity for storing information, we find an increasingly complex set of time systems. The project of the realistic novelist is to move a complex set of characters through a complex set of interrelated actions; in other words, to acquire a rather fantastic omnipotence with regard to a rather mundane world. In *Tom Jones*, for example, Books IV through XVIII are titled by the amount of time they depict, a time which is the time of the text's representation: "Containing the Time of a Year," "Containing a Portion of Time Somewhat Longer Than Half a Year," "Containing About Three Weeks," "Containing Three Days," and so on. Thus we can further distinguish between authorial time (time of writing) and the reader's time (time of reading the text) as extratextual

temporalities, and the narrator's time (time of the storytelling act) and the time that is portrayed through the text's representation (time of depicted events) as intratextual temporalities.¹³ Because this particular novel is a history of a central character, told by an omniscient narrator, we have a further disjuncture between Tom's experience of events (the time of the representation), the reader's experience of events (vacillating between the point of view of the narrator and the point of view of Tom), and the narrator's "experience" of events, the last being the experience of the storytelling act. Hence the narrator must resort to "meanwhile" strategies if the work is to have a continuity miming the continuity of our experience in everyday life. Chapter 8 of Book X ("In Which the History Goes Forward About Twelve Hours"), "In Which the History Goes Backward," therefore begins: "Before we proceed any farther in our history, it may be proper to look a little back in order to account for the extraordinary appearance of Sophia and her father at the inn at Upton. The reader may be pleased to remember that in the ninth chapter of the seventh book of our history we left Sophia, after a long debate between love and duty, deciding the course as it usually, I believe, happens in favour of the former." With these complex disjunctions between different experiences of temporality, the narrative voice and, consequently, the time of the narration reach for transcendence through the use of metanarrative comments like this one. The omniscient narrator works to disguise the temporality of his or her own voice, to assume an all-at-onceness and all-knowingness that is seductive to the reader, for that position of omniscience presumably will be available to the reader once he or she reaches the novel's closure. At closure we have "graduated," we have finished the book; we have not simply taken one more turn through a forest of signs as we do in allegory. The ideological aspects of the narrative voice also must be considered here, for rather than splitting into binary allegorical camps (we have only to think of bumper stickers that say "I've got it"), the realistic novel presents a set of conflicting ideologies, conflicting points of view, in part through the device of conflicting extratextual and intratextual time systems. The triumph of the omniscient narrator is worked in pulling the reader out of sympathy with any particular time system other than his or her own. Sophia's debate between love and duty is seen through the ironic distancing of "deciding the course as it usually, I believe, happens."

This absent location of origin and authority in the novel might be compared to other postliterate modes of aesthetic production. Just as the reader impossibly aspires to take the position of the narrator,

standing above and outside the narrative, so, Benjamin explains, does the audience take the position of the camera in watching a film.

The camera that presents the performance of the film actor to the public need not respect the performance as an integral whole. Guided by the cameraman, the camera continually changes its position with respect to the performance. The sequence of positional views which the editor composes from the material supplied him constitute the completed film. It comprises certain factors of movement which are in reality those of the camera, not to mention special camera angles, close-ups, etc. . . . This permits the audience to take the position of a critic, without experiencing any personal contact with the actor. The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera.¹⁴

In his projections regarding the popular apprehension of film, Benjamin was not able to anticipate the ways in which the technology would discipline the audience into particular modes of seeing or the ways in which that technology itself would develop. Nevertheless, with the advent of film, interpretation has been replaced by watching, by an eye that suffers under an illusion of nakedness, an illusion shared with the camera's "naked" eye. Here we see the increasing historical tendency toward the self-sufficient machine, the sign that generates all consequent signs, the Frankenstein and the thinking computer that have the capacity to erase their authors and, even more significantly, to erase the labor of their authors. The current bifurcation of popular film in America into the horror movie and the special-effects movie displays this phenomenon of reflexive signification. The popularity of *Star Wars* and *E.T.* would seem to derive at least in part from the ways in which these two modes are combined and then suffused with a generalized nostalgia for the generic history of film itself. Indeed, it is the very productivity and self-referentiality of these cinematic signs, their absolute erasure of a physical referent, that renders their excessiveness tolerable for an audience. The true horror movie would be the one envisioned by the audience of Lumière's *Arrival of a Train at a Station* on the night of December 28, 1895. As the train "approached" them at a 45° angle on the screen, they stampeded from the basement room on the Boulevard Capucine which Lumière had rented for the screening.¹⁵

In a suggestive article on the relation between the development of film and the development of late capitalism, Stanley Aronowitz has stated that "film is the synchronous art form of late capitalism. The film-machine is the enemy of time no less than mass production; it reproduces desire as its product, removes the referent, the signified, and leaves only the act of signifying."¹⁶ Here the mode of production

has as its principal obligation the reproduction of itself. Similarly, the growth of the mechanical reproduction of American folk music effected the movement from "country music," played at the speed of the audience, the speed of dance and the body, to "bluegrass," a music which is often evaluated for the way it pits the limits of skill against the limits of aural speed. Bluegrass does not mime the movements of the body; it mimes the movements of the machine that reproduces it: "The Orange Blossom Special" is a testament to technology; its referent is the history of mechanical innovation and not simply the history of musical innovation. In another parallel, the complex technology of "holographic art" erases its author and its referent; what matters is that it works, not that it points to something outside itself. Its contents seem strangely unmotivated, strangely out of key with the technical sophistication of its mechanisms: a woman's face, a parrot in a cage, scenes that resemble those of romantic greeting cards. Content is emptied of interpretability. While modernist art delighted in "making strange" the everyday, this technological art delights in turning the strange into the obvious, in mapping mystery onto cliché. Holographic art is an art like that of commercial television, a mystification of technology accomplished in a gesture which proclaims the innocuousness of all *content*. In fact, without this univocal and mimetic content, we would not be able to distinguish artistic from scientific uses of the holograph.

In these postliterate genres, the time system of the viewer is collapsed into the time system of a machine that has erased its author. No matter how many buttons there seem to be on the television set, there are only two: on and off. The buttons that would be absolutely forbidden to the television would be the buttons Vertov and Chaplin liked to push as authors: the one that speeds up the action and the one that reverses. Once the viewer can manipulate these dimensions, he or she becomes aware of the textuality, the boundaries of the work. Through such manipulations, the viewer can become both reader and authority, in control of the temporality and spatiality of the work, and hence able to reclaim it by the inscription of an interpretation that has the power of interruption and negation. In other words, the progressive movement from the body's reciprocity to technological abstraction in the mode of production of the art form effects a transformation of the subject. In the former mode of production, the subject is performer or agent of tradition; in the second mode of production, the subject is performed, constituted by the operation of the *device* or the differentiation of roles determined by the mode of production itself. For a simple example of this differentiation, we might look to the European circus, whose multiple rings are

not so much a simultaneous play as they are the articulation of class difference. What happens in the center ring (its splendor and pyrotechnics, its invention of anthropology and history) is available only peripherally to those with second- and third-class tickets. Furthermore, we might note that recent revolutionary art movements—street theater and happenings, for example—have attempted a reduction of this differentiation, although of necessity this reduction has been self-conscious and nostalgic in its attempts to replace the mechanical and individual with "the homemade" and the communal.

Manipulation and reversibility mark their other: the conventional view of time in the everyday lifeworld. This convention holds time to be linear, narrative, and undifferentiated by hierarchy; it is a convention that defines "being" in everyday life as "one thing after another." But from another stance—that offered by the model of fiction—the time of everyday life is itself organized according to differing modes of temporality, modes articulated through measurements of context and intensification. Time in the everyday lifeworld is not undifferentiated and unhierarchical—it is textual, lending itself to the formation of boundaries and to a process of interpretation delimited by our experience with those boundaries. While consciousness may be described as a "stream," it is only through the reflective and anticipatory processes of understanding that we are able to articulate even that quality of "streamness." Here we might remember Kenneth Burke's assertion that "there are no forms of art which are not forms of experience outside of art."¹⁷ The prevailing notion that everyday time is a matter of undifferentiated linearity may be linked to the prevailing forms of experience within the workplace. Such a notion presents us with an assembly line of temporality, an assembly line in which all experience is partial, piecemeal.

But this would be experience *without language*, for it is by language that we articulate the world "behind" and "beyond" the immediate context at hand. Language gives form to our experience, providing through narrative a sense of closure and providing through abstraction an illusion of transcendence. And it is at this point that the social nature of experience becomes apparent, for language is a social phenomenon; it is only by means of our inherited and lived relation to language that the temporality of our experience becomes organized and even organizable. If the form of experience is that of an "unmediated flow," it is only language which enables us to define this indefiniteness. And because of the social formation of language, because language cannot be abstracted from the ideological sphere that is both its creator and creation, we must question the function of this prevailing notion of experience.

Perhaps one of the strongest models of a presumed disjunction between everyday life and art, stream of consciousness and self-consciousness, is presented in the invisible social space of reading and writing, a space defined temporally and spatially as outside and above the quotidian. Although reading may give form to time, it does not count in time; it leaves no trace; its product is invisible. The marks in the margins of the page are the marks of writing, not the marks of reading. Since the moment of Augustine's reading silently to himself,¹⁸ reading has inhabited the scenes of solitude: the attic, the beach, the commuter train, scenes whose profound loneliness arises only because of their proximity to a tumultuous life which remains outside their peripheries. The reader speaks only to the absent writer; the writer speaks only to the absent reader. We cannot "write along" with someone; aside from Colette and Willy in the novel factory, the writer is alone. And whereas reading may assume or even manipulate the speed of thought, writing obeys the speed of the body, the speed of the hand. If thought outdistances writing, the text must become flooded with signification; if writing outdistances thought, we find the convention of the computer poem and by extension, the "mindless" secretary. Because writing by hand assumes the speed of the body, it is linked to the personal. It is not quite polite to type condolence notes and heartfelt letters to friends or lovers. To sign your name, your mark, is to leave a track like any other track of the body; handwriting is to space what the voice is to time. The moral righteousness of burning one's own letters and diaries is the righteousness of the suicide, not of the avenging murderer. But the record that cannot be burned with the rest is the record that cannot be recorded: the time that cannot count in the diary is the time of writing the diary.

The Sadness Without an Object

The functions that the everyday and its concomitant languages, inhabitants, and temporalities serve are at least two. First, they quantitatively provide for history; second, they qualitatively provide for authenticity. The temporality of everyday life is marked by an irony which is its own creation, for this temporality is held to be ongoing and nonreversible and, at the same time, characterized by repetition and predictability. The pages falling off the calendar, the notches marked in a tree that no longer stands—these are the signs of the everyday, the effort to articulate difference through counting. Yet it is precisely this counting that reduces difference to similarities, that is designed to be "lost track of." Such "counting," such signifying, is drowned out by the silence of the ordinary.

Consider once more the example of Crusoe. Crusoe is surrounded by the social, but it is the social in the abstract—truly a *langue*, a Cartesian ideal, of the social—that we see here. Inversely, Crusoe's sense of time has only the sun as its model, a model which he loses sense of precisely because it cannot be organized abstractly. Missing the comforts of social time, Crusoe in his journal counts not days but objects and the labor that has accomplished their possession or creation:

Thus I liv'd mighty comfortably, my Mind being entirely composed by resigning to the Will of God, and throwing my self wholly upon the Disposal of his Providence. This made my Life better than sociable, for when I began to regret the want of Conversation, I would ask my self whether thus conversing mutually with my own Thoughts, and, as I hope I may say, with even God himself by Ejaculations, was not better than the utmost Enjoyment of humane Society in the World.

I cannot say that after this, for five Years, any extraordinary thing happened to me, but I liv'd on in the same Course, in the same Posture and Place, just as before; the chief things I was employed in, besides my yearly Labour of planting my Barley and Rice, and curing my Raisins, of both which I always kept up just enough to have sufficient Stock of one Year's Provisions before hand. I say, besides this yearly Labour, and my daily Labour of going out with my Gun, I had one Labour to make me a Canoe, which at last I finished.¹⁹

The absolute tedium of Crusoe's days is the tedium of this antiutopia of objects, an island of objects existing solely as their use value. Marx similarly described Crusoe's world:

Let us now picture to ourselves, by way of change, a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour-power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour-power of the community. All the characteristics of Robinson's labour are here repeated, but with this difference, that they are social, instead of individual. Everything produced by him was exclusively the result of his own personal labour, and therefore simply an object of use for himself.²⁰

If *Robinson Crusoe* is an eschatological work, its eschaton is the moment when the ship (and not the naked footprint) appears on the horizon and use value is transformed into exchange value. The crucial moment in which Crusoe decides to take the money from the ship marks the onset of this anticipation. In this is the "capitalist" tone of the work, and not simply in Crusoe's desire to possess things.

Robinson Crusoe presents us with the saturation point of "ordinary language," language as pure use value, language as inventory over utterance. If there was ever a character who spoke in ordinary lan-

guage, it is Friday. Yet Friday must be disciplined into speaking ordinary language. He begins his dialogue with Crusoe on the level of "if God much strong, much might as the Devil, why God no kill the Devil, no make him no more do wicked?" Crusoe's response is, "And at first I could not tell what to say, so I pretended not to hear him, and ask'd him what he said." After more frustration with the question, Crusoe says: "I therefore diverted the present Discourse between me and my Man, rising up hastily, as upon some sudden Occasion of going out; then sending him for something a good way off."²¹ Eventually Crusoe teaches Friday to simply say "yes" and "no," reducing his language to a pure function of immediate context and perpetuating a much larger imperialist tradition of leveling the vox populi.

For Crusoe, time is space to be uncovered, parts of the island left unexplored. The measurement of time is distance; time is a matter of the discovery and acquisition of nature. And because this sense of time stands only in relation to the material world, it has no capacity for reciprocity or for reversal. Time and material goods are stockpiled in Crusoe's world; there is no space for play and exchange until the moment of closure. Similarly, the conventions of everyday life assume an absolute referentiality between ordinary language and the material world. Hence, within this mythology, the primitive, the folk, the peasant, and the working class speak without self-consciousness, without criticism, and without affectation. Yet what is hidden within (or beneath) this flat surface of "ordinary language" is the range of genres that still characterize a face-to-face mode of social interaction: gossiping, flirting, promising, joking, making conversation, doing introductions, and so on.

The function of these "invisible" genres is not to serve as purely utilitarian modes, to serve as "pointers" toward the material world. Rather, it is to maintain, manipulate, and transform the ongoing social reality from which such individual genres have arisen. Furthermore, we may include within this function not only face-to-face genres but all genres. In the place of "ordinary" and "poetic" ones we might substitute "face to face" versus "literary" genres as distinctions useful for articulating differing methods of engagement with the text, differing modes of production and consumption. Or we might replace the standard/poetic distinction with a distinction between nonfictive and fictive genres—a distinction which would allow us to examine ideological formations as they alternately create "the real" and "the imaginary" of social life. In any case, to take as a first step a division between standard and poetic language is to engage in a wholesale and simultaneous trivialization of the word and the work of art.

The crisis that this distinction between standard and deviation attempts to erase, or perhaps simply to avert, is the crisis of the sign—the gap between signifier and signified, which Derrida and others have termed the myth of presence in Western metaphysics. To have an ordinary language which proceeds as if it were part of the material world and a poetic language made of deviations from ordinary language is to ignore the slippage between language and referent which makes all language, from the outset, a deviation from "standardness" or "quality," a deviation which in fact is the productive possibility of language's existence as a social phenomenon. The utilitarian vision of an ordinary language perfectly mapped upon the material needs of the everyday is a vision of language before the Fall: speaking from the heart or from nature as the vox populi is mythically able to do. Thus the folk are seen to rise in one voice because of their lack of consciousness of difference.²² Such theories of language can be placed amid other Western cults of the primitive: the celebration of madness in romanticism and modernism, the cult of the child, the cult of the pastoral—cults that have never been held by the mad, the child, or the folk themselves.

But if we view this crisis of the sign from an emphasis upon language, what becomes problematic is the gap between language and speech, between the abstraction that is language and the practice that is speech. Hence the structuralist focus on the sentence and its transformations rather than upon the utterance and its situations. And if we view this problem as one of transformations of context, we can begin to approach language as utterance, language used within speech situations, and to see the arbitrariness of the sign dissolve into an ontological crux. The arbitrary nature of the sign may hold within the relation of word and thing, but it is transformed into a nonarbitrary relation by social praxis. Here we might compare the arbitrariness of the sign to the "arbitrariness" of exchange value. Although exchange value bears no intrinsic relation to either the material nature of the commodity or the amount of labor that has gone into the formation of the commodity, in the sense that it is socially determined it is not arbitrary. "Hence," wrote Marx, "exchange value appears to be something accidental and purely relative, and consequently an intrinsic value, i.e. an exchange value that is inseparably connected with, inherent in commodities, seems a contradiction in terms. . . . Therefore, first: the valid exchange values of a given commodity express something equal; secondly, exchange value, generally, is only the mode of expression, the phenomenal form, of something contained in it, yet distinguishable from it."²³ Such an appearance of arbitrariness serves the social function of creating the illusion of a

"free market." My point is that we find the conventions for using language emerging in the material social praxis of utterance and not through the abstract measurement of an imperfect *parole* against a perfect *langue*. By framing our use of language in this way, we witness a shift in idealization, a shift which moves the ideal from the *langue* to the situation. Context, the situation of the utterance in face-to-face communication, becomes privileged. In these two positions, the abstract and singular vocality of *langue* and the concrete and multivocal situation of the utterance, we can see voiced two conflicting ideological positions. To privilege either view is to stop the vital movement of the sign. Bakhtin, writing under the name of Vološinov, has characterized this movement, which he calls the social "multiaccentuality" of the sign, as follows:

Class does not coincide with the sign community, i.e. with the community, which is the totality of users of the same set of signs for ideological communication. Thus various different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of class struggle.

This social multiaccentuality of the ideological sign is a very crucial aspect. By and large, it is thanks to this intersecting of accents that a sign maintains its vitality and dynamism and the capacity for further development. . . .

The very same thing that makes the ideological sign vital and mutable is also, however, that which makes it a refracting and distorting medium. The ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, external character to the ideological sign, to distinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgments which occurs in it, to make the sign uniaccental.

Bakhtin goes on to say that the inner dialectical quality of the sign comes out fully in times of revolutionary change and social crisis, but that because of the social tendency toward conservatism this contradiction does not fully emerge in everyday life.²⁴ Thus not only is an ideological function at work in the separation of ordinary and poetic (semiotic and symbolic) language and its hierarchization of access to meaning, but such an ideological function is at work as well in the always-political imposition of univocality. The gap between signifier and signified, the irreconcilable state of difference (which, accepted, tends toward the schizoid), is taken up by social life and dispersed into the "free play" of art and the grounded "base" of the everyday, a base which, with difficulty, must suppress its own access to heterogeneity.

The conservatism of everyday life arises from its emphasis upon

convention, repetition, and the necessity of maintaining a predictable social reality.²⁵ The function of "making conversation," for example, is mainly the exercise of statements of membership, statements which will allow for the continuance and proper closure of the conversation itself. Hence the reflexive nature of everyday reality, its capacity for mirroring itself through the creation of the rule-governed and rule-creating behavior we know as the traditional, behavior which appears to be outside and beyond the situation and which is at the same time the very creation of the situation. We can see in the structuralist's assumption of an ideal of language a romanticism of apprehension, a romanticism to be fulfilled at the moment when *langue* is realized on earth. And in the contextualist's privileging of context of situation we see a romanticism directed toward a lost point of origin, a point where being-in-context supposedly allowed for a complete and totalized understanding. In order to examine our relations to this point of origin, the point before the splitting of signifier and signified, the point of union between utterance and context, let us turn to a set of formations—the quotation, the fiction, and the book—and the varieties of nostalgia in which they are engaged.

This privileging of origin, of "original" context, is particularly manifested in the ambivalent status of the quotation, for the quotation lends both integrity and limit to the utterance by means of its "marks." In detaching the utterance from its context of origin, the quotation marks textualize the utterance, giving it both integrity and boundary and opening it to interpretation. The quotation appears as a severed head, a voice whose authority is grounded in itself, and therein lies its power and its limit. For although the quotation now speaks with the voice of history and tradition, a voice "for all times and places," it has been severed from its context of origin and of original interpretation, a context which gave it authenticity. Once quoted, the utterance enters the arena of social conflict: it is manipulatable, examinable within its now-fixed borders; it now plays within the ambivalent shades of varying contexts. It is no longer the possession of its author; it has only the authority of use. At the same time, the quotation serves to lend the original an authenticity it itself has lost to a surrounding context. The quotation mark points not only inward but outward as well. What stands outside the quotation mark is seen as spontaneous and original; hence our generic conventions of speaking from the heart, from the body, from nature.

In the quotation, we see at work the two primary functions of language—to make present what can only be experienced abstractly, and to textualize our experience and thereby make it available for interpretation and closure. The act of quoting intensifies these pro-

cesses, which are at work in all language use, much as the framing of carnival marks the intensification and display of all other textual scenes of social life. In quotation and in carnival we see a process of restoration and a process of disillusionment, for the boundary of the text is both fixed and made suspect, and, because of the ongoingness of time and space, this placing is never complete. Henri Lefebvre has suggested that "la fête ne se distinguait de la vie quotidienne que par l'explosion des forces lentement accumulées dans et par cette vie quotidienne elle-même."²⁶ The carnival presents a reply to everyday life which is at the same time an inversion, an intensification, and a manipulation of that life, for it exposes and transforms both pattern and contradiction, presenting the argument and the antithesis of everyday life in an explosion that bears the capacity to destroy that life.

Quotation thereby leads us to a set of terms bound up in this double process of restoration and disillusion: the image, the reflection, and, above all, the repetition. To posit a repetition is to enter the abstract and perfect world of art, a world where the text can appear and reappear despite the ongoingness of the "real world." And yet, without this repetition, without this two-in-the-place-of-one, the one cannot come to be, for it is only by means of difference that identity can be articulated.²⁷ In quotation we find the context of production transformed and the utterance detached from the authority of that context. In fiction, reframing the utterance transforms both the context of production and the mode of production. As Bateson has explained in his studies of the message "This is play," the play message signifies a transformation of interpretive procedures, a transformation partaken of by members of the situation and which they understand as a device for entering into an abstract and metaphorical play world.

Play, and fiction as a form of play, exaggerate the capacity that all reported speech bears—the capacity to re-create contexts other than the context at hand, the capacity to create an abstract world through language. And the crisis of the sign, the gap between signifier and signified, is reproduced at the level of context: the gap between the reported speech and the speech of origin. The repetition the fiction presents is an imaginary repetition, for it need not have the authority of the "happened before." What is fictive is the "original context"; the pure fiction has no material referent. Hence fiction subverts the myth of presence, of authorial context, of origin, and at the same time asserts the ideological by insisting upon the reality-generating capacity of language.

Fiction allows us to see that repetition is a matter of reframing, that

in the repetition difference is displayed in both directions, just as "identity" is created. We thus cannot see the repetition as secondary, or auxiliary, to the original, for instead of supplementing or supplanting the original, it serves to create the original. Analogously, the fiction, whether conventionally labeled "realistic," "absurd," "fantastic," or "exact," does not reflect its subject so much as it creates its subject; each fiction contaminates the imaginary purity of everyday life by denying the privileged authority of immediate, lived context and that context's subsequent "authenticity" of experience.

Because fiction "occurs" in a world simultaneous to and "outside" everyday life, it interrupts the narrativity, the linearity of that life. The weaving of fictive genres throughout this linearity lends to everyday life a lyric quality, a quality of recurrence and variation upon theme. Even the personal-experience story, the narrative genre that perhaps most mimes the conventional linearity attributed to our everyday experience of temporality, serves to structure that narrative within larger conventions, indeed generic conventions, for interpreting experience. And such structuring echoes others' engagement with both everyday temporality and the temporality of "personal narrative." The personal-experience story is most impersonal in its generic conventions and may be compared to the novel in its continuing involvement with and transformation of previous performances of its genre. Here the progress of the individual life history, whose repetition is seen as a cumulative one, is in fact the progress of the genre, the refinement of notions of character, incident, action, and scene in relation to changing cultural values.

All fictions, both oral and written, lend lyric structure to our experience, but the convergence of fictiveness and print is particularly conducive to an experience of simultaneity and a metaphorical existence that is both substitutive and predicative. Whereas speech unfolds in time, writing unfolds in space, and print's formation by a process of mechanical reproduction gives the book both material existence through time and an abstract existence across a community of readers. Furthermore, the community, like the author's ideal and gentle reader, is a largely imaginary construction, an abstraction unavailable to any given author or reader at any given moment, and yet which must of necessity be assumed at such moments. Hence the reproduction of the text is simultaneously quite literal and autonomous of authorial intention: each reader creates not a new interpretation but a new text and an author whose "authority" is determined by the ideology of literary convention, including the social formation known as "the literary life," as much as by conventions of intentionality. The tension we see at work between tradition and situation

in the face-to-face communities that engage in oral genres is displaced in written forms by their turning of the reader into performed/performer. The author's experience of this tension is that of a reader creating a new text, a new temporality, out of those experiences, both real and imagined, which he or she had apprehended and given structure to.

The simultaneity of the printed word lends the book its material aura; as an object it has a life of its own, a life outside human time, the time of the body and its voice. Hence the transcendent authority of the classic and the classicism of all printed works. The book stands in tension with history, a tension reproduced in the microcosm of the book itself, where reading takes place in time across marks which have been made in space. Moreover, because of this tension, all events recounted within the text have an effect of distancing, an effect which serves to make the text both transcendent and trivial and to collapse the distinction between the real and the imagined. The ideological nature of the work becomes apparent here as the ideal supplants the "merely real." The printed word always tends toward abstraction, for it escapes both the necessity of a material referent and the constraints of an immediate context of origin; it is always quotation.

Similarly, in its absolute closure, its clarity of beginnings and endings, the printed work finds an analogous practice in narrative. While "lived" history is perceived as open work, work without established beginning or established ending, it is the accomplishment of narrative to provide both origin and eschaton, a set of provisions that are profoundly ideological in the closure they present. Narrative is "about" closure; the boundaries of events form the ideological basis for the interpretation of their significance. Indeed, without narrative, without the organization of experience, the event cannot come to be. This organization is an organization of temporality and an establishing of the causality implicit in temporality, but narrative closure is offered outside the temporality of our everyday lives. It is not caught up within that temporality, but rather is performed with self-consciousness, with a manipulation of point of view within its own story time, the context of its performance.

Although narrative offers transcendence, it lacks authenticity, for its experience is *other*. The printed word suffers doubly from this lack, for not only has it lost the authenticity of lived experience—it has lost the authenticity of authorial voice as well. Who is speaking? It is the voice of abstraction, a voice which proclaims its absence with each word. In this outline of experience we can see a simultaneous and contradictory set of assumptions. First, the assumption that immedi-

ate lived experience is more "real," bearing within itself an authenticity which cannot be transferred to mediated experience; yet second, the assumption that the mediated experience known through language and the temporality of narrative can offer pattern and insight by virtue of its capacity for transcendence. It is in the meeting of these two assumptions, in the conjunction of their *symptoms*, that the social disease of nostalgia arises. By the narrative process of nostalgic reconstruction the present is denied and the past takes on an authenticity of being, an authenticity which, ironically, it can achieve only through narrative.²⁸

Nostalgia is a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience. Rather, it remains behind and before that experience. Nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack.²⁹ Hostile to history and its invisible origins, and yet longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin, nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face, a face that turns toward a future-past, a past which has only ideological reality. This point of desire which the nostalgic seeks is in fact the absence that is the very generating mechanism of desire. As we shall see in our discussion of the souvenir, the realization of re-union imagined by the nostalgic is a narrative utopia that works only by virtue of its partiality, its lack of fixity and closure: nostalgia is the desire for desire.

The prevailing motif of nostalgia is the erasure of the gap between nature and culture, and hence a return to the utopia of biology and symbol united within the walled city of the maternal. The nostalgic's utopia is prelapsarian, a genesis where lived and mediated experience are one, where authenticity and transcendence are both present and everywhere. The crisis of the sign, emerging between signifier and signified, between the material nature of the former and the abstract and historical nature of the latter, as well as within the mediated reality between written and spoken language, is denied by the nostalgic's utopia, a utopia where authenticity suffuses both word and world. The nostalgic dreams of a moment before knowledge and self-consciousness that itself lives on only in the self-consciousness of the nostalgic narrative. Nostalgia is the repetition that mourns the inauthenticity of all repetition and denies the repetition's capacity to form identity.³⁰ Thus we find that the disjunctions of temporality traced here create the space for nostalgia's eruption. The inability of the sign to "capture" its signified, of narrative to be one with its object, and of the genres of mechanical reproduction to approximate

the time of face-to-face communication leads to a generalized desire for origin, for nature, and for unmediated experience that is at work in nostalgic longing. Memory, at once impoverished and enriched, presents itself as a device for measurement, the "ruler" of narrative. Thus near-sightedness and far-sightedness emerge as metaphors for understanding, and they will be of increasing importance as this essay proceeds.

Interior Decorations

Nostalgia's longing for absolute presence in the face of a gap between signifier and signified reminds us that narrative is a signifying phenomenon made up of another signifying phenomenon: language "means" before narrative takes it up. Here is another face of the problem of ordinary/poetic language: language detached from its history, from the contradictions arising from its experience in real speech situations, would be empty, would be barren not only of exchange value but of use value as well. Because it is manufactured from this stock of utterances, the literary is neither new nor deviant, but rather is what Soviet semioticians have called a "secondary modelling system":

It is possible to conclude that if from one perspective the assertion that poetic language is a particular case of natural language is well-founded, then from another perspective the view that natural language is to be considered a particular case of poetic language is just as convincing. "Poetic language" and "natural language" are particular manifestations of more general systems that are in a state of continual tension and mutual translation, and at the same time are not wholly mutually translatable; therefore the question of the primacy of one or the other communication-modelling system is determined by the functional direction of a specific act of translation, that is, by what is translated into what.³¹

Because, as a result of its particular mixing of the complex of languages available at the moment of its performance and of its detachment from a context of origin, the literary work cannot admit of synonymy, it displays within its physical closure the impossibility of closure on the level of interpretation. It displays the oxymoron of the sign: while the signifier may be material, the signified cannot be.

So long as a literary genre allows for a distinction in point of view(s),³² a set of conflicting languages will be in tension both within the text and in relation to the interpreter's language. These conflicting languages arise not just from the relations between various stances regarding what is said but also from the relations between what is

said and what is not said. It is in patterns of signification that we derive the ideological, for what is not said bears the burden of cultural assumptions; the what-everyone-knows does not need to be articulated. Yet these unarticulated assumptions are in fact the most profoundly ideological of all assumptions, for they suffuse every aspect of consciousness. In this tension between identity and difference, the unarticulated and the defined, lies the work of the speech situation. But literary genres present not only the tension of the speech situation; they also present a tension between tradition and performance, between past instances of the genre and the instance at hand. Literature does not represent speech acts in the sense that a tape recording might represent them. Literature comes with the weight, the burden, of literary history, with conventions shaping the form of representation, conventions that both arise from and effect the conventions for oral discourse. In a footnote to her *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, Mary Louise Pratt writes: "It will be argued that literature is often or always didactic, that is, intended to have some world-changing or action-inducing force. I think it can be shown, however, that this aim has to be viewed as indirect in an analysis of literary speech acts, since its achievement depends on first achieving the representative aim. All exempla work this way and differ in this respect from direct persuasion."³³ But in saying this, Pratt herself is both ignoring and, through the unsaid, articulating the literary convention that lyric structure argues and narrative structure (to which she limits her study) "describes"; hence lyric structure seeks to "persuade," while narrative structure seeks to "inform." "Directness" is a feature of generic style. My point is that it is the very closure of narrative, its "unmotivatedness," which places it within the realm of the ideological. Whereas the univocality of the traditional lyric may clearly define an *other*, an alternative, or opposing, voice, it is narrative's illusion of multivocality which conceals the shaping force of intentionality, of the authorial voice in history. Narrative is ideological both in its "unsaid" quality and in the fact that its descriptive power lies in its ability to make visible, to shape the way we perceive the landscape of action, and hence to shape the way we perceive our relation to that landscape. We cannot assume the existence of a "representative" aim independent of an ideological aim, for representation always strives, through manipulation and the forced emergence of detail, to create an ideal that is the "real." The continual use of an "ethnographic present" in anthropological writing is a good example of this denial of the ongoingness of experience and the multivocality of points of view. It is not lived experience which literature describes, but the conventions for organizing and interpreting that experience,

conventions which are modified and informed by each instance of the genre.

What does it mean to describe something? Descriptions must rely upon an economy of significance which is present in all of culture's representational forms, an economy which is shaped by generic conventions and not by aspects of the material world itself. While our awe of nature may be born in the face of her infinite and perfect detail, our awe of culture relies upon a hierarchical organization of information, an organization which is shared by social members and which differs cross-culturally and historically. Not our choice of subject, but our choice of aspect and the hierarchical organization of detail, will be emergent in and will reciprocally effect the prevailing social construction of reality. As genres approach "realism," their organization of information must clearly resemble the organization of information in everyday life. Realistic genres do not mirror everyday life; they mirror its hierarchization of information. They are mimetic in the stance they take toward this organization and hence are mimetic of values, not of the material world.³⁴ Literature cannot mime the world; it must mime the social. It cannot escape history, the burden of signification borne by language before literature takes it up.

Here we must go beyond the conventions of description, which mask its independent life and functions. The unsaid assumption underlying all descriptions is experience beyond lived experience, the experience of the other and of the fiction. In description we articulate the time and space that are absent from the context at hand, the lived experience of the body. Our interest in description may be stated most often as an interest in style, but in fact it is equally an interest in closure. All description is a matter of mapping the unknown onto the known. To have an "indescribable" experience is simply to confirm the ideology of individual subjective consciousness. Each time we present a description, each time a description is "taken up" as the real, the social utopia of language, the belief in the signifying capacity of language and uniform membership in that capacity on the part of speakers, is confirmed. And where writing is concomitant with authority, the validity of written description will be held to transcend any contradictions everyday experience may present. In this otherness from the everyday, every text bears the potential of a sacred text.

Thus an adequate description is always a socially adequate description. It has articulated no more and no less than is necessary to the membership of the sign. Independent of this social organization of detail, description must threaten infinity, an infinity which stretches beyond the time of speech in a gesture which points to speech's helplessness when bereft of hierarchy. To describe more than is so-

cially adequate or to describe in a way which interrupts the everyday hierarchical organization of detail is to increase not realism but *the unreal effect of the real*. If such writing as that of the *nouveau roman* seems inhuman, unmotivated, it is because the surface of detail has been leveled to significance without hierarchy; it does not tell us enough and yet it tells us too much. The tension that novelists like Puig or Robbe-Grillet present combines an objective surface of detail with a hidden and necessarily subjective subject, a subject formed from the pattern of its absences. Butor has characterized this mode of writing as a "structural inversion": "We might emphasize the importance of a given moment by its absence, by the study of its surroundings, thus making the reader feel that there is a lacuna in the fabric of what is being narrated, or something that is being hidden."³⁵ This "objective" style takes the stance, the point of view, of an observer who looks from a distance that is "realistic." Yet it is the even-handedness, the amoralistic (because unhierarchical) nature, of this stance which undermines its realism, much as the unconscious undermines the superficial realism of everyday life. Such objectivity may be seen as well in the work of contemporary "superrealists" such as Richard Estes. In Estes's work we are overwhelmed by a detail that in everyday life has become taken for granted; thus this detail is presented so realistically it becomes illusory. The cityscapes Estes chooses to paint are cultural scenes; their detail is human, made within the signifying practices of man, and yet inhuman in that such paintings resist the imposition of "humanism" upon them. We are overwhelmed by surface in these works, by the reflections of these scenes in the very glass they depict. Everything points to the surface of the paint, a surface made glaring by its lack of texture, by the absence of its mark. This is why a photographic reproduction of an Estes work is boring; there is nothing to distinguish it from a photograph of the material landscape itself. The painting has sprung into being like the magical commodities that contextualize it. In Estes's work or in the sculptures of Duane Hanson we search for clues of the subjective in the midst of an objective surface; hence our delight when we uncover the artist's signature (the "Estes" which Estes invariably conceals somewhere in each work) or, amid the Hansons, when the tourist turns out to be a real tourist after all.

As the form of realism shifts to individual experience in its temporal and spatial context, the context of the interior of bourgeois space, it is the details of that context which become described, and such details must be described according to the conventions of bourgeois life. Laurence Sterne concluded that the "nonsensical minutiae" of everyday life, the "little occurrences of life" are what exhibit

the truth of character. And if detail lends hierarchy and direction to our everyday lives, so does it lend hierarchy and detail to the novels of realism. It is the mark of a successful realistic novel that it be frittered away by detail. We can see in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century realistic novels echoes of two major themes of bourgeois life: individuation and refinement. If reality resides in the progress of the individual, it is that individual's context which should be used to define him or her. The description of the material world, the world of things, is necessary for a description of the hero's or heroine's progress through that world, and the "finer" the description, the "finer" the writing. Such description provides a categorization of value; its catalog links the abstractness of language to the materiality of things. In his *Semiotics of Poetry* Riffaterre concludes: "As reality, the details are indeed minor. As words, however, minor details are worth noticing merely because they have been recorded: their insignificance is but the other face of their importance as signs. . . . This semantic given is the model for all the other details, which function not just as picturesque notations or constituents of reality, but as embodiments of the semiotic constant."³⁶ Within this semiotic universe, the material object is transformed completely to the realm of exchange value. There is no *point* to the detail in bourgeois realism aside from its function within the world of signs, its message that it is the trace of the real. The ornament does not dress the object; it defines the object. We find an analogy to our position in Guy Debord's critique of the spectacle forms of what might be termed the semiotics of late capitalism. "It [spectacle] is not a supplement to the real world, its added decoration. It is the heart of the realism of the real society."³⁷ His point—that the semiotic system works independent of, and even absorbs, intrinsicality—is well displayed in a recent *New Yorker* advertisement for Rolex watches, which compares the precision of its promoted commodity with the "precision" of the late John Cheever's fiction:

Rolex. For those who set the measure of the times.

John Cheever. Best selling novelist and master of the short story.

An award winning author who savors the bittersweet taste of American life in timeless narration.

Detail illuminates John Cheever's writing. Just as detail inspires every Rolex craftsman. Created like no other timepiece in the world. With an unrelenting, meticulous attention to excellence in a world fraught with compromise. The Rolex Oyster Perpetual Day-Date Superlative Chronometer.

A great work designed to stand the test of time.

The substitutability of Cheever's signs for the sign of the watch signals not only the commodification of the artwork but also the mutuality of exchange within the system of objects. The recent film *Diva*, with its emphasis upon the articulation of the brand name (again the substitution of the Rolex in a gesture of "trading up" as one "trades in"), makes an analogous point: the ideology of trading up always promises an imaginary social mobility for the subject, an improvement in "style of life" that is here a virtual transformation of time.

Refinement has to do with not only the articulation of detail but also the articulation of difference, an articulation which has increasingly served the interests of class. Baudrillard, in his study of the bourgeois system of objects, noticed this class-related phenomenon of refinement; for example, he described the bourgeois interior as dependent upon the discretion of "tints and nuances." Colors such as gray, mauve, and beige mark a moral refusal of color in the bourgeois world. "De la couleur surtout: trop spectaculaire, elle est une menace pour l'intériorité."³⁸ The sign itself is dissolved into its differences from other signs within a system of signs: the material world is made symbolic according to the signifying practices of class. Hence the naïveté of semiotics in assuming signs that are not symbols; particularly in the era of late capitalism we can see all aspects of the material world become symbolic of class relations, all signs referring with careful discrimination to their place in the system of signs.

Thus far we have been addressing the detail in relation to the description of the material world: the world as still life. And just as the still life is a configuration of consumable objects, so the book's minute description of the material world is a device which tends to draw attention to the book as object. The configurations of print and the configurations of context-as-décor bear an intimate relation which oral genres, pointing to the time and space of the body, do not partake of. Description of the material world seems self-motivated, seems to be directed toward a presentation without direction. Thus, whereas the still life speaks to the cultural organization of the material world, it does so by concealing history and temporality; it engages in an illusion of timelessness. The message of the still life is that nothing changes; the instant described will remain as it is in the eye of the beholder, the individual perceiving subject. As Louis Marin has suggested, "Et cependant, avant d'être peinture de vie silencieuse, la nature morte a eu pour fonction et objectif, de parler, de murmurer à l'oreille du contemplateur, un certain discours qui ne pouvait être compris là encore que de ceux qui possédaient consciemment ou inconsciemment les codes hautement élaborés d'une culture."³⁹ The

still life stands in a metonymic relation to everyday life; its configuration of objects does not frame another world so much as it enters the frame of this world, the world of individual and immediate experience in a paradise of consumable objects. Here we can see that all description is depiction, an effort to enclose a seemingly infinite amount of detail within an absolute frame. That frame is the social convention of adequacy, which functions to provide closure. Description allows us to "see" remote experience, to "picture it in our minds," and we do so by a process of intertextual allusion and comparison. If the notion of depiction implies a relativity and authorship which a more "scientific" notion of description does not, it is because we simultaneously have need for an ideology of individual creativity in the first case and an ideology of replicability and transcendent viewpoint in the second.

Narrative closure articulates boundary in such a way as to separate one temporality from another, to point to the disjunction between context of narration and the context of the narrated event. When narrative moves into the "detailed" description of action rather than material life, it calls attention to itself as a manipulation of temporality. A detail of movement is a skewing of narrative time, a manipulation of the reader's access to knowledge. In the detail of movement we see the possibility of using detail to digress, to inscribe a circle around an object in order not to divulge it, and at the same time the possibility of using detail to tantalize. The digression stands in tension with narrative closure. It is narrative closure opened from the inside out. It holds the reader in suspension, or annoyance, for it presents the possibility of never getting back, of remaining forever within the detour. Fantasy literature in particular exploits this device of narrative looping, for the fantasy presents what is framed as an absolute other world, and so the detour does not have the hierarchical constraints that a realistic narrative must internalize. Digression in narrative might be seen as the equivalent, on the discourse level, of syntactical embedding. Just as syntactical embedding is a matter not just of additional information but of a restructuring of information in such a way as to throw light upon and help define the position of the speaker in relation to the material and the listener in context, so narrative digression articulates the narrative voice, its control over the material, and consequently its control over the reader's passage toward closure. Instead of offering the reader transcendence, the digression blocks the reader's view, toying with the hierarchy of narrative events. What counts and what doesn't count must be sorted. The digression recaptures the tedium of the journey, the incessant and

self-multiplying detail of landscape, a detail which nearly erases the landmark by distracting the reader's attention.

In the detail of the scene we see nature transformed into culture: the material world is arranged and transformed with regard to the exigencies of plot or in order to allow the reader to enter the signifying practices of the work. In the detail of action we see narrative triumph over everyday temporality, forcing the reader to participate in the speed of the narrative. In either case the reader must acknowledge with a statement of membership the community of readers. The text will draw upon and transform the ideological practices brought to it by the reader in this dialogue between inside and outside: the book as both idea and object, finalizable as meaning and materiality at once; the interpenetration of milieu and inference, sign and symbol, that marks the function of details for the bourgeois subject.

Space of Language

Speech leaves no mark in space; like gesture, it exists in its immediate context and can reappear only in another's voice, another's body, even if that other is the same speaker transformed by history. But writing contaminates; writing leaves its trace, a trace beyond the life of the body. Thus, while speech gains authenticity, writing promises immortality, or at least the immortality of the material world in contrast to the mortality of the body. Our terror of the unmarked grave is a terror of the insignificance of a world without writing. The metaphor of the unmarked grave is one which joins the mute and the ambivalent; without the mark there is no boundary, no point at which to begin the repetition. Writing gives us a device for inscribing space, for inscribing nature: the lovers' names carved in bark, the slogans on the bridge, and the strangely uniform and idiosyncratic hand that has tattooed the subways. Writing serves to caption the world, defining and commenting upon the configurations we choose to textualize. If writing is an imitation of speech, it is so as a "script," as a marking of speech in space which can be taken up through time in varying contexts. The space between letters, the space between words, bears no relation to the stutters and pauses of speech. Writing has none of the hesitations of the body; it has only the hesitations of knowing, the hesitations which arise from its place outside history—transcendent yet lacking the substantiating power of context.

The abstract and material nature of language, apparent in speech as sound and significance, is all the more apparent in writing. This oxymoron of the sign, the material nature of the signifier in contrast

to the abstract nature of the signified, has posed a particular problem for Marxist aesthetics. Raymond Williams tries to resolve the matter by drawing a distinction between inner sign—inner language—and the material sign, one located within consciousness and the other located in social life.⁴⁰ But in what way can we say that inner language is different from social language? Certainly not in its degree of sociability, for the language we use to formulate, experiment, fantasize, and reason “internally,” that is, without speech, is the same language, with the same history, be it “personal” or “cultural,” that we use in our relations with others throughout our everyday lives. The social cannot be abstracted from language; to perform such an abstraction would be to posit a personal beyond history, a gesture which quite obviously serves certain class interests. In *A Theory of Semiotics*, Umberto Eco provides a gloss on this point as part of a larger argument regarding semiotic content:

We can say that *cultural units are physically within our grasp*. They are the signs that social life has put at our disposal: images interpreting books, appropriate responses interpreting ambiguous questions, words interpreting definitions and vice-versa. The ritual behavior of a rank of soldiers interpreting the trumpet signal “at-tention!” gives us information about the cultural unit (at-tention) conveyed by the musical sign-vehicle. Soldiers, sounds, pages of books, colors on a wall, all these *etic* entities are physically, materially, *materialistically testable*. Cultural units stand out against society’s ability to equate these signs with each other, cultural units are the semiotic *postulate* required in order to justify the very fact that society does equate codes with codes, sign-vehicles with meanings, expressions with contents.⁴¹

It is not through any intrinsic quality of the sign but rather through the interpretive acts of members of a sign community that the sign comes to have meaning. Hence the transmutability of all signs, their capacity to serve as signified or signifier, independent of their physical properties. The semiotic universe is an abstract and interpretive universe constructed by means of concrete social practices.

The aesthetic, as a dimension of the semiotic, celebrates the transformation of the material by the abstract. The capacity of all play and fictions to reframe context is a transformation performed by means of signifying practices, the transformation of use value into exchange value by means of signification. It is not surprising that the age of late capitalism is marked by the aestheticization of commodities and the commercial exploitation of sexuality. It is not the materiality of signs which makes them subject to ideological formations here; it is their immateriality, their capacity to serve the interests of those formations regardless of their physical form. Although the cult of the artist has

celebrated such an immateriality as a form of transcendence, this immateriality can as well be seen as what links aesthetic forms to specific historical and social content. Art exaggerates the double capacity of the sign, the transformative power of all signs. The signs of art signify within an immaterial context, but the signs of other contexts display an equally immaterial signified, are equally capable of becoming significant.⁴²

The oxymoron of the sign is particularly foregrounded in the book: book as meaning versus book as object; book as idea versus book as material. And because the social shape of reading has become inner speech, the book as meaning and idea is all the more distanced from the book as object and material. In this deliberate and artificial split lies the gap between the leisurely bourgeois reader and the “intellectual worker,” between the cardboard front for books and the thumbed edition. The two faces of paperback publishing, the mass-market and the academic paperback, further complicate this focus of the book, for in the mass-market paperback, the book is consumable, destroyed by reading, and in the academic paperback the “value” of academic discourse is displayed within the pulp of cheap materials. In his essay on the book as object, Butor criticizes the consumerism of commercial publishing for bringing about this state of affairs:

When the book was a single copy, whose production required a considerable number of work hours, the book naturally seemed to be a “monument” (*exegi monumentum aere perennius*), something even more durable than a structure of bronze. What did it matter if a first reading was long and difficult; it was understood that one owned a book for life. But the moment that quantities of identical copies were put on the market, there was a tendency to act as if reading a book “consumed” it, consequently obliging the purchaser to buy another for the next “meal” or spare moment, the next train ride.⁴³

Butor is gratified to see that the *Discourse on Method* is available in every train station, but he mourns the loss of the monumental book here, a mourning which may be translated into a nostalgic mourning for the classic, for the book as a transcendent cultural artifact. In the realm of market competition, speed is the auxiliary to consumption, and the rapid production and consumption of books, their capacity for obsolescence in material form, necessarily seems to transform their content. If the book can be consumed, so can the idea; if the book is destroyed, the idea is destroyed. The consumer approaches memory not simply with nostalgia but with an abundance of bad faith. This bourgeois conjunction of sign and signified is apparent in the dramatic rescue of the classics offered in advertisements for gilt-and-leather volumes of “The World’s Greatest Literature.”

So long as the production of books remained within the artisanal sector, a wide range of the population was denied access to them. It was only the mass production of books that created a crisis in value. Before mass production, form and content presented an illusion of wholeness. Thus the book collector is caught up in the maniacal desire of the museologist; his or her nostalgia is for an absolute presence between signifier and signified, between object and context. Like other collectors, he or she must substitute seriality and external form for the moment of production and its firsthand knowledge. In his *Curiosities of Literature*, D'Israeli writes:

The passion for forming vast collections of books has necessarily existed in all periods of human curiosity; but long it required regal munificence to found a national library. It is only since the art of multiplying the productions of the mind . . . that men of letters have been enabled to rival this imperial and patriotic honour. The taste for books, so rare before the fifteenth century, has gradually become general only within these four hundred years: in that small space of time the public mind of Europe has been created.⁴⁴

The royal predilection for giving libraries the names of their benefactors ("The emperors were ambitious at length to give their names to the libraries they founded")⁴⁵ has in more modern times been transferred to the identification of the reader with the books he or she possesses, to the notion of self as the sum of its reading. Consider the juxtaposition of D'Israeli's criticism of the bibliomania of those who collect books for their own sake with his approval of the "tasteful ornamentation of books":

This passion for the acquisition and enjoyment of *books* has been the occasion of their lovers embellishing their outsides with costly ornaments, a rage which ostentation may have abused: but when these volumes belong to the real man of letters, the most fanciful bindings are often emblems of his taste and feelings. The great Thuanus procured the finest copies for his library, and his volumes are still eagerly purchased, bearing his autograph on the last page. A celebrated amateur was Grollier; the Muses themselves could not more ingeniously have ornamented their favorite works. I have seen several in the libraries of curious collectors. He embellished their exterior with taste and ingenuity. They are gilded and stamped with peculiar neatness; the compartments on the binding are drawn and painted, with different inventions of subjects, analogous to the works themselves; and they are further adorned by that amiable inscription, *Jo. Grollierii et amicorum!*—purporting that these literary treasures were collected for himself and for his friends!⁴⁶

Only "taste," the code word for class varieties of consumption, articulates the difference here.

The book as pure object abandons the realm of use value and enters an ornamental realm of exchange value. Valéry describes with distaste the example of Edmond de Goncourt:

And now for another and very different example, showing the absurd lengths to which even the most distinguished collector may go when the desire for variety leads him to forget the basic function of a book and the binding fitted to it. After having the first editions of his friends' works bound in parchment, Edmond de Goncourt had their portraits painted on the covers by the artists he considered most appropriate to the sitters: for Daudet, Carrière, for Zola, Raffaelli, etc. Since the books could not bear the slightest handling without damage, they were condemned to sit eternally in a glass case. . . . Is that what a real book is meant for?⁴⁷

Writing can be displayed as both object and knowledge. The possibilities for its objective display are restricted to its physical properties, to the limits of its mode of production. At the outer limits of these possibilities are transformations in the mode of its production and transformation of its physical properties. Valéry records: "I remember seeing and—with a certain horror—daring to handle a ritual of black magic, or perhaps it was the text of a black mass, bound in human skin; a frightful object—there was still a tuft of hair on the back of it. All aesthetic questions apart, there was a very evident kinship between the grisly exterior and the diabolical content of this abominable book."⁴⁸ In this remarkable example, a series of correspondences are collapsed: binding and content, body and soul. This object inverts the value which holds that the cultural always triumphs over the natural, over labor, and over death. The volume is horrible in much the same way that the pyramids are horrible: it is a monument to death, to the total transformation of labor into exchange value. The taboo here is the transformation of the living body into the merely material, the doubling of human labor moving spirit into matter. The book has murdered its content. We may compare this volume to the Dadaist book/objects. One in particular was covered by a forbidding configuration of needles. The book stands self-contained, inviolable in this case, testing the boundaries of our notion of "book." As the skin-bound book tests the limits of the book's physical properties, other volumes speak of an infinity of production that then becomes their history—not the history of their writing, or what we call literary history, but the history of their making as objects. Describing "the most curious book in the world," Bombaugh writes:

The most singular bibliographic curiosity is that which belonged to the family of the Prince de Ligne, and is now in France. It is entitled *Liber Passionis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, cum Characteribus Nulla Materia Compositis*. This book is neither written nor printed! The whole letters of the text are cut out of each folio upon the finest vellum; and, being interleaved with blue paper, it is read as easily as the best print. The labor and patience bestowed in its completion must have been excessive, especially when the precision and minuteness of the letters are considered. The general execution, in every respect, is indeed admirable; and the vellum is of the most delicate and costly kind.⁴⁹

Like the *molas* of the San Blas Cuna, this volume reverses the usual pattern by which writing, as a craft, inscribes the world. It is through the absence of inscription (perhaps better described as the inscription of absence) that this text speaks. The text does not supplement nature here, it takes from it, marking significance by means of a pattern of nonmarks; it is the difference between the tattoo and the brand.

This patterning of significance returns us to the problem of quotation and the display of writing as knowledge. Allusion to the abstract world, the world created through speech and perpetuated through time in writing, is a dominant aspect of discourse in the literate world. The quotation as allusion points to the abstract exchange value of printed works, their value as statements of membership and class. And literature enters the field of exchange, a field articulated by writing, the exchange of letters, IOU's, "deeds," all acts of reciprocity that reveal the conflicting realms of the material and the abstract, the real and the ideal, praxis and ideology.

2. THE MINIATURE

Micrographia

The book sits before me, closed and unread; it is an object, a set of surfaces. But opened, it seems revealed; its physical aspects give way to abstraction and a nexus of new temporalities. This is the distinction between book and text which Derrida has described in *Of Grammatology*:

The idea of the book is the idea of a totality, finite or infinite, of the signifier; this totality of the signifier cannot be a totality, unless a totality constituted by the signified preexists it, supervises its

inscriptions and its signs, and is independent of it in its ideality. The idea of the book, which always refers to a natural totality, is profoundly alien to the sense of writing. It is the encyclopedic protection of theology and of logocentrism against the disruption of writing, against its aphoristic energy, and, as I shall specify later, against differences in general. If I distinguish the text from the book, I shall say that the destruction of the book, as it is now under way in all domains, denudes the surface of the text. That necessary violence responds to a violence that was no less necessary.¹

The metaphors of the book are metaphors of containment, of exteriority and interiority, of surface and depth, of covering and exposure, of taking apart and putting together. To be "between covers"—the titillation of intellectual or sexual reproduction. To be outside the cover, to be godlike in one's transcendence, a transcendence of beginning collapsed into closure, and, at the same time, to be "closed out."

The closure of the book is an illusion largely created by its materiality, its cover. Once the book is considered on the plane of its significance, it threatens infinity. This contrast is particularly apparent in the transformations worked by means of the miniature book and minute writing, or micrographia. Minute writing experiments with the limits of bodily skill in writing: the remarkableness of minute writing depends upon the contrast between the physical and abstract features of the mark. Nearly invisible, the mark continues to signify; it is a signification which is increased rather than diminished by its minuteness. In those examples of micrographia which form a picture we see an emphasis upon healing the skewed relation between meaning and materiality. The miniature book delights in tormenting the wound of this relation, but the micrographic drawing says that, in fact, there is not an *arbitrary* relation between sign and signified but a *necessary* one. In a set of prints published recently in *The Georgia Review*, for example, the minute configurations of an author's words "spelled out" or depicted the author's portrait.² Such works transform the map into the globe; they say that writing, if approached from a sufficiently transcendent viewpoint, can become multidimensional.

Reading the book of nature became a *topos* of the Renaissance, but placing the book in nature may antecede it. D'Israeli, in *Curiosities of Literature*, equivocally describes "the Iliad of Homer in a nutshell, which Pliny says that Cicero once saw, it is pretended might have been a fact, however to some it may appear impossible. Ælian notices an artist who wrote a distich in letters of gold, which he enclosed in the rind of a grain of corn." He also mentions the English Bible that Peter Bales, an Elizabethan writing master, enclosed "in an English walnut no bigger than a hen's egg. The nut holdeth the book; there are as many leaves in his little book as the great Bible, and he hath written as much in one of his little leaves as a great leaf of the Bible."³ Minute writing is emblematic of craft and discipline; while the materiality of the product is diminished, the labor involved multiplies, and so does the significance of the total object. Curtius writes:

Now to reading conceived as the form of reception and study, corresponds writing conceived as the form of production and creation. The two concepts belong together. In the intellectual world of the Middle Ages, they represent as it were the two halves of a sphere. The unity of this world was shattered by the invention of printing. The immense and revolutionary change which it brought about can be summarized in one statement: Until that time, every book was a manuscript. Merely materially then, as well as artistically, the written book had a value which we can no longer feel. Every book produced by

copying represented diligence and skilled craftsmanship, long hours of intellectual concentration, loving and sedulous work.⁴

The labor was the labor of the hand, of the body, and the product, in its uniqueness, was a stay against repetition and inauthenticity. The appearance of minute writing at the end of the manuscript era characterizes the transformation of writing to print: the end of writing's particular discursive movement; its errors made by the body; its mimesis of memory, fading and, thus, in micrographia, diminishing through time as well as in space.

On the interface between the manuscript and printing, the miniature book is a celebration of a new technology, yet a nostalgic creation endowed with the significance the manuscript formerly possessed. McMurtie gives an account of the rise of miniature-book printing during the fifteenth century:

In the nature of things, books of small size will be found rarely among the incunabula of the earliest days of printing—say from 1450 [to] 1470. Type at first was cast in relatively large sizes, and the books printed with them, if not folios, were almost always quartos of fairly generous dimensions. But by the last decade of the century, books in smaller sizes, though still relatively few, made their appearance more frequently. Refinements in the art of punch cutting and type casting made it possible to produce with remarkable ease types in the smaller sizes which were prerequisite to the printing of books of really small format.⁵

While convenience of handling was the first reason given for printing small books, printers gradually came to vie with each other to print the smallest book as a demonstration of craftsmanship for its own sake. And the small book required greater skill on the part of the binder as well as on the part of the printer. The leather had to be skived very thinly, the corners sharply defined, and the tooling done with minute care.⁶

The earliest small book was the *Diurnale Moguntinum*, printed by Peter Schoeffer in Mainz in 1468. From the beginning, the miniature book speaks of infinite time, of the time of labor, lost in its multiplicity, and of the time of the world, collapsed within a minimum of physical space. In the fifteenth century, small books of hours (measuring two square inches, set in gold, and worn suspended from the belt by a charm or rings) were made for the merchant princes of Florence and Venice.⁷ Calendars and almanacs were and are favorite subjects for the printer of miniature books. The microcosmic aspects of the almanac make it particularly suited for miniaturization. For example, *A Miniature Almanack*, printed in Boston in the early nine-

teenth century, has a frontispiece which reads "Multum in parvo"; it includes the days of the month, days of the week, a calendar, the sun's rising and setting times, the moon's rising and setting times, the full sea at Boston, advice on "Right Marriage," "Qualities of a Friend," and "Popularity," a "List of Courts in the New England States," the "Rates of Postage," "The times of holding the Yearly Meetings of Friends in the Continent of America," a "Money Table," "A Table Shewing the number of days from any day of one month to the same day in any other month," a "Table of interest, per day, at 6% on any number of dollars from one to Twelve Thousand," and "A List of the Post Towns, on the main road from Brewster, Maine to St. Mary's, Georgia."⁸ Thus the book encapsulates the details of everyday life, fitting life inside the body rather than the body inside the expansive temporality of life. Similarly, the Bible as the book of greatest significance, the book holding the world both past and future, is a volume often chosen for miniaturization.

It is the hand that has produced these volumes and the hand that has consumed them—they are an affront to reason and its principal sense: the eye. The miniature book speaks from the convention of print, but, just as importantly, from the invention of the microscope, the mechanical eye that can detect significance in a world the human eye is blind to. In Robert Hooke's journal, *Micrographia; or, Some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies Made by Magnifying Glasses, with Observations and Inquiries There Upon* (1665), we sense this discovery:

April 22 1663, Leeches in Vinegar. Bluish Mold on Leather; April 29th. A Mine of Diamonds in Flint. Spider with Six Eyes; May 6th, Female and Male Gnats; May 20th, Head of Ant. Fly like a Gnat. Point of a Needle; May 27th, Pores in petrified wood. Male Gnat; June 10th, Sage-Leaves appearing not to have cavities; July 8th, Edge of a Razor. Five Taffeta Ribbons. Millepede; July 16th, Fine Lawn. Gilt edge of Venice Paper; August 5th, Honeycomb Sea-weed. Teeth of a Snail. Plant growing on Rose-Leaves.

In the conclusion to his preface Hooke wrote: "And it is my hope, as well as belief, that these my Labours will be no more comparable to the productions of many other Natural Philosophers, who are now everywhere busie about greater things; then my little Objects are to be compar'd to the greater and more beautiful Works of Nature, a Flea, A Mite, a Gnat, to an Horse, an Elephant, or a Lyon."⁹ The modesty of Hooke's remark can hardly help but strike us as ironic: the almost playful subject of his new instrument and its scope; the toy had not yet been put to work. It is significant that Hooke called his journal *Micrographia*, that somehow it was the *writing* of the natural, the previously unreadable, which now stood revealed. While the

miniature book reduces the world to the microcosm within its covers, the microscope opens up significance to the point at which all the material world shelters a microcosm. For a modern corollary, picture the project undertaken by W. E. Rudge of Mt. Vernon, New York, in 1928: Rudge made a miniature New York phone book, the pages 4 3/4 by 6 1/4 inches and the entire book 3/4 of an inch thick. It could be read with the aid of a glass designed by a retired rear admiral. In that glass the eight million stories of the Naked City opened into an accordion of significance.¹⁰

The social space of the miniature book might be seen as the social space, in miniature, of all books: the book as talisman to the body and emblem of the self; the book as microcosm and macrocosm; the book as commodity and knowledge, fact and fiction. The early artisanal concern with the display of skill emphasizes the place of the miniature book as object, and more specifically as an object of person, a talisman or amulet. The fact that the miniature book could be easily held and worn attaches a specific function to it. Its gemlike properties were often reflected in its adornment by real gems. Occasionally miniature books were made with metal pages. James Dougald Henderson writes: "The most beautiful example of this type of book which has come to my notice is of silver gilt, three quarters of an inch high, with a narrow panel on the front cover in which is enameled in natural colors a pansy with stem and leaves. On the remaining portion of the front cover is an engraved cobweb from which hangs a spider. The body is a pearl and the head is a wee ruby."¹¹ Henderson doesn't bother to mention the title of the book—that is obviously not the point. However, we might find significance in the choice of flower and insect here. The pansy is the flower with a human face and thereby always a kind of portrait miniature. And the spider is perhaps the most domestic of insects, making her own home within a home. This book/jewel, carried by the body, multiplies significance by virtue of the tension it creates between inside and outside, container and contained, surface and depth. Similarly, Charles H. Meigs of Cleveland made a "Rubáiyát 7/16th of an inch by 5/16th of an inch at the turn of the last century. Three copies do not cover a postage stamp and one was set in a ring worn by the author for safe-keeping."¹² The first American miniature book, measuring 3 3/8 by 2 1/8 inches, could in fact, be worn metaphorically:

A Wedding Ring (Boston, 1695)

A WEDDING RING
Fit for the finger
Or, the Salve of Divinity
On the Sore of Humanity

.....
Laid open in a Sermon, at a
Wedding in Edmonton

By William Secker, preacher of the Gospel.¹³

Henderson writes that "in the period from 1830 [to] 1850 no stylishly gowned lady in England was complete unless her handbag carried one of the dainty little jeweled *Schloss Bijou* almanacs, about half the size of a postage stamp, enclosed in a small solander case and this in turn reposing in a tiny silk or plush lined and leather bound case in which was also a diminutive magnifying glass shaped like a hand mirror."¹⁴

Just as speech is structured by its context, so is there an effort here to join the content and form of writing. The mirror that is also a microscope, that both reflects and reveals, reappears in the other face of the miniature book, its pedagogic uses, for such books "serve not only as an adornment of some dusty trinket cabinet, but have served as the primary basis of education and interest for many a tot in centuries gone by."¹⁵ Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century hornbooks, 3 to 4 inches long, with a handle, were shaped like hand mirrors and made of square pieces of wood. Paper was applied to the wood, and on this surface was inscribed a cross, followed by the alphabet, and concluding with the Lord's Prayer. Cow's horn was placed over the paper to protect it. To make the lesson even more appealing, hornbooks were sometimes made from gingerbread that had been shaped in molds.¹⁶ If the lesson was well done, the child could eat the book, thus consuming the lesson both metaphorically and literally.

Early-seventeenth-century miniature Bibles, like John Taylor's rhyming "Thumb Bible," published in London by Hamman in 1614, were designed especially for use by children.¹⁷ The preface to the Reverend Edmund S. Janes's miniature Bible, published in Philadelphia by W. N. Wiatt in the 1850's, explains:

It therefore becomes a matter of immense importance, that their attention should be profitably directed, and their feelings morally and religiously influenced: that thus their minds may be properly occupied, and their hearts rightly exercised. And certainly nothing is more admirably calculated to accomplish this desirable object than those bible stories, or narratives, which are level to their capacities. . . . It was this conviction that induced the author to compile (at the request of the publisher) this little volume. He hopes it may take the place of foolish little picture books that afford no useful instruction, and exert no happy virtuous influence. This little volume has an excellence which similar publications have not had; the language is entirely scriptural.¹⁸

And the author of *Wisdom in Miniature; or, The Youth's Pleasing Instructor*, "a pocket companion for the youth of both sexes in America," printed in New York by Mahlon Day in 1822, had a similar goal: "It was my aim to crowd as many select sentences as I could into a small compass, to make this book a convenient portable pocket companion for the use of Young People."¹⁹ This work concludes with "Short Miscellaneous Sentences: Alphabetically Digested; which may be easily retained in the memories of youth." We see an effort to connect the book to the body; indeed, to make a "digestible" book and at the same time a linking of the aphoristic thinking of religious didacticism with the miniature book's materially compressed mode of presentation.

The invention of printing coincided with the invention of childhood,²⁰ and the two faces of children's literature, the fantastic and the didactic, developed at the same time in the miniature book. The foolish little picture books that the Reverend Janes objected to were the chapbooks of fairy and folk tales, the inheritance of the *Bibliothèque Bleue*, the translation of the oral folk forms of the fantastic into the printed fantastic. Instead of offering nuggets of wisdom for the child to consume, these books presented an infinite and fabulous world which had the capacity to absorb the child's sense of reality. The miniature here became the realm not of fact but of reverie. After the advent of romanticism, the miniature book frequently served as a realm of the cultural other. The smallest printed book in the world, Eben Francis Thompson's edition of *The Rose Garden of Omar Khayyám* (3/16 by 5/16 of an inch), followed Meig's attempt to collapse the significance of the Orient into the exotica of a miniaturized volume. And in the twentieth century the miniature became the servant of advertising. Books with metal pages were put out to advertise hotels and local attractions for tourists in the 1920's, for example, and *Life* and *Saturday Evening Post* in 1916 and 1925, respectively, published miniature editions for advertising purposes.²¹

Such experiments with the scale of writing as we find in micrographia and the miniature book exaggerate the divergent relation between the abstract and the material nature of the sign. A reduction in dimensions does not produce a corresponding reduction in significance; indeed, the gemlike properties of the miniature book and the feats of micrographia make these forms especially suitable "containers" of aphoristic and didactic thought. Furthermore, on the interface between the manuscript and printing, as modes of production they are linked to the souvenir, the amulet, and the diminutive world of childhood. In describing these forms, my text has become embroi-

dered with details, ornaments, and figurations. Thus these forms bring us to a further aspect of this divergent relation between meaning and materiality: the problem of describing the miniature. For the miniature, in its exaggeration of interiority and its relation to the space and time of the individual perceiving subject, threatens the infinity of description without hierarchization, a world whose anteriority is always absolute, and whose profound interiority is therefore always unrecoverable. Hence for us the miniature appears as a metaphor for all books and all bodies.

Tableau: The Miniature Described

We have looked at the ways in which the miniature book illustrates the conjunction of the material and abstract nature of the sign, emphasizing that the reduced physical dimensions of the book will have only peripheral bearing upon the meaning of the text. Thus the miniature book always calls attention to the book as total object. But we must also consider the *depiction*, or description, of miniatures within the text, the capacity for all writing, and especially fictive writing, to be like Hooke's *Micrographia*—that is, to be a display of a world not necessarily known through the senses, or lived experience. The child continually enters here as a metaphor, perhaps not simply because the child is in some physical sense a miniature of the adult, but also because the world of childhood, limited in physical scope yet fantastic in its content, presents in some ways a miniature and fictive chapter in each life history; it is a world that is part of history, at least the history of the individual subject, but remote from the presentness of adult life. We imagine childhood as if it were at the other end of a tunnel—distanced, diminutive, and clearly framed. From the fifteenth century on, miniature books were mainly books for children, and in the development of children's literature the depiction of the miniature is a recurring device.

In writing, description must serve the function of context. The locus of speech and action must be "filled in" for the reader, who suffers from the exteriority of print; the distance between the situation of reading and the situation of the depiction is bridged by description, the use of a field of familiar signs. What disappears in writing is the body and what the body knows—the visual, tactile, and aural knowledge of lived experience. Thus, whenever we speak of the context of reading, we see at work a doubling which undermines the authority of both the reading situation and the situation or locus of the depiction: the reader is not in either world, but rather moves between them, and thereby moves between varieties of partial and

transcendent vision. Situation within situation, world within world—there is a vacillation between the text as microcosm and the situation of the reader as microcosm. Which contains which is unresolved until closure.

This mutual exteriority of "real" and textual worlds results in part from the problem that language can imitate only language: depiction and representation of the physical world in language are matters of concealed suture, matters of a mutuality of procedures by which the community maintains the fiction of linguistic representation. Thus, to speak of miniaturization in narrative is to engage in this fiction, for the ways in which the physical world can be miniaturized are not carried over into devices for the linguistic depiction of the miniature. The depiction of the miniature works by establishing a referential field, a field where signs are displayed in relation to one another and in relation to concrete objects in the sensual world.

Solomon Grildrig's introduction to *The Miniature: A Periodical Paper* might serve as an introduction to this literary method:

I consider myself as one who takes a picture from real life, who attempts to catch the resemblance, or pourtray the feature of existing objects, so that the representation may impartially, and exactly describe the perfections or defects, beauties or deformities of the original. It is not for me to attempt the bolder strokes, and nervous outlines which the pencil of *Raphael* exhibit, nor can I expect that *my* portraits should glow with the vivid coloring which a *Titian* might express. My attempts will follow the style of a *MINIATURE*, and while the touches are less daring, while less force, and richness of imagination may be conspicuous in the following sketches, they may perhaps derive some merit in a humbler scale, from correctness of design, and accuracy of representation. This style indeed will be more appropriate, as it is in the lesser theatre of life that it will be employed, and as juvenile folly, or merit will often be the subjects of my lucubrations.²²

The writing of miniaturization does not want to call attention to itself or to its author; rather, it continually refers to the physical world. It resists the interiority of reflexive language in order to interiorize an outside; it is the closest thing we have to a three-dimensional language, for it continually points outside itself, creating a shell-like, or enclosed, exteriority. "Correctness of design" and "accuracy of representation" are devices of distance, of "proper perspective," the perspective of the bourgeois subject. If they are especially appropriate to the "lesser theatre of life," it is because they allow the reader to disengage himself or herself from the field of representation as a transcendent subject.

The field of representation in the depiction of the miniature is set

up by means of a method of using either implicit or explicit simile. Each fictive sign is aligned to a sign from the physical world in a gesture which makes the fictive sign both remarkable and realistic. The narrative of Tom Thumb, first mentioned in print in Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), affords a good example of this technique.²³ Consider this passage from Charlotte Yonge's children's work, *The History of Sir Thomas Thumb* (1856):

A son was born in the cottage by the wood side, but had ever man such a son? He was no larger than the green top of the twayblade blossom, and though perfect in all his limbs, it was not possible to feel that a thing so light and soft rested on the hand; and his mother, as she laid him gently on the thistle-down with which she had filled an acorn cup, knew not whether she were glad or grieved that she had the wish fulfilled which she had spoken. Owen gently sighed, and thereby almost blew his son away. . . .

No mis-shapen limbs, no contorted features were there, but all was sweet and beautiful, the bright eyes like blue speed well buds, and the delicate little frame fresh and fair as the young blossom on the sweet-briar bough.

Truly, for the first few days he grew so fast, he soon exchanged his acorn cup for a walnut shell, and outgrowing that again, had to sleep in the warm nest of the long-tailed tit mouse.²⁴

The description here is not only directed toward the visual—it evokes the sensual as well, the hand being the measure of the miniature. The miniature has the capacity to make its context remarkable; its fantastic qualities are related to what lies outside it in such a way as to transform the total context. Thistle-down becomes mattress; acorn cup becomes cradle; the father's breath becomes a cyclone. Amid such transformations of scale, the exaggeration of the miniature must continually assert a principle of balance and equivalence, or the narrative will become grotesque. Hence the "all was sweet and beautiful." The model here is nature and her harmony of detail. This space is managed by simile and by the principles of equivalence existing between the body and nature. Scale is established by means of a set of correspondences to the familiar. And time is managed by means of a miniaturization of its significance; the miniature is the notation of the moment and the moment's consequences. The delight and irony with which Yonge writes "Truly, for the first few days he grew so fast" establishes the pace of the miniature; it is not necessary to tell us that at some point Tom will stop growing; it is clear that that point is where description ends and action begins.

Because of the correspondences it must establish, writing about the miniature achieves a delirium of description. The arrested life of the

miniature object places it within a still context of infinite detail. Gulliver's outline of "the inhabitants of Lilliput" might serve as an example:

Although I intend to leave the Description of this Empire to a particular Treatise, yet in the mean time I am content to gratify the curious Reader with some general Ideas. As the common Size of the Natives is somewhat under six Inches, so there is an exact Proportion in all other Animals, as well as Plants and Trees: For Instance, the tallest Horses and Oxen are between four and five Inches in Height, the Sheep an Inch and a half, more or less; their Geese about the Bigness of a Sparrow; and so the several Gradations downwards, till you come to the smallest, which, to my Sight, were almost invisible; but Nature hath adapted the Eyes of the *Lilliputians* to all Objects proper for their View: They see with great Exactness, but at no great Distance. And to show the Sharpness of their Sight towards Objects that are near, I have been much pleased with observing a Cook pulling a Lark, which was not so large as a common Fly; and a young Girl threading an invisible Needle with invisible Silk. Their tallest trees are about seven Foot high; I mean some of those in the great Royal Park, the Tops whereof I could but just reach with my Fist clenched. The other Vegetables are in the same Proportion: But this I leave to the Reader's Imagination.²⁵

Here we see not only a set of correspondences to the familiar but also the way in which that set of correspondences generates a metonymic extension of what has been described. Gulliver is able to leave the rest to the reader's imagination because he has established the proper principles of proportion. Indeed, he has left little to imagine! The progression of gestures in this passage marks a movement from the most visible to the least visible. At the point at which the invisible thread enters the invisible needle, we return to trees, and the sequence invites another round—from naked eye to microscope, from exterior to interior.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard writes that "because these descriptions tell things in tiny detail, they are automatically verbose."²⁶ We might add that this verbosity is also a matter of multiplying significance. The procedure by which description multiplies in detail is analogous to and mimetic of the process whereby space becomes significance, whereby everything is made to "count." The depiction of the miniature moves away from hierarchy and narrative in that it is caught in an infinity of descriptive gestures. It is difficult for much to *happen* in such depiction, since each scene of action multiplies in spatial significance in such a way as to fill the page with contextual information. Minute description reduces the object to its signifying properties, and this reduction of physical dimensions results in a

multiplication of ideological properties. The minute depiction of the object in painting, as Lévi-Strauss has showed us in his analysis of the lace collar of François Clouet's *Portrait of Elizabeth of Austria*,²⁷ reduces the tactile and olfactory dimensions of the object and at the same time increases the significance of the object within the system of signs. When verbal description attempts to approximate visual depiction, we find a further reduction of sensory dimensions and, because of the history of the word as utterance in lived social practices, an even greater ideological significance.

This tendency of the description and depiction of the miniature to move toward contextual information and away from narrative also transforms our sense of narrative closure, for in the miniature we see spatial closure posited over temporal closure. The miniature offers a world clearly limited in space but frozen and thereby both particularized and generalized in time—particularized in that the miniature concentrates upon the single instance and not upon the abstract rule, but generalized in that that instance comes to transcend, to stand for, a spectrum of other instances. The miniature offers the closure of the tableau, a spatial closure which opens up the vocalicity of the signs it displays. In his classic article "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," Axel Olrik discusses the tableau as follows:

In these scenes, the actors draw near to each other: the hero and his horse; the hero and the monster: Thor pulls the World Serpent up to the edge of the boat; the valiant warriors die so near to their king that even in death they protect him; Siégmund carries his dead son himself. . . . One notices how the tableaux scenes frequently convey not a sense of the ephemeral but rather a certain quality of persistence through time: Samson among the columns in the hall of the Philistines; Thor with the World Serpent transfixed on a fishhook; Vidarr confronting the vengeance of the Fenris Wolf; Perseus holding out the head of Medusa. These lingering actions—which also play a large role in sculpture—possess the singular power of being able to etch themselves in one's memory.²⁸

Thus there are two major features of the tableau: first, the drawing together of significant, even if contradictory, elements, and thereby the complete filling out of "point of view"; and second, the simultaneous particularization and generalization of the moment. The tableau offers a type of contextual closure which would be inappropriate to genres rooted in the context of their utterance; the tableau effectively speaks to the distance between the context at hand and the narrated context; it is possible only through representation, since it offers a complete closure of a text framed off from the ongoing reality that surrounds it. Here we might think not only of sculpture but also

of the photograph, which has made possible the dramatization and classicization of the individual life history. Such "still shots," say, before the family car or the Christmas tree, are always profoundly ideological, for they eternalize a moment or instance of the typical in the same way that a proverb or emblem captions a moment as an illustration of the moral working of the universe. Thus, while these photographs articulate the individual, they do so according to a well-defined set of generic conventions. It is not simply that the family album records an individual's rites of passage; it does so in such a conventionalized way that all family albums are alike.

The French surrealist Raymond Roussel used the tableau as the basis for a lifelong experiment with problems of description. In his poems "La Vue" and "Le Concert" (1904), the narrator concentrates on the depiction of representation itself: a tiny picture set in a penholder in "La Vue," an engraving on the letterhead of a piece of hotel stationery in "Le Concert." In both cases Roussel has chosen an already defined space of representation—the picture and the engraving—and he has chosen to "rewrite" it in the necessarily incomplete medium of language. The exteriority of the interpretive field, the exteriority of the narrator's speech in relation to what he sees, is even more strongly realized in "La Source" (also in the 1904 volume), which begins with the narrator watching a young couple having lunch:

Tout est tranquille dans la salle où je dejeune
Occupant une place en angle, un couple jeune
Chuchote avec finesse et gaieté; l'entre tien
Plein de sous-entendus, de rires, marche bien.

The narrator then describes for fifty pages the spa pictured on the label of his bottle of mineral water before returning to the young couple, "chuchote toujours des choses qu'on n'entend pas."²⁹ The double removal of a representation of a representation is also present in the numerous tableaux of *Impressions of Africa*. In the following scene we see the device at work:

Standing upright behind the funeral slab was a hoarding covered in black material, which presented to the viewer a series of twelve water colours, arranged symmetrically, in four rows of three. The resemblance between the characters suggested that the pictures were concerned with some dramatic narrative. Above each image, by way of a title, one could read certain words, traced with a brush.

In the first painting a non-commissioned officer and a fair-haired woman in flashy clothes were lounging in the back of a luxurious victoria; the words *Flora and the Sergeant-Major Lécurou* summarily identified the couple.

Next came *The Performance of Daedalus*, represented by a large stage on which a singer in Grecian draperies appeared to be singing at the top of his voice; in the front of a box the sergeant-major could be seen, sitting beside Flora, who was gazing through her opera glasses at the performer.³⁰

The narrator goes on to describe the remaining ten watercolors. These tableaux may be seen as illustrations for a text which does not exist. The attempt to recoup their meaning through a narrative miming visual description marks a double falling away from the continuity of an original textual closure. Roussel ambiguously explains in *How I Write Certain of My Books* that "the *tableaux vivants* were suggested by lines from Victor Hugo's Napoleon II (from *Les Chants du Crépuscule*). But here there are so many lacunae in my memory that I will be obliged to leave several gaps."³¹ Two lines that he does explain are:

1. [Hugo:] Eut reçu pour hochet la couronne de Rome
2. [Roussel:] Ursule brochet lac Huronne drome
(Ursula pike Lake Huron 'drome)
1. [Hugo:] Un vase tout rempli du vin de l'espérance
2. [Roussel:] . . . sept houx rampe lit . . . Vesper
(seven hollies balustrade read . . . Vesper).³²

Via punning Roussel has transposed Hugo's lines and then depicted them. His deliberate mis-hearing (misreading) sets off a chain of visual-into-verbal signifieds. Every sign bears a capacity to allude not only in a "correct" fashion but also by a process of misallusion. In Roussel's universe every utterance bears the infinity of its meaning and the infinity of what it might not mean. Thus the tableaux work as rebuses, pictures that "spell out a message." But Roussel's ironic device of presenting us with the *writing* of a rebus, not with a rebus itself, further distances the reader from the final decoding of the message. If a picture is worth a thousand words, it is through Roussel that we know that the picture bears the weight of a thousand words on all sides of its history: at its creation, at its reading, and at every scene of misapprehension. To be read in words, any tableau must be given a form of rhetorical organization, must acquire the shape of the language that will represent it. Thus we see in the depiction of the tableau the choice of a point of origin and the subsequent *delineation* of significant aspects in relation to that point. To the right of, to the left of, next to, behind, before—the language of the tableau moves continually from center to periphery. What remains ambiguous is the closed field of the *edges*, for language must remain exterior to this spatial closure.³³ The irony of language's infinite possibilities in describing a finite spatial field is displayed in Roussel's continual choice

of the minute scene. He writes that his long, final poem, "Nouvelle Impressions d'Afrique" (1932), "was to have contained a descriptive section. It concerned a miniature pair of opera glasses worn as a pendant whose two lenses, two millimetres in diameter and meant to be held up to the eye, contained photographs on glass depicting Cairo bazaars on one side and a bank of the Nile at Luxor on the other."³⁴ The restricted field (a miniature pair) and the depicted cultural scene (the opera) are further transformed by the still view of the bazaars and the river, nature into culture, into culture, and into culture again by description. Furthermore, the hierarchization of language disappears. Everything seen is equally describable; the point of origin is simply a point of origin, a place to begin in this gliding across the unruffled surface of things.

Visual descriptions have the capacity to portray depth of field, a capacity presented by the invention of perspective. Verbal description must depend upon conventions of subordination in order to portray a sense of perspective, and these conventions rely upon the social process by which significance is simultaneously assigned and denied. In this sense, perspective in narrative is always dependent upon the intrinsically ideological stance of point of view. However, there is a further device which language uses in order to produce an analogous sense of depth of field and that is ambiguity. Here profundity arises through the multivocal aspects of the sign, aspects that speak of the resonance of the sign's history. The word in the word, utterance in the utterance, sentence in the sentence, allusion in the allusion, work in the work, lend depth and the significance of a multiple set of contexts to the functions of language. We see this process at work in Roussel's biliteral inventions:

Taking the word *palmier* I decided to consider it in two senses: as a *pastry* and as a *tree*. Considering it as a *pastry*, I searched for another word, itself having two meanings which could be linked to it by the preposition *à*; thus I obtained (and it was, I repeat, a long and arduous task) *palmier* (a kind of pastry) *à restauration* (restaurant which serves pastries); the other part gave me *palmier* (palmtree) *à restauration* (restoration of a dynasty). Which yielded the palmtree in Trophies Square commemorating the restoration of the Talou dynasty.³⁵

Rayner Heppenstall, following Jean Ferry's analysis of the second canto of "Nouvelle Impressions d'Afrique," says that these typical lexical images confound the great with the small: the confusion of an adjustable spanner with a semiquaver rest, a photographer's tripod with the rejected stalks of a bunch of three cherries, a chamois horn with an eyelash, a stalactite in a cave with the uvula in a throat

opened wide for inspection.³⁶ To this impulse of the representation in the representation should be added Roussel's verse technique of parenthetical sentences, sentences that sometimes involve as many as five parenthetical expressions ((((((!)))))). These parentheses require the reader to move from the temporal edges of the book (beginning to end) toward its center, and once the reader finds himself or herself at that center, there is the intolerable burden of returning to the beginning again in order to capture the original unfolding of the progression of thought.³⁷

If Roussel reminds us that the task of describing inevitably leads to exhaustion, Jorge Luis Borges, in "The Aleph," reminds us that such a task—that is, the transportation of vision into temporality and of simultaneity into narrative—inevitably leads to boredom. Following their description of Carlos Argentino Daneri's microcosmic poem, *The Earth*, Borges the character and Borges the author conclude:

Only once in my life have I had occasion to look into the fifteen thousand alexandrines of the *Polyolbion*, that topographical epic in which Michael Drayton recorded the flora, fauna, hydrography, orography, military and monastic history of England. I am sure, however, that this limited but bulky production is less boring than Carlos Argentino's similar vast undertaking. Daneri had in mind to set to verse the entire face of the planet, and, by 1941, had already dispatched a number of acres of the State of Queensland, nearly a mile of the course run by the River Ob, a gasworks to the north of Veracruz, the leading shops in the Buenos Aires parish of Concepción, the villa of Mariana Cambaceres de Alvear in the Belgrano section of the Argentine capital, and a Turkish baths establishment not far from the well-known Brighton Aquarium.

Like Roussel, Daneri relies upon the "profundity" of allusion in order to accomplish his impossible task of accounting for the planet, and Borges concludes that "Daneri's real work lay not in the poetry but in his invention of reasons why the poetry should be admired."³⁸

Despite Daneri's confidence, we find that when language attempts to describe the concrete, it is caught in an infinitely self-effacing gesture of inadequacy, a gesture which speaks to the gaps between our modes of cognition—those gaps between the sensual, the visual, and the linguistic. Thus these attempts to describe the miniature threaten an infinity of detail that becomes translated into an infinity of verbiage. Language describing the miniature always displays the inadequacy of the verbal. In contrast, however, *multum in parvo*, the miniaturization of language itself, displays the ability of language to "sum up" the diversity of the sensual, or physical, world of lived experi-

ence. In his book on the place of *multum in parvo* in the poetic imagination, Carl Zigrosser writes:

Where are prime examples of *multum in parvo* to be found? Not generally in the realm of sound or music, for the sequence of time is an integral ingredient in our perception of music, one note after another producing the pattern of form. Compression is possible only where perception is immediate or nearly so. The appreciation of form through touch likewise involves a time factor. As far as other senses are concerned, those of taste and smell have never been sufficiently developed in man to admit of pointed brevity. At best, the emotive stimulus of taste and smell is gained by association. No, the happy hunting ground for *multum in parvo* is through the eye and mind, among mathematical formulae and symbols, in the concise and epigrammatic forms of poetry, and in the miniature forms of visual art. Furthermore, from a purist's point of view, neither a fragment of a longer poem nor a detail of a picture can be accepted strictly as *multum in parvo*.³⁹

The *multum in parvo* quality of the quotation, the epigram, and the proverb arises as they each take their place as free-floating pieces of discourse, pieces of discourse which have been abstracted from the context at hand in such a way as to seem to transcend lived experience and speak to all times and places. The *multum in parvo* is clearly rooted in the ideological; its closure is the closure of all ideological discourse, a discourse which speaks to the human and cultural but not to the natural except to frame it. Zigrosser articulates this problem when he writes: "Realistic portraits of people and landscapes (which are essentially portraits of Nature) do not, as a general rule, provide apt material for much in little. The basic purpose of both is likeness, and true likeness precludes imaginative variation. Specific detail is documentary, referring to the one and not to the many."⁴⁰ But one might add that the *multum in parvo* must offer a kind of univocality, a form of absolute closure; its function is to close down discourse and not to open the wounds of its inadequacies. We should remember that the word *aphorism* comes from the Greek "to set bounds" and "boundaries." Zigrosser's own predominant choices of pastoral and religious works speak to the ideological systems, the closed and clear systems of cultural meaning, from which *multum in parvo* is constructed. Like visual *multum in parvo*, linguistic *multum in parvo* is best shown in a display mode; hence its place upon home samplers has now been taken over by posters, cards, bumper stickers, and T-shirts. Within the frame and without a physical form, the *multum in parvo* becomes monumental, transcending any limited context of origin and at the same time neatly containing a universe.

The Secret Life of Things

Let us return to the last lines of the series of tableaux in *Impressions of Africa*. The watercolors give way to this dramatic series and then, "when the usual smooth mechanism which closed the curtains hid this antithetical oddity from view, Carmichael left his post, thus marking the end of the series of scenes without action."⁴¹ In describing the tableau, the writer must address a world of things defined in spatial relation to one another. But with the introduction of action, the task of writing changes toward the description of narrative, the description of events within sequence, and the description of the world of things becomes "mere" context, is supplemental to the description of narrative events. We find this problem over and over again in pastoral and ethnographic writing and in those works of children's literature which create a toy world. In this aspect of the tableau we see the essential *theatricality* of all miniatures. Our transcendent viewpoint makes us perceive the miniature as object and this has a double effect. First, the object in its perfect stasis nevertheless suggests use, implementation, and contextualization. And second, the representative quality of the miniature makes that contextualization an allusive one; the miniature becomes a stage on which we project, by means of association or intertextuality, a deliberately framed series of *actions*.

Foucault writes that in Roussel's "Le Concert," "la petite vignette de papier à en-tête comme la lentille du porte-plume souvenir, comme l'étiquette de la bouteille d'eau d'Evian est un prodigieux labyrinthe—mais vu d'en haut: si bien qu'au lieu de cacher, il met naïvement sous les yeux le lacis des allées, les buis, les longs murs de pierre, les mâts, l'eau, ces hommes minuscules et précis qui vont dans tous les sens d'un même pas immobile. Et le langage n'a plus qu'à se pencher vers toutes ces figures muettes pour tenter par d'infinies accumulations d'en rejoindre la visibilité sans lacune. Celle-ci, à vrai dire, n'a pas à être mise au jour: elle est comme l'offrande d'une ouverture profonde des choses elles-mêmes."⁴² That the world of things can open itself to reveal a secret life—indeed, to reveal a set of actions and hence a narrativity and history outside the given field of perception—is a constant daydream that the miniature presents.⁴³ This is the daydream of the microscope: the daydream of life inside life, of significance multiplied infinitely *within* significance. Thus the state of arrested life that we see in the tableau and in the fixity and exteriority of writing and print always bears the hesitation of a beginning, a hesitation that speaks the movement which is its contrary in the same way that the raised and hesitating baton speaks the bursting

action that will result from its fall. It is significant that in manuscript illumination the first letter has borne the ornament.

In children's literature this transition from hesitation to action, from the inanimate to the animate, continually appears in the theme of the toy come to life. The nutcracker theme can be found even on the boundary between didactic and fantastic children's literature. In *The Adventures of a Pincushion*, published in the late 1780's, Mary Jane Kilner felt it necessary to point out that inanimate objects "cannot be sensible of anything which happens, as they can neither hear, see, nor understand; and as I would not willingly mislead your judgement I would, previous to your reading this work, inform you that it is to be understood as an imaginary tale."⁴⁴ Pauline Clarke's *Return of the Twelves*, the story of a boy named Max who discovers the Brontë children's toy soldiers and finds that they are alive, presents a good contemporary example of this thematic device. In the beginning of the work, when Max is waiting for the soldiers to show him that they are alive, Clarke slows the action, measuring it to the progressive disappearance of a jawbreaker that Max is sucking: "All the same, he did not give up hope. He had seen them move twice now, and what you saw you believed. (Max also believed many things he did not see, like everyone else.) The jawbreaker was becoming more manageable now, and as he knelt there, Max turned it over and over in his mouth. Suddenly he crunched it all up with determination and impatience. He decided to go in."⁴⁵ In the depiction of the still life, attention is devoted to objects, but once the inanimate is animated, the parallel problem of description of action must be placed against the depiction of objects. Max's sister, Jane, sets the table for "the Twelves": "And she began quickly to lay upon the table the set of tiny brass plates she had kept from her dolls' house days. At either end, she put a brass candlestick, and between these, small piled plates, gleaming at the edge, filled with bread crumbs, cake crumbs, biscuit crumbs, dessicated coconut, currants, and silver pills. The plates were milk bottle tops. By each man's own plate she put a tiny wineglass."⁴⁶ . . . The Twelves were not long in accepting the invitation. They fixed a balsawood gangplank, and scrambled or slid down it, according to taste."⁴⁷ The problem of scale appears only in relation to the physical world. In the depiction of action there is no need for the constant measurement-by-comparison that we find in the first part of the passage. The profundity of things here arises from those dimensions which come about only through scrutiny.

There are no miniatures in nature; the miniature is a cultural product, the product of an eye performing certain operations, manipulating, and attending in certain ways to, the physical world. Even Max

draws the parallel between divine and human creativity and manipulation here: "He thought of all the other small creatures, mice, toads, beetles, some much tinier than Stumps, ants and spiders and furry caterpillars. No doubt to God, he, Max, seemed quite as small and needing help."⁴⁸ The miniature assumes an anthropocentric universe for its absolute sense of scale. We see perhaps no better demonstration of this desire to juxtapose the nonhuman and the human than the spectacle of the fleacircus. The flea circus presents a seemingly pure animation, a life-from-death in which the apparatuses of the circus appear to move of their own accord. At the same time, the flea circus provides an explanation of movement; we know that the fleas are there, even though we cannot see them, just as the microscope confirmed the daydream of microcosmic life. Furthermore, the flea circus completes the taming and manipulation of nature which the circus represents. The flea-tamer is the inverse and twin of the lion-tamer: he feeds his animals with his own blood voluntarily, while we marvel that the lion-tamer has evaded the spilling of blood; and the flea-tamer takes control of an invisible nature whose infinity is just as threatening as the jaws of the great beasts.

Problems of the inanimate and the animate here bring us to a consideration of the toy. The toy is the physical embodiment of the fiction: it is a device for fantasy, a point of beginning for narrative. The toy opens an interior world, lending itself to fantasy and privacy in a way that the abstract space, the playground, of social play does not. To toy with something is to manipulate it, to try it out within sets of contexts, none of which is determinative. Henri Allegre writes in his *Histoire des jouets*: "La différence que l'on peut établir entre le jouet et le jeu, c'est que le premier est plus particulièrement destiné à divertir l'enfant, tandis que le second peut servir à son instruction et à son développement physique."⁴⁹ To toy is "to dally with and caress, to compose a fantastic tale, to play a trick or satisfy a whim, to manipulate, and to take fright at," according to the *OED*. Plato, in the *Meno*, writes of the self-moving statues made by Daedalus, small statues of the gods which "if they are not fastened will run away." Socrates explains that "it is not much use possessing one of them if they are at liberty, for they will walk off like runaway slaves: but when fastened, they are of great value, for they are really beautiful works of art. Now this is an illustration of the nature of true opinions: while they abide with us they are beautiful and fruitful, but they run away out of the human soul, and do not remain long, and therefore they are not of much value unless they are fastened by the tie of the cause; and this fastening of them, friend Meno, is recollection, as has been already agreed by us."⁵⁰ In these remarks we see the relation between ar-

rested life and absolute, "completed," knowledge which is so important to the notion of the collection. Although the transcendence of such objects allows them to endure beyond flux and history, that very transcendence also links such objects to the world of the dead, the end of organic growth and the beginning of inaccessibility to the living. The desire to animate the toy is the desire not simply to know everything but also to experience everything simultaneously.

The inanimate toy repeats the still life's theme of arrested life, the life of the tableau. But once the toy becomes animated, it initiates another world, the world of the daydream. The beginning of narrative time here is not an extension of the time of everyday life; it is the beginning of an entirely new temporal world, a fantasy world parallel to (and hence never intersecting) the world of everyday reality. On the one hand, we have the mechanical toy speaking a repetition and closure that the everyday world finds impossible. The mechanical toy threatens an infinite pleasure; it does not tire or feel, it simply works or doesn't work. On the other hand, we have the actual place of toys in the world of the dead. As part of the general inversions which that world presents, the inanimate comes to life. But more than this, just as the world of objects is always a kind of "dead among us," the toy ensures the continuation, in miniature, of the world of life "on the other side." It must be remembered that the toy moved late to the nursery, that from the beginning it was adults who made toys, and not only with regard to their other invention, the child. The fashion doll, for example, was the plaything of adult women before it was the plaything of the child. After the death of Catharine de' Medici's husband, eight fashion dolls were found in the inventory of her belongings—all were dressed in elaborate mourning garb and their cost appeared as an entry in her accounting book.⁵¹ Today's catalogs of miniatures often recommend their products as suitable to both the dollhouse and the knickknack shelf.

The toy world presents a projection of the world of everyday life; this real world is miniaturized or giganticized in such a way as to test the relation between materiality and meaning. We are thrilled and frightened by the mechanical toy because it presents the possibility of a self-invoking fiction, a fiction which exists independent of human signifying processes. Here is the dream of the impeccable robot that has haunted the West at least since the advent of the industrial revolution. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries mark the heyday of the automaton, just as they mark the mechanization of labor: jiggling Irishmen, whistling birds, clocks with bleating sheep, and growling dogs guarding baskets of fruit.⁵² The theme of death and reversibility reappears in the ambivalent status of toys like the little guillotines

that were sold in France during the time of the Revolution. In 1793 Goethe wrote to his mother in Frankfurt requesting that she buy a toy guillotine for his son, August. This was a request she refused, saying that the toy's maker should be put in stocks.

Such automated toys find their strongest modern successors in "models" of ships, trains, airplanes, and automobiles, models of the products of mechanized labor. These toys are nostalgic in a fundamental sense, for they completely transform the mode of production of the original as they miniaturize it: they produce a representation of a product of alienated labor, a representation which itself is constructed by artisanal labor. The triumph of the model-maker is that he or she has produced the object completely by hand, from the beginning assembly to the "finishing touches." As private forms, these models must be contrasted to the public forms of display and recreation which have from the beginning marked the advertisement of industrial products.

Historically, the miniature railway has served both private and public aesthetic functions. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, the utilitarian possibilities of miniature railways were abandoned and such railways came to be used as demonstration or display models. In England in 1874, Arthur Heywood tried to promote a miniature gauge railway for use on country estates and farms, but without success. Later, however, as a pleasure attraction, with its dining and sleeping cars, his railway gained popularity.⁵³ Early miniature railways found their function in the aesthetic or play sphere whether they were part of private estates or public displays. By the turn of the century, they had been totally given over to amusement. In 1894 four Irish-American brothers, the Cagneys, opened an office in New York City and sold miniature locomotives to amusement parks all over the world. The engines they sold were replicas of standard-gauge locomotives, originally based on the famous No. 999 of the New York Central Railroad, which in 1893 had reached the unprecedented speed of 112 1/2 miles per hour.⁵⁴ The names of these early-twentieth-century engines celebrate the distinction between scale and might, materiality and meaning: the Little Giant (Eaton Railway, 1905), the Mighty Atom (Sutton Park Railway, 1907), the Little Elephant (Halifax Zoo Railway, 1910).

The industrial miniature results in amusement. The park here is not just the taming of the natural but the double stamp of culture brought about by introducing the mechanical to the natural and by traversing the natural with the mechanical at the same time that a reduction of scale is effected. Whereas the railroad itself had brought

about a new traversal of the landscape, the vision it offered was a partial one, the vision of an observer moving through, not above, the landscape. In the miniature railroad we have a reduction of scale and a corresponding increase in detail and significance, and we are able to transcend the mechanical as well as the natural that forms its context. In the further miniaturization of the table-top train set, we have an access to simultaneity and transcendence completed. Correspondingly, the natural has moved from the forest to the individual trees of the park to the synthetic trees, barns, cows, and farmers of the train set's landscape. For a written account of such a transcendent and transformed view of the natural, we might turn to one of H. G. Wells's books of "floor games," *Little Wars*. Here the frontispiece shows "A Country Prepared for the War Games—the houses are made of wall-paper with painted doors and windows, the roofs are cut out of packing paper, and the houses are filled with wooden toy bricks to make them solid. The castle and the church are made from brown cardboard. There is a river chalked across the centre of the battlefield, which widens to flow past the great rocks in the centre." Comparing his game to the kriegspiel played by the British army, Wells writes: "My game is just as good as their game, and saner by reason of its size. Here is War, done down to rational proportions, and yet out of the way of mankind, even as our fathers turned human sacrifices into the eating of little images and symbolic mouthfuls. . . . Great War is at present, I am convinced, not only the most expensive game in the universe, but it is a game out of all proportion. Not only are the masses of men and material and suffering and inconvenience too monstrously big for reason, but—the available heads we have for it are too small."⁵⁵ The movement here is correspondingly one from work to play, from utility to aesthetics, from ends to means. A miniature railway built by a Captain Harvey and Count Louis Zborowski was christened along the Kent coast in the summer of 1927 by Earl Beauchamp, K. G., Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, who referred to the line as "the most sporting railway in the world, built by sportsmen."⁵⁶ What is this erasure of labor, this celebration of the mechanism for its own sake, if not a promise of immortality, the immortal leisure promised by surplus value?

Here it might be useful to contrast the independent meanings of the terms *journey* and *excursion*. The journey belongs to the moral universe of preindustrialism. It marks the passage of the sun through the sky, the concomitant passage of the body's labor through the day, and the pilgrimage or passage of life. It is an allegorical notion, one that suggests a linearity and series of correspondences which link

lived experience to the natural world. In contrast, the excursion is an abstract and fictive notion; it emerges from the world of mechanized labor and mechanical reproduction. The excursion is a holiday from that labor, a deviation and superfluity of signification. While the journey encompasses lived experience, the excursion evades it, steps outside and escapes it. The excursion is a carnival mode, but an alienated one; its sense of return is manufactured out of resignation and necessity. Today in America the uses of miniaturized landscapes continue to emphasize this sporting, or play, function. Miniature golf, the fantasy land, the children's zoos, and storybook countries realize the exotic and the fantastic on a miniaturized scale. The image that is produced not only bears the tangible qualities of material reality but also serves as a representation, an image, of a reality which does not exist. The referent here is most often the fantastic, yet the fantastic is in fact given "life" by its miniaturization. Although we cannot miniaturize what has not had material being in the first place, we can align the fantastic to the real and thereby miniaturize it by displacement. For example, the miniature unicorn is a popular gift-shop item, and we must assume that we are expected to read the scale as "miniature unicorn: unicorn :: miniature horse: horse." In these fantastic landscapes, the transformation of the miniature is effected by magic, not by labor. The automaton repeats and thereby displaces the position of its author. And the miniaturized landscape of the amusement park is domesticated by fantasy rather than by lumberjacks, carpenters, architects, and cleaning ladies, those workers who have "really" been its causality.

The amusement park and the historical reconstruction often promise to bring history to life, and it is here that we must pay particular attention once more to the relation between miniature and narrative. For the function of the miniature here is to bring historical events "to life," to immediacy, and thereby to erase their history, to lose us within their presentness. The transcendence presented by the miniature is a spatial transcendence, a transcendence which erases the productive possibilities of understanding through time. Its locus is thereby the nostalgic. The miniature here erases not only labor but causality and effect. Understanding is sacrificed to being in context. Hence the miniature is often a material allusion to a text which is no longer available to us, or which, because of its fictiveness, never *was* available to us except through a second-order fictive world. These "parks" mark the landscape as nostalgic allusions to interiority and fictiveness the way Beatrix Potter figurines mark the nursery or the Toby jug stands on the English mantelpiece, symbol of the interior fire at the heart of the domestic.⁵⁷

The Dollhouse

Transcendence and the interiority of history and narrative are the dominant characteristics of the most consummate of miniatures—the dollhouse. A house within a house, the dollhouse not only presents the house's articulation of the tension between inner and outer spheres, of exteriority and interiority—it also represents the tension between two modes of interiority. Occupying a space within an enclosed space, the dollhouse's aptest analogy is the locket or the secret recesses of the heart: center within center, within within within. The dollhouse is a materialized secret; what we look for is the dollhouse within the dollhouse and its promise of an infinitely profound interiority. In fact, we can see the dollhouse-maker's relative inattention to the exterior of his or her structure as further evidence of this movement inward. Like the fashion doll, the dollhouse was originally (and perhaps still is) an adult amusement. We can see its origins in the crèche, which we find from the Middle Ages on, particularly in Naples and Marseilles. The Neapolitan crèches displayed figures made of wood or terra cotta, with finely finished faces and hands, silk clothing, and silver and pearl ornaments. Surrounding the figures were miniature objects and animals, which, Allemagne writes, "l'on faisait figurer dans ces petites reconstitutions des crèches pour leur donner un plus grand cachet de vérité."⁵⁸ In the Sicilian crèche tradition, for example, there seems to be an important movement toward locating the sacred within the secular landscape. At the heart of such crèches are the abstract mythologized figures of the Nativity, but as one moves out from that location, the landscape becomes more familiar: the snail- and herb-gatherers of the Palmeritan hills; the shepherds as Sicilian shepherds. In contrast, the art cabinets of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe focused upon the secular domestic interior as they displayed small objects made of silver, china, glass, and pewter as well as miniature furniture. Dutch miniatures of the time were often exact reproductions of the owner's household furnishings.⁵⁹ In 1637 the town of Augsburg bought for presentation to the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus, a cabinet from the University of Upsala which contained real toys: a pair of mechanical dolls, a peepshow, and a little falconry after the style of a doll's room.⁶⁰

The dollhouse has two dominant motifs: wealth and nostalgia. It presents a myriad of perfect objects that are, as signifiers, often affordable, whereas the signified is not. Consider the miniature Orkney Island chairs that can be found in the china cupboards of many Island homes. The full-size chairs, handmade of local straw, were once a major furnishing of the peasant house, but because their manufacture

is so labor-intensive and because their mode of production has become so esoteric, only the very wealthy can now afford them. Hence the descendants of the peasants who once owned such pieces can afford only the miniature, or "toy," version. Use value is transformed into display value here. Even the most basic use of the toy object—to be "played with"—is not often found in the world of the dollhouse. The dollhouse is consumed by the eye. The most famous dollhouses, such as the Duchess Augusta Dorothea of Schwarzburg-Gotha's reproduction of court life and the dollhouse built for Queen Mary of England in 1920,⁶¹ have been extravagant displays of upper-class ways of life that were meant to stop time and thus present the illusion of a perfectly complete and hermetic world. In his introduction to *The Book of the Queen's Dolls' House* Arthur Benson writes: "The scale of one inch to one foot being precisely maintained throughout, . . . thus there is nothing of the grotesque absurdity of a scene that does not resemble life and has only the interest of caricature. And then there is the *completeness* of the whole. Her majesty [Queen Mary], through all her public life, has realised the extraordinary importance of the small details of life. . . . The Queen's House is a symbol of this."⁶² We might suspect that this monument against instability, randomness, and vulgarity speaks all the class relations that are absent from its boundaries. But we need not turn to the most celebrated examples to find these motifs of wealth and nostalgia. In the advertisements for, and catalogs of, miniature articles issued by firms such as the Franklin Mint, the Concord Miniature Collection, and Federal Smallwares Corporation, "period furnishings," "storybook figures," the "charming," the "picturesque," and the "old-fashioned" are presented to a bourgeois public immersed in the discourse of the "petite feminine." The dollhouse is a version of property which is metonymic to the larger set of property relations outside its boundaries. As private property marked by the differentiations of privacy and privatizing functions (bathrooms, maids' rooms, dining rooms, halls, parlors, and chambers) and characterized by attention to ornaments and detail to the point of excruciation (the hand of the artisan, the eye of the beholder), the dollhouse erases all but *the frontal view*; its appearance is the realization of the self as property, the body as container of objects, perpetual and uncontaminable.

Here we might briefly link the dollhouse to the house-poem tradition, which also functioned to display and hypostatize the status of the interior world of the ascending and upper classes. For example, Jonson's "To Penshurst" presents a description of lush natural images and their consumption by the eye and the ear. The poem moves from distance to interiority—from "thy walkes and thy Mount" to

"thy coppes," to "the lower land," "thy ponds," to the espaliered fruit trees, to the scenes within the garden walls (where farmers and peasants bring their goods), to the table, bed, and hearth, and finally to the children of Penshurst, who "may, every day,/Reade, in their vertuous parents noble parts,/The mysteries of manners, armes, and arts." The lyric ramblingness of the poem perhaps belies the parallel that can be seen between the unfolding of the poem in the eye and ear of the reader or audience and the depiction of objects to be consumed in the same manner. And the impulse to describe variety and fecundity can be seen as the same impulse that inspired the Duchess of Schwarzburg-Gotha to include in her dollhouse scenes of a princess at her toilet, a curio closet, a fair with booths, clowns and a quack doctor, and the town crier and a marketplace with the Imperial posting house. Worlds of inversion, of contamination and crudeness, are controlled within the dollhouse by an absolute manipulation and control of the boundaries of time and space.

The house is meant to be viewed from a distance, with attention focused upon one scene and then another, just as it is in Jonson's poem, and, we might add, just as it is in the landscaping tradition that places the house at a remove from the life of the street in proportion to the degree of wealth displayed. Hence what might be seen as a microcosmic tendency is macrocosmic as well: "Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show, of touch, or marble." Perfection can be appreciated only through attention to detail and incident; significance bursts the bounds of the physical structure here. Unlike the single miniature object, the miniature universe of the dollhouse cannot be known sensually; it is inaccessible to the languages of the body and thus is the most abstract of all miniature forms. Yet cognitively the dollhouse is gigantic. As Jonson moves from the remote to the domestic, his images become increasingly imbued with refinement. The landscape becomes increasingly detailed and attended to; from rustic humor (where fish and fowl offer themselves to be killed and the fruit clings to walls, just as the ripe country maidens, like "plum, or peare," "add to thye free provisions" as objects to be consumed) we move to the elevated seriousness of the scenes depicting the hospitality extended to King James and the passage on the education of the children. That education enables the children to discern discriminately the separate parts of their parents, their separate features representing the refinement of their behavior.

In contrast, "Upon Appleton House" moves eclectically outward from the structure and history of the house to the garden to the meadow to the forest, where the narrator places himself, and, in conclusion, to a meditation on the merits of Maria Fairfax and an

account of how she is responsible for the beauty of the other scenes. But Marvell's poem similarly exhibits a resistance to time, an attention to nature as a panoply of objects for consumption, and a juxtaposition of microcosmic and macrocosmic images. We might draw an analogy between the relative inattention to exterior structure of the poem here and the inattention of the dollhouse-maker to exterior form. Marvell, like Jonson, directs our attention to one location at a time, yet here each scene is marked by a conceit: the battle of Fairfax and the nuns, the garden-fort, the meadow-sea, and the peasantry depicted in a fantastic or toylike manner:

Where every Mowers wholesome Heat
Smells like an *Alexanders sweat*.
Their Females fragrant as the Mead
Which they in *Fairy Circles* tread:
When at their Dances End they kiss,
Their new-made Hay not sweeter is.

We see a similar giganticization of the master of the house—

Yet thus the laden House does sweat,
And scarce induces the *Master* great:
But where he comes the Swelling Hall
Stirs, and the *Square* grows *Spherical*;
More by his *Magnitude* distrest,
Then he is by its straitness prest:—

and a corresponding miniaturization of the villagers:

They seem within the polisht Grass
A Landskip drawn in Looking-Glass
And shrunk in the huge Pasture show
As spots, so shap'd, on Faces do.
Such Fleas, ere they approach the Eye
In Multiplying Glasses lye.
They feed so wide, so slowly move,
As *Constellations* do above.

Time and history exist for Fairfax; later generations will wonder at the relation between his physical size and the physical scale of Appleton House, just as the descendants of Penshurst will correlate the expansiveness of the house with that of their ancestors. But the miniature peasant world, the toylike worlds of the farmers and the clowns, takes place in a timelessness that is tableaulike, an arrangement defined by the "picturesque" rather than by history. This mode of description is that of the pastoral up until the late eighteenth century and the advent of the romantics. As Pope wrote in *A Discourse on*

Pastoral Poetry, the author would be most successful if he chose to "expose" only the best side of a shepherd's life and conceal its miseries. The pastoral figures of Pope and his predecessors are more like wind-up toys than the shepherds of romantic pastorals, who sweat and become lonely. They live in fantasy worlds, the literary worlds of a Golden Age or Arcadia, and their stories are imbued with a happy precision that makes them more lyric than narrative.⁶³ More precisely, they are more dead than alive; for again we find the motif of mechanization with its concomitant immortality as a gesture against organicism and the apparent disorganization of history. The dollhouse, as we know from the political economy as well as from Ibsen, represents a particular form of interiority, an interiority which the subject experiences as its sanctuary (fantasy) and prison (the boundaries or limits of otherness, the inaccessibility of what cannot be lived experience).⁶⁴

Miniature Time

The miniature does not attach itself to lived historical time. Unlike the metonymic world of realism, which attempts to erase the break between the time of everyday life and the time of narrative by mapping one perfectly upon the other, the metaphoric world of the miniature makes everyday life absolutely anterior and exterior to itself. The reduction in scale which the miniature presents skews the time and space relations of the everyday lifeworld, and as an object consumed, the miniature finds its "use value" transformed into the infinite time of reverie. This capacity of the miniature to create an "other" time, a type of transcendent time which negates change and the flux of lived reality, might be seen at work in such projects as the *Museum of Art in Miniature*, which was distributed by the Book-of-the-Month Club in 1948. Here the Metropolitan Museum, that most insistent denial of history and context, is reduced to a series of pictures on stamps that can be pasted into a book. The stamps are presented in a seemingly random arrangement of categories and individual places—Michelangelo, Robert, Homer, Carnevale, Goya, Rembrandt, Fragonard; Italian, Roman, French, Etruscan, Egyptian, and Chinese works. Albums G and J contain, respectively, "the Old Testament in Art" and "the New Testament in Art"—and their detachability presents even more possibilities for manipulation. In this rather remarkable phenomenon we thus find the object at least three degrees of removal from everyday life: the distance between the work of art and what it signifies (itself not necessarily "representational"), the decontextualization of the work of art within the museum context, and the re-

removal of the museum from the constraints of its physical setting into an almost infinite set of possible arrangements and recontextualizations. Like the miniature world of the encyclopedia, where the "arbitrary" order of alphabetization replaces the seemingly determined disorder of history, this "museum of art in miniature" exists in a time particular to its own boundaries.

Interestingly, there may be an actual phenomenological correlation between the experience of scale and the experience of duration. In a recent experiment conducted by the School of Architecture at the University of Tennessee, researchers had adult subjects observe scale-model environments 1/6, 1/12, and 1/24 of full size. The environments represented lounges and included chipboard furniture as well as scale figures. The subjects were asked to move the scale figures through the environment, to imagine humans to be that scale, and to identify activities appropriate for that space. Then they were asked to imagine themselves to be of "lounge scale" and picture themselves engaging in activities in the lounge. Finally, they were asked to tell the researchers when they felt that they had been engaged in such activities for 30 minutes. The experiment showed that "the experience of temporal duration is compressed relative to the clock in the same proportion as scale-model environments being observed are compressed relative to the full-sized environment." In other words, 30 minutes would be experienced in 5 minutes at 1/12 scale and in 2.5 minutes at 1/24 scale.⁶⁵ This compressed time of interiority tends to hypostatize the interiority of the subject that consumes it in that it marks the invention of "private time." In other words, miniature time transcends the duration of everyday life in such a way as to create an interior temporality of the subject.

Such a transformation of time, which serves to skew the experience of the social by literally *deferring* it, parallels the miniature's transformation of language. This relation to language is an ironic one at every point. The problem of the miniature described, as we noted above, emphasizes the noniconic nature of language as sign. The miniature always tends toward tableau rather than toward narrative, toward silence and spatial boundaries rather than toward expository closure. Whereas speech unfolds in time, the miniature unfolds in space. The observer is offered a transcendent and simultaneous view of the miniature, yet is trapped outside the possibility of a lived reality of the miniature. Hence the nostalgic desire to present the lower classes, peasant life, or the cultural other within a timeless and uncontaminable miniature form. The miniature is against speech, particularly as speech reveals an inner dialectical, or dialogic, nature. The miniature's fixed form is manipulated by individual fantasy rather than by

physical circumstance. Its possible linguistic correlations are the *multum in parvo* of the epigram and the proverb, forms whose function is to put an end to speech and the idiosyncrasies of immediate context. In its tableau-like form, the miniature is a world of arrested time; its stillness emphasizes the activity that is outside its borders. And this effect is reciprocal, for once we attend to the miniature world, the outside world stops and is lost to us. In this it resembles other fantasy structures: the return from Oz, or Narnia, or even sleep.

In Lilliput, Gulliver becomes his body: eating, drinking, defecating, sleeping, and using his muscles are the sum of his social existence within the miniature world. For the Lilliputians, even Gulliver's death has an apparently organic, rather than a cultural or social, meaning: the problem would be how to dispose of his enormous body and the correspondingly enormous stench it would create. The clumsiness of Gulliver, the ways in which new surfaces of his body erupt as he approaches the Lilliputian world, is the clumsiness of the dreamer who approaches the dollhouse. All senses must be reduced to the visual, a sense which in its transcendence remains ironically and tragically remote. Thus, throughout the sojourn among the Lilliputians it is Gulliver's eyes which are continually threatened, from the early arrows that narrowly miss his eyes, to the Blefuscan fleet's attack on them, to the final punishment, which is modified by his friend Reldresal to a request that his eyes, not his life, be put out.

Because Gulliver knows the Lilliputians only through a transcendent visual sense, the narrative voice works within the convention of travel writing and, by *déjà vu*, within the voice of early anthropology. For what is important here, what is chosen to be *related* and attended to, is detail in juxtaposition with pattern, the broad cliché illustrated by selected example. The very features of the model or automaton become the features of the Lilliputians themselves, a people characterized by a perfect physicality and by values which are mathematical and technocratic. Lilliput is a completely cultural world in Gulliver's description of it; it is marked by a clockwork set of laws and customs and by a language inflated beyond the significance of its referents. Nature is continually transformed into art: "The country round appeared like a continued Garden; and the inclosed Fields, which were generally Forty Foot square, resembled so many Beds of Flowers. These Fields were intermingled with Woods of half a Stang, and the tallest Trees, as I could judge, appeared to be seven Foot high. I viewed the Town on my left Hand, which looked like the painted Scene of a City in a Theatre."⁶⁶ What is remarkable about Lilliput, just as what is remarkable about the mechanical toy, is that it works, that it presents movement and change without necessitating a difference

of scale. Hence the souvenirs that Gulliver chooses to return with are natural; these cows and sheep exemplify the skewed relation between quality and quantity, significance and amount, presented by the Lilliputian world as a whole.

As is the case with all models, it is absolutely necessary that Lilliput be an island. The miniature world remains perfect and uncontaminated by the grotesque so long as its absolute boundaries are maintained. Consider, for example, the Victorian taste for art (usually transformed relics of nature) under glass or Joseph Cornell's glass bells. The glass eliminates the possibility of contagion, indeed of lived experience, at the same time that it maximizes the possibilities of transcendent vision. Thus the miniature world may always be seen as being overcoded as the cultural. The hearth at Penshurst, the Nuremberg kitchens, the dollhouse, even the interior sky of baroque architecture—all tend to present domesticated space as a model of order, proportion, and balance. Yet, of course, the major function of the enclosed space is always to create a tension or dialectic between inside and outside, between private and public property, between the space of the subject and the space of the social. Trespass, contamination, and the erasure of materiality are the threats presented to the enclosed world. And because the interiority of the enclosed world tends to reify the interiority of the viewer, repetition also presents a threat. It is important to remember that the miniature object, in its absolute (i.e., conventional) representativeness, is "unique" as well. We cannot separate the function of the miniature from a nostalgia for preindustrial labor, a nostalgia for craft. We see a rise in the production of miniature furniture at the same time that the plans of Adam, Chippendale, and Sheraton are becoming reproduced in mass and readily available form.⁶⁷ Contemporary dollhouses are distinctly not contemporary; it is probably not accidental that it is the Victorian period which is presently so popular for reproduction in miniature, not only because that period's obsession with detail and materiality is so analogous to the miniature's general functions, but also because Victorian modes of production presented the height of a transformation of nature into culture. Whereas industrial labor is marked by the prevalence of repetition over skill and part over whole, the miniature object represents an antithetical mode of production: production by the hand, a production that is unique and authentic. Today we find the miniature located at a place of origin (the childhood of the self, or even the advertising scheme whereby a miniature of a company's first plant or a miniature of a company's earliest product is put on display in a window or lobby)⁶⁸ and at a place of ending (the productions of the hobbyist: knickknacks of the domestic collected by elderly wom-

en, or the model trains built by the retired engineer); and both locations are viewed from a transcendent position, a position which is always within the standpoint of present lived reality and which thereby always nostalgically distances its object.

In this chapter I have discussed the miniature in its role as both an experience of interiority and the process by which that interior is constructed. The abstract experiences of fantasy and fictiveness in general, experiences known through representation, have been considered thus far as a dialogue between outside and inside, between partiality and transcendence with regard to authority and authorial knowledge. The miniature, linked to nostalgic versions of childhood and history, presents a diminutive, and thereby manipulatable, version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected from contamination. It marks the pure body, the inorganic body of the machine and its *repetition* of a death that is thereby not a death. In the next chapter we will move from transcendence to partiality, from the inside to the outside. No longer alone, we will find ourselves within the crowded space below the giant.