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THE LITERARY MARK:
LINGUISTIC OPPOSITIONS AND LITERARY ANALYSIS

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

AMIE A. DOUGHTY
Norman, Oklahoma
2000

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THE LITERARY MARK:
LINGUISTIC OPPOSITIONS AND LITERARY ANALYSIS

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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THE LITERARY MARK: LINGUISTIC OPPOSITIONS AND LITERARY ANALYSIS

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This study uses the linguistic concept of markedness as a method for analyzing literature. Because markedness is rarely used when examining literature, I spend the first part of the work explaining the concept and how it can be applied to literature. I discuss the two types of opposition in markedness, binary and scalar, and how they differ in terms of markedness analysis. In an attempt to show the clearest way in which markedness works in the analysis of literature, I work with four novels that have more than one narrator: *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys, *Tracks* by Louise Erdrich, and *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner. By their very nature, these texts offer an opposition between narrators, an opposition that makes it possible to analyze them using markedness. I argue that markedness works on three levels in these texts: the narrative, the textual, and the cultural. At the narrative level, the oppositions revolve around the narrators. At the textual level, characters and cultures in individual texts form the oppositions. At the cultural level, the form and style of the text and the author's place in his or her own culture are the focus. At all three levels, I argue, markedness analysis shows concretely how the themes of isolation and otherness work in the texts and, further, how these themes are connected among the different levels.

Introduction

They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother, 'because she pretty like pretty self'

Christophine said. (Rhys 17)

Jean Rhys' novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* opens with this paragraph, immediately setting up the narrator Antoinette's status in opposition to the rest of the society she inhabits. She is not one of "them" as she says, because she is "not in their ranks." Her lineage, her mother's status in society, has impacted her own status in that society. Antoinette's mother Annette does not fit into Jamaican society for several reasons revealed in the second paragraph of the novel: she is "my father's second wife, far too young for him they thought, and worse still, a Martinique girl" (17). These qualities¹ are then associated with Antoinette and her brother Pierre, especially after their father's death, the time frame of Antoinette's narrative.

The four qualities which Antoinette attributes to her mother—being "pretty like pretty self,"² a second wife, too young, and from Martinique—are all *marks*. They are things which make Antoinette's mother different from the rest of white Jamaican society and which prevent them from being part of the "ranks"

¹ Or at least the notion of being Other.

Antoinette refers to in her opening sentences. Some of the marks are “physical” marks—prettiness, youth—while others are not. In all cases, though, the mark represents a feature which sets Annette apart from the others.³

Markedness, the concept I want to use to examine literature, is a concept that examines oppositions in terms of what exactly makes them oppositions. The thing which defines the opposition is called a *mark* or *feature*, and items that possess the specific mark or feature are considered *marked* while those items without the mark or feature are called *unmarked*. The concept of markedness originated in the 1930s in the field of linguistics, specifically in phonology, but it has since branched into other fields, including literature, though its primary usage is still in linguistics. An indelible issue in markedness is that of privileging and hierarchy. Because the unmarked part of the opposition is considered the “normal” or “natural” part, especially in semantic markedness where I focus my analysis, the marked part is called “abnormal” or “unnatural.” The result is often the privileging of the unmarked. In literature, then, the marked character or element is seen as the Other and thus often takes a lower position than that which is unmarked, the result being an attempt to isolate the Other. But because the marked half of an opposition is as important as the unmarked half—you can’t have one without the other—and because of the marked state of the Other, often

² In other words, “She is pretty like prettiness itself” (Raskin 9—footnote).

³ Further on, I will discuss how a bundle of features marking a character is often more important than a single feature.

the marked is more visible than the unmarked. It is the mark—the distinctive feature—that makes the Other noticeable to the world. If the marked element is ever completely removed from society, then there is no opposition and nothing to focus on.

The concept of the distinctive feature originates, like the concept of markedness itself, in phonology. Phonemes possess distinctive features that mark their difference between other phonemes. For example, /t/ and /d/ are phonemes in which the only difference is that /d/ is marked by the distinctive feature voice while /t/ is unmarked by (does not possess) that distinctive feature (Schleifer 384). Most phonemes possess more than one feature, called a bundle of features, but each feature only becomes important if it is used to distinguish one phoneme from another. Distinctive features, like markedness, have also been carried over into other areas of linguistics, including syntax and semantics, though its success in semantics has been questioned (Groves “Distinctive” 200). Others label features not used in phonetics “semantic features” (McArthur 400), though they possess the same basic function—distinguishing one half of an opposition from another.

In literature, as in fields other than linguistics, markedness and distinctive features are rarely used when talking about oppositions, though early in the development of markedness, Jakobson mentions his belief that markedness “has a significance not only for linguistics but also for ethnology and the history of culture” (Jakobson and Waugh 90-91). Oppositions possessed by a given culture

or society at a given time can be examined through the concept of markedness, with the aid of distinctive features. In some cases, one distinctive feature will be enough to mark part of the opposition; in other cases, a bundle of features establishes the mark (or extremity of mark) in that society. Literature certainly can be examined in terms of markedness.

The example of markedness given from *Wide Sargasso Sea* is just one way in which markedness can be used to examine texts. It works from a textual standpoint, looking at how characters are related to and/or opposed to the culture(s) in which they live. For texts, these cultures are created by the author of the text and it is up to the reader of the text to gather information about them from the text itself.⁴ The distinctive feature possessed by the marked character or group can be a physical deformity, a way of speaking, a race, or any number of other features that distinguishes the marked from the unmarked.

Sometimes, as in the case of Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the narrator will say how that culture is constructed and what constitutes being marked or unmarked in the culture, what the distinctive features are. Then the reader must decide how reliable the narrator is and whether the information given is accurate. Other texts leave the task of finding the mark up to the reader. In all cases, however, it is possible to look at how the culture is structured and how the characters fit or don't fit into the culture through markedness. From that point, the

issue of the Other comes into play, as does the theme of isolation. As I will discuss later, markedness allows a clear way of showing how and why the Other is classified in that manner. Markedness also points toward the theme of isolation in texts, especially since the marked item of an opposition is inherently isolated. What markedness does is isolate what is not “normal” or “natural” in an opposition, those things that have a distinctive feature.

Markedness is being examined here on a *textual* level. It can, however, be used to examine the texts on two other levels: *cultural* and *narrative*. Whereas textual markedness focuses on a texts from a purely content based framework (only the text is used to explain oppositions and marks), the cultural level focuses on both how the text is constructed and how its style fits into a historical and cultural framework of the author and, to some extent, the time in which the text is being examined. In the case of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, we need to look at Jean Rhys’ place in the literary world of her time, in particular at the effect Modernism and Modernist writers living in Paris had on her. We also need to examine how Rhys is categorized in terms of both nationality and writing style. And for Rhys in particular, as I’ll show in Chapter 4 how the difficulty people have categorizing reflects on studying *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Ethnicity and nationality play an important part of the cultural level. Also a part of this level is the style of the text, whether it is part of a literary style or movement or a type of generic fiction. In

⁴ Often the culture created by the author is based on a real culture, but it is still subject to authorial

many ways the cultural level helps to explain the themes of isolation and otherness in literary texts.

Narrative markedness focuses on the narrative structure of a particular text and how it functions. Only certain types of texts—those with more than one narrator or narrative voice—can be examined at this level. With the narrative level, the voices or narrators are set in opposition and examined in terms of realistic narrative conventions—style and verb tense in particular. With *Wide Sargasso Sea*, there are two narrators in opposition, Antoinette and her husband. To determine the marked and unmarked narrator in this and any text, we have to look closely at the styles to see how they fit in with the dominant culture of the text and how they match up with realistic narrative conventions. Once again, the themes of otherness and of isolation come into play. Often the narrative marking underscores the marks found at the textual level, showing how a character and a narrator are simultaneously isolated.

There are two goals for this dissertation. First, I would like to explain some of the background of markedness in linguistics and connect it to literary analysis. Second, I would like to show using specific examples how markedness can be used to examine literature on the three levels. The text has thus been broken into four chapters. The first chapter presents a historical background of markedness and a definition of the concept as well as an explanation of certain

manipulation, at least to some extent.

aspects of markedness such as reversals, assimilation, and neutralization which will have an impact on how markedness can be used to examine literature. Once the background has been explained, the chapter moves into a brief explanation of how linguistic ideas of markedness can be applied to literature and also to how markedness is visible on the three levels in literature.

The remaining chapters cover the second goal of the dissertation, and all of them are linked by the themes of isolation and otherness and how those two aspects of the texts are visible in each level. I will be examining four main texts: *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner, *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys, and *Tracks* by Louise Erdrich. Chapter Two looks at the first level—narrative markedness. I first talk about how realistic narrative conventions have helped to define what is marked and unmarked narration. From there, I discuss the particular types of texts that can be examined on this level—those with two or more narrative voices. I identify two particular types of multi-voiced narratives—imbedded and separate—and discuss how their differences affect the way markedness can be analyzed in narratives. In the rest of the chapter, I analyze each of my four major texts, explaining how the markedness structure of the narratives points to the themes of isolation and otherness.

Chapter Three looks at the textual level. I begin the chapter with a brief explanation about how textual conventions can be derived, and then I follow through with a textual analysis of each of my three main texts, focusing on how

the Other and the theme of isolation all appear as a part of the markedness structure of the texts.

The focus of Chapter Four is the cultural level. This level shows how changeable markedness can be, how reliant on time is. To that end, I begin the chapter referring to Roman Jakobson's essay "The Dominant" in which he establishes his ideas about the unmarked in literature and in culture generally. From there, I move to an analysis of each author and text in terms of the time in which each text was published and also, to a smaller extent, how that text is seen today. I examine the issues of nationality, ethnicity, and literary movement with each author in an attempt to see what effect, if any, the markedness status of the author has on the themes of otherness and isolation in the texts themselves.

Though the levels I examine in each chapter are presented separately, they are not truly separate from each other. Each of the levels entwines with the others to form a whole on which the themes of isolation and otherness are visible. The interrelation between the levels shows how the mark of the Other touches every aspect of the texts in question. Using markedness to examine the different levels allows for this connection to be clearly visible.

Chapter 1:

Markedness and its Literary Connection

Markedness is a concept based on oppositions and hierarchy that Roman Jakobson and Nikolai Trubetzkoy in 1930 began discussing in their correspondence. Since then, markedness has been used, primarily in linguistics, to explain how hierarchies and oppositions function. The concept sprang from a discussion of opposition in phonology but quickly spread to other areas of linguistics and eventually into other fields altogether. In July 1930, Trubetzkoy wrote:

Apparently any (or might it not be ‘any’) phonological correlation acquires in the linguistic consciousness the form of a contraposition of the presence of a certain mark to its absence (or of the maximum of a certain mark to its minimum). Thus, one of the terms of the correlation necessarily proves to be ‘positive’, ‘active’, and the other becomes ‘negative’, ‘passive’ . . . [O]nly one of the terms of the correlation is conceived of as actively modified and positively endowed with a certain mark, while the other is merely conceived of as non-endowed by this mark and thus passively modified. (qtd. in Jakobson and Waugh 90)

Examples which Trubetzkoy offers in this letter are of “palatalized vs. non-palatalized” and “labialized vs. non-labialized” consonants. In both of these oppositional pairs, the “non” half of the pair is unmarked because it does not possess the quality which makes the other marked. The other half is marked

because it possesses a distinctive feature—being palatalized, labialized—not possessed by the unmarked half. An example in English phonology is the oppositional pair /t/ and /d/ which are distinguished only by the quality of voice (Schleifer 384). In this pair, /d/ is “endowed” with the mark because it possesses the distinctive feature of voicing, /t/ unmarked because it does not possess this feature.¹

These examples are all of *binary* oppositions. Binary oppositions refer to those oppositions whose parts are completely distinct from one another. There is no overlap of the parts, and the opposition itself is apparently arbitrary.² When Trubetzkoy talks about a “mark to its absence,” he emphasizes the separateness of the two parts of this type of opposition. One half has the mark, one does not. But Trubetzkoy also makes reference to a second type of opposition in his letter when he talks about “the maximum of a certain mark to its minimum.” In this type of opposition, there exists a scale, and the parts of the opposition all fall somewhere on this scale—they are thus related by the context in which they occur. This type of opposition, in which the parts are connected, is called a *scalar* opposition.³ Throughout this dissertation, I will be referring to these two types of oppositions in reference to markedness.

Jakobson’s response to Trubetzkoy’s letter took the idea of marking much farther than phonology, expanding it from linguistics to other fields:

¹ For example, the only difference between the words *tip* and *dip* is that *dip* is voiced—the vocal cords vibrate when saying *dip*, but not when saying *tip*.

² The arbitrariness of the opposition can be either at the signifier or signified level, depending on context.

³ This type of opposition is more commonly called *polar*. I have chosen to use the term *scalar*, however, because it is more specific regarding the structure of this type of opposition whose terms are based on degrees rather than on a have/have not relationship.

I am coming increasingly to the conviction that your thought about correlation as a constant of mutual connection between a marked and unmarked type is one of your most remarkable and fruitful ideas. It seems to me that it has a significance not only for linguistics but also for ethnology and the history of culture, and that such historico-cultural correlations as life ~ death, liberty ~ non-liberty, sin ~ virtue, holidays ~ working days, etc., are always confined to relations *a* ~ non-*a*, and that it is important to find out for any epoch, group, nation, etc., what the marked element is. . . .
(qtd. in Jakobson and Waugh 90-1)

Whereas Trubetzkoy's idea was quite limited, Jakobson's development of it spread its usefulness from linguistics to a wider field. Jakobson here focuses on the binary opposition—*a* ~ non-*a*—but this focus would later expand to include scalar oppositions.

Despite Jakobson's connection of markedness to fields other than linguistics, markedness has remained associated primarily with linguistics and has rarely extended beyond that realm. In fact most comments connecting markedness to other fields of study are made by linguists trying to explain how markedness works rather than using markedness to examine these fields specifically. One of the goals in this dissertation is to take the connection Jakobson originally makes to other fields, and to apply it to literature. In order to make this connection, however, it is first important to define markedness from a linguistic standpoint more clearly and then to examine some of the issues in markedness which make an impact on the way markedness works when applied to literature.

A Definition of Markedness

Nikolai Trubetzkoy offers a very basic definition of markedness in the 1930 letter to Roman Jakobson quoted above: markedness deals with two items, one unmarked, one marked. For Trubetzkoy, an unmarked item of an opposition is “negative,” “passive,” lacking a feature possessed by the marked item.⁴ This feature makes the marked item “positive,” “active.” In linguistics, there are two types of features: distinctive and semantic. Distinctive features usually refer to phonology. Thus /d/ has the distinctive feature of voice. Semantic features are not phonological. Rather, they contribute “an element of meaning to a word, such as the feature [female] in . . . *woman*, . . . as opposed to [male] in *man*, . . .” (McArthur 400). It should be noted here that only *woman* is marked in this opposition.

A marked category is generally considered something narrower, more specific than the unmarked category. The marked is isolated from the unmarked by its possession of the feature, and it is this feature that makes the marked more specific. Unmarked items tend to be more general or neutral and are associated with “naturalness” and simplicity whereas marked items are complex. Present tense, for example, is the unmarked tense of general language use. It can represent present time, no time, past and future.⁵ Past tense is marked because it

⁴ Note that the feature is not necessarily physical. This fact is especially true of the features I will deal with in this dissertation.

⁵ An example of present used without a time reference is in the sentence “Students *like* to procrastinate” in which the verb *like* is in present tense but refers to a general statement of fact. This use of present tense to refer to generalities (also used in clichés like “Time *flies* when you’re having fun”) is sometimes called *gnomic present* (Cohn 24).

specifies a time frame different than that of the “speech situation”—past (and only past) (Waugh 301). It possesses the feature past time and is thus narrower than present tense.⁶

In the field of English literature, markedness is observable in the way in which the field is categorized. The term English literature is used to stand for all literature written in English—thus there is an English Department. The term American literature is narrower than term English literature because it possesses the semantic feature American nationality and is more specific about where the literature comes from than English literature. English literature is thus unmarked. To take the marking further, American literature is unmarked compared to Native American literature or African American literature, both of which possess the feature ethnicity.

Another example, this time from a literary text, is the character of Jane in *Jane Eyre*. She is marked by her position in society, first as a ward raised by relatives—feature parentless—and then as a governess. Her status in society is limited initially compared to someone who is raised by his/her own family.⁷

Present tense used to represent past time occurs frequently in stories, especially those recounted verbally, in particular with the use of *say* instead of *said*. For example:

So I told them to drive it into the barn, because it was threatening rain again, and that supper was about ready. Only they didn't want to come in.

“I thank you,” Bundren *says*. “We wouldn't discommode you. We got a little something in the basket. We can make out.”

“Well,” I *says*. . . . (Faulkner *AILD* 115, emphasis added)

This type of present tense usage, often referred to as Historical Present or Conversational Historical Present, is studied in depth in “The Conversational Historical Present Alternation” and “A Feature of Performed Narrative: The Conversational Historical Present” by Nessa Wolfson.

⁶ This difference between marked and unmarked is the case for both types of opposition. With the binary opposition, the complexity is complete while in a scalar opposition, the complexity varies with where the marked part(s) of the opposition fall on the scale.

⁷ Note here that the mark is based on something Jane lacks—parents—showing that the feature does not necessarily have to be an extra presence of something.

When she becomes a governess, her status is marked because she is not a family member—feature employee—but also not a servant—feature non-servant—but something in between and thus not part of either group. In the case of the family relationships, Jane is part of the family, just not the full family member that the others are. With her situation at Thornfield Hall, she is caught between two oppositions, that of the family and that of the servants. As a little bit of both, she is on each scale as something not quite “natural” or the “norm” and thus is marked.⁸

Though the idea behind markedness appears to be straightforward, there is still much debate going on in the linguistic community about how widely applicable markedness is and even what constitutes a marked/unmarked opposition. Some linguists argue that markedness should be confined to *formal* marking, which sees the unmarked as the formally simpler of the items in a pairing (e.g. *lion* is unmarked compared to the marked *lioness*—feature feminine—or *cat* versus *cats*—feature plural⁹). Limiting markedness to formal situations only, however, appears to be shortsighted “[s]ince markedness is a relationship between signifieds, [and] it is determined by the functional rather than the merely formal association. *Youngster*, for example, is not semantically a marked version of *young*, yet *young* is a marked form of *old* when the terms refer

⁸ An issue related to the idea that the unmarked is “natural” or the “norm” is that of privileging. In most cases, though not all, the unmarked, as the “norm,” is privileged in its context while the marked receives a lower status in society. But with *Jane Eyre*, Jane is privileged in terms of being more than a servant, but not privileged in terms of her relationship with the family, yet she is marked in both cases. I discuss privileging later in this chapter.

⁹ In oppositional pairs such as *young/old*, the “formal marking . . . consists in a replacement rather than a differentiation of the signifier, a process characterized by the grammatical term *suppletion*” (Groves 386).

to biological age” (Groves 386). When explaining the marked/unmarked pairs, using their function is critical to understanding why the oppositions work the way they do. And in fact most linguists who work with markedness do so on a semantic level.

The example of the present/past opposition shows clearly one aspect of markedness that has caused problems for some working with the concept. As I said above, past tense is marked because it possesses the feature of past time “(time that is past with respect to the speech situation)” (Waugh 301). Present is the unmarked form because it does not possess the feature. But it can be opposed to past tense in several ways. First of all, it can mean an opposite time—present time. Secondly, it can mean the absence of any representation of time. Roman Jakobson talks about these two aspects of markedness in his essay “Shifters, Verbal Categories and the Russian Verb”:

The general meaning of a marked category states the presence of a certain (whether positive or negative) property A; the general meaning of the corresponding unmarked category states nothing about the presence of A, and is used chiefly, but not exclusively, to indicate the absence of A. The unmarked term is always the negative of the marked term, but on the level of general meaning the opposition of the two contradictories may be interpreted as “statement of A” vs. “no statement of A”, whereas on the level of “narrowed”, nuclear meanings, we encounter the opposition “statement of A” vs. “statement of non-A.” (136)

These two uses of the unmarked are also called “zero-interpretation” (no statement of A) and “minus-interpretation” (statement of non-A) by Linda Waugh, in her article “Marked and Unmarked: A Choice between Unequals in Semiotic Structure” (303). For the present/past opposition, past, the marked half of the opposition, is equivalent to statement of A. Present tense used to mean present time is the narrow meaning—statement of non-A—while the present representing no time is the general meaning—no statement of A.

Part of the problem with working with these two uses of the unmarked term is that they represent two different types of opposition. The zero-interpretation—no statement of A—represents the scalar opposition. In this interpretation, there is a scale of marking, and the unmarked present represents the “minimum” of the mark of past time—no time—while the marked past represents the maximum of the mark. The minus-interpretation, on the other hand, is a binary opposition: the two parts of the opposition are completely separate from each other. Thus the opposition is presented as statement of A vs. statement of non-A. The unmarked is not A, and the relationship between the two parts of the opposition is, at some level, arbitrary. In other words, in a different context, the opposition might not exist. The arbitrary nature of the opposition is on the semantic level.¹⁰

A third way in which the unmarked category can be used, as mentioned in the verb tense example, is by taking on the role of the marked category. Waugh

¹⁰ The arbitrariness comes from the context in which the opposition is made. For example, if both Nanapush and Pauline were not narrators of the novel *Tracks*, they would not be opposed to the extent that they are. In fact, there are other characters in the novel who work against both characters but who do not have the significance of the opposition between Nanapush and Pauline (e.g. Nanapush’s dislike of the Morrisseys and Lazarres; Pauline’s problems with Lulu and Fleur).

refers to this substitution as a “plus-interpretation” (304). In the verb tense example, present tense can represent past time, acting as a sort of substitute for past tense. In other words, in certain situations, the unmarked can possess the feature of the marked. This substitution is not possible in all marked/unmarked pairs, but it is possible in some cases.

Let me return again to the way the field of English language literature is unmarked compared to American literature. This example shows clearly how the two types of opposition correspond to minus- and zero-interpretations. When we refer to English literature in the broad sense, in which English literature refers to all types of literature (or to none in particular), we are employing the zero-interpretation, no statement of A (no statement of American nationality). The opposition in this case is a scalar opposition. However, when English literature is used to mean specifically literature from England/Britain, we are employing the minus interpretation, statement of non-A (statement of non-American nationality). Here the opposition is binary.

An aspect of markedness related to the various roles the unmarked term can take on is called neutralization. In neutralization, the unmarked term could represent the marked term but it could also represent the opposite (it is neutralized, in other words). Edwin L. Battistella calls neutralization “the suppression of the contrast between A and the narrow sense [non-A] of the unmarked term in favor of the indefinite or generic sense of the unmarked feature” (*Logic* 60). He continues, saying,

The point to keep in mind here is that neutralization is not simply the suppression of a distributional contrast, but rather the

suppression of the feature contrast. . . . The pattern shared by both phonology and semantics is that opposition is specification, while neutralization (or suppression) is nonspecification. (61)

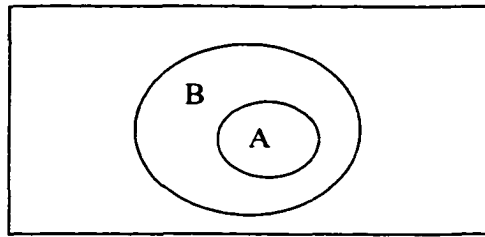
The opposition, in other words, is canceled out in these situations. It is important to note here that the only type of opposition in which neutralization can occur appears to be the binary opposition.

Ronald Schleifer, in his article “Deconstruction and Linguistic Analysis,” talks about neutralization and gives a couple of examples. One is the “opposition between *man* and *woman*. The neutralization occurs in contexts such as *chairman* where *–man* signifies /person/” (387). Because the chairman could actually be male or female, the unmarked term is neutralized. In today’s society, the neutralization which occurs in gender-based situations is becoming less common. Though *chairman* can still mean either a male or female, the marked *chairwoman* and *chairperson* are becoming more prevalent. A better example of how the use of a male form as a neutral has become less accepted is in the use of third person pronouns. Whereas just ten or fifteen years ago using *he* as a neutral pronoun was accepted, now it is standard to use *he/she* so as not to be gender specific, and in fact freshman (also a neutralized term here) composition courses teach students to write using either *he/she* or the plural form. Other less politically charged oppositions where neutralization is always possible are *shallow/deep*, *old/young*, and *short/tall*.¹¹

¹¹ For example, the normally unmarked terms *deep*, *old*, and *tall* are neutralized in statements such as “That hole is 2 inches deep” (2 inches being shallow rather than deep); “That baby is 3 months old” (3 months being young); and “The figurine is 3 inches tall” (3 inches being fairly short). In all three cases here, the opposition has been neutralized.

Types of Oppositions and Markedness

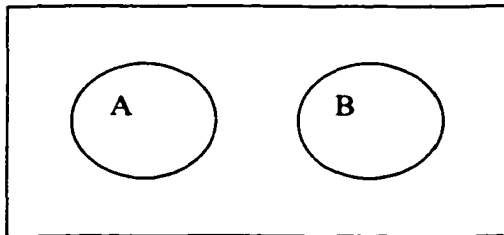
Though I'm using the terms *binary* and *scalar* to refer to the two types of opposition prevalent in markedness, other linguists studying markedness have used different terms or similar terms in different ways. For example, Edna Andrews, in her essay "Markedness Reversals in Linguistic Sign Systems," talks about two types of opposition: binary and polar. A binary opposition for her is the opposition applicable to markedness because one part of the opposing units encompasses (and thus can take the place of) the other. She diagrams binary oppositions as follows:



(Andrews 170)

Clearly in this type of opposition, which I call *scalar*, consists of pairs in which one part of the opposition is imbedded in the other.

A polar opposition to Andrews is an opposition that does not overlap; rather its parts are completely distinct from each other. Andrews' polar opposition is what I have been calling a *binary* opposition. She diagrams it as follows:



(Andrews "Reversals" 170)

There is no overlapping connection of parts in this opposition. The polar opposition for Andrews is not part of markedness because it does not offer the overlap seen in a binary opposition (170). Andrews' oppositions are labeled in the opposite way that I am using them. She sets up her criteria for a definition of markedness thus:

The implicit assumptions of a markedness theory defined . . . are:
(1) the existence of opposition in language; (2) the inherent asymmetry of linguistic signs; (3) the mandatory presence of a hierarchy; and (4) the binary nature of signs. It is of the utmost importance that the conceptual features are only binary. (170)¹²

The importance of using a binary opposition is based on the presence of the hierarchy which Andrews believes is only in what she calls a binary opposition.¹³ For Andrews, the narrow sense of the opposition (signalization of non-A—what I am calling binary) is not part of markedness because she believes there is no hierarchy in this type of opposition.¹⁴ Most linguists who work with markedness,

¹² Note again that her reference to binary is what I am calling scalar.

¹³ Andrews sounds like she's talking about two different types of opposition, but really I think that though not all oppositions have the ability to work in both the narrow and general senses Jakobson talks about, many can and do. Basically she seems to be ignoring (or at least discounting) the way some oppositions can work. Perhaps she should have a third diagram, one that looks like the Boolean search schema (where there can be overlap but where there doesn't have to be). One term can take the place of the other but doesn't have to. She really doesn't like to work with the extra variables. Certainly the past/present opposition is set up that way, as are many of the oppositions brought up by the markedness theorists. Andrews also shifts her perspective some in her book *Markedness Theory*.

¹⁴ As a result of this way of looking at the oppositions, Andrews calls neutralization, markedness assimilation and markedness reversals a myth in markedness theory. She appears to have changed her point of view ever so slightly in her book (rather than the article), because in the book she talks about both general and specific interpretations in markedness while still maintaining that polar [binary] oppositions like male/female and black/white cannot be categorized using markedness. She's into the highly formal, linguistics only view of markedness, and so the semantic marking I'm doing is not applicable. Rodney B. Sangster in "Two Types of Markedness and Their

however, do not agree with Andrews about the way the types of opposition work in markedness theory.

Elmar Holenstein, for example, talks about the same types of opposition but uses the terms contradictory and contrary to describe them:

A contradictory difference exists between the presence and absence of an element or a feature (the relation vocalic/nonvocalic). A contrary difference is given in the relation between two elements which belong to the same genus and are maximally distinct from one another within this genus (the extreme elements in the periodic system of chemistry) or which are realized in the maximum or minimum of a feature which displays a graduated scale. Contrary opposition is also called polar opposition (black/white). (122-3)

For Holenstein all oppositions can be classified by using markedness, something which Andrews does not believe. Holenstein uses the term polar opposition in the opposite way from the way Andrews does—it is equivalent to my scalar opposition. For Andrews, only her binary oppositions can work with markedness because polar oppositions cannot claim the hierarchy she thinks marked/unmarked pairs need. They are merely opposed. I prefer to work with the

Implications for the Conceptualization of Grammatical Invariance” talks about markedness similarly. It should also be noted here that although Andrews seems to believe that there is no hierarchy in what she calls polar oppositions and I call binary, if she is calling male/female that type of opposition, then there is a definite hierarchy imposed by cultures. She would likely negate this hierarchy by claiming that *semantically* there is a hierarchy but not *linguistically*. And while this may be true at one level, separating the semantics from the formal or linguistic structure is never truly possible, just as the types of opposition are not truly distinct but can have some overlapping because of context.

Jakobson and Holenstein two types of opposition because, though somewhat more complicated, they offer more to work with. Further, there is a hierarchy inherent in the connotation behind some polar oppositions—*male/female*, for example. This hierarchy is part of the problem that bringing semantic issues into the theory of markedness creates. Though Andrews may wish to negate the importance of the semantic in markedness to favor only the formal, it is practically impossible to do and somewhat shortsighted because markedness is easily applicable to semantics where, no matter which type of opposition is used, there is some kind of hierarchy.

Markedness Reversals/Shifts, Markedness Assimilation

Within the concept of markedness, there is another controversial concept called markedness reversal. In a reversal, items typically considered marked become unmarked and vice versa. For example, for verb tense, as mentioned above, present tense is unmarked and past marked in everyday language usage, but in a narrative situation, they are considered reversed and past becomes the unmarked form and present the marked one.¹⁵ This reversal can also be associated with markedness assimilation in which “marked units cohere (are congruent) with marked contexts and unmarked units with unmarked contexts” (Shapiro 150). In other words, marked items stay with marked items, unmarked with unmarked, and when reversals occur, the entire group of marked items becomes unmarked and vice versa.¹⁶ Returning to the language use example, narrative is a marked form of

¹⁵ See Fleischman, Waugh. I will talk more about verb tense in narrative in Chapters 2 and 4.

¹⁶ There are of course some exceptions to this rule—not all marked items will follow the reversal trend, though they do usually become reversed in groups.

language use and thus the marked verb tense of standard language (past tense) use becomes the unmarked tense for the marked language use and the unmarked tense (present) becomes marked. The verb tense has been assimilated by the language use.¹⁷

Both reversals and assimilation are dismissed by Andrews because they are not often linguistically bound and are usually based upon a binary (not scalar) opposition. A typical example of reversal which Andrews dismisses is the male/female opposition. In most situations of profession (doctor, professor), the male is the unmarked while the female is marked. But in the profession of nurse (also elementary, especially kindergarten, teacher), female becomes unmarked and male marked. Andrews objects to the reversal because the opposition is first of all binary and not scalar, and also because the reversal occurs contextually and not on a purely linguistic level, where she would like to limit the existence of markedness (*Markedness Theory* 151-2). If we assume that markedness can occur on more than a purely formal, linguistic plane, then markedness reversals can work. Newfield and Waugh, for example, argue that the reversal or, as they later call it, shift is not really a “swap” of values so much as a new (marked) context dictating the change of marked and unmarked values because the “marked or unmarked status of a given feature is a function of the context in which it is found

¹⁷ Note that adverbial time markers are not assimilated in this reversal. In narratives, present adverbial time markers are used with past tense: “road repairing was *now* a thing of the past” (Rhys, *WSS* 17—emphasis added); “He never did adopt her son, Russell, whose father lived somewhere in Montana *now*” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 13—emphasis added). The present adverbial *now* should correspond with present tense, but in these examples, it is paired with past tense.

and thus may vary according to the context” (228, 231). For them, context plays an important role.¹⁸

The question of the existence of reversals or shifts persists, though. In narrative, to continue with that example, present tense can still take the place of past tense at times (see footnote 5 and the example from William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*), yet past does not take the place of present. So is past truly the unmarked tense of narrative, or is it being classified as the unmarked tense merely because in a narrative context past tense is more *frequently* used than present tense? This question is important, and it raises the issue of the role frequency plays in markedness. Some critics¹⁹ have argued that frequency is one of the main determiners of markedness while others²⁰ argue that although frequency is usually associated with the unmarked item of an opposition, it is often a consequence of markedness (what’s more “natural” or simpler is more frequently used) but not a defining characteristic. Indeed, I tend to think that frequency is more a common trait of the unmarked than that it is a defining characteristic of the unmarked because what defining the marked does is isolate the part of the opposition containing the feature. Usually this isolation will occur to the less frequent part of the opposition.²¹

¹⁸ For example, reading literature and/or watching something fictional—viewing stories in a marked context—results in the reader/viewer suspending disbelief and accepting situations which would normally be unbelievable if seen or heard in an unmarked context. This suspension of disbelief occurs in all cases but is especially noticeable in Science Fiction and Fantasy texts.

¹⁹ Greenberg (Language Universals) (qtd. in Battistella, *Logic* 50).

²⁰ Andrews

²¹ A cultural example of markedness in which frequency (in numeric terms) occurs in the marked is in slavery. Slave owners, the unmarked, were often outnumbered by their marked slaves.

In the novel *Tracks*, for example, there seems to be a reversal of the narrative conventions for literature. The unmarked narrator, Nanapush, is orally retelling family history to Lulu Nanapush, his “granddaughter.” He is the unmarked narrator for a couple of reasons—his role as more sympathetic character and narrator and his location in the text. However, though he is unmarked and his opposing narrator Pauline is marked—by her unsympathetic nature and the way her narrative is surrounded by Nanapush’s—Pauline narrates more like a conventional first person narrator—distant from her audience and in strict past tense. This style is also one factor that makes her a marked narrator in this text. The way in which the text is presented makes Nanapush’s traditional oral tale unmarked, a shift or reversal of white, English, realistic narrative conventions. Further, Nanapush’s role as a traditional trickster figure renders some of his actions, which might normally be considered marked (e.g. his penchant for lewd jokes/comments), unmarked. Pauline thus possesses the features unsympathetic, secondary, Western style to mark her as a narrator.²²

Universal and Contextual Markedness

A further problem with markedness is deciding how it works. Are marked objects marked in all situations (universal)? Or are they marked differently in different situations (contextual²³)? In Jakobson’s view (one not shared by all), both universal and contextual marking are possible. A frequently cited example of universal marking is spoken versus written language, spoken being unmarked in

²² I will discuss these points in more depth presently.

²³ This type of marking is sometimes also called local markedness.

all language systems (it develops first) and written being marked (Waugh 308).²⁴ An example of contextual markedness in the English language is the pronunciation of certain terms in different regional areas. For example, the word *aunt* is pronounced one way on the East Coast of the United States and in England, Australia, and Canada and a different way in the rest of the United States. The unmarked pronunciation in the first area /ant/ is marked in the other area where /ænt/ is the unmarked pronunciation.²⁵ Another pronunciation example in American English²⁶ is the word *greasy* which is pronounced differently by northern and southern speakers. In the North, it is pronounced /grisi/ while in the South it is pronounced /grizi/. As with the pronunciation of *aunt*, the perception of which pronunciation is marked will vary according to which area the question is posed in. With lexical items such as *soda*, *pop*, *tonic*, and *coke*, and *bag* and *sack*, there are similar contextual differences based on location.

Regarding contextuality, Olga Mišeska Tomić comments, “Just as it can be marked in one language and unmarked in another, a given grammatical category can be marked in one dialect or in one period of the history of a language and unmarked in another” (“Assessment” 203). Contextuality seems to be a given

²⁴ This universal exists “in the context of the history of humanity as a whole” (Waugh 308). Once both oral and written language exist, there can be a reversal regarding which form of the language is privileged. Norbert Elias gives the example of how the German middle class (bourgeois) favored written German over the language spoken in the courts (French) as a result of being unaccepted in the courts, which were unmarked. Interestingly, in the context of the dominant (political) class, German writing would still have been marked. Thus it would make sense for the writing to be unmarked in the marked society of the German middle class in terms of markedness assimilation. The same thing happens with verb tense in a narrative situation. Note that in this situation the idea of privilege is bound up with the idea of the unmarked here.

²⁵ One of the problems of dealing with contextual marking is obviously going to be explaining exactly what context the marking is being derived from.

²⁶ Note here that, like American Literature, American English is marked compared to the unmarked English, which encompasses all speakers of English.

for her. In the introduction to *Markedness in Synchrony and Diachrony*, Tomić notes that “while agreeing that assignments are not universal, they [the authors of the text’s articles] do not seem to doubt that the theory of markedness itself is universally applicable” (5). The idea of markedness certainly seems to have a wide application because people seem naturally disposed to viewing the world in terms of oppositions and hierarchies.

Most critics do seem to agree that contextuality plays a part in markedness, but there are at least a few who say that markedness should not be contextual. Rodney B. Sangster, for example, says that “the mark must remain invariant with respect to all contexts, since it determines the essence of the opposition” (145).²⁷ While his idea may sound logical—it’s important to have a universal to base other ideas on—this conception of markedness limits how markedness can be applied and leads to the problem of what constitutes “universal.” Is something universal for *all* languages, for specific languages, for specific dialects? And if it’s not universal for all languages, then how does universality truly differ from contextuality (since the context for the universal to be established is made)? Another problem with working just with universal markedness is that something which may appear to be universal may in actuality not be that way if all languages/cultures are not examined. Tomić’s observation about the universality of the theory of markedness may in fact be more accurate

²⁷ This point contributes directly to his dismissal of reversals, which rely on contextual markedness to exist. Newfield and Waugh neatly refute his argument in their essay “Invariance and Markedness in Grammatical Categories.”

than Sangster's observation. Certainly I've not yet uncovered something which can hold the label of being universal, though I won't rule out the possibility.²⁸

Most linguists working with markedness work with the assumption that contextuality is a critical aspect of it. Waugh sums up the approach most linguists take regarding contextuality in markedness as follows:

. . . the mark itself is independent of the opposition, in the sense that either pole of the opposition may take on the mark, depending on the context in which the opposition is used. Marks are not absolutes, but rather are constantly defined in terms of nonmarks and in terms of the context of which they are a part. (307)

In other words, what is unmarked for one language or culture may be marked in another language or culture, or even in the same language or culture in a different time (thus acknowledging the way both languages and cultures evolve). This idea is one visible in Jakobson's initial response letter to Trubetzkoy when he writes, "I'm convinced that many ethnographic phenomena, ideologies, etc. which at first glance seem to be identical, often differ only in the fact that what for one system is a marked term may be evaluated by the other as the absence of a mark" (qtd. in Jakobson and Waugh 91).²⁹ The similarities between cultures, ideologies, etc. are revealed by what they consider marked and unmarked.

²⁸ And in fact, the "universal" brought up by many linguists—oral language precedes spoken—has some potential flaws: how do languages such as Esperanto and sign language affect the theory. While Esperanto may be easily dismissed as not a "natural" language, sign language poses a unique problem because it is neither oral nor written, but a combination of the two. And sign language such as Manually Coded English, though not as heavily used as American Sign Language, would seem to work backwards since it has taken a written language—English—and converted it, including punctuation, into hand signs.

²⁹ Jakobson's example directly preceding this statement is "the *Chekists* said that everyone is a man of the White Guard, and if not, it must be proved in every separate case. Here the Soviet

The question which arises now (and it is the concern of the universalists) is, if markedness is so contextual, then what can possibly be gained from studying it? Studying markedness allows for a systematic analysis of oppositions in language (and other sign systems) and an analysis of how the oppositions function in their contexts (and how they contrast from context to context). In literature, for example, the canon is used as an attempt to establish “good” literature, what all students studying English should read. Texts which make it into the canon can be considered unmarked because they are “the norm.” Texts outside of the canon are marked by some means. In some cases, as in the case of much popular, generic fiction the mark is that of writing not of the same thought-provoking quality as that of the canon—it’s not written as well and bears the feature lower quality. In the cases of marginal literature or of modern literature, the mark may be the culture from which it came (though this is becoming less common) or of the fact that it is not old enough to have established itself as a “classic” work—the feature is ethnicity or time. It should be noted here that, as times have changed, so too has the canon, reflecting how oppositions (and thus marks) can change with changing contexts. With the interest in multicultural and ethnic literatures, the canon has recently expanded to be more inclusive, a reflection of how contexts change.³⁰

allegiance is a marked element. At present in Soviet print there has emerged a slogan; they used to say that ‘all those who are not against us are with us’, but now they say ‘all those who are not with us are against us’. That points to a shift of the elements, i.e., to a generalization of the Chekist standpoint” (90-91).

³⁰ This expansion is still seen as limiting by some critics, however, since while it allows certain ethnic and women authors entrance into the canon, it shuts the doors to even more. Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez reflects on this issue in her recent text *Contemporary American Indian Literatures and the Oral Tradition* (50).

Let me return briefly to the English literature example from above. In classifying this field, I said that English literature was unmarked and that all other, more specifically labeled areas, are marked. We can extend that further to say that American literature is unmarked in relation to other ethnically-defined literatures such as Native American,³¹ African American, Chicano, etc. There are naturally ideological problems with this marking of literature because the markedness hierarchy often seems to be the way the literatures are viewed in departments—with the marked literatures being treated as secondary to the unmarked literatures.³² As Peter Groves comment in his definition of markedness for the *Encyclopedia of Semiotics*,

Because the semantic opposition of unmarkedness and markedness influences our perceptions of naturalness and deviance, it forms part of the tacit system through which ideology is inscribed in language. The marking of one gender in a pair of terms like *author* and *authoress*, for example, constitutes a silent privileging of the unmarked gender: part of the meaning of the unmarked term is therefore “this is the natural gender for this category of beings”
(386)

The idea that “natural,” unmarked, is privileged in the hierarchy is something that would seem to go hand-in-hand with the connotation behind “natural” or the

³¹ The label Native American literature is under some scrutiny. Critics like Armand Garnet Ruffo (and Greg Sarris to some extent) have called for the end of the label Native American literature because it is a term which inappropriately generalizes hundreds of different cultures under a single label. Others such as Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez have begun to call it Native American literatures (plural) to stress the tribal diversity of the authors.

³² Here again the issue of privileging comes up. The unmarked literatures are usually the privileged one in an English department.

“norm” because of the connotation behind the words “natural” and “norm.” If something is not “natural,” it is *unnatural* or *abnormal*, words implying deviance and otherness. Usually privilege is an inherent effect of being unmarked. However, this privileging is not always the case. For example, from a Marxist perspective the marked people in a culture, those who are not part of the working class, are the privileged class. Today, the privileged members of society are marked by the feature fame and/or wealth while the unmarked, “average Joe” is not privileged.

Groves’ comments on gender are easily applicable to the lines drawn in the English language literature categories. Traditionally, British literature has been privileged over American, and American privileged over ethnic American literatures. Similar privileging is visible in the critical theories that have moved in and out of popularity in English departments—New Criticism, structuralism, deconstruction, etc. Markedness is subject to the changes that occur over time to affect markedness values and so what is privileged and/or unmarked one day may be marked and/or no longer privileged the next.³³

A further issue in markedness is how we are to assess marked actions. Battistella reflects on the possible deliberateness of marked behavior:

When an individual engages in marked behavior of some kind, how is this to be interpreted? Marked behavior may be a conscious decision—a stylistic option, or a challenge or subversion of the

³³ The issue of changes in markedness positions will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.

existing superstructure.³⁴ It may also be an unconscious decision determined by a system of markedness values that is the reverse of that generally held. In the first case one intends one's behavior to be marked; in the second case one believes one's behavior to be unmarked, though from the point of view of general values (of, for example, the hearer, the audience, the reader, society in general) it is marked. (*Evaluative* 200)³⁵

Context plays a very important role here. If someone deliberately performs a marked act, he/she is assuming that the audience who witnesses the act will understand that the act is marked. An example of deliberate marked usage is evident in the young/old opposition when an adult might claim to be "sixty years young" rather than "sixty years old" or someone who talks about the "Department of Redundancy Department." Further, someone who accidentally performs a marked act in a certain context is assuming his/her audience understands the context from which he/she is coming and does not realize that his/her actions are marked. For example, a teacher in an ESL class might lick his/her finger to help

³⁴ My comment: Nouveau Roman as a literary example of deliberate shifting of style, as are Modernist authors. And in fact many "artists" desire to do something different—marked—to show a unique feature in their work.

³⁵ Deliberately marked behavior seems to be an important aspect of literature, whether in terms of authors experimenting with marked forms, such as the novel in the 17th century, or in terms of characters in text, or in terms of narrative styles. Some character examples include Fleur's deliberately marked behavior vs. Pauline's bumbling; Frankenstein's deliberate marked behavior (making life in a marked way) leading to the creature who cannot escape being marked despite his articulateness and general attempts to fit in (parallel between this novel and *Paradise Lost* in which a man creates life rather than the female) and the creature's eventual adoption of marked behavior as a response to Frankenstein; also, issues of magic in Native American tribes (elk scene and other magic—Nanapush and Fleur vs. miracles—Pauline) and obeah in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and who it will and won't work on. In Elias, German writing was used as a way to flaunt the mark of German.

unstick pages of a handout, not realizing that this action is marked to most of his/her students. In this case, though the teacher assumes his/her action is unmarked, since it is common for Americans to perform it, the context of the action is different because the students in the class are not Americans.³⁶

There is also a third way to look at the use of marked items not mentioned by Battistella. In some situations, a person can realize that he/she is behaving in a marked way but not be able to change that behavior (at least not easily). A clear example of this type of marked behavior is in non-native speakers of a language. For most people learning a new language, speaking in the new language involves pronunciations (and intonations) that are very different from the native language. This difference is especially true for people learning a language in a different language family. For example, a native English speaker learning Kiowa must learn how to pronounce the popped consonants in words such as *mountain* (*qóp*) /k'óp^h/, and *stone* (*xó*) /ts'óⁿ/.³⁷ Even within the same language family, however, there are pronunciation problems. Many non-native speakers of English have difficulty pronouncing /ð/ and /θ/ in words like *this* and *other* because their languages do not possess such sounds. In these cases, the language learners are aware that they are marked but they have difficulty becoming unmarked.³⁸

³⁶ Issues of personal space and how they differ from culture to culture also come into this category of marked behavior.

³⁷ I'm using the Kiowa orthography established by Parker MacKenzie and taught by Gus Parker, Jr. in Kiowa language classes at the University of Oklahoma. Kiowa scholars are presently in the midst of creating a written form of the language, as are many Native language scholars.

³⁸ In literature, one thinks of *Jane Eyre* in which Jane is marked as an orphan and then as a governess and knows that she is marked but unable to do anything about it. Similarly, Lucifer knows that he is marked as an Angel and aware of it (not satisfied with being marked to God's unmarked state). The Creature in *Frankenstein* and Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* are in similar situations.

Binary and Scalar Markedness

Thus far when talking about markedness and oppositions, the focus has been on paired oppositions, one of which is marked and one of which is unmarked. However, not all oppositions are paired. For example, personal pronouns have three parts—first, second and third person—and they pose a new problem: should they be broken into two sets of oppositions as Linda Waugh presents them in her essay “Marked and Unmarked: A Choice between Unequals in Semiotic Structure” or should they be evaluated on a scale of markedness in which one item is called unmarked and the others are labeled as less marked and more marked?

For Waugh, personal pronouns are labeled as an opposition between the third person (unmarked) and the grouping of the first and second person (marked), “with a marked reference to the ‘participants of the event’” (306).³⁹ Then the opposition of second person versus first person is made with second person being unmarked and first marked “since it specifically refers to the producer of the given message” (306).⁴⁰ There are two distinct oppositions in Waugh’s vision of this system. Both of these oppositions are binary.

A scalar marking system, however, works from the idea that “markedness is a matter of degree” (Ivir 141). If markedness is indeed a matter of degree, then the personal pronouns can be analyzed as one set and not two. In this case, the

³⁹ Thus the marked is the “participant of the event” versus the unmarked “non-participant of the event.” The feature is participation.

⁴⁰ Producer of the message is marked, non-producer of the message is unmarked. The feature is production of a message.

values Waugh applies are still applicable, but they contribute to the degree of marking that the personal pronoun has. Third person remains the unmarked item, but now the second person is classified as “less marked” (it possesses only the mark of “participant of the event”) than the first person, which is “more marked” (having both the mark of “participant of the event” and “producer of the given message”). Ferenc Kiefer comments in his essay “Towards a Theory of Semantic Markedness,” “it has to be assumed that semantic markedness concerns n-tuples in contrast rather than pairs in contrast” (122). In other words, semantic markedness usually deals with more than a pair of items. The idea of scalar markedness is particularly applicable to semantic markedness because it allows for more than pairs to be examined, something which will be critical later in this dissertation.⁴¹

Multiple narrator novels present a clear place where scalar marking can be applied. Novels such as *Frankenstein*, with its three narrators, and *As I Lay Dying* with its fifteen different narrators, will naturally offer the opportunity for examination on a scale of marking. And in most texts themselves, characters will be marked on a scale depending on how marks are set up. In the novel *Tracks*, for example, the unmarked characters of the text are male and full-blood Chippewa. Nanapush is a good example of an unmarked character.⁴² Fleur can be seen as less marked than Pauline because Fleur is marked only by her gender while Pauline is

⁴¹ Note that the oppositions still stand; it's a group of oppositions which make up the scale of markedness (the more marks something possesses, the more marked it is). These marks can be part of either binary or scalar oppositions. Rather than a single feature, something that is more marked in scalar markedness possesses a bundle of features contributing to its marked nature. The more features, the more marked an item is.

⁴² He is further unmarked by representing the traditional mythological figure of the trickster.

marked by both her gender and her mixed-blood heritage. She has a bundle of features that isolate from the rest of her society.

In reality, the binary and scalar markedness ideas are similar in that scalar models essentially take the created pairings (e.g. third/second and first; second/first) and assume a bundle of features (rather than a single one) to decide the scale of marking. Though the oppositions in the personal pronoun example are all binary, the oppositions used in scalar markedness can be either binary or scalar. In the cultural examples, to be discussed in more depth in Chapter 3, often the oppositions are scalar. Characters such as Pauline, Nanapush and Father Damien in *Tracks* are caught in a scalar opposition where the unmarked is Anishnaabe (Nanapush), the marked is white (Father Damien), and the middle ground is mixed blood (Pauline). But they are also opposed in the culture they choose to favor. This second opposition is binary—Anishnaabe versus not Anishnaabe. What happens is a compilation of marks in which Father Damien is most marked (he is white and favors the non-Anishnaabe culture), Pauline less marked (she is mixed blood and favors the non-Anishnaabe culture), and Nanapush is unmarked (being Anishnaabe and favoring the Anishnaabe culture).⁴³ The issue is defining what features are important in the text and seeing who possesses those features. Some features will carry more weight than others.⁴⁴

⁴³ Other characters fall into different areas of the marking. Nector, for example, is less marked than Pauline, but marked compared to Nanapush.

⁴⁴ For example, in the introduction, I quote Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* commenting on the various features that mark her mother. She names the one that carries the most weight in that society: “and worse still, a Martinique girl” (17). It is possible that the other features could be overlooked if not for this last one.

Markedness: A Theory or a Concept?

Let me offer a short definition of markedness as I feel it functions now based on the discussions above. First, markedness in its most basic form is a way of looking at oppositions and hierarchies. There are two types of opposition: binary and scalar. In a typical opposition, one part is unmarked and considered more “natural” or “simple” while the other part is marked, possessing a certain feature, and considered more “complex” and specific. The two-part oppositions can be either binary or scalar depending on the way in which they’re opposed.

Further, markedness is based primarily on context. Though it may be possible to find universal oppositions, I have never discovered a true one (one not based ultimately on some kind of context, however broad).⁴⁵ The context of markedness can be a time or a specific culture or language, and what is marked in one culture will often be unmarked in another culture. Bound up with context are the ideas of markedness reversal/shift and markedness assimilation. A reversal occurs when something which is generally considered marked becomes unmarked in a new context. Assimilation is the idea that marked items stay with marked situations and unmarked items with unmarked situations, and that when a reversal occurs, items usually reverse or shift together.

There is some question about whether markedness is itself a theory. Tomic comments about markedness as a theory:

What is meant when one speaks of the application of the theory of markedness is actually analysis through (binary or scalar) markedness opposition. If successful, this analysis makes a

⁴⁵ Or at the very least they have the potential of changing over time.

contribution towards a theory of markedness, which is actually nascent rather than existent, so that theory and application are difficult to set apart from each other. (Introduction 9)

Her position is that markedness theory is being developed still but not yet well established as a theory. Rather, it is more an application of an idea.

Battistella also comments about the idea of a theory of markedness:

we ultimately must conclude that there is no theory of markedness per se. Rather, the picture of markedness we arrive at is one merging a number of different domains of markedness, different technical proposals, and different analytic goals. (*Logic* 133)

For Battistella, markedness is not a theory but an idea applicable to many areas, a similar view to Tomić.

The goals of markedness that I examine are explained well by Battistella: “the goal of markedness is to encode relations in the structure of language and other sign systems by delineating the asymmetries among general meanings and the connection of these asymmetries to language use and function” (*Logic* 134). He continues, “the goal is to document hierarchies and correlative properties and to tie those hierarchies to descriptive typological universals” (135). In other words, the goal of markedness is to codify the way language is put together by looking at oppositions and hierarchies which exist in language and from there to see how these oppositions and hierarchies work in “language use and function.” Of course, my focus is on how oppositions and hierarchies function in literature rather than language, but the ideas still apply.

A Literary Connection

With the above definition of markedness in mind, we can now see how markedness can be applied to the study of literature and why it will work as a tool for examining literature of all types, but specifically for the texts I'll be examining in the rest of this dissertation.

For Jakobson, as is evident in his response letter to Nikolai Trubetzkoy, it was possible to extend the concept of markedness beyond the linguistic realm to all forms of culture, including literature.⁴⁶ Though not much yet has been done with literature and markedness, Jakobson's structuralist-based explanation makes it easy to move from linguistics to literature since literature has its own sign system containing oppositions and hierarchies.

In the last chapter of *The Logic of Markedness*, Battistella comments that

In its totality, Jakobson's model extends phonological and morphological binarism and asymmetry to relations between actual or potential features that characterize any aspects of sign structure—that is, anything from basic phonological distinctions to morphological categories to opposites in literature, art, and culture. His view implies that learning about the world involves the construction of oppositions and rankings. . . . For the linguist, critic, or philosopher whose interests include the organization of sign systems and the possibility of general structural principles that

⁴⁶ Claude Levi-Strauss is one of few to work with Jakobson's ideas of opposition in a field other than linguistics—anthropology in this case. He never actually uses markedness, but he does work with oppositions (Battistella *Superstructure* 233—fn. 10)

are relevant across systems, Jakobson's approach has much appeal.

(131-2)

I am not interested in trying to establish a universal markedness approach to analyzing literature in this dissertation, always assuming that there is one. That would be too much for one dissertation. I would, however, like to try to establish some "universals" for *English language literature* and from there go to contextual markedness. Markedness can be applied to literature in several ways, at different levels of the text. Different texts will lend themselves naturally to interpretations using markedness at these different levels: narrative, textual, and cultural.

In narrative texts with more than one narrator or narrative voice (usually written in first person, but not exclusively), markedness can be evaluated on a *narrative* level. The texts that will be the primary focus of this dissertation—*Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner, *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys, and *Tracks* by Louise Erdrich—all have at least two narrators and can be examined on all three markedness levels. On the narrative level, the focus of the analysis is the way in which the narrators present their part of the tale. The unmarked narrators usually present their tale in a traditional—or near-traditional—realistic narrative style, in particular the use of past tense. Those marked narrators usually deviate from that style, possessing features such as present tense and grammatical. There are occasions, however, as I will show with my analysis of *Tracks*, when the unmarked culture of the text forces a new view of what an unmarked narrative should look like. In most cases, the marked narrators correspond to the marked characters of the texts and the result is their isolation from their society.

A second way in which markedness can be used to analyze literature, however, is on a *textual* level, as a stand-alone text. A text may fall under a specific form, but it is also a stand-alone text whose elements can be examined from just the materials present in the text, especially in narratives, whether poetry or prose. In these types of works, the characters are part of some society which they may or may not fit into, and their relationship to the society can be interpreted using markedness. For example, *Paradise Lost* revolves around the marking of Lucifer who refuses to fall in with God's plans. Lucifer had fit into his society but later rebelled against God's society and then created his own society with its own marking after losing the war in heaven and being cast out. Even when he was part of God's favor, however, he (along with all the other angels) was marked because God is the unmarked character. What he does by rebelling against God is, essentially, declare, "If I can't be unmarked, then I'm going to be really marked" and his markedness becomes deliberate rather than inherent. He flaunts his mark. But this deliberate mark also allows Lucifer to create for himself a society in which he is unmarked. The result is a reversal of marks based on the new context Lucifer establishes for himself.⁴⁷ But Lucifer is still marked in terms of the dominant culture of the text—God's society—and his rejection of his mark forces his isolation and subsequent role as Other in the text. Markedness at this level allows for the themes of isolation and otherness to be explained more clearly, since the reasons that a character is Other is clarified.

⁴⁷ What Lucifer does here is what many artists themselves do: challenge the authority of the day by writing texts that vary from the "norm." Modernist authors in particular are known for their challenging of conventions of writing, music and art of their time.

The third level of markedness in literature is the *cultural* level—how the texts are presented and their forms, and how they relate to the time they were written in. Also covered at this level is the way markedness changes from one era or movement to another. And indeed markedness changes are examined in Jakobson's essay "The Dominant" in which he talks about how different Russian literary forms have dominated that literary field throughout time. Jakobson defines the dominant as "the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components" (41). Though he doesn't name it explicitly, the dominant is the unmarked literary form or element—it is the form or element of literature (or art) considered natural to a particular society.

Similar "dominants" have existed in English language literature (among others) throughout time. Poetry, for example, was the dominant type of writing for many periods until prose began to dominate and the novel began to take precedence. Before the introduction of the novel, the focus of prose writing that wasn't non-fiction was the romance, tales of people far removed from the average person's life (Kershner 9). The novel brought fictional accounts of average people to the reader and was criticized for doing so. R.B. Kershner comments, "the fact that the novel is fiction (that is, an elaborate and sustained falsehood) made it difficult to defend on the grounds that it might teach something useful" (1). The first novels were decidedly marked in their time, their feature being falsehood. Eventually, however, they shifted from that position of being marked to an unmarked status, one that remains today.

Though I am separating the texts into three levels, it should be noted that the levels overlap and influence each other. Themes or styles evident in a

historical period can and do influence the cultural level of markedness by leading to particular types of characters as well as to the presentation of the narratives. And character type may affect the type of narrative used as well. Thus, while I will discuss each level in its own chapter, there will be overlapping between them, which I will note. The most notable overlaps, and the ones I will focus on, are the themes of isolation and otherness in all of the four main texts I will examine at each level.

Chapter 2:

Narrative Markedness:

Imbedded and Separate Narratives and the Theme of Isolation

Unlike the cultural and the textual level, which both include all types of texts, the narrative level is limited to texts that have two or more narrators or narrative voices. This limitation springs from the need for oppositions in markedness. Standard narratives—those with a single narrator—do not have the oppositions necessary to be examined at this level. The only occasion in which the single narrative may be part of a discussion of markedness is if the narrative style is being discussed in comparison to the prevalent style of narrative/writing at the time in which the text was written. But in this case, the markedness issue is not at the narrative level but the cultural level—dealing with the dominant narrative trend.¹ At the narrative level, the oppositions come from the actual narrators—the way in which the narrators differ is the focus of the analysis. Thus there must be more than one narrator or narrative voice for a text to be looked at on this level.²

The limitation on multiple-narrator texts naturally makes the novel the primary genre for this level, though there are some examples of poetry which can

¹ Another exception could be texts in a series. If the texts have first person narrators, then, because the texts are about the same characters, a narrative level examination of markedness is possible.

² The narrators are usually first person, though this is not universally the case. Texts such as *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner and *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich combine first and

be examined at this level. For example, the text *Tekonwatonti: Molly Brant, Poems of War, 1735-1795* by Maurice Kenny is a collection of poems all focused on a specific historical event—the French and Indian War. The poems are in different voices, from Molly Brant herself to George Washington to her brothers and husband. Because they are all focused on the same event and the collection tells a story from a variety of perspectives, this collection of poems can be examined at the narrative level. The same can be said of any collection of poems that presents an event or narrative similarly.

There are a couple of different types of multiple-narrator novels which can be examined using the narrative level: imbedded³ and separate. Imbedded narratives, while containing more than one narrator, have one narrator who controls the others because he/she recounts the tales of the others.⁴ Examples of imbedded narratives include Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a poetic example of imbedded narrative. Hurston's novel and Coleridge's poem differ from the other two novels in that the main narrative is in third person rather than in first person, but it still constitutes an imbedded narrative because the third person

third person. And George Eliot's fiction, in which the third person narrator and the "authorial" voice combine also comes into play here.

³ This type of narrative is often called a frame narrative.

⁴ The outer narrator is in control in the sense that he/she is in charge of delivering the other narrators' narratives.

narrative gives way to Janie Crawford's narrative in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and to the Mariner in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Imbedded narratives are composed of scalar oppositions—they are all bound together, no matter how many internal narrators there are, by the first narrator, and all narrators except for the first narrator are marked in some way. The distinctive feature in these cases is location in the text.

The second type of narrative is the separate narrative. These narratives consist of at least two different narrators, but, unlike the imbedded narratives, the narrators in separate narratives are autonomous. One narrator does not encompass the others, and the narrators are not connected beyond being characters in the same story.⁵ Examples of separate narratives include Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury*, and Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* and *Love Medicine*. Maurice Kenny's collection of poems also fits into this narrative type. The oppositions in separate narratives can vary between binary and scalar. In texts with only two narrators, the binary opposition will appear more frequently than scalar oppositions because the text sets up a binary markedness situation. Texts with three or more narrators, however, because they must be examined in terms of scalar markedness, often use a combination of binary and scalar oppositions. Separate narratives are generally more modern than imbedded narratives.

There are, of course, places in which the two types of narrative converge. *Tracks*, for example, while essentially a separate narrative, does contain some imbedded narratives, especially in the Nanapush sections, though to a lesser extent in Pauline's. There is a particular effect which results from this combination, as I'll discuss presently. A second case of overlap is that of the epistolary novel such as Choderlos de Laclos' *Dangerous Liaisons*. Though technically a separate narrative, this style relies on the connections between letter writers and thus seems to straddle the line between imbedded and separate narratives.

Imbedded Narratives

In the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, there are three narrators: Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the Creature. The structure of the narrative, as mentioned earlier, is imbedded. Walton is the main narrator whose narrative is in the form of letters to his sister. Both Victor Frankenstein and the Creature's narratives are related through Walton's letters to his sister. The Creature's main narrative is further imbedded in Victor Frankenstein's because it is he who tells Walton of the Creature's tale.

The oppositions of the narrators are scalar. Because Walton connects them all, they come together on a scale in which they're all ultimately part of the same

⁵ This statement is rather simplistic. They're usually somehow related (siblings, husband/wife,

narrative. Further, they must be analyzed by scalar markedness since there are more than two narrators. On this scale of markedness, Walton takes the position of unmarked narrator, Victor Frankenstein as less marked, and the Creature as the most marked. They are marked this way by their place in the narrative. Walton, as primary narrator, has control over Frankenstein's narrative; he chooses where to start telling it and where to stop.⁶ The Creature is doubly marked—first by being imbedded in Frankenstein's narrative and then by being further imbedded in Walton's letter. Late in the text, after Frankenstein's death, the Creature moves up a level in markedness when he tells more of his tale to Walton, who alone repeats it in his letter. The distinctive features of the marked narrators is embedded.

There has been some critical discussion of the resemblance between narratives. Beth Newman, in her article "Narratives of Seduction and the Seduction of Narratives: The Frame Structure of *Frankenstein*," comments that

one of the central tenets of most approaches to narrative theory [is] the idea that no story exists apart from a shaping human intelligence, and that every story bears the mark of this shaping intelligence. The paradox of frame narratives like *Frankenstein*

tribal members) but they need to be for the story to work. The oppositions are still binary.

⁶ He does, however, credit Frankenstein with editing the tale, saying, "Frankenstein discovered that I made notes concerning his history; he asked to see them and then himself corrected and augmented them in many places; but principally in giving the life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy. 'Since you have preserved my narration,' said he, 'I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity'" (155). And in this sense Frankenstein isn't as marked as the normal imbedded narrator would be; he has some say in the narrative's presentation, at least if Walton can be believed.

and *Wuthering Heights* is that they present first person narrators whose singular and even bizarre stories suggest highly individualized tellers, but they ask us to believe that the stories they contain are repeated virtually word for word by other, quite different tellers; and in the process they efface a particular set of markers in the text that would permit us to distinguish the individual tellers, those tonal markers and indices of character inscribed in the narration itself, markers often loosely called 'voice.' (142-3)

What Newman refers to here is the way in which the narrators in a frame or imbedded narrative often appear so similar to each other that it would be difficult to tell them apart without the benefit of being introduced to the narrator by the first narrator. In this sense the "control" of the primary narrator is in the style. Newman observes that differences in voice between the characters Frankenstein and the Creature are mentioned in the text,

but that difference is inaccessible to us as we read. We are more apt to be struck by the similarities in the way the Monster and Frankenstein express themselves, since they both use the same kind of heightened language, and since both speak with an eloquence more expressive of a shared Romantic ethos than of differences in character. In fact, Walton's voice, the other

significant voice in the text, is scarcely different. The novel fails to provide significant differences in tone, diction and sentence structure that alone can serve, in a written text, to represent individual human voices, and so blurs the distinction that it asks us to make between the voices of its characters. (145-6)

For Newman it is difficult to distinguish one voice from the other based on the style of narrative.

Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth in *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel* talks about how the realistic narrator is “nobody,” unknown to the reader because the narrator exists in an unknown future time, saying,

The collective nature of consciousness is implied by the fundamental premises of realism. If one believes—and it is the business of realistic convention to make us believe—that an invariant, objective world exists, then consciousness is always *potentially* the same, interchangeable among individuals, because it is consciousness of the same thing. All consciousness derives from the same world and so, if total consciousness were possible, it would be the same for everyone. (66)

If, as Ermarth believes, consciousness can be the same for everyone, it is possible to see the narrators’ stylistic similarities as a reflection of the similar nature of their “consciousness” of their world. The collective nature of consciousness is

always apparent in imbedded narratives, which imply through their very structure that it is possible for one narrator to recount successfully the narrative of another narrator, as if that second narrator were present.

But are the narratives in *Frankenstein* indeed so stylistically similar?

Stephen C. Behrendt, in “Language and Style in *Frankenstein*,” remarks that there is a stylistic similarity between Walton and Frankenstein, particularly in repeated phrases such as “I cannot describe to you” and “It is impossible to communicate” (80). Both Walton and Frankenstein, though “students of language,” repeatedly remark on the difficulty of expressing their thoughts. For Behrendt, though, unlike Newman, the Creature’s narrative does not stylistically resemble Walton and Frankenstein’s. The difference is in the type of voice used. According to Behrendt, “Victor repeatedly invokes the responsibility-shifting power of the passive voice to exonerate himself rhetorically from the catastrophic chain of events for which he is directly and unavoidably responsible” (82). The Creature, however, prefers “the active voice—especially in his description of his earliest memories and in his final speech” (82). This difference between passive and active voice is critical to the understanding of the characters and is one way in which the Creature is marked compared to Frankenstein. He takes full responsibility for his actions, something Frankenstein never does, and possesses the feature active voice.

One of the things noticeable about *Frankenstein* is how its narrative structure and its scalar oppositions and marks connect to one of the main themes in the text: isolation and characters' fear of isolation. Imbedded narratives, as noted above, rely on connections between narrators and sometimes audience. In the case of *Frankenstein*, this connection is twofold. Not only does Walton narrate both Frankenstein and the Creature's stories, but he also writes these narratives to his sister, thus furthering the connections inherent in the imbedded narrative style.

Ironically, the connection of the narrative is the direct opposite of the connection in the plot. Walton is on a ship heading for the North Pole with a relatively foreign crew. Though he knows they are skilled workers, he is not friends with them, and in fact late in the novel his crew tries to mutiny, thus extending his isolation. He laments his lack of friends to his sister: "You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as well as of a capacious mind, whose tastes are like my own. . . ." (18). The direction in which he's heading—the North Pole—makes it unlikely that he will make friends along the way. Yet despite his lack of true friends, he is eager to be on his way, as is reflected in his comments: "But do not suppose that, because I complain a little, or because I can conceive a consolation for my toils which I may never know, that I am wavering in my resolutions" (19). Though lonely, he is dedicated to his task. It is not unthinkable, then, that he should wish to befriend Frankenstein when the

crew pulls him off the ice, despite his “emaciated” and “wretched” condition (22). Walton is desperate to break up his isolation, self-imposed as it is, which is one of the reasons he writes letters to his sister. She represents community to him, and he reaches out to that community through his letters.

His isolation is the least extreme of the three narrators, something appropriate for him as the unmarked narrator. While he may feel isolated, there is a community of sorts available to him—via his letters to his sisters, but also through his crew. Despite feeling isolated, Walton could undoubtedly come to form a community with them if he chose to do so. As primary narrator, he is also the closest to the surface for the reader—the one the reader really comes in contact with. He may feel isolated, but he is the least isolated of the three.

Victor Frankenstein, too, is an isolated character, and his isolation is also partly self-imposed. It is clear that his childhood was far from isolated. He comes from a close family, composed of his parents, brothers, friend Clerval, and his cousin Elizabeth.⁷ His isolation begins when his father sends him to Ingolstadt to study. He comments, “I threw myself into the chaise that was to convey me away and indulged in the most melancholy reflections. I, who had ever been surrounded by amiable companions, continually engaged in endeavoring to bestow mutual pleasure, I was now alone” (34). Frankenstein continues to talk about his separation from his family and how he had been “sheltered” his whole life. He

fears trying to make new friends, and only his interest in learning brings him out of his “melancholy.”

Once he becomes accustomed to Ingolstadt and forms a friendship with one of the professors at the school, his sense of community returns, and he loses his sense of isolation. He even considers returning home to his original community, but “an incident happened that protracted my stay” (38). It is at this point that Frankenstein’s isolation becomes self-imposed. His interest in creating life comes to the fore, and he becomes so obsessed with his goal that he isolates himself from everyone in his rooms in Ingolstadt. He neglects his family and friends in his obsession with completing the Creature.⁸ Then, when the Creature comes to life, Frankenstein’s isolation is broken, but not in the positive way of his family. Rather, his new “family member” is so hideous in his eyes that he refuses to accept him. At this point, Frankenstein inadvertently sends himself (and the Creature) into permanent exile. Had he been able to nurture the Creature, then he would no longer be isolated, but because he cannot, he essentially banishes both himself and the Creature to live isolated lives.

It appears at times that Frankenstein is going to return to the warm community of his family after he finally leaves Ingolstadt. While this may appear

⁷ Note that Elizabeth is a ward brought into the family in the 1831 edition of the text, but the daughter of Victor’s father’s sister in the 1818 edition.

⁸ This neglect parallels Walton’s to some extent, though Walton does not completely neglect his sister, since he writes to her. Victor’s isolation is such that he does not communicate with his family at all.

to be the case, Frankenstein never again feels part of his family because he can no longer confide his dark fears of the Creature to them. He is isolated here because he is unable to *narrate* to his family, as Walton can narrate his troubles to his sister. Here his isolation is mental, as Walton's appears to be, but soon it becomes physical as well when he departs for England to make a new Creature. Following his return to Geneva after he destroys the second Creature, his original Creature completes Frankenstein's isolation by killing most of his family.⁹ Leaving society to try to capture and kill the Creature, Frankenstein remains isolated from society until he is brought aboard Walton's ship. It is here that he breaks his isolation by telling his tale.¹⁰ Yet even here he remains separate, refusing Walton's friendship and wanting to continue after the Creature (156).

As with Walton, Frankenstein's status as "less marked"—bearing the single feature imbedded, and this feature only partial—is appropriate to the extremity of his isolation, for although he is truly isolated when he leaves to catch the creature, much of the rest of the time he has the opportunity to belong to a community. Further, because he is shown telling his tale to Walton, he is not completely imbedded, especially when it is made clear that he has an influence on

⁹ Only one brother survives (and this brother, oddly enough, is the one marked by the feature illness at the beginning of Frankenstein's narrative): "Ernest was six years younger than myself, and was my principle pupil. He had been afflicted with ill health from his infancy. . . : his disposition was gentle, but he was incapable of any severe application" (32).

¹⁰ Earlier, he tries to break his isolation by trying to tell the local magistrate of the problem, but his tale is ineffective (146-7).

editing his narrative. He is not the unmarked narrator, but he is also not the most marked narrator.

That role belongs to the Creature, who is the only character whose isolation is not voluntary. His first actions, and most of his subsequent ones, are his attempts to connect with someone. He approaches Frankenstein and all of the other people on his travels in an attempt to establish a connection. But his unique, frightening countenance is so disturbing to others that no one will connect with him, and he is only vicariously part of any community. This isolation is paralleled by his position as the most marked narrator. He is buried beneath the narrative Frankenstein gives, and thus his connection to Walton is through someone else; he is only given the chance to interact with Walton after Frankenstein dies and even that connection is temporary and tainted by Frankenstein's warning to Walton that the creature "is eloquent and persuasive; and once his words even had power over my heart; but trust him not. His soul is as hellish as his form, full of treachery and fiend-like malice. Hear him not; . . . and thrust your sword into his heart" (154). The distinctive features the creature bears are imbedded (in Frankenstein) and imbedded (in Walton). He is more marked than Frankenstein because he is twice imbedded in the narrative frame—once by Frankenstein, once by Walton.

The Creature so desires community with someone that he eventually decides to kidnap a youngster to try to form his own community. When this idea

fails, he returns to Frankenstein to demand that he listen to his creature's tale and then that he create a mate so that he will no longer be so isolated. While Frankenstein allows this brief narrative connection, he ultimately breaks his promise. It is at this point that the Creature's isolation becomes self-imposed.¹¹ Predicting Frankenstein's reaction, the Creature leads him on the chase, which ultimately brings all three narrators together. The isolation is broken by the presentation of the narratives. Yet the death of Frankenstein on the ship also leads to the final banishing of the Creature who "sprung from the cabin-window . . . upon the ice-raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance" (164). This brief connection has also, however, led to Walton turning the ship back to port and his isolation is nearly ended. The narrative structure of the novel serves as a contrast to the theme of isolation in the text. Despite the connected nature of the narrative, the narrators remain isolated from each other and from possible communities around them.

There is also in *Frankenstein* the issue of the Other to deal with. The Creature is always the Other. Walton cannot look at the Creature when he tells the final part of his tale because seeing the marked visage would repulse him too

¹¹ Actually this particular isolation is almost a community for the Creature, since he knows where Frankenstein is at all times and he even feeds his creator on occasion. Frankenstein attributes the food to "spirits," but when he refers to how "coarse" the meal is, he echoes the Creature's earlier comment about needing only the coarsest of foods to exist, even if he compares the meal to that "such as the peasants of the country ate" (150). It seems clear that the privileged Frankenstein does not understand what it is like to be seen as indelibly marked, Other, as the Creature does because he was brought up in a very loving, "normal" way, something the Creature has never known.

much to hear what he has to say. As the ultimate Other (see Chapter 3), the Creature cannot be allowed into the light; he must disappear into darkness and distance. He has no say in the narrative as Frankenstein did. And once he disappears the story literally ends. Without an opposition left, there is nothing to talk about.

Separate Narratives

Whereas the narrative format of *Frankenstein* contrasts with the theme of isolation, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* they are parallel. The narrative structure of this novel is a separate narration. Antoinette narrates Parts 1 and 3, her husband Part 2. There is no overlap of narratives, though in Part 2, there are two instances in which Antoinette's narrative replaces her husband's. There is also, at the beginning of Part 3, a brief third person narrative of sorts. Within the husband's narrative, there are several imbedded letters and other narratives.

Assigning the mark to texts with separate narrators is much more complicated than with the imbedded narratives because in imbedded narratives the scale is clearly set up by the way the narrative appears in the text. With separate narratives, however, the narrators are arbitrarily opposed and are thus related differently. They are arbitrary in the sense that any set of characters could have been used to present the story, as Ermarth comments: "the basic activity of the past-tense narrator is the same: a confirmation of collective experience,

literally a recollection of all points of view and of all private times under the aegis of a single point of view and in a common time” (54). Even realistic multiple-narrator texts seem to be part of “this potential for collective and even continuous consciousness” (66) because in most of those texts there is no overlap of time and events. Instead, each narrator tells a part of the story that unfolds and there is little repetition. There is no clear-cut oppositional scale. As a result, several different things must be considered when trying to assign the marks.

First, narrative style must be considered. What is typical or the “norm” for narratives must be established for the text. Establishing the norm can be done through a combination of cultural and textual analysis. For example, first person narrators conventionally narrate in past tense and follow traditional grammatical conventions. These narrators are looking back on a situation from some point in the future. There may be occasional uses of gnomic present tense or of present to show a reflection the narrator has as he/she narrates, but generally the narrative remains in the past tense. Narratives which differ from this style are marked on the cultural level. The past tense is unmarked because in realistic fiction the narrator has to be in the future, the “nobody” Ermarth describes:

The narrator is ‘nobody’ in two ways. . . : it is not individual, and it is not corporeal. First, the narrator is a collective result, a specifier of consensus, and as such it is really not intelligible as an individual. Second, since the general consensus thus specified

exists only through a dissociation, at a distance from the concrete,
the narrator-specifier is also not intelligible as a corporeal
existence. (65-66)

The realistic narrator can be either first or third person because “Differences between first- and third-person tellers do not appreciably alter the effect of disembodiment” (88). However, there are still some “interesting differences” between first and third person: “For one thing, the narrator who stands both inside and outside the fictional world, i.e., is both actor and teller, tends to confirm more conclusively that continuity between virtual and actual time upon which fictional realism rests” (88). Verb tense, for Ermarth, is more important than person because the tense sets up the continuum and ensures the “nobody” status of the narrator. Thus the feature present tense is marked culturally and narratively in realistic Western—and she does at one point specify “Western culture” (17). Non-Western texts and/or texts that are not realistic do not necessarily follow the Western rules for tense markedness, as I will show presently.¹²

They are not necessarily marked on the narrative level however, because the mark on the narrative level is not based solely on the cultural connection. In cases in which the narrators all narrate in a fairly “traditional” style (or differ from the traditional), the mark will need to be determined through other methods. Further, a single feature is often not enough to mark a narrator; instead, a bundle

of features establishes what is marked. At this point, the reader can look at how sympathetic a narrator is and/or the location of the narrative in the text to determine the markedness structure of the narrative. There is a tendency, though not universal, for the first narrator who appears to be considered the unmarked narrator, since he/she generally establishes what is considered “the norm” in the minds of the reader. Relying on the first narrator to establish the conventions may prove problematic, however, as we will see in William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*. There is also a tendency to want to label the sympathetic narrator the unmarked one, though again this label is not always the accurate. It is important to look at the style of the narrative first and then move to the other two methods if necessary.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, there is a similar narrative style in Parts 1 and 2. Both Antoinette and her husband narrate primarily in past tense. The husband’s sentence structure is a little looser than Antoinette’s, and he has a tendency to use more lengthy, compound and complex sentences than Antoinette’s simpler sentences. But on the whole they are similar enough that one is not clearly marked over another. If the narrative analysis were based solely on Parts 1 and 2, it would be necessary to look beyond the style of the narrative to assign the mark. Part 3, however, reveals which of the narrators is marked.

¹² It should be noted here that tense is an issue that falls in both narrative and cultural markedness since narrative style and form are concerns of both levels.

Both also feel that they are different in Jamaican society, though the source of the difference is not the same. For the husband, the difference he feels stems from him being in an unfamiliar place. He is not Jamaican, and he feels overwhelmed by the place that is so different yet that strives to emulate his native England. Though he is part of the unmarked society, he is outnumbered by the marked and thus feels that he, not they, is marked. The issue for the husband is that of frequency, as discussed in Chapter 1. Though he is unmarked, he is in a minority here and as a result his status as unmarked is threatened by the majority.

Antoinette, on the other hand, is truly marked in this society. Her family, particularly her mother, is marked in Jamaican society, the only society she has ever lived in. The distinctive features her mother possesses are extreme beauty, youth (in terms of age difference in marriage), second wife, and Martinique heritage in an English society. A later distinctive feature that comes up is madness. All of these features serve to mark Antoinette's mother and, as a result, Antoinette. Though she doesn't possess all of her mother's features, she does come to possess a new one: child of marked. So unlike her husband, who feels marked because he is outnumbered, Antoinette truly is marked in Jamaican society. She is literally isolated from society while her husband is embraced by it.¹³

¹³ Her isolation is clear from the beginning of the novel. At first her family lives cut off from society on Coulibri, an old run-down plantation. After fire destroys Coulibri, she is isolated in her aunt's house and then in a convent. At her marriage, she and her husband head to the isolation of

In the third section of the novel, once the brief passage in third person is over, Antoinette begins to narrate again.¹⁴ Her narration has, however, changed dramatically from Part 1. Rather than narrating in past tense with the occasional lapse into present, this part is in present tense. Antoinette's control over this narrative is very tight. If it weren't in present it would read like the "traditional" realistic narrative, more controlled than either Part 1 or Part 2. She uses present tense until her flashback, at which point she works in past tense, as is appropriate for a flashback. Antoinette has conformed in some ways to the "norm" of narrative—her tight, stylistic control—but, because the end of the novel is, at least according to many critics,¹⁵ the narration of her death, the main narrative would seem appropriate in present tense, assuming that the dead can't narrate, Faulkner notwithstanding.

But because of the tense used, I do not believe the "death walk" theory. Knowing how tightly controlled her narrative is and how the main part of the narrative is in present tense, I believe the last page of the novel is the dream.

Grand Bois, a house far from civilization. And when they leave Grand Bois, Antoinette is first kept out-of-sight in a ship's cabin and then in the attic of Thornfield Hall. She rarely interacts with the rest of society.

¹⁴ I think that this third person passage can be likened, at least in part, to an overheard narration imbedded (only at the beginning) of this part. One way or another, it completes the separation between Antoinette's final narrative and the rest of the text. She is isolated from everyone textually and as a character at this point. Certainly, this third-person section is marked in terms of this particular novel because it is in third person and so brief. It is also primarily the thoughts of Grace Poole. The narrator barely appears except in the form of dialog tags.

¹⁵ These critics are usually the same ones who like to assign a name to the husband. The *Jane Eyre* connection is difficult to shake, and since Bertha Rochester dies in *Jane Eyre*, the assumption is that Antoinette dies in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Antoinette says, “I called ‘Tia!’ and jumped and woke” (190). Note that the narrative here is in past tense. Antoinette is recalling her dream and the time surrounding it. She’s using a flashback and that flashback does not end with her waking from the dream, as evidenced by the final paragraph of the novel, which continues to be narrated in past tense. What many have called Antoinette fulfilling her dream is really a recollection that doesn’t end, much like her isolation in the attic. When she says, “But I shielded [the candle flame] with my hand and it burned up again to light me along the dark passage” (190) to end the novel, she is referring to a past event. The future remains open for her, bleak though it is. At this point in the novel, the character of Antoinette is nobody—to herself, to her husband, to her caretakers. Yet, she is no longer nobody, in Ermarth’s sense of the past-tense narrator, to the reader. Instead, she is fully present.

Assuming that the present tense were appropriate for this particular narrative section of the text, it is still not a “normal” narrative style. It is so different from the other two parts of the novel that she could be an entirely different person than the original narrator.¹⁶ And it is this difference in style, from the other narrative and from “typical” realistic narratives, that makes Antoinette

¹⁶ And in fact, she is essentially a different person, something she reflects on in this final narrative when she says, “Names matter, like when he wouldn’t call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass” (180). She has been removed from her home and completely isolated from the world by her husband to the extent that her identity as Antoinette has drifted out the window. Her name is never mentioned again. There is some question about her sanity also, and she cannot even recognize herself in the mirror any longer: “I went into the hall again with the tall candle in my hand. It was then that I saw her—

the marked narrator of the novel, despite her earlier, unmarked narrative style. She is marked by the feature present tense. This final narrative reflects just how much she as a character has changed; she could be a completely different person. With Antoinette's narrative being marked as a result of Part 3, then the husband's becomes the unmarked narrative, matching the marks of the narrative level with the textual level: Antoinette is the more marked character on the textual level, so her narrative marking should come as no surprise. Her husband, though somewhat marked textually, is less marked than Antoinette, and thus his unmarked narrator status fits his character. While I don't know if *all* narrative markings will parallel textual markings, it is a common occurrence. What makes it worth examining is the way the author structures the text to reflect the parallel.

The themes of isolation and the Other are also reflected in the narrative structure. Both Antoinette and her husband have feelings of isolation and of being Other throughout the novel. Antoinette begins her narrative talking about how isolated her family's plantation is from town and how cut off they are, especially once their only horse dies. She also refers to the features marking her family as Other—in particular her mother's marks, mentioned earlier. The husband is isolated in a different way. He has come to Jamaica from his home and is thus isolated from what is familiar to him, even though he is welcomed into the white culture of Jamaica. He also feels Other when he reflects on how different the

the ghost. The woman with streaming hair. She was surrounded by a gilt frame but I knew her"

people, and especially Antoinette, are from those with whom he is familiar. Yet the Jamaicans are really the Other in terms of the unmarked culture of the text—the English culture. But because the husband feels outnumbered, he believes he is Other. The use of separate narratives is a reflection of the isolation they feel. At the end, Antoinette's final narrative is separated further from the others by the third person narrative—the ultimate in separate, unconnected narratives—that comes between the end of her husband's narrative and her narration in Part 3. This extreme narrative separation underlines the complete isolation Antoinette feels in the attic room at her husband's English house. She is truly the isolated Other of the novel.

Louise Erdrich's novel *Tracks*, unlike *Wide Sargasso Sea*, shows how a markedness reversal works on the narrative level. This novel presents two narrators who are opposed in a way that reflects on the textual oppositions present. At the textual level, the main opposition is the traditional versus the modern, also seen as Anishnaabe versus white, with the mixed blood as a middle ground of sorts in this scalar opposition. In this novel, as I will discuss in Chapter 3, there is a decided favoring of the traditional Anishnaabe over the modern mixed blood and the white, seen through the ways the characters are portrayed. The result is that the traditional Anishnaabe are unmarked, the mixed bloods and whites marked in varying degrees. At the same time, even though the traditional is

(188-9). The "gilt frame" is the mirror's frame.

avored, there is an undeniable sense that that time has passed irrevocably and that a shift of the unmarked is beginning to occur.

The narrative structure of the novel underscores the marks established in the textual level. In using a separate narrative structure, Erdrich establishes the way that modern narrative has taken precedence over the more communal, traditional narrative style.¹⁷ Some of that traditional style is still evident, however, within the narrative of Nanapush. While he is part of a separate narrative, his own narrative is filled with imbedded ones—both paraphrased and quoted. Nanapush, when engrossed in the actual tale, often uses consistent verb tense—past—and style, but it is always clear that his tale is directed to a specific audience, his “granddaughter” Lulu. It is also clear that he is telling her the tale to teach her. Addressing a specific audience and narrating to teach are both common elements of more traditional narratives.¹⁸ The traditional nature of Nanapush’s narrative is further underscored by the type of character he is. As a type of trickster figure,¹⁹ Nanapush is representative of all that is traditional in the Anishnaabe culture, especially the storytelling. Thus his oral-based narrative, which relates an important time in Anishnaabe history from which his granddaughter is supposed to learn, is fitting for him.

¹⁷ This is a kind of overlapping of the cultural level (text style) and textual level.

¹⁸ In fact, they’re often associated with folk literature.

¹⁹ Both his name and actions point to him as a Trickster figure. Nanapush is a derivative of Nanabush which one of many variants of Nanabozho, the more commonly given name of the Chippewa Trickster figure. The Trickster is known for his/her outrageous behavior, and at times

Pauline, on the other hand, is more modern with her narrative. Though her first narrative begins in as if it is an oral tale, she never addresses a particular audience, and by the end of the novel, her narrative is completely separated from traditional ties, as is she as a character. She has no audience, and she narrates strictly in past tense with the exception of the use of gnomic or of reflective present. Though she presents the occasional imbedded narrative, most notably a story Nanapush tells, this use is infrequent. It is *her* point of view which matters, not the shared knowledge of the tribe. She represents the modern, separate narrator.

The opposition of styles in *Tracks* is clear. The problem, then, is figuring out which one is the unmarked half of the opposition. From the modern Western realistic fiction standpoint, Pauline's narrative should be the unmarked one. However, this novel is not just a modern Western realistic novel. The influence of Louise Erdrich's Anishnaabe background makes a difference when looking at the mark and is where the textual level feeds into the narrative level. Because the Anishnaabe culture is the unmarked culture of the text, it is natural that Nanapush, who represents this culture, be called the unmarked narrator. What happens in *Tracks* is a markedness reversal. In this reversal, the "norm" of modern Western realistic narrative style—which Pauline represents—becomes the marked style

Nanapush's behavior is extremely outrageous—his treatment of Pauline, his many sexual jokes, for example.

while the typically marked style becomes the unmarked. The distinctive feature Pauline bears is untraditional.

Within the narratives themselves, however, there are other indications of Pauline being the marked narrator. First, despite Pauline's "normal" narrative style, her narrative is uneven, even questionable, and certainly unsympathetic. She lies about her actions—or tries to—throughout the novel.²⁰ By the end of the novel, her sanity is questionable, for she narrates of events which are almost unbelievable, especially her relationship with Christ and then her boat ride on Lake Matchimanito. Earlier events that might "normally" be seen as unbelievable—turning into an owl, using love medicine on Sophie and Eli, traveling with Fleur to the world of the dead—are not as unbelievable because Pauline still has some connection to her Anishnaabe heritage at that time. Further, the final two pages of Pauline's last chapter have shifted from the strict past tense to a present tense, much the way Antoinette's narrative changes after she goes mad. The control over the verb tense is still there—evidenced by the flashback she tells—but the narrative now lacks life. The new Pauline sounds as if she has been brainwashed: "I am now sanctified, recovered, and about to be married here at the church in our diocese and by our bishop. I will be the bride and Christ will take me as his wife, without death. For I was caused by my sisters' most tender ministrations to regain my sense . . ." (204). This narrative is quite passive and

subdued compared to her earlier narrative. it also bears the distinctive feature present tense. The end returns again to past tense, in a second, brief flashback, but, like Antoinette's final narrative, Pauline's is based in present tense. So even in terms of traditional, Western, realistic narrative, Pauline is Other, appropriately since she has lost all sense of herself. Indeed, she still resembles Ermarth's "nobody" narrator, though she, like Antoinette at the end of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is more someone now than ever before because of her present tense.²¹

In addition, throughout the text she calls herself an invisible narrator, an "only witness," a fact she uses to walk into the thoughts of other characters whose thoughts she cannot know.²² Though in Ermarth's ideal consensus, she should be able to walk through others' thoughts, it is unbelievable to the reader who does not trust Pauline. So while part of the style of her narrative fits into the "norm," other aspects of it are far from normal. This fact, combined with her unsympathetic nature (and her narrative location) mark her as narrator. Her distinctive features are unsympathetic, second narrator, and later, present tense.

Nanapush, on the other hand, is a highly sympathetic, consistent narrator. Though he's using a traditional method of tale-telling, he stays in this narrative style. He keeps the reader aware of his audience by addressing her throughout the

²⁰ Killing the men in Argus, her treatment in Argus, Sophie's actions, her affair with Napoleon, her racial background.

²¹ And like Antoinette, Pauline's character identity is erased. She is given a new name—Leopolda—yet she comments that "my name, any name, was no more than a crumbling skin" (205).

text; he makes sure that he credits his sources whenever he tells stories he did not witness; and, while some parts of his narrative are fantastic—helping Eli hunt the moose in particular—they do not seem out of character as Pauline’s do. Nanapush also has the sympathetic narrative and the initial and final narrative. While these cannot replace style in importance, combined with a consistent style and compared to an inconsistent and unsympathetic narrator, they do affect the markedness, and as a result Nanapush is the unmarked narrator.

In some ways, his style is still relevant to Ermarth’s discussion of realistic narrators because he falls in with her analysis of epistolary novels. These novels, though utilizing some present tense, are still realistic because, as Ermarth notes about the novel *Pamela*, “we know little about Pamela at the actual moment she writes her letters. However close in time that writing may be to the actual event, it can never overtake it and remain realistic” (89). The reader’s knowledge of Nanapush is similar. We know some of the events surrounding his present—he’s telling Lulu to dissuade her from marrying a Morrissey (180), so it has evidently been many years since the events took place. But the exact time of the telling is unclear. There is thus a sense of Nanapush being “nobody”, from the perspective of Ermarth’s realistic narrative. Thus he is unmarked even from the perspective of Western literary conventions. The changing times have caught up with him.

²² Mary Pepewas (66-8), Sophie (82-4), Fleur and the afterworld (158-63).

This novel's narrative structure underlines the way that society has become more isolated. Nanapush, the elder, is not isolated from his society even though he is caught up in the changing times. His telling of his story (and the fact that he is a storyteller/talker) emphasizes his connection to society, especially his family. Pauline, though, suffers from modernization. She is isolated from the rest of her tribe, starting with her own family at the beginning: she's called lighter than her sisters, and she has no interest in learning traditional crafts. Each time she begins to be part of a society, she picks up and moves, first from the reservation to Argus, then to the Morrisseys', then to the reservation convent, and finally back to Argus as a nun. Pauline's isolation from everyone, her position as an "only witness" as she calls herself, fit with the way that the society she is from is changing. Rather than tight tribal connections, now there is isolation and fighting among the families. Her narrative mark shows that this culture hasn't yet accepted the isolation inherent in modern narrative (something it has done in the next novel *Love Medicine*, which chronicles time after the end of *Tracks*).

Nanapush is not exempt from the isolation creeping into his society, however. He does retain some connection to his family and other tribal members, but he is not respected as a storyteller as he would have been earlier. In several episodes of the novel, his loss of power is evident. When he and Margaret are captured by Boy Lazarre and Clarence Morrissey, the captors isolate him by knocking him unconscious and then stuffing Margaret's cut braids in his mouth.

Later in the novel, after the death of Fleur's second child, Nanapush's connection is again questionable because, though Fleur listens to his advice, she does not really consider it. At that moment, he is isolated from her, she from him. And even his narrative connection to Lulu is somewhat questionable, for he frequently refers to her fidgety movements and her unwillingness to listen to his tale. He even comments about how much less willing to listen Lulu is than her mother was. So though Nanapush is clearly far more connected to his society than Pauline, he is also clearly isolated in some ways and this isolation is reflected in the way the narrative structure is presented—as a separate narrative. His lower level of isolation is fitting for his unmarked narrator status, but he still feels some isolation.

Though both *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Tracks* have separate narrative, *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner is by far the most extreme example of scalar markedness and separate narratives. Despite the familial relationship among the majority of the narrators, the narrative structure of *As I Lay Dying* is extremely separate. Most novels with multiple narrators rely on each narrator to tell different parts of the story without much overlap (this fact is true of both *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Tracks*). In that sense there is a basic connection between the narrators even though they are separate. They need each other to tell a complete story, forming part of Ermarth's "single temporal community" (80). But in *As I Lay Dying*, the structure is a little different. In places one narrator will recount all or

part of the story recently told by another narrator. Examples include Cora and Dewey Dell's conflicting reports of Darl looking in on Addie before he and Jewel leave for town; Whitfield and Tull recounting Whitfield's arrival at the Bundrens'; and MacGowan and Vardaman seeing each other outside the drugstore in Jackson. Most of the end of the novel is also overlapped. The effect of this overlap is to enhance the isolation among characters, showing different perspectives of events. Isolation in *As I Lay Dying* is further emphasized by the primary narrator Darl, who narrates scenes at which he is not physically present, including Addie's death.

Establishing who the marked and unmarked narrators are in *As I Lay Dying* is more complicated than either *Wide Sargasso Sea* or *Tracks* because of the vast number of narrators. It is further complicated by the style of narration. Throughout most of the novel (until after Addie's narrative), the narratives are recounted in present tense as if the action is happening as it is narrated. One exception to this style is Sampson's narrative, which is in past tense except for his dialog tags, which are in Conversational Historical Present. Following Addie's narrative, which is in past tense, narrators vary between past and present before settling finally into past tense at the end of the novel after Darl has been sent away. It is as if Addie's narrative and then Darl's removal from society gives them the closure necessary to narrate in past tense. Because of the proliferation of the feature present tense, this novel is marked in terms of realistic narratives. In

fact, Ermarth would not consider it a realistic narrative. This mark is appropriate in terms of the cultural background of the novel and Faulkner's place in his time. He wanted to write in a marked fashion, and one way to accomplish this goal was through the use of the present tense. The fifteen different narrators also mark the novel, since even texts with more than one narrator rarely have as many as Faulkner's fifteen.

Because this novel does not fit the requirements of realistic narratives, the narrative must be examined in terms of other factors to decide which narrators are marked and why. Verb tense aside, Darl appears to have the most conventional narrative. He uses standard English and gives clear explanations of character action. He occasionally waxes philosophical²³ but that does not appear out of the ordinary for his character. Other characters, on the other hand, are much more colloquial. They use slang, have incorrect grammar, and are not as clear or as specific as Darl. As a result, Darl on the surface appears to be unmarked. But, as with *Tracks* not favoring Pauline's more conventional narrative style, the text does not favor his particular style of narrative. As the only living narrator to use correct, conventional narrative, he is marked by the feature standard English, but other aspects of his narrative mark him. Darl presents himself as a type of third

²³ Some of his stranger musings are "A feather dropped near the front door will rise and brush along the ceiling, slanting backward, until it reaches the down-turning current at the back door: so with voices. As you enter the hall, they sound as though they were speaking out of the air about your head" (19-20) and "In a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep. And before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not. And when you are filled with sleep you never were" (80).

person narrator at certain points of the text, whether it is telling what Jewel is doing to his horse or narrating Addie's death. Like Pauline from *Tracks*, Darl would seem to fulfill Ermarth's ideal of consciousness being "always *potentially* the same, interchangeable among individuals, because it is consciousness of the same thing. All consciousness derives from the same world and so, if total consciousness were possible, it would be the same for everyone" (66). Yet also like Pauline, even though it takes longer, ultimately Darl's consciousness is questionable because he turns out to be mad, even though he appears lucid for most of the novel, at least to the reader. He is certainly one of the most isolated narrators, and this isolation is both narrative and textual. The majority of the other characters make reference to Darl being "queer" and "the one folks talk about." At the end of the novel, when he goes insane and is sent to the asylum in Jackson, his isolation is complete, for he refers to himself in the third person now too. He is the marked narrator.

The only narrator who is more isolated than Darl, and more marked, is Addie. By her very nature—she is dead—she is isolated from the rest of the narrators and characters. She is further isolated by her use of the past tense, a use which separates her temporally from the rest of the narrators to that point. And like Darl, she narrates in standard English, a further mark in the context of the novel. Her bundle of distinctive features are then, non-living, standard English, and, at least the moment she narrates past tense. The content of her narrative

reflects her isolation from the world. She narrates of her liking to be alone, in “quiet” when she was a school teacher,²⁴ and how her children took away her isolation irrevocably.²⁵ For Addie, death and isolation appear to be positive things.

The unmarked narrators of the text are the secondary narrators, those who are not integral parts of the action: Samson, Armstid, and Moseley. Their role in the novel is primarily that of bystander. They interact briefly with the Bundrens and then relay their narrative. At certain points they resemble Nanapush from *Tracks* in that they appear to be telling the story to someone. For example, Samson comments “If they’d [Dewey Dell’s eyes] been pistols, I wouldn’t be talking now” (115), and Armstid says, “Well, that’ll be the last they’ll ever see of him [Jewel] now, sho enough. Come Christmas time they’ll maybe get a postal card from him in Texas, I reckon” (193). Unlike Nanapush, however, their audience is never made clear, and they remain isolated, just not to the same extreme as the other narrators.

On the next tier of marked narrators are those who are not related to the Bundrens but who have more frequent and/or significant interaction with the family. MacGowan, who sells Dewey Dell the fake abortion medicine; Whitfield,

²⁴ Yet she also comments that she beats them so that they are “aware” of her (170). She wants her isolation, but she wants others to know about it.

²⁵ She comments, “In the afternoon when school was out and the last one had left with his little dirty snuffling nose, instead of going home I would go down the hill to the spring where I could be quiet and hate them. It would be quiet down there then. . .” (169) and “I knew that it had been, not

minister who had an affair with Addie; Peabody, the doctor; and Tull and Cora, who both generally help the Bundrens, all fall under this category. They narrate without any apparent awareness of an audience but do not suffer the same degree of isolation as the Bundrens, yet they still appear more isolated than the unmarked narrators in their storytelling style.²⁶ Their feature is association with Bundrens.

The final tier is the Bundren family, and they are all highly marked, yet there is a further scale within the family itself. As mentioned above, Addie is most marked, followed by Darl, then Vardaman, Jewel, Dewey Dell, Anse, and finally Cash. Vardaman, like Darl and Addie, is quite isolated from the rest of the family, but his isolation is age-related. As a child, he is unable to communicate clearly his fears and emotions to his family members, who do not take the time to help him understand what is happening, and so in that sense he is isolated. Further, when he narrates, he does so quite abstractly, and it is evident that he does not understand what has happened to his mother and, later, to Darl. He may eventually outgrow this isolation, but for the purposes of this novel, he is marked by his isolation and his inability to communicate.

Jewel, Dewey Dell, Anse and Cash are all on approximately the same level. Their status as Bundrens marks them in the text, and they are marked by their familial isolation—physical and societal. Their family lives out of town, as is

that my aloneness had to be violated over and over each day, but that it had never been violated until Cash came. Not even by Anse in the nights" (172).

evident from the distance Peabody, Whitfield, and the Tulls must travel to reach them, one form of isolation. But the Bundren family itself seems to bear some kind of mark itself which separates them from the rest of the people in and around town. Anse's uselessness, Darl's "queer"ness, Jewel's intensity all separate them from society. Of all the Bundrens, Cash seems to be the least isolated. His skill as a carpenter, reflected on by many of the narrators, gives him worth in society, and as a result he is in demand by others and not as marked as his family members. This fact seems to be underscored by the evolution of his narrative, which moves from being merely mechanical (his initial list of why the coffin was made on a bevel (82-3)) to being informative (it is from him that we learn about Darl's madness (232-8) and the new Mrs. Bundren (258-61)). His location as the final narrator also connects him more firmly with the reader.

With *As I Lay Dying*, then, the isolation is related to markedness in that the most marked narrators (and characters)—the Bundrens—are the most isolated from society. Colloquial speech is also unmarked while standard English speech, presented by Darl and Addie, is marked. The number of features a narrator possesses determines his/her place on the markedness scale. Thus Addie and Darl, possessing the most features, are the most marked narrators while the narrators with fewer marks are less marked.

²⁶ It is interesting to note that those most isolated from Addie/the Bundrens are the least isolated

Comparing Imbedded and Separate Narratives

The theme of isolation and the structure of narratives in multiple-narrator novels appear to be connected. In separate narratives such as the ones in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Tracks*, the isolation of the marked narrators is enhanced by the very nature of the narrative—separate. Embedded narratives such as *Frankenstein*, on the other hand, because they rely on audience for their structure—the Creature tells his story to Frankenstein, who tells it to Walton, who in turn writes it to his sister—do not have the same extreme sense of isolation that is present in separate narratives. Though the most imbedded narrator is the most marked (and most isolated) narrator, there is still a connection being made, however brief and tenuous.

It is interesting to note that one of the most marked characters in literature—the Creature—is part of a narrative structure that does not isolate him as much as characters that are part of separate narrative. There is some question in my mind about whether such an extremely marked character as the Creature could be part of a separate narrative. The closest characters to the Creature, as far as extremity of mark that I can think of are Benjy from *The Sound and the Fury* and possibly Addie from *As I Lay Dying*. Addie's narrative, though, must be presented as part of a separate narrative because she is dead at the time the narrative is presented and she is the only one who knows what she is narrating. Further,

characters and are unmarked or least marked on the markedness scale for this novel.

though she as a narrator is extremely marked, as a character, she is not as marked in her text as the Creature is in *Frankenstein*. His marking as a character has an impact on his narrative positioning. Benjy, is closer in terms of marking to the Creature as far as physical traits, but, unlike the highly intelligent Creature, Benjy is mentally retarded and trapped in his own mind. His narrative is a commentary of what he literally sees, not an analysis. Thus, he, like Addie, presents information that only he knows and could not narrate to someone as the Creature does.

In separate narratives, there are more variables when it comes to deciding who is the marked and unmarked narrators. Because of the extreme isolation of the narrators, there is no inherent markedness structure as there is with the imbedded narratives. For those texts that are realistic, such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Tracks*, most of the variable is verb tense, and those narrators who do not use past tense consistently through their narratives bear the distinctive feature present tense. They may bear other features as well, but it is the present tense that truly cements their marked nature. Non-realistic texts such as *As I Lay Dying*, rely on more than the tense, though aspects of realistic novel conventions can impact them. For example, the narrators who follow realistic narrative conventions more closely are often the unmarked narrators while the less conventional narrators are marked.

The narrative level of markedness is unique to multiple-narrator or narrative voice texts and offers readers a chance to look at how the author presents narrators in comparison to characters examined at the textual level. The theme of isolation is often related to the narrative markedness structure as it is with textual markedness as we will see in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Textual Markedness: Individual Texts and Their Conventions

I. A General Explanation of Textual Markedness

Textual markedness centers around the way the characters fit into the society/societies of the text and how they are perceived both by these societies and by themselves. There is also some focus on how the characters react to their marks and what this reaction means in terms of the action of the text. When dealing with textual markedness, there are a few things to consider. Though the culture presented comes from the mind of the author, novels such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Tracks*, which are historical, must also have some realistic connection to the times in which they were set even though most of the actual characters are fictional.¹ Further, if the text is related to another text, there needs to be some continuity of culture between the texts. In the case of *Tracks* and *Love Medicine*, there are a few problems from the initial version of *Love Medicine* that Erdrich later took care of in the revised and expanded edition.²

There are certain things that will affect how the marks of the text's culture are applied, and though it is the author who establishes the culture of the novel, it is the reader who must infer which marks are important and which marks are not

¹Even texts which are not historical but which are realistic relate closely to a "real world."

² For example, in the first version of *Love Medicine*, Eli and Nector are twins, but they are not twins in *Tracks* or the revised and expanded version of *Love Medicine*.

for the text in question. Though the marks apparent in the text will have some basis in “real world” situations, the reader must decide based on the events what marks are most important and how they affect the characters in the text. The effect of the marks that characters bear will be evident by the way a character fits into (or doesn’t fit into) the culture of the novel.

There is also the issue of how the reader impacts the analysis of the marks. A reader who is from a culture extremely distant/different from the one in the text may read the marks in one way while a reader from the culture on which the text is based may interpret the marks in a different manner. Armand Garnet Ruffo and Greg Sarris, in some of their works, discuss the issue of interpreting various works by Native American authors and how it is important for the reader to understand the specific tribe being written about to understand the text. Certainly the background of the reader will influence his/her analysis of the marks, but there will often be clues given by the author to indicate how the marks should be assigned so that the reader’s background will not always affect the interpretation. For example, in the novel *Tracks* by Louise Erdrich, it is evident that the Chippewa culture is the unmarked culture of the novel while the white and the mixed-bloods are in marked cultures. Erdrich shows this preference through the point of view—the more sympathetic narrator is Nanapush, a traditional Chippewa elder—and through her depiction of the whites and mixed-bloods. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, on the other hand, the more sympathetic narrator is

Antoinette, but she is evidently a peripheral part of a society that is marked in comparison to the society her husband comes from, making her character doubly marked.

There are a number of ways in which marks can be seen in a text. First, when characters and/or narrators focus on differences, these differences usually indicate oppositions, which in turn can indicate markedness—the differences being where the marks occur. For example, Antoinette focuses on the differences between “them” (Jamaican society) and her family, especially her mother. Likewise, Antoinette’s husband refers to others and to the extreme nature of the countryside to show how different it feels to him. What he’s referring to can be considered marks.³ And Antoinette’s use of the love medicine she gets from Christophine is her attempt at neutralizing the difference between her marks and her husband’s lack of them. Unfortunately, she ignores Christophine’s warning that the medicine will not work on béké, indicating that at least in this context the husband is marked while Antoinette (and the practitioners of obeah) are not.⁴

A character’s sense of their difference does not always indicate how extreme his/her mark is. In the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, for example, the husband is extremely aware of the differences between him and the people of

³ In the passage of the novel after the husband has slept with the servant girl Amélie, he observes that she seems to be blacker, and her lips fuller than before he slept with her. These differences were essentially neutralized when he saw her as desirable, but the aftermath shows her to be marked after all.

⁴ This situation is a kind of reversal, such that the usually unmarked white male from Britain is the marked, while the Creole (and black) women are unmarked.

Jamaica, and he feels very much an outcast. He is not, however, a marked character in most situations because he is in a position of power over the others and because he comes from the society which is seen as the originating, and thus unmarked, one. Similarly, Antoinette, who is aware of the difference between herself and her society, does not belabor the point as her husband does, yet she is extremely marked, more so than most of the novel's characters.

The powerful characters are often the unmarked because they have more freedom to move about, in the same way that the unmarked element can take on the role of the marked.⁵ For example, the husband in *Wide Sargasso Sea* can do more in society (his and hers) than Antoinette. He is in a position of power and he is the unmarked character. The situation is slightly different in the novel *Tracks*. In this novel, power is a sign of being marked. Fleur is a marked character, and her mark comes from the power she (and her family) possesses.

Further, there is a great difference between the way in which those who are physically marked and those whose marks are invisible are treated. Often, characters who are physically marked are treated much worse than those characters whose marks are invisible, yet it is these invisibly marked characters who are more marked than their counterparts. This idea is particularly true of the first text I want to focus on, *Frankenstein*. But not all texts use physical markings as an issue, focusing instead on the deceptiveness of looks. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*,

the second text I will discuss in this chapter, the story is more focused on the deceptiveness of looks, how they conceal true differences (and thus marks).

In all of the texts I will examine, the themes of isolation and the Other come into play. Isolation is indicative of markedness because the marked element of an opposition is isolated by the distinctive feature(s) it possesses. In a similar fashion, marked characters suffer isolation from their society (or the dominant society). This isolation leads to the label of Other that the marked characters usually possess. Though the theme of the Other is most evident in texts that have a physically marked character or several different cultures, as I'll show in *As I Lay Dying*, the theme of the Other can also be examined in texts with more homogeneous characters and a single culture.

II. *Frankenstein* and Physically Marked Characters

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley has one of the most clearly and dramatically marked characters there is—the Creature—yet it also contains more subtly marked characters as well. Further, this novel, I believe, has at its heart a problem which, though we would prefer to think of it as past, is a problem in today's world just as it was in Shelley's time. The problem I'm talking about is that of dealing with external (physical) versus internal marking. From the time children first hear tales, they hear about “beautiful” and “ugly” characters and are

⁵ See discussion of verb tense in Chapter 1. The present tense in normal speech situations has the

taught that these external, physical descriptions are reflective of the characters' internal nature. Later in life they are forced to deal with the contradictions between what they learn as children and what they observe in the real world. How they deal with the contradictions will be reflected in how they react to the people they encounter in society. What *Frankenstein* does is present three main characters—Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the Creature—and show how they each react differently to the contradictions thrown before them. The way in which they react says much about them as characters and also about the world in which they were raised.

In traditional folk literature, there is a clear distinction between good and evil, and this distinction is made in physical descriptions. The good characters are handsome and beautiful, the evil characters ugly. In the rare exceptions to this traditional characterization—Snow White's beautiful but evil stepmother, for example—there will be some indication that the character is not as he/she appears. In the case of Snow White's stepmother, for example, the stepmother is not as beautiful as Snow White and must perform her worst evil when transformed into something ugly (Russell 110).

While folk tales traditionally present flat characters, the tradition of describing characters physically to reflect their internal qualities of good and evil is something which has persisted in narratives, and even some more rounded

freedom to mean any time—past, present, or future.

characters may possess a telltale feature that they are good or evil, whether through the color they wear or the way in which their speech is presented.⁶ All of these descriptions are ways of marking characters, and the physical features can correspond to the concept of markedness. An unmarked character in traditional folk literature would be someone of ordinary stature and looks who is neither good nor bad—and in folk tales these are the characters who have little impact on the story. Marked characters are those who differ from the unmarked by possessing some kind of outstanding quality, a feature. Cinderella is marked because she is beautiful; the same is true of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty as well as the majority of folk tale heroes. The antagonists of folk tales usually possess a horrifying countenance: they are trolls or witches or some other kind of deformed monster. And for both the heroes and antagonists of the tales, the physical feature is indicative of the internal character. The only exceptions to the rule will possess a moral that attempts to show that beauty of spirit (internal) is more important than beauty of face (external). Two classic examples of this type of tale are *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Frog Prince*. And in each case, once the lesson is learned, the deformed but good character transforms into a beautiful prince, thus reinforcing the beauty equals goodness stereotype in some ways.

⁶ Characters with accents are typically seen as either evil or as helpers, depending on the type of accent they possess. For example, in the film *Dangerous Liaisons*, the main characters have an American accent; servants and lower class characters have lower class British accents. Similarly, in the film *Gladiator*, the main characters speak upper class British English (Received Pronunciation) despite the different language backgrounds of the characters (the title character is

These tales are the traditional literature of our society, and they continue to be told to children. What's more, the tales which we today read have been greatly softened because "Many people even thought the folktales too harsh for children and sought to protect children from these stories" (Russell 114). The protection—a product of the 19th century—comes in the form of less violent tales that still retain the character markings of old.⁷ Of further note about the tales is that, while they are now considered children's tales, in their traditional form they were not for children. Rather, they were for the whole society, a way to teach the society about life and morals and the traditions of that society.

Victor Frankenstein's reactions to his world in Mary Shelley's novel seem to reflect the way characters are set up in traditional folk literature. Those who are beautiful—his mother, Elizabeth—are naturally good—marked in a positive way—and those whom he finds unattractive are negatively marked. The most clear-cut example of his reaction to the negatively marked is his reaction to his primary professors at Ingolstadt. He appears to dislike and distrust M. Krempe, the first professor whom he encounters at Ingolstadt, primarily because of his

Spanish, many of the senators are Roman); the title character's servant, however, speaks with a Scottish accent.

⁷ A classic example of a retelling is Little Red Riding Hood. There are variant endings for this tale, but one of the original ends with the Woodsman coming to save Red Riding Hood and her grandmother by cutting open the wolf's stomach (while it was alive) and freeing them. Then they fill the wolf's stomach with rocks, sew him up and throw him in the bottom of a river (or lake). Similarly, Snow White's traditional ending has the evil queen being forced to wear red hot iron shoes and to dance to her death at Snow White and the prince's wedding. And Cinderella's stepsisters in the Grimm version of the tale (called Ashputtle) first cut off parts of their feet to try to fit the shoe and then have their eyes plucked out at the wedding, a case of physical marks being

appearance:

M. Krempe was a little squat man, with a gruff voice and repulsive countenance; the teacher, therefore, did not prepossess me in favour of his doctrine. Besides, I had a contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy. (35)

Here Frankenstein focuses explicitly on the appearance, which is “repulsive” to him, of the teacher, and his other reasoning (“contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy”) is secondary. In Frankenstein’s mind, then, M. Krempe is negatively marked by his appearance—with the features of a “squat” stature, a “gruff voice,” and a “repulsive countenance”—and all else about him must, by association, be marked negatively as well.

A short time later, Frankenstein shows that his expectations based on physical appearance apply both ways. He meets M. Waldman, another professor, and immediately decides that he is good based on a lengthy discussion of his appearance:

This professor was very unlike his colleague [M. Krempe]. He appeared about fifty years of age, but with an aspect expressive of the greatest benevolence; a few gray hairs covered his temples, but those at the back of his head were nearly black. His person was short, but remarkably erect; and his voice the sweetest I had ever

applied to the beautiful to reflect their evil spirit. See Iona and Peter Opie’s *The Classic Fairy*

heard. (35)

This description is the first concrete one given of Waldman and its focus is clearly about the positive physical features of the professor, how he visually appears (and appeals) to Frankenstein. From his first view of Waldman, Frankenstein knows that this is the professor he can trust. His reaction is the result of trusting instinctively the positive features he describes about Waldman.⁸

Once Frankenstein has studied with Waldman for a time, he eventually goes back to study also with Krempe and even seems to overcome, to some extent, his dislike of the man. He says, “I found even in M. Krempe a great deal of sound sense and real information, combined, it is true, with a repulsive physiognomy and manners, but not on that account any less valuable”(37). In this statement is the crux of the matter in the novel: how to deal with a character who has negative physical features but not necessarily negative internal ones. With M. Krempe, Frankenstein appears to be handling the situation fairly well once he deals also with a positively marked character who stresses the usefulness of the negatively marked.

He has not yet dealt with a “monster,” however. M. Krempe may be

Tales.

⁸ Ludmilla Jordanova calls Frankenstein’s reaction to his teachers a reflection of the time: “Shelley’s account gives credence to the ideas that the character of men of science was to be ‘read in their appearance’” (62). And Anne K. Mellor, also referring to the time in which the novel was published, comments “these characters are endorsing Johann Lavater’s and Johann Spurzheim’s contemporary theories of physiognomy and phrenology—the assumption that the external human form or the shape of the skull accurately manifests one’s internal moral qualities” (100). Thus the

negatively marked, but he is someone Frankenstein has the ability to deal with since he is at least recognizable as a human, no matter how “repulsive” he may be. Reacting to the creature is another matter entirely because Frankenstein has nothing to compare this experience with, except perhaps descriptions of monsters from childhood tales. When he first begins construction of the creature, he imagines that it will be a creature of greatness who will “bless me as its creator and source” (40). Though there is no description of the creature in physical terms, Frankenstein does believe that the creature will have a “happy and excellent” nature (40), traits which reveal his expectation of attractiveness for the creature. This expectation is shattered after the creature opens his “dull yellow eye” (42) and Frankenstein becomes horrified by his countenance. Frankenstein goes into detail at this point, describing the result of his creation and how it differs from his plan to make the Creature beautiful:

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid

cultural situation would have influenced the characters’ reactions, another example of where the

contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips. (42)

Though he has succeeded in creating life from the death, the result is not beautiful as desired, but so hideous that Frankenstein cannot stand to look upon the Creature. In effect, Frankenstein has created something so negatively marked physically that he, who had difficulty dealing with the few negative physical features of M. Krempe, cannot bear to see what he has created.

Yet he should have expected the results. In at least two places in his narration, this downfall is hinted. The first time is when Frankenstein talks about why he planned to make the Creature as large as he does. He says, “As the minuteness of the parts formed a hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large” (40). In his desire to create his being whom he earlier claimed would be “happy and excellent” of nature, he chooses to make the creature larger than normal. This choice is one that guarantees that the creature will be marked negatively, for size, especially extremely large size, is one of the first ways to describe a fearful creature. And his choice to speed up the process by making the Creature so large is also interesting considering that he’s already spending a great amount of time—“nearly two

levels can overlap.

years" (42)—to create his being.

The second indication that the creature would not be what Frankenstein desired comes in a comment he makes after he leaves his apartment and the creature. He comments that he had "gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then" (43). From this comment, the outcome of the creation should be apparent. Frankenstein may think that he has conquered the view that ugliness means evil, though, since he has evidently managed to work successfully with M. Krempe. And perhaps it is the concluding part of the above comment which explains why he cannot bear to look upon the Creature: "but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived" (43). It is not just that the creature is ugly, but that he is so ugly that Frankenstein has nothing to compare him to; he is so hideous that Frankenstein must go back once again to his childhood experiences to know how to react to the Creature, and that means treating the Creature as if he is inherently evil like some of the monster characters of traditional tales.⁹

Applying markedness to this aspect of the novel is fairly straightforward. This is where scalar marking comes clearly into play. Whereas M. Krempe was marked to Frankenstein, he was less marked than the Creature. The Creature is

⁹ Judith Pike, in her essay "Resurrection of the Fetish in *Gradya*, *Frankenstein*, and *Wuthering Heights*" attributes Frankenstein's reaction to the Creature as a natural reaction to the animation of the fetish. Whereas the Creature was tolerable when inanimate—an "exquisite corpse"—when animated, he is "monstrous" (154), a fetish come to life. Other critics talk about how though the finished product may appear to be what the Romantic artist strives for, this is not truly the case.

clearly the representation of what it means to be most marked. Nothing and no one can be more marked than the Creature, at least from the perspective of those characters who see him. M. Krempe possess three features to mark him negatively: a “squat” stature, a “gruff voice,” and a “repulsive countenance.” The Creature is more specifically, and thus narrowly, defined (more isolated) in terms of features; he is “large” (over eight feet tall), has “yellow skin,” “watery eyes,” a “shrivelled complexion,” and “black lips.” These last four features can be related to the idea of a “repulsive countenance” like Krempe’s, but whereas Krempe’s feature was described generally, the Creature’s specific features isolate him more than Krempe or other similarly marked characters. This isolation of his features leads to his isolation as a character. Because of the vast number of distinctive features, he cannot be part of society as the less marked Krempe can. His unique hideousness marks him in a way that no human can ever be marked. He is in fact so marked that it is difficult for Frankenstein to name him accurately. His labels range from “wretch” to “creation” to “monster,” and even the Creature himself is at a loss for labels.¹⁰

But what about the way that Walton and the Creature react to those who

Thus Frankenstein is unable to cope with the finished product of his artistry. (Bronfen 33; Homans 169).

¹⁰ I find it interesting that critics seem to have the same trouble. He will be called a “creature” or “creation” or “monster” (and/or proper noun versions of the same). “Creature” seems to be most prevalent, and I have to wonder if it’s because that word bears less of a negative mark than “monster,” which conjures up any number of frightening images. Further, since the Creature is a sympathetic character, critics (myself included) may want to neutralize as much as possible the extremity of his difference by calling him “Creature” or “creation” rather than “monster.”

are marked around them? How do they compare with Frankenstein? For the Creature, the lessons, which Frankenstein learned about ugliness equaling evil in tales, are learned first-hand. When his narrative is related it is filled with descriptions of how the people who gaze on him call him “monster” and/or scream in terror and run away from him. The lesson the creature learns, then, is not fictional for him. It is how he exists, though it takes him a long time to realize why people run from him. He comes to the cottage of the deLaceys and it is here that his true education of beauty and goodness compared to his own ugliness occur. He compares himself to the cottagers at one point:

I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified, when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity. (84)

All that he comments on here is the physical impressions of himself and the deLacey family, yet he is convinced that because of their difference that he is a monster, even though he knows that internally he is not deformed as he is externally. It is at this point that he becomes caught up in the quandary about

himself and how he should deal with humans, with whom he longs to interact.

His decision to approach the elder M. deLacey comes from his knowledge that his physical appearance will frighten the others. But because M. deLacey is blind, the Creature knows that he will have a chance to interact successfully with the older man and possibly establish a relationship with the family he has come to consider his. The plan is a good one, since the old man's blindness makes him impervious to the physical, but of course it fails because the Creature does not act quickly enough to complete his plan before the rest of the family sees him and runs away.

Though the Creature is despondent over the failure of his plan to interact with the deLaceys, he eventually decides to try again. This time he attempts to gain a companion who will see him as good by taking a child who "was unprejudiced, and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity" (105) and raising him, something which would make sure that the child understood that deformity does not always mean evil. Unfortunately, his choice of a child (whom he calls "beautiful"), was one who was old enough to have been trained to have "a horror of deformity." Worse still, the child is Frankenstein's brother, and when his reaction to the Creature is not what the Creature expected, he is killed in the Creature's rage. Though the idea that the Creature possessed, to raise someone not to think of ugliness as evil, could possibly have worked, he evidently needed to choose someone much younger.

In both cases when the Creature tries to overcome people's sight prejudice, his plan has potential. In particular, the idea of training a child to see him as good despite his appearance has a lot of potential, but William, who was at least eight, had most certainly been told the stories Frankenstein and most other children hear when they're young. As a result, he sees the Creature as evil, perhaps even more so than adults would because he has not begun to learn, as Frankenstein did with M. Krempe, that ugliness is not necessarily a sign of evil.

Had the Creature's plan had any hope to succeed, it would have had to be implemented on a child who did not possess developed language skills. It is the understanding of language (and from there tales) which allows for people to understand the marks that are in place. This was true of the Creature certainly. Before he understood language or had a clear idea of what it meant to be physically "beautiful," he was puzzled by the way others rejected him, but he wasn't angry about it because he didn't understand what was happening. Knowledge of language makes it clear to the Creature that he is different than others, and that his difference makes him evil in their eyes. At the same time, though, the success of training a pre-lingual child to be his companion would have some potential problems because, as John B. Lamb points out in his essay "Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Milton's Monstrous Myth,"

Language tantalizingly presents itself as an escape from the boundaries of self, a transcendental medium with which to master

the monstrous, the finite limitations of life and identity. But, ironically, language *is* the monstrous, a limiting and limited taxonomy, a preestablished cultural hierarchy that defines all the possible definitions of self. . . . (312)

Because the Creature would undoubtedly teach the child language, then, that child would still be bound by the limitations of the language in describing and dealing with the Creature, and the result might be just as disastrous as if the child had been raised by someone else, especially since, as Lamb points out, the Creature is forced, by the limitations of the language he thinks will allow him to break from his mold, to label himself as Frankenstein labels him (311-2). The Creature's escape from the identity this society has placed on him is impossible.

Markedness again plays a role here. The Creature's difference makes him marked compared to the others, but unlike Victor Frankenstein, who perceives a scale of marking, for the Creature there is only one marked entity: himself. At one point in his narrative, he lists the ways in which he is different from humans:

Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they, and could subsist on a coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded

their's. When I looked around, I saw and heard of none like me.

Was I then a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned? (89)

Beyond the “figure hideously deformed and loathsome,” the Creature possess other traits which make him unlike anyone else he has encountered and these all constitute features, and they are all negative in his mind, though some of them don't naturally appear to be negative (eating a coarser diet, bearing the cold and heat better). For the Creature, though, anything which separates him from the human race will be seen as negative now that he perceives himself as “other.” The issue of being Other is an important one in *Frankenstein*. The Creature is so different, so isolated from the rest of society that he can only be classified as Other. Though he would love to be part of the society, there is little chance for it to happen, especially once his own language skills label him as Other. Though cast out by society, he is still bound by the linguistic conventions that make him monstrous and leave him in the position of Other.

He is different from Frankenstein in that he knows that his external markedness is not a reflection of his internal characteristics—thus his surprise when he sees his reflection; before that moment he had assumed he looked similar to the deLaceys. And the Creature's main problem is not dealing with the contradiction personally—at least not at first—but with convincing others raised as Frankenstein to see that the contradiction is false. As time passes and he fails to

convince others, he begins to see himself as the rest of the world does, but only because he has begun to do things which he knows is wrong—marked—in society. He becomes the monster he is called once he kills William and then the others.

While the Creature and Frankenstein both perceive the Creature's actions to be heinous and "monstrous," however, the reader does not. This different perception may be attributed to markedness reversal. In normal circumstances, murder and other crimes are marked actions in society, marked because they are illegal compared to unmarked actions. They are part of a scale of marking in which something simple like theft, though marked, does not carry the same weight as murder, which is one of the most marked crimes there is. Had the Creature just murdered William or Clerval or Elizabeth for no reason, then the crime would be in the category of most marked. However, because of the circumstances which drive the Creature to kill—being cast out and seen as marked by the rest of the world, especially Frankenstein—a reversal occurs, and though his actions are still perceived as marked, they are not as marked as if he had killed in cold blood. And in fact, Frankenstein's crime—abandoning his creation, not nurturing him—becomes more marked in this circumstance than the Creature's crime, thus turning a character who would normally be seen as unmarked into someone more marked than that character seen by the novel's

society as the most marked a creature can be.¹¹ There is a narrative influence on the way in which the Creature is perceived. Until the reader hears the Creature's story, the sympathy lies with Victor whose perceptions are the only ones visible. With the Creature's narrative, this new point of view reverses the way in which the characters are marked, forcing Frankenstein into a position at least as marked as his Creature's, if not more so. Stephen C. Behrendt, in "Language and Style in *Frankenstein*" notes that the shift appears to be the result of the Creature taking responsibility for his actions—narrating actively—while Victor's narrative is passive and thus less sympathetic (81). Once again there is an overlap of the markedness levels.

Walton is the final character who must deal with the contradiction of internal and external marks. He is different from both Frankenstein and the Creature, however, for he learns of the contradictions before he is faced with them firsthand. Walton would have been raised hearing the tales that Frankenstein did, and he would have had in his mind the same types of expectations that Frankenstein did, but there are places in the text where he learns about how people who appear marked on the outside will be unmarked inside. And in fact, there is some question of whether he thinks in terms of external characteristics at

¹¹ Nancy Hetherington, in her essay "Creator and Created in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," makes a strong, related point about our perception of the Creature: "Ironically, this image [of the Creature being alone with no one like him] works so well in gaining our sympathy because it embodies in concrete and extreme terms a fear which we, as civilised humanity in a civilised society, also share—a fear of being ultimately unlovable because we fall short of collective standards" (26). In

all, for he does not spend much time describing them, as Frankenstein did. The first instance in his narrative in which we see how internal characteristics are more important to him than external ones is when he relates the tale of his lieutenant to his sister. The lieutenant is described as “a person of an excellent disposition, and . . . remarkable in the ship for his gentleness, and the mildness of his discipline. He is, indeed, of so amiable a nature, that he will not hunt. . . . He is, moreover, heroically generous” (18-9). None of the qualities described here refer to a physical description of the lieutenant, for it is the quality of his nature that Walton focuses on, and not what he looks like. But his description, bound up as it is in terms of heroism, makes the reader picture someone not unlike a handsome prince sacrificing himself for the one he loves. The reader is as bound by convention as Walton and Frankenstein. His description is not as Frankenstein would have made it.

When his crew pulls Frankenstein from the sea, Walton does present a physical description of Frankenstein, saying “his body was dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering” and that “his eyes have generally an expression of wildness and even madness” (22). This description is far from “beautiful,” though it is not “monstrous” either. Walton is as interested in his character as his appearance, however, for he focuses his attention on both: “He must have been a noble creature in his better days, being even now in wreck so attractive and

the language of markedness, this comments translates into people fearing being perceived as

amiable” (23). His descriptions are such that he could be speaking about either Frankenstein’s physical appearance or his personality traits or a combination. Walton appears to be more balanced than either Frankenstein or the Creature from the start.

This balance is underscored at the end of the text, after Frankenstein’s narrative ends and Frankenstein dies, when the Creature boards the ship. Though Walton sympathizes with Frankenstein and desires to befriend him, he is unable to obey Frankenstein’s dying request to destroy the Creature because he feels a “mixture of curiosity and compassion” toward him (161). Because he knows that he cannot look at the Creature’s face without fear and loathing, he looks away and allows the Creature to finish his narrative, and when he rebukes the Creature, it isn’t about how the Creature looks but about his actions: “‘Your repentance,’ I said, ‘is now superfluous. If you had listened to the voice of conscience, and heeded the stings of remorse, before you had urged your diabolical vengeance to this extremity, Frankenstein would yet have lived’” (162). His words to the Creature definitely support Frankenstein, but that is to be expected when he sees Frankenstein as a “noble” man even after his story. He would have responded to anyone that way. Still, his comments do not reflect the idea that the Creature is predisposed to evil. Quite the contrary: he refers to the Creature’s “conscience,” something Frankenstein never attributes to him. Again, Walton’s reactions are

negatively marked and isolated from society.

based on what the Creature has done rather than his appearance. In that sense, his is like the reader who understands that the Creature committed crimes, however mitigated, that he must take responsibility for. The main difference is that the reader feels more sympathy for the innocent victims—Justine, William, Elizabeth—than for Frankenstein, who is Walton's main concern.

What's also interesting about the way in which Walton responds to the Creature is that he doesn't sign off his letter. Instead, he ends the text with the Creature's retreat into the "darkness and distance" (165). Of the three characters, Walton seems to be the one who is best able to balance internal and external marks. Though he never says that the Creature is anything but bad, he bases his opinion of the Creature on his actions, most notably the death of Frankenstein. For Walton, then, as opposed to Frankenstein and the Creature, internal characteristics are more important than external ones. He sympathizes with Frankenstein because he admires him, but he does not condemn the Creature merely on appearance as Frankenstein has done. Instead he condemns the Creature because of his marked actions—actions that, for him, remain marked despite the circumstances surrounding them. Walton seems to be the only character to be able to get beyond the traditional association of beauty and goodness and ugliness and evil.

III. *Wide Sargasso Sea* and the Marked Creole

Unlike *Frankenstein*, with its focus on physical marks, *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys approaches the issue of physical marks from a different perspective. The characters in this novel do not expect the physical characteristics of the others to tell them anything about what these other characters are like, though there are indications in some parts of the text that they would like to use the physical as a guide.¹² The physical does not reveal anything about the characters in this text because it is a book about how the external similarities of characters disguise the differences and thus make it hard for the characters to distinguish the marks that signal differences. Ultimately, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a novel about how markedness works in the world of colonizer and colonized.

Whereas *Frankenstein*'s markedness was based to a large extent on physical beauty, *Wide Sargasso Sea* uses other features as its primary marks, including nationality, gender, birth order, wealth, and race. All five of these features are critical to the setting of the novel: post-Emancipation Jamaica. Nationality is important because, though the novel is set primarily in Jamaica—something which would seem to favor Jamaican nationality—the unmarked nationality is English.¹³ The English (and Europeans) are unmarked because they

¹² One notable exception to this case is the English people's reaction to the blacks. Mr. Mason underestimates them while the husband is suspicious of them. And they ignore the white women who are native to the islands when they try to correct the men's misunderstanding of the blacks.

¹³ Gayatri Spivak, in her article "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," comments that *Wide Sargasso Sea* is "a novel which rewrites a canonical English text [*Jane Eyre*] within the European novelistic tradition in the interest of the white Creole rather than the native" (253).

are the “mother” country and seen to be superior to the island.¹⁴ They are the privileged group. People—the whites in particular, though not exclusively—want to emulate the English. The problem arises when the English arrive and see their mannerisms being used in a way that is very similar but not exactly the same. The result is a confusion of nationality, particularly among the whites who are neither English nor really Jamaican, since that is not a nationality yet. They are also not colonizer or colonized since, though their ancestors are English, they were born and raised in the islands. There is a confusion of identity.¹⁵

Gender is also an important element of markedness in this novel. In this time period women were extremely marked and most relied on their male relatives to take care of them. This problem is one that Antoinette and her mother face in the novel. A further element of markedness in the novel is birth order. In this time period, the first born male was still the primary inheritor and second (and later) sons were often forced to marry wealth to do well. Wealth and race are

Though her comment is in reference to the departure of the servant Christophine, it applies to the discussion about nationality. This novel’s form—and this point gets into cultural markedness—is English, a fact which underlies the preference of things English in the culture of the text. Further, Spivak appears to be assuming that the “white Creole” like Antoinette doesn’t have a style separate from the English like the “natives” would. Yet, interestingly, Christophine shouldn’t be considered native either since her ancestry is black, thus African, and not any more “native” to Jamaica than Antoinette’s ancestry. The issue of identity—and lack thereof—is imbedded even in the form of the novel.

¹⁴ Throughout the novel there are references which show the importance of the “mother” countries and their biases. The most notable is the reference to St. Pierre in the islands as the “Paris of the West Indies” (80), a label that clearly shows how the islands are marked in comparison to things European. Here there is a decided privilege afforded to England and Europe and the closer something appears to resemble England or Europe, the less marked it is.

¹⁵ Antoinette’s husband comments, “Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either” (67). She would be marked as European, clearly, but not as marked as she is now, as something he cannot successfully describe in terms he understands.

the final main elements of markedness in this text. Being a poor white in Jamaican society is to bear a huge mark, but being female and wealthy in Jamaica has its own type of mark which can (and in this text does) lead to disaster. Race issues in the novel are the only truly physical type of mark which plays a part, but it is here that the problems with other invisible marks also play out because there is a mixing of races and the coloreds are often hard to distinguish either from the whites or the blacks. This confusion parallels the difficulty of distinguishing the English from the islanders in terms of nationality.

Both of the main characters of the novel are marked. Antoinette, the first of the narrators, is marked in many ways. She is a white Jamaican Creole woman who starts her narrative talking about how poor her family is after her father dies and the slaves are emancipated. Coulibri, the estate she, her mother and brother live on, is run down and only a few servants remain to help tend it. In addition to the features of being female, Jamaican and poor, Antoinette is further marked by her parentage. She starts her narrative by separating her family from the “ranks” of Jamaican society:

They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother, ‘because she pretty like pretty self’

Christophine said. (17)

Antoinette’s mother does not fit into Jamaican society for several reasons,

explained in the second paragraph of the novel: "She was my father's second wife, far too young for him they thought, and, worse still, a Martinique girl" (17). Each of these reasons is an additional feature her mother bears, and each affects her role in society. Further, these features affect Antoinette's status in society because in this society, parentage is very important and marks are inherited. And in fact it is her parentage that makes her both attractive to her husband and that eventually helps to turn him against her.¹⁶

Though Antoinette is extremely marked in her society at the beginning of the novel, these features are overlooked to an extent—at least on the surface—by Jamaican society when her mother remarries a wealthy Englishman who has holdings on other islands.¹⁷ Mr. Mason, as a rich Englishman, is unmarked in high Jamaican society, and he restores Coulibri to some of its former glory. This glory is destroyed, however, by his lack of understanding towards the blacks who work for him. Because he believes that the blacks are "too damn lazy to be dangerous" (32) and that "They are children—they wouldn't hurt a fly" (35), he does not take them seriously. His assumption is that they do not possess the ability to do things which could cause harm because they appear to be simple. This aspect of the

¹⁶ Daniel Cosway, her self-proclaimed half-brother (whose parentage Antoinette denies), convinces her husband that because her mother and brother were "crazy" she will end up the same way. He also claims that she has an affair with one of her light-skinned "cousins."

¹⁷ Antoinette is aware that her acceptance is only on the surface, however, when she presents some of the comments which she overhears at her mother's wedding: "A fantastic marriage and he will regret it. Why should a very wealthy man who could take his pick of all the girls in the West Indies, and many in England too . . . marry a widow without a penny to her name and Coulibri a wreck of a place?" (28) and "As for those two children – the boy an idiot kept out of sight and

novel is one in which appearances are vital. The difference in race, and Mr. Mason's assumption that his race is superior to theirs, leads him to overlook any signs that there could be trouble brewing.

When both Antoinette's mother and Aunt Cora try to correct his mistaken ideas about the blacks, his response is "Live here most of your life and know nothing about the people" (35). In his status as the unmarked member of the family, he assumes that he knows better than they do about the world they have lived in all their lives. This assumption is also based on appearances. Since the women in his new family appear similar to the white women he knows, and since they act and speak similarly, he assumes that they cannot be more knowledgeable than he is about the blacks even though he knows and acknowledges that they have lived there most of their lives. As a result of Mr. Mason dismissing the women's warnings about the blacks, he is unprepared for them to burn down Coulibri, which they do shortly after his comment about them being children.

The clash of cultures visible in the marriage between Antoinette's mother and Mr. Mason is magnified in the Antoinette's own marriage. This marriage is arranged by Mr. Mason and his son Richard to an unnamed man who, as we learn in his narrative, is the second son of an English family.¹⁸ He does not wish to

mind and the girl going the same way in my opinion" (29). There is little doubt that Antoinette remains marked.

¹⁸ The name Richard Mason for Antoinette's step-brother is one of the few places in the novel where the overlap between *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* is explicit. The other areas of overlap are in the husband's renaming of Antoinette to Bertha (Mason) and the beginning of Part Three which begins with a third person narrative from Grace Poole's perspective. The husband in

marry Antoinette, but feels that it is his duty to do so as his “letters”¹⁹ to his father indicate:

Dear Father. The thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition. No provision made for her (that must be seen to). I have a modest competence now. I will never be a disgrace to you or to my dear brother the son you love. No begging letters, no mean requests. None of the furtive shabby manœuvres of a younger son. I have sold my soul or you have sold it, and after all is it such a bad bargain? The girl is thought to be beautiful, she is beautiful. And yet. . . (70)

This letter makes clear a two things about the husband and his relationship with Antoinette. First, it clearly shows the one way in which the husband is marked—he is a “younger son”—and this feature is what leads him to travel to Jamaica and to marry Antoinette.²⁰ However, he does not wish to have his birth order stereotype him; rather, he is marrying so that he can be seen as something other

never given a “proper” name in the novel, though most critics call him Rochester. See discussion in Chapter 4.

¹⁹ Only one of his letters, the last one he writes, is ever sent to his father, and there is some question about whether his father ever receives this letter.

²⁰ Gayatri Spivak comments that “Rhys makes it clear that [the husband] is a victim of the patriarchal inheritance law of entailment rather than of a father’s natural preference for the firstborn: in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rochester’s situation is clearly that of a younger son dispatched to the colonies to buy an heiress” (251). Though I don’t necessarily believe that the husband is not a victim of his father’s preference for the firstborn—the tone of his letter is such that he sounds bitter about his father’s love for his brother—it is clear that the husband is sent to marry for money. It is also one of the ironies of the novel that Antoinette, who was so poor at the beginning of the novel, is considered an “heiress” since the money is not from either her natural father or her mother but from her stepfather and stepbrother.

than the image of the “begging” younger son who performs “furtive shabby manœuvres” to get attention and money from his elder brother.

The second aspect of the relationship revealed by the letter is the husband’s perception of Antoinette. He comments that “The girl is thought to be beautiful, she is beautiful.” This comment is quite revealing and underscores a comment he makes earlier in his narrative. He observes that “. . . her eyes . . . are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either” (67). To the husband, Antoinette is not what he is used to, and though he credits her with being beautiful, it is only after someone apparently tells him that she is beautiful. He must be told of her beauty because she is “alien” and her looks are not quite what he is familiar with. She is familiar enough for him to accept others’ opinions, however, and as a result, he comes to believe, on some level at least, that she is beautiful. The final comment from the letter—“And yet . . .”—reveals that though he sees her beauty at one level, he isn’t completely convinced. There is something about her that he can’t quite understand. This something—the “secret” he talks about throughout his narrative—he becomes obsessed with as his narrative progresses.

Antoinette’s husband is first aware of the difference between himself and Antoinette through the new landscape he encounters in the West Indies. The strangeness of the land overwhelms him, and he isn’t really sure what to do about

it. He remarks that “Everything is too much. . . . Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near. And the woman is a stranger” (70). There is a connection made here between the strangeness of the land and the strangeness of his new wife, and this connection is made throughout the husband’s narrative. The difference of the landscape—something which is physically visible to him—comes to represent the difference between himself and Antoinette, and the more he dislikes the land—the more marked it appears—the more he dislikes her—the more marked she appears.

He also sees similarities between her and the English women he is used to, especially early in their marriage. At one point, when Antoinette brings him water, he remarks, “Looking up smiling, she might have been any pretty English girl” (71). The husband is constantly trying to deal with the apparent contradiction between what Antoinette looks like—“any pretty English girl”—and some of the things she does, including her ease with her surroundings, especially the blacks, with whom he is not at all comfortable.²¹ *Wide Sargasso Sea* thus contrasts with *Frankenstein* here because while Antoinette appears to fit in physically, she does not, whereas in *Frankenstein*, the Creature is physically marked but internally unmarked until his actions, resulting from the rejection of his surface, force him to be marked.

²¹ When they arrive at Granbois for their honeymoon, he asks why she hugs and kisses Christophine, her former nurse, commenting when she replies “Why not?” “/ wouldn’t hug and kiss them I couldn’t” (91).

Already suspicious of her—feeling her appearance is deceptive—when Daniel Cosway brings him “proof” of Antoinette’s difference (her “relationship” with Daniel, the madness in her family), he seizes on this proof as a way to justify rejecting her. Once he’s gotten the proof, he steadily distances himself from her and the sexual spell he believes Antoinette has cast over him. His affair with Amélie, a black servant, cements the distance between them and drives Antoinette to desperate measures to regain his affection.

But she, too, has been deceived by appearances. Though she knows how different they are, she insists on using obeah to try to win her husband’s favor again. Christophine repeatedly warns her against using the love potion on *béké*—an outsider—but Antoinette refuses to believe the magic won’t work on her husband. Her choice severs any possible remaining tie between them, leading her husband to label her mad, the ultimate distinctive feature in the novel. No longer can a relationship be maintained, and the husband deals with Antoinette the only way he thinks he can, by taking her away from the only home she has known and locking her away from the world so that her marked nature is hidden to all except her caregivers. His solution also returns him to steady, unmarked territory where he will not have to worry about the “secret” he thinks Antoinette and the islanders are keeping from him. In England, there are no secrets to worry about.

Antoinette’s new label of madwoman transforms her to the extent that she is no longer able to recognize her own reflection in a mirror. Instead she describes

who she believes is the “ghost” people have said haunt her new home, not realizing she is describing her own reflection: “I went into the hall again with the tall candle in my hand. It was then that I saw her – the ghost. The woman with streaming hair” (189). The only certain thing about the end of the novel is that Antoinette has been trapped by her marked status much as the Creature was bound by his. Once the dominant society has labeled her mad, the most extreme feature there is, she cannot hope to live peacefully.

She ends the novel similarly to the way she began it: isolated from society in a literal, physical sense as well as internally. At the beginning of the novel, her family is isolated on the run-down plantation Coulibri, an isolation heightened by the death of their only horse. They live on the periphery of society once the link to Antoinette’s father is gone at his death. While Mr. Mason may bring a semblance of community to them, it is short-lived and followed by further isolation. Antoinette’s mother goes mad and is removed from society to be looked after by a pair of servants. Antoinette is isolated from society by being sent to a convent school. Here she is part of a community of sorts, though she is not fully accepted there either. Upon her marriage to an unmarked Englishman, there is a chance of her living in society. The isolation of the honeymoon in Grandbois appeals to Antoinette, used to being away from civilization, but does not to the husband, who cannot adjust to the isolation of the islands. He feels the isolation much more acutely than does Antoinette, who views the honeymoon as a chance to establish a

new community for her and her husband. She is a part of the marriage as she wasn't part of much else in her life. Unfortunately, the husband, like Mr. Mason, does not understand the difference of the island and, because of his power—his unmarked status—he controls the way things are done, leading Antoinette to further isolation. His treatment of her leads to her madness and, like her mother, she ends up isolated all over again. In the cold room in England, Antoinette is the forgotten Other. Because both parts of the opposition are necessary for there to be a recognizable opposition, however, she does still appear in the world occasionally. In this case, she gets the chance to “go to England,” to leave the attic, and also to attack her stepbrother Richard. By showing the parallel between Antoinette's marriage and her mother's second marriage, both to members of the unmarked dominant culture, Jean Rhys illustrates how the position of being both marked in terms of culture and in terms of gender could lead to madness for the Creole woman Other.

IV. *Tracks* and Shifts in Textual Marks

Tracks presents a clear-cut character opposition between Nanapush and Pauline. These characters spend a large part of their narratives reflecting on what they see as the negative of the other. This opposition reflects the major opposition in their Anishnaabe society—that between the older generation of Nanapush and the younger generation represented by Pauline. This opposition is played out both

textually and, as I discussed in Chapter 2, narratively.

The novel favors the point of view of the older generation but also clearly shows that this generation is losing its hold on society. This change appears in two ways. First, it appears through Erdrich's choice of novel type. She is writing a historical novel, but within that historical novel are two first person narrators looking back on events that occurred many years before. Nanapush's narrative in particular shows a great distance between the present of his storytelling and the present of his narrative. He remembers these times with fondness and some regret for their passing. The change of generations also appears through the story's ending in which the older generation loses its power—its home and its ability to fend for itself—to the younger generation.

So who is marked and who unmarked as characters in the novel? There is little doubt that Nanapush is the more sympathetic character, but does that make him unmarked? In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the sympathetic character is the marked one. In *Tracks*, however, this is not the case. *Tracks* presents a culture in transition, and as a result we witness a markedness shift as the events unfold. While Nanapush is unmarked at the beginning of his story, by the end, he has become marked. And Pauline, at the very end of the novel, when she receives her new name and position in Argus, shifts from her extremely marked position on the reservation to that of somewhat marked nun in Argus.

To see how these changes occur, it's important to recognize the dominant

point of view in the novel. The texts I've examined thus far all use white European-based culture as the dominant one by which characters are judged. For *Tracks* the dominant culture is different. As Catherine Rainwater says in her article "Reading between Worlds: Narrativity in the Fiction of Louise Erdrich," "instead of the Christian code, the shamanic code is activated as an interpretive path. Events narrated by both narrators take on meaning within a framework of American Indian beliefs about life, death, and mystical experiences" (408). In *Tracks*, in other words, white society is marked and Anishnaabe culture unmarked. Thus Nanapush, representative of traditional Anishnaabe culture, is unmarked. Pauline, however, who declares "I wanted to be like my mother, who showed her half-white. I wanted to be like my grandfather, pure Canadian" (14), is marked by the way she favors white society and scorns being Anishnaabe.

Nanapush's connection to traditional Anishnaabe culture is presented from the instant his narrative starts. His name, Nanapush, is a version of the Anishnaabe trickster figure Nanabush or Nanabozho. Further, Nanapush's role in this novel is that of the storyteller, and he's passing the history of his tribe and family on to the next generation. Throughout the novel, he refers to both his audience—his granddaughter Lulu—and to the act of storytelling.

Pauline, by contrast, though she does refer to storytelling on occasion,²²

²² Especially at the beginning of her first narrative, when she is most connected to Anishnaabe culture. After this section, her connection to an audience of any kind is lost, as is her tribal connection.

has no strong ties to her Anishnaabe culture and in fact does much in her power to deny this culture. Because Anishnaabe culture is the dominant one of the novel, however, she is marked by her rejection of it. She has no clear audience for her narrative and regards herself as invisible throughout much of her narrative. There is some question about what makes her uncomfortable in Anishnaabe society. Sidner Larson attributes it to her being a mixed-blood, saying, “Pauline is indeed a handful, representing all the pain, rage, and frustration of a person forced to live in two different cultures while being rejected to a large degree by both” (10). While it is true that she is rejected by white society when she’s in Argus, she is not completely rejected by Anishnaabe culture. Larson’s argument is based on the Mojave tribe’s treatment of mixed-blood Indians, not on Anishnaabe culture: he’s drawing conclusions about Pauline’s tribe using evidence from a different tribe. In fact, though, even Nanapush, who leaves no doubt that he loathes Pauline, does not reject her because, as he says, “It is not our way to banish any guest” (189). He clearly does not want her around but, even after she has renounced ties to the tribe, he does not kick her out of the tribe.²³

But just because the dominant culture does not overtly reject her does not mean she will fit in. Pauline comments on differences between herself and her tribe and family. She is lighter-skinned than her siblings, and she identifies herself

²³ This fact is vastly different from the cultures of the other novels, in which such extreme marking as Pauline shows would be somehow removed from society, willingly or not. However, in the sense that Pauline is not actively welcomed—without telling lies to be welcomed, that is—she is rejected.

with whites more than Anishnaabes. As Gloria Bird observes, Pauline “regards the Indians of the novel as Other, as disconnected from herself” (45). Thus she distances herself from the culture willing to accept her. She views the whites as the dominant, and in a novel favoring the whites, she would be less marked. But because the point of view does not favor the whites, she is marked, as are other characters who work with whites against the Anishnaabe way of life. So though she may regard the Indian as Other, it is she who is Other in terms of the culture of the novel.

This marking begins to shift, however, as times change and those who deal with whites begin to gain power. As Nanapush, Margaret, Fleur, Eli, and Nector struggle to raise the money to pay taxes on their allotments, Nanapush reflects on how the culture has changed, how his stories are no longer listened to, how Fleur’s power has waned, how the tribal members working with the whites have begun to run the reservation and take over the reservation lands.²⁴ Anishnaabe culture is in a state of change, one in which Nanapush, tribal elder and storyteller, is no longer respected as such. Even his granddaughter barely listens to him. His position at the time he tells the story is no longer unmarked as it was when the events of the story began. Though still part of the tribe and still able to capture Lulu’s attention, Nanapush does not belong as he used to; by sticking with

²⁴ Boy Lazarre and Clarence Morrissey kidnap and humiliate Nanapush and Margaret; Fleur cannot save her child or her land.

tradition, he is marked.²⁵

And Pauline is becoming less marked. When she decides to become a nun, she suppresses her Anishnaabe heritage in order to do so. Declaring herself white and actually being white, however, are two different things.²⁶ During her novice stage, there is frequent evidence that as a nun she will be marked: her elaborate penances, her combination of Anishnaabe and Catholic mysticism, and her visions of Christ talking to her from the woodstove. She wants so much to be part of the order that she overcompensates. It is only once she has “fought” Satan/Misshepeshe and killed Napoleon that she becomes less marked. The transformation comes with her marrying Christ and being renamed. With the new name, Leopolda, her transformation from mixed-blood girl to white nun is complete and she can assume a new role of less marked. She has a clear role in a culture. Though it is a marked culture compared to the new Anishnaabe culture, for Pauline, the fact that she belongs somewhere alters her mark.

By the end of the text, both Pauline and Nanapush are isolated and Other. With the new favoring of a sort of hybrid of white and Anishnaabe culture, neither the traditional Nanapush nor the converted Pauline/Leopolda belong in society. Pauline becomes isolated by being sent to teach in a convent school in

²⁵ In the final chapter, Nanapush infiltrates the changed culture to get Lulu back to the reservation, but it's a temporary transformation, clearly evident from the present of his narration (after the events of the story have long ended). Of all the character I'm examining in this dissertation, Nanapush clearly understands how to code switch best.

Argus while Nanapush's isolation is a result of the lack of interest Lulu and others show in his storytelling, the main way he connects with others. This isolation is new to Nanapush, but Pauline has always been isolated, even when a member of her family. Like Frankenstein, Pauline distances herself voluntarily from her family and is never able to regain a community. Thereafter, though someone always takes her in, she never truly belongs. Her frequent references to being an invisible witness serve to underscore how isolated she feels from everyone—present but unacknowledged unless she does something extreme to draw attention to herself. Pauline lives her life as the Other.

V. *As I Lay Dying* and the Marked Family

There are many ways I could focus my discussion of textual markedness in *As I Lay Dying*, but I want to focus on Darl and on how his marked nature is constructed by both the other characters of the text and the reader, first as “queer” and then as “mad.” Both of these constructions of Darl make him marked, first in a fairly minor way similar to his family members and then as so marked that he cannot remain in the society of the novel.

From the time he is born, Darl is an outcast. His mother Addie does not accept him as she did Cash because she was “deceived” into having Darl by

²⁶ In fact, critics such as Susan Stanford Friedman have noted how even though Pauline has converted to Catholicism, she retains elements of her Anishnaabe heritage, most notably when she battles it out with the lake monster in her final section.

Anse's "declarations of love" (Wadlington 38). Clearly Addie's rejection of him—a marked action since parental, especially mother, love is considered "natural" and thus unmarked—starts him along a marked path from which he never escapes. Darl has been marked much the way the Creature from *Frankenstein* is marked—by a lack of parental love.²⁷ The difference, of course, is that Darl does not bear the physical marks that the Creature bears.

One of the ironic aspects of Darl and Addie's relationship, considering Addie's rejection of Darl, is that they are very similar characters. Addie comments near the beginning of her narrative, "I could just remember how my father used to say that the reason for living was to get ready to stay dead a long time" (169). This idea recurs in some commentary about Darl's character. Charles Palliser, for example, comments that one of Darl's two "principle convictions" is an "ironic reversal of the beliefs of his family." While they perceive Addie as alive in some ways until she is buried, "Darl sees living people as in a sense already dead" (137). The similarity between this comment and Addie's narrative is interesting. If Addie believes what her father says, then the next natural step is the idea that people are in a sense already dead, as Palliser says about Darl's perception.

In addition to the similarity between Addie and Darl's ideas of life and

²⁷ There is not much information on Anse's feelings for Darl, but he is less important here 1) because it is Addie who is so central to the story and 2) because Anse is so self-centered that he shows no real affection for anyone but himself.

death, they are also similar in their narrative style and word use. Addie spends much of her narrative reflecting on the uselessness of words while Darl's narratives show the flexibility and indeterminate nature of language. Addie herself is a marked character, though differently than her husband or children. Because she joins the marked Anse's family, she becomes marked in the eyes of the novel's society, yet she is viewed sympathetically by the majority of other characters and narrators. Peabody, especially, delays going to their house until he suspects her death is imminent because he wants her to escape from Anse and his life with him: "When Anse finally sent for me of his own accord, I said 'He has wore her out at last.' And I said a damn good thing, and at first I would not go because there might be something I could do and I would have to haul her back, by God" (41). Others, like Cora Tull, feel less pity because they see her as ungodly: "she took God's love and her duty to Him too much as a matter of course, and such conduct is not pleasing to Him" (166). However, Cora is also the only non-Bundren character who believes that Darl is a kind, loving son—evident from several of her narratives in which she feels sorry for him because he clearly loves his mother so much. Her judgment is suspect because it doesn't conform to that of the rest of the characters and she presents herself as an unsympathetic, sanctimonious woman, and is thus unreliable.

Darl's marking comes across in a number of ways. First, he is a very distant figure: though accepted as part of the family, he shows no real connection

with anyone and in fact talks of them in his narrative as if they were any other character. This fact is especially true of his mother, whom he consistently calls by her first name rather than as “my mother” or “maw.” He does not do this with his father, whom he refers to as “Pa” throughout the novel. It is possible that Addie’s lack of acceptance of Darl has led him to do this distancing (Wadlington 41). Certainly her favored children—Jewel and Cash—are not as separate. Cash is perhaps the least marked among the Bundren children. As Warwick Wadlington points out, “Cash is in many ways the most balanced Bundren, with his quiet, justified pride in his individual craftsmanship in carpentry, which he uses to contribute to the common effort” (47). He is nevertheless still marked in his society, especially when he makes the decision to continue the journey after breaking his leg. This mark, however, lands him squarely in the Bundren family circle. Their goal is to get Addie to Jefferson to bury her, and all must stay together until that happens. Even Jewel, whose prized horse Anse trades to replace the drowned mules, contributes to the cause of getting his mother to Jefferson. He “saves” his mother twice—once from the river, and once from the burning barn. It is only Darl who actively hinders the progress by setting fire to Gillespie’s barn. This act—the attempted destruction and halting of the goal to get Addie to Jefferson—leaves the biggest mark on Darl and forces even his family, all marked in their own right, to separate him from society.

But is Darl truly mad, or is his madness, as E. Pauline Degenfelder claims,

societally dictated: “As Cash comments, Darl’s insanity is a relative matter, in actuality based on the presumptions of others. He [Cash] recognizes that although perception and judgment are subjective, yet when a sufficient number of interpretations coincide, the phenomenon is considered a certitude” (72).

Wadlington comments on a similar aspect of the novel and reflects on how Cash observes the way in which society labels people insane when insanity is relative (78). Cash says, “Sometimes I aint so sho who’s got ere a right to say when a man is crazy and when he aint. Sometimes I think it aint none of us pure crazy and aint none of us pure sane until the balance of us talks him that-a-way. It’s like it aint so much what a fellow does, but it’s the way the majority of folks is looking at him when he does it” (233). At this point in the novel (after Darl has set the fire), Cash is reflecting on the family’s decision to send Darl away to Jackson. His words here, and the critics’ comments, bring up the central issue of markedness: cultural construction and subjectivity.

From the beginning of the novel, Darl is seen by society as an outcast. He is marked by being labeled “queer” and “the one folks talk about” by most non-family narrators except Cora Tull. Thus “the majority of folks” Cash refers to and Degenfelder’s “sufficient number” of coinciding interpretations of Darl’s character create him as marked.²⁸ As merely marked by their descriptions, he can exist in the society, even though he is marked. It is once he *acts* in a clearly

²⁸ The same is true to a great extent of the other Bundren family members.

visible, “unnatural” way—setting fire to Gillespie’s barn—that he ceases to be harmlessly marked and becomes labeled a danger to society—mad—and must be institutionalized.²⁹

This shift is paralleled in Darl’s narrative passages. In his first passage, Darl narrated in a marked way, describing Jewel’s actions without being able to see them.³⁰ He continues this trait of narrating differently from traditional first person narration, but not enough to be more than an oddity until his final narrative in which he refers to himself in the third person: “Darl has gone to Jackson. They put him on the train laughing, down the long car laughing, the heads turning like the heads of owls when he passed” (253). As with the fire he sets, this shift from first to third person narration, which encompasses him as well as characters he cannot observe, changes his label from slightly marked to fully marked in terms of traditional English narrative style, and the reader never sees him again.

And while it is true that the definition of madness—and narrative correctness—is a construct of society, Darl is so different that he is unlikely to fit into *any* society after he starts the fire and changes his narrative. He has crossed the line from harmless mark to potentially harmful mark. Even his family,

²⁹ This situation is similar to *Wide Sargasso Sea* in which Antoinette’s actions—using obeah on her husband—lead to her being labeled mad and removed from society.

³⁰ There is some question of whether what Darl is doing is “clairvoyance” or prediction based on prior knowledge of characters. Charles Palliser argues for the latter, saying, “most of these ‘prophecies’ are forecasts of the behavior of other members of his family and are simply based on his knowledge of their past behavior” (134). Whether they are indications that Darl is clairvoyant or that he is so observant he can accurately predict their behavior, the passages mark him as a narrator because he is narrating unconventionally. This analysis overlaps with the narrative level.

themselves all marked in their society, view his final mark as something which must be removed from society. As with *Frankenstein's* Creature and Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Darl breaks society's rules past redemption and must be banished as a result. Thus he is sent to Jackson. The remaining Bundrens—marked but not more than society allows—return to their home.

Once again, the themes of isolation and Other come into play in this novel. The Others of this novel, the Bundren family, live on a farm isolated from the society. The Tulls appear to be the closest neighbors, and they must travel to get to the Bundrens. Further, it takes Peabody a good while to get to them, and Jewel and Darl plan to take a full day to go to town, a trip that turns into three days when the wagon gets stuck in a ditch. This physical isolation seems to enhance the difference, the Otherness of the Bundrens. Like the marked characters of *Frankenstein*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *Tracks*, the marked characters of *As I Lay Dying* live on the periphery and their occasional appearances in town serve to emphasize their Otherness and the need to keep them isolated. With Darl, the Otherness crosses the line, as it did in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Frankenstein*, resulting in the need to separate Darl further from the society by locking him away in an asylum.

VI. Some Final Remarks about the Textual Level

Although I've looked at each of the four texts in this chapter as individual

entities, it should be clear from the discussion that there are some aspects of culture that are consistent among the texts. What should also be clear is that the texts most related are the ones in which the dominant culture is similar. As mentioned in Chapter 1, most marked/unmarked oppositions are not universal, if any are; thus, the society or culture from which the opposition resides takes responsibility for deciding what is natural, unmarked, and what is marked. Therefore, *Tracks*, with the Anishnaabe culture dominating, does not have the same way of dealing with highly marked characters as *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Frankenstein*, and *As I Lay Dying*. Though Pauline appears mad and commits crimes that are unforgivable in terms of white Western culture, she is not removed from society as the other characters are. Instead, she removes herself from society (note the difference in agent). For Antoinette and Darl, because they are called mad at the end, there is no place for them in their society. They are removed against their will. The Creature, too, is forced away from society. Though not confined to an asylum or a tiny attic room, he lives his life isolated from his creator's world, driven forcibly away by the people he encounters. The Western societies that are unmarked in these texts deal with the Other in ways that the Anishnaabe culture does not. The cultural context of the novels makes a difference in how actions are interpreted. When Nanapush and his family continue to allow Pauline admittance to their home, however reluctant, they act in a way that characters from the other three novels would not. Even the characters from *As*

I Lay Dying who offer to help the Bundrens usually do so from some kind of distance: the Tulls go to the Bundrens' house; the characters putting the Bundrens up let them sleep in outbuildings.³¹

In the three texts with similar cultures, a main similarity among the marked characters is a rejection by a parental figure—the Creature's "father"; Antoinette's mother; and Darl's mother. Parental rejection appears to be a mark leading some of the characters to further marks. For the Creature, every marked action he makes—killing William and the others—stems from Frankenstein's rejection of him. For Darl, Addie's rejection leads to an obsession with Jewel, her favorite, and to him burning the barn with her coffin. Antoinette is more difficult to analyze because she is more marked as a result of her mother's marks than because her mother rejects her. Ultimately, the parental rejection initially isolated the characters, marking them as Other immediately, and making it impossible for them ever to be part of society.

The themes of isolation and otherness also come up in these texts because in each one, the marked suffers from some type of isolation, an inherent quality of the marked. This isolation usually manifests itself physically as well as mentally, and they feed off each other. The Creature, who is forced into isolation by the rejection of Frankenstein, comes to believe that he deserves to be isolated because he is so different from the rest of the world, so extremely Other. For Antoinette,

³¹ Samson offers to let them sleep in the house, but because they don't want to leave Addie, they

the physical and mental isolations are always tied together. As a child, she is physically isolated from culture by the remoteness of Coulibri, but she also knows mentally that she is not part of the culture. The only time she appears to feel part of a society—during the brief happy period of her marriage—she is still physically isolated from society because she is at the remote Grandbois and not aware that her husband does not share her delight with the remote surroundings. At Thornfield Hall, the final isolation takes Antoinette to the attic room where she has become isolated from herself, not recognizing her reflection or her past as part of who she is. She has become the extreme example of the Other here.

Darl, at the end of *As I Lay Dying*, is similarly disconnected from himself. Whereas before he would narrate in third person about other characters, in his final narrative, he too is part of the third person narrative, isolated from himself mentally. Like the other characters, he is also isolated physically, removed from the story forcibly by his family. The isolation underscores the Otherness of the characters because isolation points to difference, which is what the Other is. The marked, however it is determined textually, will always be the Other and will always be isolated.

refuse.

Chapter 4

Cultural Markedness: Situating the Texts and Authors

The final level of markedness I want to focus on is the one Roman Jakobson alludes to in his essay “The Dominant.” This article focuses on the “dominant” trends in Russian and Czech literature and how those changes were affected by changing times. What Jakobson argues in “The Dominant” is that elements of literature or art always exist but that different points in history—different literary and artistic movements—value different elements as the norm. These elements are the dominant. Jakobson says,

For example, in Czech poetry of the fourteenth century the inalienable mark of verse was not the syllabic scheme but rhyme, since there existed poems with unequal numbers of syllables per line (termed “measureless” verses) which nevertheless were conceived as verses, whereas unrhymed verses were not tolerated during that period. On the other hand, in Czech Realist poetry of the second half of the nineteenth century, rhyme was a dispensable device, whereas the syllabic scheme was a mandatory, inalienable component, without which verse was not verse If we were to compare the measured regular verse of Old Czech *Alexandreis*, the rhymed verse of the Realistic period, and the rhymed measured

verse of the present epoch, we would observe in all three cases the same elements—rhyme, a syllabic scheme, and intonational unity—but a different hierarchy of values, different specific mandatory, indispensable elements; it is precisely these specific elements which determine the role and the structure of the other components. (“Dominant” 42)

While Jakobson never calls the “dominant” unmarked, it is certainly applicable. Because the unmarked part of an opposition is considered the norm, it corresponds to the dominant, the norm of a period of literature. When a work from a certain period of time does not favor the dominant, that work is marked and thus not acceptable as a form of literature (or art or music) during that time.

Evident from the above quote is the way that changing times cause shifts in the dominant literary (or artistic or musical) elements. Thus the dominant rhyme of the 14th century Czech verse shifts to the dominance of syllabic scheme in Realistic Czech verse. As Jakobson notes, both rhymes and syllabic scheme exist in both eras; the required, “normal” element is what varies. It is in this shifting that markedness reversal appears. The dominant, unmarked feature is replaced by a formerly marked feature.

Jakobson continues his discussion of the dominant by explaining how some past movements have reworked the texts of earlier periods so that the older texts conform to the dominant of the present. One of his examples deals with the

way in which the Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov reworked some of Musorgsky's symphonies because these symphonies did not fit the dominant musical trends. Later, of course, Musorgsky's originals were recovered and used and Rimsky-Korsakov's personal works lost some of their dominance. Today, rewriting can be seen in film and in history texts. In film, folk tales such as "The Little Mermaid" and "Beauty and the Beast" are rewritten by Disney to fit the "norm" of a modern folk tale. In the case of "The Little Mermaid," the end of the tale is rewritten so that it ends happily with the mermaid marrying the prince. In the case of "Beauty and the Beast" the addition of a villain character—Gaston—whom the protagonists must fight before they can live happily ever after normalizes the tale.¹

In history textbooks, particularly American history, until recently the dominant way to present the materials was to include information exclusively from the perspective of Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Occasionally information about other ethnic or religious groups would be presented, but this information was extremely rare and undeveloped. More recent texts have begun to look at history from a broader perspective, and, though the traditionally dominant culture remains dominant, it has lost some of its power. New school history books have entered many school districts. Related to the change in history texts is the way in

¹ As folk tales became children's literature in the Victorian era, there was also a normalizing of traditional tales to remove the violence. Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and many other were rewritten to make them more "appropriate" for children, and these are the tales we know today.

which history has begun to be perceived. Whereas in the past, a book might be called *The History of the United States* or *The History of the Ancient World*, present texts often bear a less exclusive article. Now the title is *A History of the United States* or *A History of the Ancient World*. This change in article reflects the change in the way the world is being perceived. Instead of there being only one way to look at history, historians have begun to see that multiple perspectives exist. Exclusivity is losing its dominance in the way history is perceived, and being inclusive has become the dominant trend in historical writing. In terms of markedness and markedness reversal, the formerly unmarked exclusive text has reversed its position to become the marked while the formerly marked inclusive text is now unmarked.

A similar trend has taken place in literary circles. The canon, formerly consisting almost entirely of white males, has seen continual expansion. Like history, the exclusiveness of the canon has given way to a far more inclusive canon—if it can even be called that any longer. And in fact it is often very difficult to define what unmarked literature is—other than inclusive—because there is now such a wide variety accepted. Instead, dealing with marked and unmarked in literature means looking at a specific era in which the literature was produced and/or a particular ethnic or religious background from which its author comes. Instead of talking about literature, we talk about American literature or

David L. Russell, (*Literature for Children: A Short Introduction*), and Peter and Iona Opie (*The*

Post-Colonial literature or Native American literature. Yet to look at a text as Post-Colonial or Native American or African American is to see them as marked because in relation to the larger field of literature they are limited, a factor indicating markedness. But as subsystems of the larger field, they also have their own qualities that indicate markedness as a member of that subsystem. What I will be doing with my primary texts is looking at them in relation to the subsystem(s) of literature under which they fall (or are closely connected to) and to see how well these texts fit into these areas.

One way to try to define literature is with the use of neutralization.

According to Stephen Greenblatt,

The world is full of texts, most of which are virtually incomprehensible when they are removed from their immediate surroundings. To recover the meanings of such texts, to make any sense of them at all, we need to reconstruct the situation in which they were produced. Works of art by contrast contain directly or by implication much of this situation within themselves, and it is this sustained absorption that enables many literary works to survive the collapse of the conditions that led to their production. (227).

For Greenblatt, the feature history—the “situation in which [a text] was produced”—is “absorbed” so that the text is understandable long after it was

Classic Fairy Tales) discuss these changes in their texts.

written. Readers do not need an understanding of, for example, the complete background of science in Mary Shelley's day to understand what is happening in *Frankenstein*. Nor does a reader need to research the difference in cultures between English and Jamaica to understand that the English culture is dominant. The information that a reader needs to know about the texts are in the texts themselves. Any further research a reader wants to do about the historical background of the text will enhance but not override the interpretation. The feature history is neutralized, making the text a work of literature rather than something isolated, marked by the times that caused its production. The result is a reader's ability to analyze a text as it stands, as I did in Chapter 3 by looking at each text as an individual entity. This neutralization can also explain why few works are considered "literary" until many years after their publication, as well as why some texts lose their literary label as time passes.²

But the idea of the dominant can be applied to forms of writing as well as

² In Native American studies, some critics and authors question whether it is possible to understand a work of Native American literature without understanding the tribal community. While Greenblatt's analysis of literature may demand the answer "no," since being literary means neutralizing the background in which the text was written, this analysis seems to me simplistic in some ways. The cultural codes that are imbedded in the texts written by English and American authors will not be the same as those imbedded by Native American writers (or Asian American or African American), even across time. Thus a tribal member reading a text will likely see codes that a non-tribal member will not, such as reference to tribal history or folklore. A good example is the character of Nanapush in *Tracks*. Had I not studied this text in a Native American literature class, I would not have known he was named for the trickster figure in Anishnaabe culture. I would have understood his standing as an unmarked tribal elder, but not the extent of it. The question is whether this lack of knowledge would be detrimental to my analysis of the text. Again the answer is complicated. I would say that my analysis would be adequate without knowledge of the culture, but not complete. Of course, the same can be said of most historical texts as well as texts stemming from different cultural backgrounds.

aspects of genre. Poetry, drama, and nonfiction prose are all types of writing that have a long history. They have dominated the literary world. The novel, and the concept of a unique plot associated with this literary form, are both, as the word *novel* implies, fairly new. Though this form is now the dominant in literature, it began as an extremely marked style of writing. According to R.B. Kershner in *The Twentieth-Century Novel: An Introduction*, “the novel was under attack for much of its history” and “in the view of the Roman Catholic Church—and many of the Protestant sects as well—novels were frivolous entertainment that distracted the readers from proper concentration on their spiritual state. . . . Meanwhile, the fact that the novel is fiction (that is, an elaborate and sustained falsehood) made it difficult to defend on the grounds that it might teach something useful” (1). In fact, many novelists, when the novel was a new form, either wrote it in a form similar to nonfiction—a travelogue or a journal or even an epistolary novel—or, perhaps more commonly, claimed that the novel was a romance or a history, unmarked forms of prose.³ The authors were striving to neutralize the opposition between the romance and the novel.

The marked nature of the novel continued for many years, and, according to Kershner, “up to the late nineteenth century, some novelists still insisted that they were writing romances; only in the twentieth century did *romance* take on its

³ Note that this use of *romance* refers to “courtly stories” originally written in verse but beginning to be written in prose in the fifteenth century (Kershner 2). The present negative connotation of the

current somewhat debased connotation of a sentimental love story and the word *novel* begin to be used with a positive connotation” (2). This effort to disguise the novel is directly related to the issue of the dominant and to markedness. By adopting forms imitating the dominant nonfiction forms or by referring to a novel as a history or a romance, the authors are attempting to validate their writing and to fit it into the dominant sphere.⁴ Eventually, there was no need for this validation as the novel’s position in literature shifted, eventually coming to the dominant position it occupies today.⁵

This shift was in progress when Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein* was originally published in 1818, so the form was not as marked as it had been in the previous century. Poetry remained the dominant literary form, but the novel was gaining ground. *Frankenstein* presents several interesting issues regarding the cultural level of markedness. One of the primary issues is that of Mary Shelley’s gender and her place in English society of the day—a unique position. Because she was female, the marked gender, English society expected her to behave in certain ways, ways that did not include eloping with a married man or becoming pregnant out of wedlock or even writing fiction. However, her unique family

romance novel is a much later development. Also note that in France, there is only one word for both romance and novel—*roman*.

⁴ According to Kershner, “writers of prose narratives tended to present and to justify their offerings to the public as either history or romance—and sometimes, both—for each had its own rationale. ‘True histories’ were seen as worthwhile because of their information value, whether they were typical or unusual” (5).

⁵ A trip to any bookstore shows the dominance of the novel in literature (and popular culture) now, but in literature classes, poetry does hold its own, just not usually the really recent poetry.

situation reversed some of the marks of English society for her. As the daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, two prominent, politically active writers, Mary Shelley was raised to believe that being a successful member of society meant writing. Stephen C. Behrendt comments in “Language and Style in *Frankenstein*” that “because she belonged to a community of prolific writers, poets, and journalists (including Percy Shelley, Byron, Leigh Hunt, and William Hazlitt), she felt obligated and encouraged to write” (78).⁶ Paula R. Feldman, regarding the expectations for Mary Shelley, says, “The daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin could be nothing less than exceptionally talented” (71). By all accounts, the only way for Mary Shelley to be unmarked in her family was to be marked in the larger English society. Though *Frankenstein* was initially published anonymously, when it was later republished in 1831, Shelley wrote an introduction to it in which she seems to downplay the role of her creativity (the novelty aspect of the text), saying that “I felt that blank incapability

⁶ There are other ways in which Shelley was raised and English society diverged. For example, society expected women to marry eligible bachelors and to settle down to raise a family. But, following what she thought were the beliefs of her parents, she eloped with Percy Shelley and bore his child while he was still married to someone else. At this point, she learned that though her father had espoused the ideas that she followed through, he did not want his daughter to follow them, and thus she was considered marked even by the people who raised her differently. Elisabeth Bronfen, in her Freud and Bloom-influenced article “Rewriting the Family: Mary Shelly’s ‘Frankenstein’ in its Biographical/Textual Context,” argues that Shelley, like all children “rewrote” her parents’ lives: “one could argue that the second generation understood parents as predecessors that encouraged, confirmed and justified their way of living. While the first generation seems to have modified its radical theories when it came to living, the second generation allowed the past to return, but in a far more radical transformation of theory into practice” (24). Thus though theoretically willing to question the marks assigned by society, William Godwin was unwilling, especially later in life, to forgo them, even if his daughter was. As a result, she becomes marked in both English society and now her family’s.

of invention which is the greatest misery of authorship” (169) and later reflecting on how she was “a devout but nearly silent listener” to the talks about discovering the principles of life between Percy Shelley and Lord Byron (170). It is only after these talks that she dreams of “the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together” (170). In effect, she is in this introduction giving credit to Percy Shelley and Byron for the idea behind *Frankenstein*. As a result, she makes herself seem less marked than if she took full credit for the idea behind the novel. She is negotiating the rocky areas between being a marked novelist, a marked woman, and a successful offspring of the Godwin-Wollstonecraft legacy, and a suitable widow and mother appropriate to English society of that time.

This no-win situation in which Mary Shelley found herself in society is reflected in the character of the Creature in *Frankenstein*, a character who seems horrible in his father’s eyes only after he moves independently, as Mary Shelley did by running off with Percy. Victor Frankenstein’s rejection of the Creature puts him in the awkward position of being unable to move about any society with success. He appears as marked to all in the outside world, much as Mary Shelley would have appeared once she moved away from her father. There is a distinct connection between Mary Shelley and the Creature. As Paula R. Feldman comments in “The Psychological Mystery of *Frankenstein*,” “Mary must have felt increasingly rejected and isolated, like Frankenstein’s Creature”(75). This isolation is an inherent part of being marked, as I’ve mentioned in previous

chapters.

Another connection between Mary and her marked character is the way in which she was a combination of strong influences—both her radical parents and her husband, as well as numerous other political and literary figures—much the way the Creature is an “amalgam of conflicting elements destined to propagate both the unexpected and the incongruous” (Roberts 60). A final way in which the Creature relates to Mary Shelley is that he

shares the situation of Romantic women, marginalized and spurned by a society to whose patriarchal scheme they fail to conform.

Moreover, the values and sensibilities typically assigned to women during the Romantic period are not unlike those that Shelley assigns to the Creature, including instinctive responsiveness to Nature, the impulse toward emotional human bonding (especially apparent in the deLacey episode), and an experiential rather than an abstract way of ‘knowing’ . . .” (Behrendt, “Woman” 78)

Thus the features Mary Shelley bore in her society appear reflected by the most marked character in her novel. Both are isolated Others in their worlds.

Related to the issue of Mary Shelley’s place in society in terms of markedness and the text of *Frankenstein* is that of the two editions of the text. Originally published in three parts in 1818, the novel was republished with its Author’s Introduction in 1831. This edition, however, also contains some changes

which many critics see as a revision of the themes in the 1818 edition. Because of these changes, critics disagree on which text is the definitive one.

According to Anne K. Mellor, the text to use is the 1818 edition because

The first completed version of both works [*Frankenstein* and Wordsworth's *Prelude*] have greater internal philosophical coherence, are closest to the authors' original conceptions, and are more convincingly related to their historical contexts. In *Frankenstein*, these contexts are biographical (the recent death of Mary Shelley's first baby and her dissatisfactions with Percy Shelley's Romantic ideology), political (her observations of the aftermath of the French revolution in 1814-16), and scientific (the experiments with galvanic electricity in the first decade of the nineteenth century). ("Choosing" 31)

Mellor claims that there are "striking thematic differences between the two published versions of the novel concern[ing] the role of fate, the degree of Frankenstein's responsibility for his actions, the representation of nature, the role of Clerval, and the representation of the family"(31-2). All of these changes can be seen as features which the 1831 edition bears while the initial edition is unmarked. These features came, according to Mellor, "as a result of the pessimism generated by the deaths of Clara, William, and Percy Shelley; by the betrayals of Byron and Jane Williams; and by her [Mary Shelley's] severely

straitened economic circumstances” (36). In other words, they are a result of the changing times’ effect on Mary Shelley. Thus her dominant concerns from 1818, though they still exist as part of the text, have shifted somewhat so they appear differently in the 1831 edition.

Other critics argue for the 1831 edition for a variety of reasons: it was Mary Shelley’s last version and so most reflective of her point of view; it was less influenced by Percy Shelley, who is often given credit for much of the first edition, and thus more Mary Shelley’s text; and, for those who teach the text, it is the least expensive version of the text.⁷ Though undoubtedly each of these arguments has merit, I want to focus on the idea that the last edition is more of a sign of Mary Shelley’s point of view, the same argument Mellor makes in favor of the 1818 edition.

Ultimately I think the issue at hand is how one wants to approach the text. If, as Anne K. Mellor claims, the revision lessens the “degree of Frankenstein’s responsibility for his actions” (“Choosing” 31), and the critic wants to focus on the indictment made against the solitary Romantic artist Victor Frankenstein represents, then perhaps the 1818 edition is preferable because the indictment is fairly clear-cut. If, however, the focus is on the issue of the mature Mary Shelley and how her life is reflected in the text, the 1831 edition, with its Author’s Introduction, might be preferable. The other option, of course, and this option is

often used by more recent critics, is to focus on a particular edition and to bring in places of divergence where they seem important to the interpretation.⁸

My own position in this debate matches Mellor's and others who favor the 1818 edition. This edition, it seems to me, more aptly reflects Mary Shelley's point of view at the time it was originally written and undisturbed by later events in Shelley's life, such as the death of her husband (a Romantic figure not completely unlike Victor Frankenstein) and her attempt to secure their son his rightful inheritance (causing her to try to fit into English society in a less marked way). Undoubtedly the time between 1818 and 1831 affected Mary Shelley's outlook on life and her politics to some extent. It could, in fact, be possible to see the two editions of *Frankenstein* as representative of how the dominant changes, in life and in art. What represents unmarked for Mary Shelley in 1818 shifted by 1831, and the shifts are reflected to some extent in the texts. Thus Mellor comments about the changes,

These events [the deaths of Clara, William, and Percy Shelley; the betrayals of Byron and Jane Williams; and her severely straitened economic circumstances] convinced Mary Shelley that human

⁷ This last point seems rather trivial, but it is brought up frequently in essays about teaching *Frankenstein*.

⁸ Johanna M. Smith in "'Hideous Progenies': Texts of *Frankenstein*" talks about the two major textual versions and wonders whether they should actually be treated as two editions of the same text or as two different texts (123). Treating them as two separate texts, I think, would be an interesting approach. Ultimately, though, I think that the texts are similar enough to compare using a text that illustrates where the texts diverge. Thus the critic can show, as necessary, the differences while focusing on the story which is fundamentally the same.

events are decided not by personal choice or free will but by an indifferent destiny or fate. The values implicitly espoused in the first edition of *Frankenstein*—that nature is a nurturing and benevolent life force that punishes only those who transgress against its sacred rights, that Victor is morally responsible for his acts, that the Creature is potentially good but driven to evil by social and parental neglect, that a family like the De Laceys that loves all its children equally offers the best hope for human happiness, and that human egotism causes the greatest suffering in the world—are all rejected in the 1831 revisions. (36)

Mellor continues her argument by claiming that in the 1831 edition, Victor appears to be controlled by nature, unable to make his own decisions, that his downfall is caused by bad influences not bad decisions, that Clerval is no longer the high moral voice but an equally driven character, that women's power in the family has been lessened, and that nature is much more machine-like to all characters not just to Walton and Frankenstein. Further, Mellor compares Mary Shelley's comment about being compelled to write the story in the Author's Introduction to Victor's compulsion to create the Creature (36-7). The ability to make choices seems to be the biggest change, and this change, in addition to the others, can certainly be seen as a reflection of Shelley's changed status. If she was reliant on her father-in-law's good graces to see that her son received his

inheritance, if she was compelled to republish the novel to support herself and her family, and if so many close to her died tragically, then her perspective on life would naturally have changed and been reflected on any thematic revisions she made to her works.

As Jakobson comments in “The Dominant,” all of the elements of both points of view are in both editions, but the 1831 edition brings to the fore different aspects—more sympathy for Victor in particular—than does the 1818 edition does. Yet still it must be noted that though Mary Shelley appears to have shifted her priorities by 1831, the novel does not change so dramatically as to completely obscure the meaning of the 1818 edition. In fact, we may be seeing a shift in the complete polarity of the black and white (binary) oppositions in 1818 to a more mature vision in which oppositions can be scalar rather than binary. Thus both Victor Frankenstein and the Creature are marked in different ways and each is guilty and innocent in his own way. The answers are not as clear-cut in this later edition. In my analyses of *Frankenstein*, I have used the 1818 edition and, as necessary, referred to any significant differences in the 1831 edition. For me, the 1818 is the unmarked, possessing as it does the “natural” or original ideas espoused by Mary Shelley. The 1831 edition is marked because it limits the ideas she had when she originally wrote the novel, as Mellor noted. The 1831 edition is isolated from her thought processes as they originally occurred and so it thus

marked.⁹

Besides the issue of textual edition for *Frankenstein*, cultural markedness is an issue when situating the novel in a literary style. There are three main categories in which *Frankenstein* is classified: Gothic fiction, Science Fiction, and Romanticism. Let me begin with Gothic fiction. This style was exceedingly popular at the time in which Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*. Its origins are attributed to Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *Castle of Otranto*. Gothic fiction, with its use of remote castles or manor houses and ghosts was a popular form of fiction; however, according to David S. Miall in his discussion "Gothic Fiction," "Gothic fiction led a curious borderline existence, widely read, but in the margins of both respectability or literariness" (346). Though not a highly marked form of writing (as, for example, pornography), it is still marked compared to other forms of writing. As a result, if *Frankenstein* is considered Gothic fiction, it is a marked literary form (not just because it is a novel).

Not all critics agree on whether *Frankenstein* is a Gothic novel. John Sutherland, agreeing with Miall, calls *Frankenstein* "a late and less contentious [masterpiece] of Gothic fiction" but notes that it "draw[s] on the intellectual or

⁹ This discussion is interesting in light of the novel *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich. This text also has two editions—its original version from 1984 and the Revised and Expanded edition from 1993. The revision of this novel is a result of changes in the history of the characters made in other novels in the series (*Tracks* and *The Beet Queen*). In this case, I would argue that the newer version is the better one to use because it represents the adjustments needed to make characters and plot consistent from one novel to another (in particular the relationship between Eli and Nector, and between Lipsha and Lyman—a relationship important in *The Bingo Palace*). Here the marked version is the original because it bears the feature of inconsistency.

Jacobin branch of Gothic inaugurated by the philosopher William Godwin” (336). Both critics thus isolate *Frankenstein* from the traditional Gothic fiction, often called terror or sentimental Gothic, written by Matthew Lewis (*Monk*) and Ann Radcliffe (*Mysteries of Udolpho*). For Miall and Sutherland, *Frankenstein* is a marked form of Gothic fiction. Robert Olorenshaw, in comparing *Frankenstein* to Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, comments, “*Frankenstein* appears to be the more modern work since it firmly places science, our science, or rather our image of it, at the centre of its concerns. This would imply that the novel presents important differences with the genre, the Gothic, with which it is usually identified” (158). The novel is marked compared to standard Gothic because it has the distinctive feature science. Olorenshaw continues, showing how *Frankenstein* is not Gothic because it uses thunder and lightning as an effect on characters. Gothic fiction, by contrast, uses lightning more for setting than impact on characters’ lives (159-60), and he also refers to the way Percy Shelley, in the guise of the author, tried to distance *Frankenstein* from the Gothic in the Preface to the 1818 edition when he comments “I have not considered myself as merely weaving a series of supernatural terrors. The event on which the interest of the story depends is exempt from the disadvantages of a mere tale of spectres or enchantment” (Bennett and Robinson 13). Olorenshaw indicates differences between *Frankenstein* and traditional Gothic fiction, pointing out ways in which *Frankenstein* is marked compared to the other texts. Jerrold E. Hogel, in

“‘Frankenstein’ as neo-gothic: from the ghost of the counterfeit to the monster of abjection,” argues that it is problematic to call *Frankenstein* anti-Gothic because it is very Gothic in places, but that what Mary Shelley does is expand on the Gothic tradition (177-8). All of these critics, it should be noted, consider *Frankenstein* marked in some ways in terms of Gothic fiction. The feature science, as Olorenshaw notes, sets *Frankenstein* apart from Gothic fiction.

This feature, though, forms the basis on which *Frankenstein* is categorized as Science Fiction. Science Fiction’s major defining feature is the use of science or technology in a way not presently used, or doing something presently seen as scientifically impossible. Certainly today the image is more technically stark (e.g. the sets of *Star Trek* or *Aliens*), but at the time in which *Frankenstein* was written, the prospect of animating the dead through science (especially from an amalgam of dead parts) would have been improbable.¹⁰ In any case, something interesting to note about Science Fiction as a genre is that it takes marked concepts (it is not the norm to create life from dead parts or to meet alien life) and presents them, for the most part, as if they are unmarked, a part of society taken for granted.¹¹ And as a genre, Science Fiction is still rather marked—not mainstream—as a genre,

¹⁰ As a work of Gothic fiction, the appearance of a ghost-like figure such as the Creature is common, but it is the manner in which the Creature becomes a ghost-like figure that separates him from typical Gothic ghosts. The science that created the Creature makes him different.

¹¹ This point is not always the case. In *Frankenstein* for example, what Victor does is not taken for granted. In fact, his motivation is the desire to be the first to achieve animating the dead. Yet the reader is willing to believe not only that he has the ability to create life as he does, but also that he is able to repeat the process later. In this sense the science is taken for granted.

though some texts have become part of the canon.¹²

The question is: Does *Frankenstein* really belong to the Science Fiction genre? According to Terrance Holt in his essay “Teaching *Frankenstein* as Science Fiction,” Mary Shelley, in overcoming the problems of departing from “empirical [scientific] knowledge” in *Frankenstein* by giving few specific scientific details, gives “the science fiction novel both its origins and its fundamental nature” (115). For Holt, Science Fiction uses science like a “black box”: “Rhetoric borrowed from science flows into it, and a viable plot flows out of it, but the exact nature of the process enacted within the box, under the rubric of science, remains obscure” (113-4). And further, science in Science Fiction is related specifically to the time—thus *Frankenstein* appears less scientific to modern readers, perhaps, while it would have been extremely timely in 1818 and even 1831.¹³ Certainly if *Frankenstein* can be considered a Science Fiction text, it is one of the first and would have been marked in its day since Science Fiction hadn’t been conceptualized.¹⁴ Percy Shelley’s remarks in the Preface, in which he separates the novel from Gothic fiction, referring to the “event on which the interest of the story depends” (Bennett and Robinson 3), leave the categorization of the novel open. But his reference to the “event” points to the scientific actions

¹² In this sense, Science Fiction is similar to Gothic fiction. Both are widely read, but neither is completely accepted in its time.

¹³ This point might explain some issues with treating Science Fiction as literary: it doesn’t always break free of time constraints as Greenblatt claims literature needs to because the science used, though cast as futuristic, is bound to some extent by the known technology of the time.

of Victor Frankenstein, and the no-name genre of the novel, according to Robert Olorenshaw, becomes Science Fiction (159). In any event, *Frankenstein* comes across as having been marked in its times by its differences to both Gothic fiction and to traditional novel, despite the public's fascination with it from the time it was published.

The stylist markings applicable to *Frankenstein* as a text of the early 19th century are applicable to it in terms of Romanticism as well as Gothic and Science Fiction, though for somewhat different reasons. Before I get into *Frankenstein* as a Romantic text, though, let me point out that when we talk about Romanticism today and the authors associated with it, we're referring to a form of literature labeled *after* the period had ended. Further, according to Seamus Perry in "Romanticism: The Brief History of a Concept," the term's meaning and the authors associated with it have shifted over time before becoming what we today consider Romantic (4-6). This trend makes sense in terms of Jakobson's idea of the Dominant. Several literary themes are associated with Romanticism: the Promethean figure, a focus on Nature or a return to Nature, and idealism. David Soyka points out that "the Romantic poets latched onto the figure of Prometheus as a noble [*sic.*] rebel and suffering savior of mankind not only in their poetry, but their image of themselves as poets/creators" (167). The typical Romantic artist is portrayed as a solitary genius, a "poet, living in the dreamily introverted

¹⁴ Much as the original novels would have been marked as a new concept when they began to

remoteness of his own consciousness” (Perry 7). Soyka adds to the explanation of a Promethean figure, however, analyzing the meaning of the name Prometheus—“forethought”—deciding that “forethought is decidedly lacking throughout the novel” (167), and concluding that “The modern Prometheus, then, is the unthinking creator who fails whether intentionally or unconsciously, to be responsible for his creation, thereby creating evil” (167).

With that background established, we can look at the text *Frankenstein* and how it does and does not fit into Romanticism. First, the title of the text should indicate an immediate connection with the concerns of Romanticism. The full title, *Frankenstein: or the Modern Prometheus* brings forth the common Promethean figure of Romanticism, this time represented by the title character. But Victor Frankenstein is not the only Promethean figure. Most critics also see Robert Walton as Promethean: “ambitious, lonely, willing to sacrifice other people despite claims of philanthropic idealism” (Veeder 39). Note that Veeder’s definition of the “Promethean questors” includes another element of Romanticism—idealism.¹⁵ Both Walton and Frankenstein are Promethean because they blindly follow their idealistic desires to achieve greatness, Walton by reaching the North Pole, Frankenstein by conquering death. Even the Creature has been called Promethean. John Beer, for example, comments, “When the

appear.

¹⁵ Walton differs from Victor Frankenstein in his Promethean pursuits, however, in that “his ambition is tempered by a love for his fellow beings” (Feldman 70).

monster goes on to say that he found an affinity in himself to Satan, he is helping to establish the degree to which he also is a Promethean figure—and more directly in some ways than Frankenstein himself, being bound to the rock of deformity which means that he can never hope for anything but hostility and fear from human beings” (232).

A further way in which *Frankenstein* is linked to Romanticism is in its use of Victor Frankenstein as an isolated, Romantic artist.¹⁶ The Nature/return to Nature theme of Romanticism is evident in the Creature, according to Stephen C. Behrendt, and is something which connects him to women: “the values and sensibilities typically assigned to women during the Romantic period are not unlike those that Shelley assigns the Creature, including instinctive responsiveness to Nature, the impulse toward emotional human bonding (especially apparent in the deLacey episode), and an experiential rather than an abstract empirical way of ‘knowing’” (“Woman” 78).

Another connection between Romanticism and *Frankenstein* commonly cited is its similarity to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. William Walling comments on how *Frankenstein* approaches “the starkness of Coleridge’s vision” of isolation in *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (111) while John Beer compares Shelley’s use of three narrators to Coleridge’s in *Ancient Mariner* (227). In addition, Shelley makes reference to *Ancient Mariner* in Walton’s

¹⁶ He is referred to in the text as an artist, not a scientist.

second letter (Cantor and Moses 128). It also makes a difference that Mary Shelley spent much of her time surrounded by the classic figures of Romanticism, especially Byron and Percy Shelley, but also Coleridge. In this sense the text is an unmarked Romantic text.

The text, however, while containing these Romantic elements, does not actually look favorably on them, with the possible exception of the Nature issue, which is given an unhappy secondary role. In fact, most critics are quick to point out that *Frankenstein* actually appears more of a *critique* of the Promethean figure and the Romantic artist than a validation of them. I want to give a sampling of critical comments about *Frankenstein* as anti-Romantic before I comment on the issue further. William Veeder comments that because Mary Shelley cannot change the men in her life—Romantic idealists—

she takes her only way out—she tells the story of her generation.

In a widening gyre, she moves out from Percy and Godwin as husband and father, to Percy, Godwin, and Byron as Prometheans, to all Romantic males, to almost all men as Romantics.

Frankenstein raises the issue of “our infantine dispositions, which, however they may afterwards be modified, are never eradicated” (201) because regression or rather the failure to mature, is Mary’s theme. (48)

Elisabeth Bronfen, in “Rewriting the Family: Mary Shelley’s ‘Frankenstein’ in its

Biographical/Textual Contexts” comments,

That in *Frankenstein* the desired object made flesh turns out to be a monster, and is accordingly repudiated by its own father, can be interpreted as Mary’s critique of romantic desire. For her, as Margaret Homans argues, “Romantic desire does not desire to be fulfilled, and yet, because it seems both to itself and to others to want to be embodied, the Romantic questor as son is often confronted with a body he seems to want but does not.” (33)

Margaret Homans, in “Bearing Demons: *Frankenstein* and the Circumvention of Modernity,” says that “The romantic quest is always doomed, for it secretly resists fulfillment” (169). She continues, “Thus *Frankenstein* thinks he wants to create the demon, but when he has succeeded, he discovers that what he really enjoyed was the process leading up to the creation, the seemingly endless chain of signifiers that constitute his true, if unrecognized, desire” (170). Therefore, “*Frankenstein* is the story of what it feels like to be the undesired embodiment of romantic imaginative desire” (171). For Homans, the Creature is a reflection of Mary Shelley’s relationship with Percy.

In almost all of the analyses calling *Frankenstein* a critique of Romanticism or the Romantic artist, Percy Shelley takes the role as the prime target of Mary Shelley’s critique, and Mary Shelley sees the problems inherent in being a Romantic figure and shows them through her portrayal of Victor

Frankenstein as a typical Romantic figure whose work causes nothing but destruction because he is unable to accept it as his work. Further, she shows in her novel how the Romantic figure at first can appear sympathetic and appealing, as Victor Frankenstein does when he begins his narrative, but how eventually his own work can undermine this sympathy. Syndy M. Conger, in talking about the shift in sympathy, comments that “the ‘focalized object’ now becomes not only the ‘focalizer’ of the novel but the ‘dominant focalizer,’ the point-of-view character whose ideology becomes the norm by which other characters and ideologies are evaluated” (64). Note the language used here: *dominant*, *shift*, *norm*. All of these terms can be associated with markedness. While Victor Frankenstein was the “dominant focalizer” (unmarked) this role “shifts” (reverses) so that the Creature becomes the “dominant focalizer” (unmarked) and his voice becomes “the norm,” marking Victor Frankenstein’s voice. This shift does not reverse again in the text, even when Victor regains the narrative. Thus, though Victor starts as unmarked, he becomes marked narratively and as a character while the Creature becomes unmarked, at least in terms of narrative.¹⁷ The fact that this shift occurs underscores the critique of Romanticism and the Romantic figures mentioned by the critics above. If there had not been a shift in sympathy, if the reader had felt that Victor was wronged by the Creature, then the

¹⁷ He does not become unmarked as a character, however, despite the audience’s sympathy for him.

Romantic figure would have still remained a positive figure, if tragic.¹⁸

What is the result of this analysis of *Frankenstein* and Romanticism? It gets back to the issue that I discussed in the previous chapter, an issue raised by Battistella: deliberate marking. If we are to read this text as a deliberate critique on Mary Shelley's part of the Romantic figure, then the text is not only marked in terms of Romanticism, but it is marked deliberately in an attempt to show the problems with the unmarked point of view of the Romantics, even if it wasn't called Romantic at the time. It seems to me that the reason *Frankenstein* doesn't fit into any specific category of the day is that it was written not to fit. Its marked author, well-read in the texts of the time—literary and non-literary, fiction, non-fiction, and poetic—was carving her own niche with this text, and that is why it is difficult to classify, why it is marked. Her place in society is reflected by the marking of her text as well as by the marking of the Creature in the text. Shelley was testing the boundaries of the genre through theme and structure and thus, as the Science Fiction classification in particular shows, helping to establish boundaries. She was taking some established forms and improvising on them, something Greenblatt remarks that most artists seem to do: “despite our romantic cult of originality, most artists are themselves gifted creators of variations upon received themes” (229). This comment seems true of Shelley who works with many Romantic and Gothic themes, shaping them (and then reshaping them) as

¹⁸ This analysis is an example of how the levels of markedness overlap, in this case the cultural

she sees fit.

Now before I move on to my next text, I want to make one more observation about *Frankenstein* and cultural markedness. This observation comes from the way society now perceives *Frankenstein*. Let me start with two quotes. The first is from Paula R. Feldman's essay "Probing the Psychological Mystery of *Frankenstein*":

I call [students'] attention to Victor's admission, just after deciding that the Creature is the murderer of young William: "I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror . . . nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave and forced to destroy all that was dear to me" (74). I read this passage aloud, slowly, and then hold up a picture of Boris Karloff portraying the Creature. "Who is this?" "Frankenstein," they gasp, recognizing the frightening implication of that response. (68)

The second quote is from Anne K. Mellor's essay "*Frankenstein* and the Sublime":

Frankenstein gradually becomes the monster he constructs. . . .
[she quotes the same passage as Feldman above] Many students notice that, by the end of the novel, Victor and his Creature have

and the narrative levels.

become indistinguishable—they embody one consciousness, one spirit of revenge, one despair. More literally, Frankenstein has becomes the monster he named: in the popular imagination informed by the cinematic and comic book versions of Mary Shelley's novel, his name, Frankenstein, has become the monster's. (103-4)

Both critics refer to the same idea—Frankenstein and the Creature are identical; they share a name. In terms of markedness, there has been a neutralization between the unmarked Victor Frankenstein and the marked Creature such that the unmarked term can stand for either the creator or the creature. This neutralization occurred *after* the publication of *Frankenstein*, once the novel worked its way into popular culture, and the change indicates the way in which society affects changes in markedness.¹⁹

The second text I want to focus on is *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner, a novel which, like *Frankenstein*, can be looked at in terms of deliberate marking. Faulkner, usually labeled a Modernist, fits into his literary world in a way that none of the other authors I'm focusing on can. The first, and one of the main reasons, is that Faulkner is a white male and thus belongs to the group of dominant, unmarked writers. He doesn't possess an ethnic or gender feature.

¹⁹ This neutralization is also rather ironic, since one of the major issues in the text is Frankenstein's refusal to acknowledge his offspring. From the reader's perspective, they share a name and are thus indelibly related, despite Frankenstein's efforts to deny his Creature.

There is little questioning that the white male writer is the dominant, especially since one of the most common critiques of the canon is that it is filled almost exclusively by “dead white guys.”²⁰

A second way in which Faulkner fits into his literary world is in the way in which he is categorized. Often considered a major figure of literary Modernism, Faulkner evidently is unmarked in this category as well. What needs to be examined here is *why* he is unmarked. To explain this, however, I need first briefly to explain Modernism and its unusual place as a literary school. According to R. B. Kershner, “Modernism, unlike most other major literary movements, was represented not by a particular style and structure in literary works, but by the search for an individual style and structure” (45). Thus unlike Gothic fiction, with its typical settings and types of characters, or Romantic literature, with its Promethean figures, Modernist works vary from writer to writer in terms of theme and style. In fact, Kershner continues his discussion of Modernism by commenting that “the fact that modernist art has its own accepted academic canon and rationale tends to disguise the fact that it began as a series of ceaseless avant-garde experiments that constituted an attack on tradition and in some ways on art itself” (45). Thus what is today considered “typical” Modernist work was at the time called anti-tradition. Artists considered Modernist—Joyce, Pound, Woolf, Eliot, etc.—strove to write in an anti-traditional manner. In this sense they made

²⁰ This trend is being changed now, but there is still a decided dominance of white male authors in

themselves marked. In the case of the novel, they marked themselves by experimenting with style: “a multitude of experiments produced fiction with strange or multiple narrators and unusual styles and methods of narration, culminating in the stream of consciousness pioneered by Dorothy Richardson, Woolf, and Joyce and further developed by Faulkner” (45). The common bond of Modernist authors was their attempt to make their work unique. In any event, the main thing to note about Modernism and its novelists is that they wanted to turn from “realism and humanistic representation towards style, technique, and spatial form in pursuit of a deeper penetration of life” (Bradbury and McFarlane 25). As a result Modernists at the time in which they wrote strove to make themselves different from society, to mark themselves. To be part of a community of Modernist writers, one essentially had to step away from the popular public and write experimentally, even if it meant living poorly. Modernists consciously isolated themselves and their work from the mainstream of the art world, making themselves Other.

The irony of this position is, of course, that today unmarked Modernists were often very marked at the time they wrote their major works. Faulkner, for example, had difficulty selling his texts because they were not written in a traditional style and were rejected not only by most readers, but by many publishers as well. In fact, Dianne L. Cox notes that until Hal Smith formed a

the canon.

publishing company and offered Faulkner a contract for *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner was in danger of not having it published by Harcourt, Brace, the company originally scheduled to publish it (xi-xii). His lack of popularity was a result of how marked the style of his novels is compared to realistic fiction. Even today, there is an element of the marked author attached to Faulkner and most Modernists. As Kerschner notes, the “great bulk of novels published today, just as in 1922 [the height of Modernism], are standard examples of realism, neither modernist or postmodern” (63). Thus, when people go to the store to buy a novel to read, most don’t reach for a Faulkner or another Modernist text. Rather, they look for something realistic. The place in which Faulkner and Modernists are unmarked is in the literature classroom and when talking about the movement of Modernism, not in popular culture.²¹

Some critics, in fact, do not consider Faulkner to be a Modernist. Rather, they see him, as Malcolm Bradbury explains in *The Modern American Novel*, as pre-eminently a novelist of that distinct region of the United States, the South: a complex late product of its romance tradition, its celebrations of heroism and chivalry, its idealisms To others he is, rather, one of the great figures of internal modernist experiment—a writer with the range, capacities, and formal preoccupations we associate with Joyce, Proust, or Virginia Woolf,

²¹ The issue of privileging may be applicable here. Though “literature” is marked, it is still seen as

an experimenter, a symbolist, a witness to modern exile. (111-2)

Because of his southern roots, Faulkner is often classified as more of a Southern writer than as a Modernist. Certainly his texts deal with characters distinctly southern. But does Faulkner's "southern-ness" mean that he cannot also be considered a Modernist? They do not appear to be mutually exclusive styles, and so I would argue, as Bradbury does later in his text, that they are not and that Faulkner is a Modernist who writes from his area, the southern United States.

With Faulkner established as a Modernist author, I want to look now at his novel *As I Lay Dying* and how it stands up both as a Modernist text and as a text in its time. One of the most noticeable aspects of *As I Lay Dying* is its narrative structure: it contains fifty-nine passages from fifteen different points of view, it varies between elevated and colloquial speech—sometimes within the same passage—and it is narrated primarily in present tense. Each three of these features is decidedly unusual. Warwick Wadlington in *As I Lay Dying: Stories out of Stories*, in talking about Faulkner's "innovations in style and form," comments that "In general, . . . Faulkner's innovations have been explained as modernist representations of the dynamic nature of individual consciousness or the flux of reality" (21). Later in his text, when talking about the type of characters in *As I Lay Dying*, he says,

Much of what is called high modernist literature . . . challenges this

privileged over less literary texts.

convention of easy identification by having protagonists with whom fewer people can identify and who may be uncomfortable to live with even if we identify with them to some degree. Addie and Darl are cut from such modernist cloth: intelligent and sensitive, but unconventional, not easy to understand, and manifesting a streak of cruelty. (62-3)

In fact *As I Lay Dying* takes the issue of identifying with a protagonist to an extreme because it is difficult to argue that one character is truly the protagonist when there are so many different voices adding to the story. There are a couple of possible main characters: Darl, for example, is sometimes called the protagonist because he has the most narrative passages, but he is often discounted because of his descent into madness as the story progresses as well as because he is not necessarily sympathetic; Addie, as the “I” of the title, too, often becomes a possible protagonist, but, again, her narrative, as Wadlington points out, is not sympathetic; finally, Cash is sometimes labeled the protagonist, and certainly at the end he seems sympathetic, but he has few narrative passages and does not seem to dominate the text as both Darl and Addie do.

I tend to agree with Wadlington and other critics who see no clear protagonist, something which “may increase to the point of detachment” the distance the readers feel from the family (62). The lack of a clear protagonist certainly helps to solidify *As I Lay Dying*’s position as an unmarked piece of

modernist fiction. It also helps to isolate the text from realism, which uses a single main character. The extreme isolation of the Bundren family from other characters from each other generally helps to emphasize how marked the text is. Even as the Bundrens strive together to get Addie to Jefferson to bury her, they go for their own reasons more than to honor the promise Anse made to her—Dewey Dell for the abortion, Anse for the new teeth, Vardaman for the train. And narratively, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, the isolation is felt strongly because there is narrative overlap uncommon to most multi-narrator texts, which, despite separate narrators, exchange sections of the story to tell. In *As I Lay Dying*, it is as if no one trusts the others to tell the story properly. Thus there are several accounts of Whitfield's arrival, Darl's interaction with Addie before he and Jewel leave, as well as other events. At all three levels of markedness, the Modernist aspect of the text, its marking in relation to realism, is felt.

But Faulkner is, perhaps, the easiest of the main authors I'm working with to classify in terms of markedness. The final two authors, Jean Rhys and Louise Erdrich, and their novels *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Tracks*, offer different problems in terms of cultural markedness. I will begin with Jean Rhys.

One of the most notable issues surrounding Rhys is how to classify her. When I first encountered her work, it was through a Caribbean literature and history class. In the class we discussed various themes related to different Caribbean texts, most notably the theme of people leaving the islands, usually

voluntarily. Since that class I have done extensive research on Jean Rhys, and in particular her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and I have seen the trouble some people have classifying her. Texts containing critical analyses of her novels range from Bruce King's collection *West Indian Literature*, to Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940*, to Jack I. Biles' *British Novelists Since 1900*. The primary split is between Rhys as a British writer and Rhys as a Caribbean writer, though there are also references to her in terms of feminist, modernist, postmodernist, and postcolonial writing. I'm going to focus on the primary split, discussing the others as they affect labeling her as Caribbean or British.

One of the difficulties in labeling Rhys either British or Caribbean is that she lived in both places for many years. Born in Dominica the daughter of a Creole mother and a Welsh father, she spent the first seventeen years of her life on that island. At the age of seventeen, however, she left Dominica for England. For the rest of her life, she would live either in England or on the European continent and visit Dominica only once, in 1936 (when she was forty-six years old). The four novels she published before *Wide Sargasso Sea*—*Voyage in the Dark*, *Quartet*, *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*, and *Good Morning, Midnight*—are often considered highly autobiographical novels, especially *Quartet* and *Voyage in the Dark*, and have very little to do with the Caribbean except that the main characters are often expatriate islanders struggling to deal with Europe.

So how should Rhys be classified? Those calling her British do so because

of her time spent in Britain and Europe, surrounded by British writers—most notably Ford Maddox Ford. They point to her having a Welsh father and to her having lived most of her life in Europe, having married a European and two British men, and being white²²—part of the colonizers’ group. Those arguing for the Caribbean classification point to her having spent her formative years in Dominica and how she never seemed to lose her desire to return to the “ideal” Caribbean she remembered. Further, they point to her main characters, many of whom are exiled West Indians having difficulty adjusting to the colder European climates but unable to return to the islands they consider home, much as Rhys herself felt. And finally, her last novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* presents what appears to be a validation and an explanation of the misunderstood, victimized Creole woman portrayed as a crazy monster in *Jane Eyre*. Helen Carr, in her text *Jean Rhys*, comments that “*Wide Sargasso Sea* appeared, by no means coincidentally, at the time when the possible existence of something called West Indian literature was first being recognized” (14-5). In this sense the novel fits into post-colonial studies of Caribbean literature with a focus on particular themes: “the journey, the break in a life, isolation, loss” (15). Yet despite the criticism of her as a Caribbean author,

In Caribbean writing she has an ambiguous and marginal place,
just as her sense of herself as a Caribbean was always ambivalent

²² Critics such as Kamau Brathwaite believe that Rhys’ white background makes it impossible to

and insecure: a white Creole (if she was entirely white, something of which she was increasingly uncertain), with a Welsh father, who came to Europe at seventeen, she had memories but perhaps not roots, or perhaps only memories of rootlessness. (16)

The ambiguous nature of her own life is reflected by the difficulty critics have categorizing her. It is also reflected in her characters who never seem to belong to a place or a group. Rhys' biographical features are in some ways imbedded in her works, particularly her feelings of isolation.

It should be noted here too that those critics who try to label her British often have even more difficulty than those labeling her Caribbean because Rhys is quite different from "typical" British authors of her era. Carr comments that "In the British tradition 'indolence' and 'licentiousness' are the qualities that mark the difference from Englishness, and even critics who pay virtually no attention to Rhys's Caribbean origin brand her [texts] with these tropes of otherness" (14). So even those wishing to call Rhys British find her marked in terms of British writers.

Ultimately, I think that deciding how to classify Rhys is less important than realizing that, no matter how critics try to classify her, she will be marked. As Carr indicates, "Jean Rhys cannot be considered exclusively as a Caribbean writer, or as a woman writer, a novelist of the demi-monde, or as a modernist. She

classify her as a West Indian author (Carr 16).

is all of those, but being all of those, none fit her as unproblematic labels” (xiv). In other words, she and her texts, like the novel *Frankenstein*, have elements of each type yet is not completely a part of them. Rather than try to pigeon-hole Rhys with a label of Caribbean writer or feminist or British or Modernist, I think it is much more fruitful, as Carr indicates, to see her as a composite of all of them. She was influenced by Modernists and by her childhood in Dominica as well as by the time she spent in England and continental Europe. And the amalgam that she is comes through in her texts and leads to some of the problematic readings of her most critically acclaimed text, *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Note that Carr’s comment refers to Rhys not just in terms of nationality but in terms of literary movements. Like Faulkner, Rhys is usually classified as a Modernist, in part because of her relationship with her mentor Ford Maddox Ford. Ford, often called an impressionist within the modernist movement, is very closely connected to Rhys. Todd K. Bender, in “Jean Rhys and the Genius of Impressionism,” comments that “*Wide Sargasso Sea* owes much to Ford and his fellow impressionists and deserves to stand with impressionist masterpieces like *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, and *The Good Soldier*” (93-4). In particular, the dreamlike quality of much of the narrative in *Wide Sargasso Sea* points to her as an impressionistic Modernist. But her texts are not completely impressionist. So though part of this Modernist style, she is still marked in it. Part of the reason may be that by the time *Wide Sargasso Sea* was published in 1966, the height of

Modernism had passed, though texts were obviously still influenced by it.

Wide Sargasso Sea itself bears some unusual marks. Originally conceived of by Rhys as the story of “‘The First Mrs. Rochester.’ I mean, of course, the mad woman in ‘Jane Eyre’” (Rhys *Letters* 153), the novel is often labeled as such without further insightful commentary. As such it would stand merely as a marked version—or revision—of *Jane Eyre*. Yet the text moves far beyond its basic connection to Brontë’s novel, becoming more a commentary on the role of the Caribbean Creole woman married to an anonymous British second son for her money.²³ In fact what the critics do, by calling the husband’s character Rochester despite the fact that he is anonymous, is make the same mistake in assuming *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a British text (or at least British wannabe) that the husband makes in assuming that Antoinette is interchangeable with British women. He renames her Bertha despite her objections, because that name makes him more comfortable than the exotic Antoinette, “Because it is a name I’m particularly fond of” (Rhys, *WSS* 135). And putting either the text or the character in that category forces on a straight jacket that doesn’t fit very well. Thus the marked nature of both the text and Antoinette increase by the application of a label that doesn’t fit. Because *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a type of revision of *Jane Eyre*, it takes on a marked position in the canon in which *Jane Eyre* has been a staple for many years. There are two reasons for this marked status. First, it is a type of revision of *Jane Eyre*

²³ Note that the Rochester figure in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is indeed anonymous.

and thus often isn't seen as being as "novel" as a novel is supposed to be.²⁴

Secondly, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, published in 1966, is only thirty-four years old and only beginning now to work through the issue of age that plays a decided influence in the field of English language literature. These two features, on top of the difficulty critics have classifying Rhys and her works, make *Wide Sargasso Sea* decidedly marked.

The isolation here is interesting. Because critics try to categorize Rhys, her novel, and her characters, they hinder her from being a unique individual. Yet she remains isolated from the "true" categories she is placed in because, despite being placed there, there is always a reason to say she doesn't fit. Like the Creole women of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys tends to be isolated into an area where a true reflection of herself, and thus her identity, is impossible to come by. She is the Other, like her characters and her texts.

The final author I want to talk about is Louise Erdrich and her novel *Tracks*. One of the primary issues surrounding Louise Erdrich, and for that matter, most Native American authors, is a question of the definition. What constitutes a Native American author, and, further, Native American literature? Is there such a thing as Native American literature—in the singular—or is it Native American literatures—plural—as some critics have begun to call it? These

²⁴ A more clearly marked situation resembling the *Jane Eyre*/*Wide Sargasso Sea* connection is Alexandra Ripley's novel *Scarlett*, a sequel to Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. This

questions present issues still being worked out in Native American studies.

According to Geary Hobson in the Introduction to *The Remembered Earth*,

In terms of politics and sociology it appears there are several ways of defining Indians: 1) the Indian tribe's, or community's, judgment, 2) the neighboring non-Indian communities' judgment, 3) the federal government's judgment, and 4) the individual's judgment. There are obvious pitfalls involved when anyone assumes an absolute position in terms of any of these viewpoints, though I must admit that I am partial to believing the first of these definitions is the most essential. (8)

There are further, according to Charles Hudson, "three essential criteria for 'Indian-ness' – 1) genetic, 2) cultural, and 3) social" (qtd. in Hobson 8) For example, must a Native American author have a certain "amount" of Indian blood to be considered Native American, despite the fact, as Robert L. Berner explains, "one of the most attractive features of traditional tribal life was the assumption of tribal members that their superiority was not racial but tribal" (2) and that often people were adopted into tribes. Further, does someone who has more Indian blood but does not associate with his/her tribe deserve to be considered Native American while someone who possesses less blood yet participates in the tribe does not? What about those who learn of their heritage, their "blood" and then go

situation is more marked because there is no attempt made to distance the sequel from the original

to research that tribal culture? In addition, does a Native American have to be on the rolls to be a Native American or carry a card saying he/she is Native American?²⁵ What does it mean to be a Native American author? Geary Hobson's feelings on this issue are that

. . . to most Native Americans today, it is not merely enough that a person have a justifiable claim to Indian blood, but he or she must also be at least somewhat socially and culturally definable as Native American.

. . . I feel that in the final analysis the most important concern is not whether one is "more" Indian than his fellow-Indian; it is much more important that both recognize their common heritage, no matter to what differing degree, and that they strive to join together for the betterment of Native Americans – as well as other people – one-eighth blood as well as full-blood, "unenrolled" as well as "enrolled." (9)

This position seems to be the most logical, for it does not exclude people on the basis of a single feature, such as the one-drop rule for African Americans does, but rather looks at several features in the determination of "Indian-ness."

Louise Erdrich, as Berner comments, identifies "with her Chippewa

text.

²⁵ Jack Forbes' short story "Only Approved Indians Can Play: Made in USA" is a good ironic treatment of this issue.

ancestors even though they are heavily outweighed in her genes by Europeans and French Canadians” because she feels that when “even a small degree of Indian ‘blood’ and (presumably) tribal culture is immersed in a society and culture that are predominantly non-Indian even a slight Indian cultural heritage assumes an importance all out of proportion to its degree” (4). The feature—however faint—given by this blood makes her associate with the marked part of her heritage to a large extent. Certainly in English departments Louise Erdrich fits into Native American literature: she, N. Scott Momaday, and Leslie Marmon Silko are the three major names brought up as Native American authors and from the perspective of English departments, these authors are clearly unmarked Native American writers.²⁶ But is what makes her Native American her blood, her identifications with her tribe, or her novels’ subject matter?

This question points me to the second part of my original question: what constitutes Native American literature? If an author is identified with a Native American culture is *all* his/her work then Native American, even if the subject matter is not or only peripherally Native American. Erdrich’s text *The Beet Queen* comes under this scrutiny. If we agree that she is a Native American author—and she is certainly one in most circles—and the subjects of her novels *Tracks*, *Love Medicine*, and *The Bingo Palace* are all focused on Native Americans, then they

²⁶ Slowly others are beginning to be brought up with these three, but there is still a tendency among non-Native American scholars to associate Native American literature with a small number of authors.

are Native American texts—unmarked in terms of their content. *The Beet Queen*, however, while part of the same series as the other three novels, does not focus on the Anishnaabe tribe as the other texts do. Instead, its focus is on Germans in the town of Argus, not too far from the reservation. The connections to other characters in *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* are there, but those characters are not the focus of *The Beet Queen*. So is *The Beet Queen* a Native American text? Most would argue not, and this argument is based on the feature of non-Native American characters taking center stage in the text.²⁷ So just because an author is Native American doesn't mean all of his/her texts are.

Some critics have attempted to define “Native American themes” in order to define Native American literature. Berner, while finding it difficult to pinpoint themes, does note that the number four seems to permeate much Native American literature (59).²⁸ Many assume Native American literature is “natural”—i.e. nature focused. Louis Owens comments that “For the contemporary Indian novelist—in every case a mixedblood who must come to terms in one form or another with peripherality as well as both European and Indian ethnicity—identity is a central issue and theme” (5). Susan Berry Brill de Ramírez, among other critics, attributes orality to Native American literatures, saying that most Native

²⁷ There is not a consensus on this idea. Hobson comments that “To insist that Indians write only ‘Indian’ poems or books is just as myopic as wishing Joseph Conrad had written ‘Polish’ novels. Just as non-Indian writers have found it profitable to write about Indians, so should Native American writers have that same freedom” (9).

²⁸ The number is prevalent in many tribes’ mythology and folklore, just as the numbers three, seven, and twelve are prevalent in many European myths and folk tales.

American texts need to be approached conversively—"the conjunctive reality of traditional storytelling through both its transformational and regenerative power (conversion) and the intersubjective relationality between the storyteller and listener (conversation)" (6-7). Her argument seeks to separate Native American literatures from what she sees as the Western theoretical tradition of distancing the reader from the text. Brill de Ramírez's reasoning is that most Native American texts are heavily influenced by orality.²⁹ Of Louise Erdrich, she says

mixed blood writers who straddle these domains in their own heritages tend to write in ways that demonstrate a varying range of both conversive and discursive literary structures. Ruppert comments on *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich (Anishinabe): "What we have is a novel, a Western structure, whose task it is to recreate something of a Native oral tradition. Erdrich uses a Western field of discourse to arrive at a Native perspective." (212)

The same can be said of *Tracks*, but in that novel we have an added issue—that of the historical novel. With this addition, we see a clear-cut novel form but imbedded in the novel is an equally clear orality represented by Nanapush who tells his story to a specific audience, Lulu. We also see how changing times affect the mixedbloods as Pauline does not narrate to an audience—conversive versus discursive in this novel. From this point of view, we're looking at Louise Erdrich

²⁹ And in fact she comments that *all* texts are at some level influenced by orality but that Western

straddling American and Native American literature, much like Rhys does between British and Caribbean, if for different reasons. Yet Erdrich would be marked in American literature while unmarked in Native American whereas Rhys is marked by everyone.

Overwhelmingly, Louise Erdrich presently takes a position as an unmarked Native American writer according to most critics—Native and non-Native. Native American literature is a field still growing, and so Erdrich, whose novels were published starting in the 1980's still has to undergo the test of time to see if she will remain an unmarked Native American writer. The same is true of her main "Native" texts—*Tracks*, *Love Medicine*, and *The Bingo Palace*.

Clearly the cultural level of markedness deals with many issues related to authors' and texts' place in their times. An author's relationship with his/her society, the themes and styles an authors uses, and other elements affecting how the texts are perceived in society all contribute to analyzing texts on the cultural level. The theme of isolation comes out here. It seems that how isolated an author is from the dominant literary style of the time, the more isolated characters in the texts will appear, and, sometimes, the more isolating the narrative structure is. Faulkner, by far the least marked of the authors in terms of his society, had to force features on his work. By experimenting with techniques, he was able to isolate himself from the mainstream in ways that the other authors I have

texts have become more separated from orality because of the written tradition that has developed.

discussed did not have to. They were marked already, by their gender and by their various cultural backgrounds. All of the cultural markedness is reflected to some extent in the texts written by these authors.

Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation has been to examine the linguistic concept of markedness and how it can be used in the analysis of literature. Because markedness is a concept that uses oppositions as the basis of its ideas, I chose to examine texts that contain an inherent oppositional structure: multiple-narrator novels. This type of novel allowed me to begin with a basic narrative opposition, which I did in Chapter 2, and from there expand out to other levels in which oppositions are visible in the texts: textual and cultural. These last two levels, while less concrete in terms of how the oppositions are structured, help to reveal how the themes of isolation and otherness are visible throughout each text.

The main idea that sets literary use of markedness apart from its linguistic counterpart is how distinctive features are used. In literary markedness, often a bundle of features is needed to explain why a narrator or a character or a novel or an author is marked.¹ A bundle of features is important because a single feature, unless it is truly distinctive, as in the case of verb tense in realistic narrative or madness at the textual level, will not force a character or a narrator out of the label “normal” or “natural.” *Tracks*’ character markings from the textual level can clarify this point. Though Pauline is a marked character, it is not just her mixed-blood feature that makes her marked, though this feature is part of the bundle of

features she possesses. Her rejection of Anishnaabe life and her lying are other features she possesses that mark her. The bundle of the three, along with her embracing of Catholicism, makes her marked. A look at Nanapush's character helps underline how the bundle of features works. He also possesses the feature of lying, albeit for different purposes, and he is an unmarked character. If a single feature forced every character to be marked, then no character would be unmarked because like fingerprints, all characters possess some feature to show their difference from the rest of the world.

For some characters, such as the husband in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, this difference leads to a discomfort with the world. Though unmarked in Jamaican society, the husband feels his difference from that society acutely and ends up taking out his discomfort on his new wife. For other characters, the difference is not enough, leading them to strive to be more distinct from their society. This situation is the case in *Frankenstein*, in which both Walton and Victor Frankenstein strive to do something that will make them heroic in society. Being marked as a hero is quite different from being marked as an Other in society. To be marked as a hero, one doesn't lose the connection to society. Instead, society embraces the hero. In the case of the Other, the isolation from society is distinct, and in each of the novels I examined in this dissertation, the isolation usually is

¹ Though linguistics does use the concept of bundles of features, in phonetics for example, it is usually only a single distinctive feature that is part of the opposition between phonemes.

physical at the end because the marked Other is something society attempts to rid itself of or at least to keep out of view as much as possible.

In terms of the cultural level of markedness, the desire to be more distinct from society is also evident, especially in the case of artists who would not normally be considered marked. Faulkner certainly shows how modernist authors wished to be isolated from the popular realistic fiction of their day. To accomplish this difference, this isolation, they devised unusual styles of writing. I would argue that the typically unmarked authors, generally white males, are more likely to challenge writing conventions because the typically marked authors, women and minorities, are more focused on gaining a voice, on being published, than on challenging styles.

The themes of isolation and otherness are where the main benefit of markedness comes up for literary analysis, for markedness offers concrete ways of examining both isolation and otherness in texts. The marked part of the opposition by definition is the Other: it is “unnatural” or “abnormal” and thus does not have as much freedom of movement as the unmarked part of the opposition. This lack of freedom, indicated by a distinctive feature, isolates the marked. Thus on the narrative level in realistic fiction, the marked narrator is isolated by the distinctive feature of not using past tense, and this narrative isolation can in turn indicate a textual-level isolation of that character. Certainly in the case of Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* this feature is key.

In situations in which the realistic unmarked verb tense does not isolate the marked—either because the narrators all use the realistic tense or because no one does (in non-realistic fiction)—different distinctive features indicate the marked. This difference is evident in *As I Lay Dying*, in which most of the characters use present tense as the primary narrative tense. The distinctive features in this case are not based on verb tense but rather on style. Each character is bound up in the story being told except Darl and Addie. In Darl's case, he is often absent for the narratives he tells, turning his narrative into a type of third person narrative rather than first person. His style isolates him from the rest of the narrators. In Addie's case, the narrative comes after she has died in the chronology of the novel, though the actual location of the narrative in time is uncertain, partly because she is one of the few narrators to use past tense up to that point in the novel. Further, her passage adds nothing to the events of the text, though it does reveal more about her relationship with her children. Her narrative style, different as it is from Darl's in many ways, also isolates her, marking her narrative. And both Addie and Darl are further marked by their use of standard English, a feature only they possess in the narrative. Again, the analysis hinges on a bundle of features.

In other narratives in which verb tense does not indicate which narrator is marked, how sympathetic a narrator is and where the narrators' passages are located can also indicate which narrator is marked. For Pauline, for example, had

she not narrated in present tense at the very end of the text, the fact that she is both unsympathetic and secondary would have marked her. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, on the other hand, it is only the final narrative passage that marks Antoinette, for she is more sympathetic than her husband and she is also the first narrator. Yet the distinctiveness of her final narrative is such that she cannot be anything but the marked narrator, particularly since her sanity is questionable.

So after all is said and done, what is the purpose of using markedness to examine ideas that already to some extent exist? As far as I am concerned, markedness has allowed me to formalize a way of talking about the isolated and Other characters in texts. If I can figure out what distinctive features mark characters or narrators or authors, I can come to a better understanding of how the text is structured and start to understand some of the parallels between the narrative, the textual, and the cultural levels of the text. And even if I choose to look at a text that does not possess a narrative structure that can be examined using markedness because it has only one narrator or narrative voice, I think that I can use the concept to look at the other two levels. In Chapter 1, for example, I brought up the texts *Paradise Lost* and *Jane Eyre* when discussing textual issues of markedness. The themes of isolation and otherness will always be available for examination using markedness, whether a text can be examined on two or three levels.

Further, I don't think that the themes of isolation and otherness are the only themes that markedness can help examine, though they are the most obvious ones. The issue of physical versus internal features and how society deals with those two very different marks is just one other, and I discussed it to some extent in *Frankenstein* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, both of which deal with the issue in very different ways. Much more can be done with markedness and its uses in literary analysis, and I realize that I have only begun to scratch the surface of its usefulness. In particular, the concept of neutralization offers much potential for study, especially in terms of how literature itself acts to neutralize the feature of time or history, as I mentioned briefly in Chapter 4. What I have tried to accomplish here is the beginnings of a way to use markedness in literary analysis.

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