THE ART OF DIALOGUE
IN THE SACRED FOUNT BY HENRY JAMES
AND MARTEREAU BY NATHALIE SARRAUTE

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ABSTRACT:

Conversation in *Martereau* is largely an affair of platitudinous and banal statements masking the antagonistic content of the subconversation. Consisting mainly of dialogue, *The Sacred Fount* presents the polished talk that evolves as the characters attempt to unravel an enigma. Though the aims of both authors are very different in many respects, Sarraute and James share a common fascination with the way in which language constitutes a means of dissimulation rather than communication. Dialogue is consequently a problematic element of both novels, registering the drama of the unspoken through commonplace remarks, echoes, and pauses which suggest the presence of a discrete psychological reality.

In seeking to renew the dialogue form in the novel, both authors depict dramatic situations in which speech functions as a means of manipulation. The nature of reported discourse in the two novels will be discussed using Jakobson's six-part model of communication, examining in detail the constitutive elements of Jamesian and Sarrautian conversation. The stylistic traits of each author will be considered as a function of the specific constraints of indirect and duplicitous communication.

In juxtaposition to the "trompe-l'oeil," or illusory, reality presented in the dialogue, a pattern of repetitive social exchanges becomes apparent as characters make contact in conversation. While James is most interested in the way in which covert strategies are expressed in speech through implication and allusion, Sarraute examines the effect of speech upon the listener: in both cases, indirect language is perceived as accomplishing
certain acts and producing unpredictable effects.

The interplay between hidden strategies in James or tropistic activity in Sarraute and dialogue becomes more evident in the narrative discourse, which develops the suggestions and possibilities inherent in the reported speech. The polyphony of the dialogue form is dominated in the narrative discourse by an obsessive observer, who, in the case of *The Sacred Fount*, is patently unreliable, or at best, unduly sensitive, as in *Martereau*. An examination of the various forms of narrative intervention, from sporadic inquit interpolations to sustained commentary, suggests the contribution of each novelist in innovating the dialogue form.

The post-Victorian experimental novel of Henry James is considered in relation to the *nouveau roman*, the latter illuminating the autonomous play of language in *The Sacred Fount*, which documents—if not "l'aventure d'une écriture"—the adventure of the creative imagination. Placed in parallel with the more traditional dialogue form, Sarraute's work is seen to exemplify the subconscious impulsions generated by the nature of the dialogue. Each author sheds light on the artistic project of the other: incipient, subconscious motivations are brought to light in the Jamesian text, while reported speech is revealed as having a major significance in Sarraute's fiction.
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...the value I wished most to render and the effect I wished most to produce were precisely those of our not knowing, of society's not knowing, but only guessing and suspecting and trying to ignore, what "goes on" irreconcileably, subversively, beneath the vast smug surface.

Henry James, The Art of the Novel, (pp. 77-78)

Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est de découvrir des tropismes dans ce qui apparaît comme insignifiant, inintéressant, dans une conversation banale, dans des mots anodins, dans des situations où l'on peut croire qu'il ne se passe rien. C'est quand il ne se passe rien que cela m'intéresse de voir ce qui se passe en réalité.

Nathalie Sarraute, interview with Besser,(p. 287)
INTRODUCTION:

In tracing the literary genealogy of the nouvelle romancière Nathalie Sarraute, one is likely to invoke the names of such diverse writers as Proust, Joyce, Dostoevsky and Kafka—novelists whom Sarraute acknowledges as forming part of the tradition leading to her unique conception of the novel. To establish a connection between Sarraute and the American expatriate Henry James is to recognise elements of the nouveau roman in the work of James, and aspects of the novel of manners in Sarraute. Both authors evince a profound distrust of the polished surfaces of social life, exploring a mode of conversation that is as much equivocation as expression.

The discrepancy between what can be articulated by the characters and the authentic substance that continually evades expression constitutes a recurrent element in the work of both James and Sarraute. While this disjunction between conversation and "sous-conversation" figures as a thematic element in the novels of both writers, more importantly, this theme is transformed into a structural principle through the dialogue form. The artistic objectives of both authors, while very different in many respects, converge in their innovative use of dialogue in the experimental novels The Sacred Fount and Martereau.

Written in 1901, The Sacred Fount forms part of a chain of fictions "concerned with fathoming a surrounding world or reducing a series of 'facts',
A novel that examines the analytical adventure of an unreliable first-person narrator, *The Sacred Fount* offers parallels with the *nouveaux romans* of Alain Robbe-Grillet as well as Nathalie Sarraute. The narrowly circumscribed world of the novel, limited in time and setting to one weekend in a country house, as well as the combination of objective detail with highly subjective narrative suggests the distinctive outlines of the French New Novel.

*The Sacred Fount* has often been compared with Sarraute's anti-novel *Portrait d'un inconnu*, which, like the James novel, features a narrator who suspects a vampirical relationship between a father and daughter. To further the parallel, the novel also contains an ambiguous portrait that is interpreted by the narrator. However, the narrator, (unlike the one of *The Sacred Fount*) witnesses few of the conversations between the characters, and consequently there is little direct discourse and objective signs of the reality he hypothesises are few. One of the most fascinating aspects of *The Sacred Fount* is the tension between objective material, given to the narrator by the other characters or suggested by neutral description, and the heightened subjectivity of the narrator's analysis: As James puts it, "As I give but the phantasmagoric I have, for clearness, to make it 

Sarraute's next novel, *Martereau*, stages the drama of a hypersensitive young man, living with his aunt and uncle and observing the consequences of a business deal with an acquaintance named Martereau. In documenting the micro-dramas that occur between the characters, the narrator attempts to sift out the significance of what he sees and hears. Although the narrator becomes involved in the enigma of Martereau's character—whether he is honest or a swindler—the epistemological theme centres rather on the
nature of the hidden content of social intercourse.

Dialogue in a Sarrautian context is relentlessly platitudinous and banal, while the "sous-conversation" embodies the author's vision of the violent emotions that words serve to conceal. Serving to juxtapose a calm "trompe l'oeil" surface reality to the tropistic activity that transpires silently, the dialogue is an essential component of Sarraute's novelistic art. While the triviality of commonplace conversation effectively camouflages tropisms, dialogue is not included merely to underline an ironic contrast between what is said and what is meant. Instead, the dialogue brings forth these tropisms. As Sarraute comments,

It is not, therefore, a question of listing or of revealing banalities as such, as Ionesco has done for example, but rather to show just how these banal statements shield and at the same time reveal tropisms.4

Reported discourse, though recurring sporadically throughout the novel, has nevertheless a major and revelatory significance in Sarraute's fiction.

The challenge of the dialogue form had already been taken up by James in the novel The Awkward Age, consisting almost entirely of dramatic scenes. Jamesian dialogue, rather than discussing the action of the novel, comprises an event in its own right, as the speakers trade in questions, repetitions, and insinuations. Conversation at Newmarch is elevated to a veritable art, as the densely rhetorical pattern of dialogue in the novel illustrates. Even as Sarraute's characters are motivated by a desire for contact with others, James's garrulous weekend guests manifest a need to form alliances, collaborate and compare wits with a variety of interlocutors.

Communication and the failure of communication, form the central issues of each novel, as the epistemological quests of the two narrators are based
on the signs of verbal and non-verbal discourse. Contrary to Saussure's definition, language ceases to be considered primarily as an instrument of communication, but rather as constituting a game with elaborate rules. Each narrator transcribes conversations in which the utterances represent complex discursive strategies whose aim is to communicate in such a way as to avoid the responsibility for what is implied. The particularly significant role of dialogue in each novel will be discussed in the first part of this study, in which Jakobson's functional analysis of speech will indicate the nature of direct discourse found in *The Sacred Fount* and *Martereau*.

The advantage of Jakobson's method of discourse analysis is that it isolates each feature of the speech act in turn, going beyond the material factors of communication such as the speaker, listener and message and suggesting the means by which communication is established (the contact), the world to which it refers (the context), and the language by which it is conveyed (the code). To each feature of the schema, Jakobson attributes the appropriate function as follows:

context/referential

sender/emotive    message/poetic    receiver/conative

contact/phatic

code/metalingual

The form of the utterance is thus derived from the pre-eminent function of the discourse. There are, however, logical flaws in the definitions of the categories. Jakobson defines the referential, emotive and metalingual
functions in terms of subject matter, whereas the phatic function is defined contextually by the speaker's intention, and the conative function by the logical criterion that imperatives lack truth value. The model remains nonetheless an effective means of determining the factors that form the verbal structure of a message, and thus the specific forms of dialogue created by Henry James and Nathalie Sarraute.

A close textual analysis of the elements of speech in each novel will be followed by a brief examination of the speech event in context: that is to say, language as it is determined by such extra-linguistic features as the speaker's intentions, goals and plans. In the light of this pragmatic approach to speech, many points of convergence between the two authors will become evident.

While every significant action is projected or discussed in the dialogue, both narrators are conscious of the way in which meaning continually exceeds expression. The unvoiced content of conversation is represented by both narrators in the form of commentary, in which the gaps traced in speech are supplemented and interpreted. This combination of reported speech and the narrator's speculative commentary engenders highly ambiguous texts that vacillate between objective and subjective presentation. The authority of the narrative voice is undermined in both novels by the polyphony of the dialogue and objective scenic description, for the dialogue introduces a number of viewpoints that tend to subvert the narrator's dominance in the text.

While both authors are preoccupied by the dialogue technique as a mode of representing quotidian social situations, the particular area of interest of each author resides in a different aspect of the communication situation. Whereas James is fascinated by the texture of verbal intercourse
as a highly suggestive vehicle of the speaker's psychology, Sarraute locates the point of interest in the addressee's reactions to such utterances. A comparison of the two novelists in their pursuit of the drama of statement and response thus reveals an inverse relationship; for, while The Sacred Fount provides a detailed transcription of the conversation, suppressing to a great extent the supposed reactions of each character to the utterance, Sarraute, on the contrary, produces conversations in which the meaning is concealed, preferring to concentrate on the psychological reactions to each speech.

Speech acts are foregrounded in the two novels by the absence of other more significant events so that the dialogic event uniting speaking and hearing occupies the pivotal role in both novels. A necessary complement to the dialogue in the novels, the first-person narration orients and often threatens to submerge the alternate viewpoints manifested in the dialogue. This dialectic between reported discourse and commentary is an essential feature of the ambiguous narratives by James and Sarraute.
FOOTNOTES:


2 See Perosa, Bouraoui, Rimmon, and Temple for the parallels between *The Sacred Fount* and *Portait d'un inconnu*.

3 Henry James, cited by Leon Edel in the preface to *The Sacred Fount*, p. xxxi.


All life therefore comes back to the question of our speech, the medium through which we communicate with each other. These relations are made possible, are registered, are verily constituted, by our speech, and are successful (to repeat my word) in proportion as our speech is worthy of its great human and social function; is developed, delicate, flexible, rich—an adequate accomplished fact. The more it suggests and expresses the more we live by it—the more it promotes and enhances life.

Henry James, *The Question of Our Speech*. 1905
THE METALINGUAL FUNCTION: The Investigative Code

Within the detective story structure of each novel, an investigative code is outlined explicitly by the narrators and the characters involved in the mystery. This code posits a set of rules and possible methods of inquiry, and it ultimately specifies the limits of what may be properly discussed without violating the rules set up by the group. The code represents "une règle du jeu non normative, mais productrice,"¹ as it underlies and shapes the form of each investigation, determining the kind of referential material reported and the nature of dialogue as a means of uncovering the object of inquiry.

A practise that might otherwise be considered quite offensive, that is, "to nose about for a relation that a lady has her reasons for keeping secret,"² is transformed by the provisional ethics of the intellectual detective into a business that is "not only quite inoffensive" but "positively honourable" (p. 61) within the investigative code of The Sacred Fount. The rules of the game are further described by Obert as he tells the narrator:

"Resting on the kind of signs that the game takes account of when fairly played—resting on psychological signs alone, it's a high application of intelligence. What's ignoble is the detective and the key-hole." (p. 66)

Thus defined, the investigation is confined to "psychological evidence," that is to say, non-material clues evoked by illustrative analogy rather than fact. The ethical code proposed by Obert has important consequences
for the way in which the narrator carries out the inquiry, for, having
decided that "success in such an inquiry may perhaps be more embarrassing
than failure" (p. 65), the narrator takes into account the delicacy of the
matter and will conduct the investigation accordingly.

The investigative code in The Sacred Fount thus privileges the art of
conversation as a means of uncovering psychological evidence, while requiring
at the same time much circumspection on the part of the observers. Conver­sion in the novel becomes subject to the conflicting tensions of the desire
to unravel the secret and the desire to cover it up: to say it all while
saying nothing. The stylistic consequences of these considerations are many.
Euphemism, allusion, analogy, hyperbole—all rhetorical devices in the novel
work to suggest rather than to reveal the indelicate truth.

In Sarraute's novel, the code determines exactly what kind of evidence is
permissible in the investigation of Martereau. Here psychological evidence
is scarcely admissible: empirical evidence is everything. The commentary
of the narrator is confirmed in the discourse when the uncle expressly defines
the code that circumscribes the character investigation:

"Moi, vois-tu, mon petit, je ne suis pas de la race des rêveurs. 
Tu le sais, ce qui compte pour moi, ce sont les faits. Je me
fiche du reste. Ca ne m'attendrit pas, moi, les points d'honneur,
les airs penchés. Ce qui compte, c'est qu'ils gardent l'argent
et la maison."

In declaring his approach to the problem, the uncle specifically differentiates his own empirical method from the speculative approach of the nar­rator. In the black-and-white universe of the uncle, material evidence
prevails against the fanciful reports of the nephew. When the narrator
reports the success of his decorating business, the uncle strikes back:


In order to communicate with the uncle, the narrator is obliged to return his own coin, to traffic in indisputable facts. The narrator of Martereau differs from his Jamesian counterpart in that he would not agree with Obert that "what's ignoble is the detective and the key-hole," for he certainly spies on occasion; however, the level of activity he observes is entirely different.

As the narrator waits for Martereau to return to his apartment, his consciousness of ulterior motives causes him to transform the act of waiting into high espionnage. The description of physical actions in the passage, rare in Martereau, invests the clipped syntax of the scene with the tension of a spy thriller. The narrator reports,

Pas une seconde à perdre...je grimpe l'escalier quatre à quatre, je n'attends pas l'ascenseur, j'arriverai plus vite à pied...trois étages, la porte à gauche: je sonne.
Personne. Pas le moindre bruit derrière la porte fermée.
Silence tout autour. Je m'assois sur une marche. J'épie...
j'appuie mon visage contre les barreaux de la cage de l'escalier, j'essaie de voir.... Je me rassoï. J'écoute. (pp. 149-50)

Here the narrator concentrates on the facts, describing such details as his movements and the setting, but it is only in the absence of other people that such facts become available to him. With the entry of Martereau, once again the atmosphere becomes clouded with the emergence of tropisms, and "the facts" recede.

Two opposing investigative codes are present in Martereau: each determines
the object of inquiry and the possible means of expression. The narrator compares language to the system of mathematics, in which there are two methods, "...comme, pour certains problèmes, deux procédés: l'un par l'algèbre, l'autre par l'arithmétique." (p. 206) Arithmetic is the method favoured by the narrator, for it comprises "toutes ces données concrètes, sensations, impressions vagues, réminiscences, pressentiments, fluides et courants," while by opposition, algebra is linear and thoroughly logical:

D'un fait à l'autre, la pensée se tend, nette, droite, le plus court chemin. Joignant l'un à l'autre des points exactement situés, elle trace un dessin qui a toute la précision d'une figure géométrique. Il suffit de le regarder: la définition s'impose. Aucun doute n'est possible. (p. 207)

To communicate successfully between these parallel worlds of expression, between algebra and arithmetic, it is necessary to traverse the area of difference between them, entering into the mode of thought of the other. The narrator surrenders his personal vision of the events to the uncle when he temporarily abandons the code of the "sous-conversation" and tropism to examine the problem in the light of the "petit fait vrai." Ironically, the positions of the two characters reverse when the uncle responds to his nephew's straight-forward and rigorously factual account by echoing the narrator's refrain: "Les choses ne sont pas si simples...." (p. 209). That the uncle condescends to use his nephew's language appears quite remarkable, but the uncle reveals secondary motives in employing this code as he declares,

"...nous comprenons tout ça, toutes leurs subtilités, leur 'psychologie'...ça porte d'autres noms maintenant, voilà tout...Moi aussi, j'ai quelque flair, je me suis frotté dans ma vie à pas mal de gens..." (p. 209)
He opens defensively, remarking that he does indeed understand the language he is about to use and further comments that he is quite adept at manipulating it. The fact that the uncle so uncharacteristically enters the nebulous area of psychological analysis is explicable within the context of the entire scene, for he is responding to the gift proffered by his nephew when he assumes the uncle's viewpoint. Furthermore, the uncle perceives conversation as a battle for dominance, and if the enemy should surrender and join forces with him, the situation becomes patently unbalanced. Hence, he is obliged to switch sides if he is to retain his conversational partner, or rather, opponent.
THE METALINGUAL FUNCTION: Questioning the Code

Much of the verbal activity in The Sacred Fount involves reflecting on the nature of the words used, whether by overtly questioning the meaning of an expression or by repeating the words of others. Discourse in which the means of expression is put into question foregrounds the metalingual function, which permits the interlocutors to verify that they are using the same code. The metalingual function becomes apparent in both novels when the characters focus on the linguistic code, by requests for definition, or repetitions, in an attempt to resolve the conflicting realities manifested in the juxtaposition of linguistic codes.

The metalingual function of language predominates when either the speaker or the listener is unsure of the code and requires additional information about the language, much as during the process of language acquisition. The metalingual function is often an important aspect of the quest, as the protagonist confronts a strange world in which a new code is often in effect. The progress of Alice in the marvelous world of Through the Looking-Glass provides a good example of the conditions in which such a focus is necessary. When she encounters Humpty Dumpty, the metalingual function operates with comic effect:

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory'," Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't--till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'"

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument'," Alice objected.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less."
This passage deals with the way in which speakers idiosyncratically transform the code, thus altering the semantic value of words in the language. The situation described above forms a humorous analogue to metalingual activities in *The Sacred Fount*. Despite the fact that the worlds of both novels are peopled by adults, all of whom possess native competence in the languages used, the metalingual function is prominent, for the characters of Henry James and Nathalie Sarraute live in the "ère du soupçon."

Furthermore, the social circles of each novel unite people of similar economic and social strata. The society at Newmarch is an homogeneous society comprised of the upper class: the narrator euphoniously characterises the group as "children of leisure and pleasure and privilege." (p. 61) However, due to the complexities of language and the delicate nature of the topics discussed, this common social background does not always ensure a shared language, since the expressions of each character often present difficulties to the listener.

Social interactions in both novels often consist of repeating and questioning the meanings of words. Characters in *The Sacred Fount*, for example, constantly challenge the lexicon of their conversational partners, reflecting on the words that have been passed to them before choosing either to accept or reject them. Similarly in *Martereau*, repetition within the dialogue of the novel often signals the metalingual preoccupations of the characters, although to a more limited extent.

The characters assembled at Newmarch are all too aware of the way in which they inhabit language. They constantly challenge and assess the expressions used by others in an attempt to clarify the code, which, although based on a common language, is not wholly comprehensible. This
conversational characteristic comes to the forefront in the opening conversation of the novel, in which the narrator discusses with Long the nature of Mrs. Briss' transformation. The narrator fails to reproduce his remarks in direct speech, although he states the gist of his words in the following way: "What I had mainly remembered was that she had been rather ugly. At present she was rather handsome." (p. 5)

Long challenges the narrator's terminology in a way that has wide-reaching implications for the events of the novel, as he remarks, "I'm bound to say I don't quite call it beauty." (p. 6) The terms of the puzzle confronting the narrator—"How could a woman who had been plain so long become pretty so late?"--are thus revised by Gilbert Long's casual disagreement, which modifies the nature of the narrator's search considerably.

While accepting Long's discrimination, the narrator justifies his own interpretation of Mrs. Brissenden's change in appearance by making the following gloss of his vocabulary: "The only thing is that if a woman doesn't grow older she may be said to grow younger; and if she grows younger she may be supposed to grow prettier." (p. 6) The metalingual function has the effect of laying bare the code, and consequently, the spurious logic that governs the narrator's thought becomes readily apparent.

The characters frequently examine the language at their disposal by questioning doubtful expressions:

"...if you mean by 'impressing upon' her speaking to her..." (p. 171)
"...do you mean by my grievance—" (p. 244)
"By the fire I mean..." (p. 277)
"That depends a little—doesn't it?—on what you mean by 'matter'!!" (p. 286)
This fastidiousness with regard to the semantic possibilities of language increases as the novel draws to a conclusion, and all the guests have been initiated into the subtle conversational techniques demanded by the narrator's standard of wit. Jamesian characters heap an excess of innuendo upon the most everyday expressions until the burden threatens to obscure the most evident references. However, these requests for explanation become less innocent inquiries about points of uncertainty than a ploy to induce the speaker to assume full responsibility for his utterance. The epistemological drama in _The Sacred Fount_ is thus played out on an emphatically linguistic level, as the characters must not only explain what they know, but also what they mean by their expressions. Questioning the meaning of words also forms a strategic device for deflecting questioning on more dangerous grounds. Mrs. Brissenden evades the question posed by the narrator in the final scene of the novel regarding Mrs. Server's attention to Mr. Briss—"And yet if she is extravagant—what do you do with it?"—by focusing on the meaning of the attribute "extravagant":

"...it depends, still further, on what you mean by 'extravagant'."

"I mean whatever you yourself meant."

"Well, I myself mean no longer, you know, what I did mean." (p. 315)

Defusing the rather hyperbolic adjective of the narrator, Mrs. Briss succeeds in denying altogether any involvement or interest in the question of Mrs. Server's behaviour.

The game of playing in the interstices of language—trading in obscurities and indirect expression—no longer amuses Mrs. Brissenden, who displays her suspicions of the narrator's arts by continually rejecting his expressions: "What do you call with such solemnity," she inquired,
"our purpose?" (p. 260) On another occasion, raising her eyebrows at the narrator's reference to her "credulity," Mrs. Briss picks up the point, repeating "My credulity?", so that the narrator is obliged to revise his terminology: "Call it then, if you don't like the word, your sympathy." (p. 287) The metalingual function draws attention to the verbal war enacted in conversation in the novel by the thrust and parry of demands for explanation and evasive replies.

A significant proportion of the dialogue in The Sacred Fount consists of the characters echoing words of dubious meaning. Such simple repetition lends the dialogue a static, even tautological appearance, as no new information is presented by the utterance. However, the informative value of the echo is greater than it first appears, for the act of removing the expression from the context of one speaker and inserting it into another effects a considerable alteration in meaning. Bakhtin makes this observation about repetition:

One speaker very often repeats literally an assertion made by another speaker, investing it with a new intention and enunciating it in his own way: with an expression of doubt, indignation, irony, mockery, derision, or the like. 5

As an expression is repeated, it becomes "double-voiced," drawing on the simultaneous presence of two speakers.

The vocabulary of the narrator is frequently taken up by his conversational partners, who often seem to quote his words with the purpose of clarifying the meaning attributed to them. Long counters the narrator's assertion that "Mrs. Brissenden's quite fabulous," as he blankly repeats, "'Fabulous'?" He not only questions the applicability of such a term to Mrs. Briss, he also implicitly denies his involvement in the foregoing
discussion with the narrator. Previously the narrator had set the
bait for his interlocutor, querying, "Do you mean there's nothing in him
[Briss] that strikes you?" (p. 24), but the implications of such a lead-
ing question are manifest to Long, who rejects the terms of the inquiry:

"'Strikes' me—in that boy? Nothing in him, that I know of,
ever struck me in my life. He's not an object of the smallest
interest to me!" (p. 24)

The narrator's choice of the verb "to strike" is significant, for it per-
tains exclusively to his interlocutor's impression without suggesting the
content of the effect. When Mrs. Server employs the same word as an
adverb, the narrator requests a more precise definition of the term:

"How can that be when he's so strikingly in love with his wife?"

I gave her the benefit of the most apparent consideration.
"Strikingly, you call it?" (p. 148)

In another instance, the narrator questions the word "tells"
used to denote a non-verbal indication of something; however, even as he
questions Obert, he recalls that he has used the same term in the same
way earlier: "I challenged it, but I uncomfortably reflected that it
was just what I had myself told Mrs. Brissenden." (p.66) As the conver-
sational stakes mount higher, the incidence of repetition also increases,
since the repetition of key words forms a means of implying dissent. This
pattern of utterance and echo illustrates the verbal tactics of the par-
ticipants in the narrator's game, who learn to fend off questions and
assertions through the simple, non-committal device of repetition. Such
understated requests for definition highlight the density of language in
The Sacred Fount, investing the lexicon with a high degree of suggestion.
In Martereau the fabric of speech presents little interest to the characters, who seldom pause to examine the terms of what is said. However, a constant element of all Sarraute's conversational dramas is the use of irony in the discourse of the characters. Within the social context of conversation, this irony assumes the form of parody, as characters repeat the speech of others, duplicating the code in which the utterance is articulated. The metalingual function of the communication situation predominates in such utterances, for the linguistic context of the original words is indirectly derided.

As the characters take up the words of others in Martereau the parodic function of reported speech comes to the fore. Such double-voiced speech acts are emphasised typographically in the text by the surrounding quotation marks, which not only indicate the presence of an embedded speech act, but also highlight such oral features of speech as emphasis and intonation. The narrator comments on the parodic intent of such reported speech in the opening dialogue, as he comments on the non-verbal context of the speech act:

...elle frétille imperceptiblement et dit sur un ton ironique, en plaçant entre guillemets "gens importants", "grands manitous": Nous étions obligés de recevoir des tas de "gens importants". Nous étions reçus chez des tas de "grands manitous". (p. 7)

Here the satirical intention of the aunt is embodied by the suggestion of quotation marks due to the tonal emphasis in her speech, as she evokes a set of primary speakers for whom the words "grands manitous" carry some weight: her tone explicitly evokes and ridicules the standards of "la doxa"--the cultural standard of correctness--while at the same time alluding to her own elevated social status.
Again as the aunt refers to "une certaine 'élite'" the presence of a double-directed discourse becomes apparent. Bakhtin states that in this double orientation, discourse maintains a double focus, aimed at the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, and simultaneously at a second context of discourse, a second speech act by another addressee.

The words introduced into the characters's speech give rise to a distinctive linguistic phenomenon whereby the uni-directional orientation of the utterance assumes a new intention and becomes double-voiced. In Martereaue the characters are often overtly ironic, challenging the values of the cultural code by introducing expressions "entre guillemets" in order to underscore the divergence between their original usage and that suggested by the new context.

As we have already noted, the reproduction of another person's speech often conveys antagonistic intentions. Leo Spitzer makes the following observation:

When we reproduce in our speech a portion of what our conversation partner said, a change of tone inevitably occurs if for no other reason than that the addressees have been shifted around: the words of the 'other' in our mouths always sound like something foreign, very often with a mocking, exaggerated, or derisive intonation...

The narrator reports the humorous effect that is often obtained by quoting someone else's words, as he describes the dénouement of the scene in which the family goes to view the country house. The aunt and nephew nervously anticipate the uncle's response to what has transpired during the afternoon, when their anxiety is dispelled by a gust of laughter:
"Eh bien, qu'est-ce que vous en dites? Ça ne vous dit rien?... les...les...Il étouffe de rire...les grattoirs...vous avez remarqué quand il a dit, d'un air important: 'Devant les portes il y a ...' il articule difficilement...un fou rire de collégiens nous prend--" (p. 103)

The code adopted by the agent attempting to point out the favourable features of the house is held up to the light in this scene, providing a source of humour for the family. The aunt and nephew join the game of reconstructing the rather absurd assertions of the agent as they recall similar remarks.

"'C'est-à-dire que Madame avait ça dans l'idée... alors elle en avait fait mettre quelques-uns... Elle avait ça dans l'idée...c'est magnifique!....elle avait des visions..." (p. 103)

As the words of the original utterance are repeated, each character produces a commentary to emphasise the comic possibilities of the agent's speech. The orientation toward another speech act serves to reinforce the linguistic solidarity of the family in opposition to all outsiders. Mimicking the agent's stock phrases aids in invoking the latent store of common familial experiences, as the incomplete utterances "en Camargue...la nuit que nous avons passée dans ce village...toi assis sur une chaise..." (p. 103) assert themselves against the embedded speech act.

As we have already noted in the discussion of the investigative code in Martereau, the adoption of another speaker's words, such as the uncle's assimilation of the expression "les choses ne sont pas si simples" or the narrator's use of "les faits:il n'y a que ça qui compte", reflects the metalingual conventions in the novel. However, such double-voiced speech acts also occur throughout the novel with parodic intent, as one character displays another's words in order to mock them. Repetition thus
serves to oppose one form of describing the world to the one held by the speaker, so that conversation remains a locus of security, where the generality of readily recognised and accepted attitudes is reinforced.

§

The Cliché:

"Avec le temps, avec l'âge tout s'arrange." (p. 83)

"One of them—you know the saying--gives the lips, the other gives the cheek." (p. 80)

"De l'argent gagné par moi, "à la sueur de mon front," pensez-donc! Plus rien à demander à personne.... L'indépendence..." (p. 21)

"Well, the way, simply, that the shoe fits." (p. 65)

Despite the varying contexts, languages, and messages of these quotations, the above statements resemble each other in one significant respect: each utterance exploits the linguistic code, drawing on quasi-proverbial truths to confirm the validity of what is said. The commonplace emphasises the universality of the code and thus seems to indicate a point of contact between the characters. However, while the proverbial nature of such utterances underlines and verifies the common linguistic code necessary for communication and signals shared cultural values, the actual expressivity of such statements is minimal. Indeed, silence is often more informative in both novels than the commonplace utterances of the characters, which "often lift no more than a corner of the veil which hides their thoughts." 8

The nature of the "lieu-commun" is thus paradoxical: it appears to
satisfy that "besoin continu et presque maniaque de contact" that motivates the speakers in each novel; however, as Jean Bloch-Michel points out, the "lieu-commun" is "un lieu où nous nous retrouvons en commun, chacun restant étranger à l'autre et sans qu'on nous demande davantage." Language becomes "un moyen de s'isoler plutôt que d'un moyen de se ren­contrer, plutôt un rempart qu'un pont."

In Martereau the lethal possibilities of words demand exceptional care on the part of the speakers, who surrender themselves to the use of the "lieu-commun" and the cliché, "des douilles vides, des bombes désamorcées" (p. 222), which seem to assure peace on the dangerous terrain of conversa­tion. Martereau is the character who manipulates hackneyed ideas and over­worked expressions the most successfully, lulling the narrator into a state of complacency and confidence.

Martereau leads him through the family photo album, creating a series of homely images of family life. In this way he transforms the deathbed scene of his father into a number of homespun anecdotes about aging:

"Il est mort de sa belle mort, il s'est éteint de vieillesse à quatre-vingt-neuf ans entouré de ses petits-enfants et arrière-petits-enfants. À quatre-vingt ans, il me disait: 'Mais ce n'est pas possible, je vieillis, ma parole, je deviens dur d'oreille.'" (p. 86)

The narrator comments on the ability of the cliché to blunt reality, to transform it into a storehouse of innocuous images, stating, "Nous rions doucement. Tout est pour le mieux. La mort apprivoisée vient comme une bête familière se faire donner de bonnes tapes amicales, manger dans notre main." (p. 86) Even as the topic turns to more painful matters, language
classifies them into comprehensible categories—

...il y a eu des coups durs, des deuils, des maladies, des revers de fortune, de bons vrais malheurs qui peuvent s'étaler au grand jour, que tout le monde comprend— (p. 87)

and momentarily, the subterranean movement of tropisms is halted. Martereau commands this inauthentic level of language to advantage, causing the narrator to believe in the possibility of "des malheurs comme de grands blocs épais et lourds, aux contours nets, au dessin pur" (p. 87), of a language which is free from the blurring effect of tropisms. Accordingly, the "lieu-commun" freezes the vibratory motions of the "mouvements à peine perceptibles" that continually surface in an ordinary conversation.

Austin's remarks on the nature of the constative utterance are relevant here as he comments that

With the constative utterance...we use an over-simplified notion of correspondence with facts...we aim at the ideal of what would be right to say in all circumstances for any purpose, to any audience.11

These observations are a fitting functional description of the purpose of the cliche in Sarraute's novels, where the static cliche varnishes over the primal working of the tropism. In the opening conversation of Martereau, speech is less a means of communication than a means of disguise, for as the aunt speaks she continually refers to stereotyped images that she dons as a mask. She refers to herself as "un oiseau de luxe," while the narrator unfurls such suggestions into images of Tanagra statuettes, "la dame aux Camélias," and Lady Hamilton. (p. 13) The aunt appears to offer an inexhaustible fund of such cliche expressions as "Je voulais faire quelque chose par moi-même, travailler, vivre ma vie, comme on disait" and
"Un beau jour j'ai pris mes cliques et mes claques, enfin, c'est une façon de parler..." (p. 15) that the narrator regards such facile expressions as patently inauthentic. The predominance of the cultural code in the aunt's speech alerts the narrator to the reality that remains unsaid and perhaps unspeakable. As Jean Bloch-Michel indicates,

Le 'lieu-commun' est ce qui nous vient d'ailleurs, des autres, ce que nous n'avons pas pensé nous-mêmes, ce qui sert précisément soit à remplacer, soit à masquer toute pensée personnelle.12

The use of cliché makes the purpose of conversation problematic, for, "si la communication est la pénétration réciproque de deux consciences, la parlerie interdit cette pénétration"13; however, communication of a different order may still take place.

The characters in Martereau offer such platitudes as "La vie est ce qu'on la fait" (p. 47), "On passe son temps à se gâcher la vie bêtement quand le bonheur est là sous la main" (p. 47), "Bon sang ne peut mentir" (p. 56)—stock utterances that categorise and contain the reality that occurs pre-verbally. The vacuity of the remarks uttered by Sarraute's characters causes the reader to turn to non-verbal signs in order to uncover the turbulent emotional undercurrents veiled by the conversation.

The cliché, more than any other stylistic feature of Sarraute's work, serves to contrast the vitality and flux of the tropism for, as Riffaterre claims,

Le cliché, pour jouer le rôle actif d'un contraste créateur d'expressivité, n'a nul besoin d'être renouvelé, puisque c'est la perception de sa banalité même qui lui permet de jouer ce rôle.14

Such a contrast between original expression and the platitude is most
notable in the scene in which the narrator imagines the inner repercussions that take place when Martereau realizes that the uncle is taking advantage of him.

Martereau's anxiety centres on the well-worn image of "un homme de paille"—a commonplace which continually triggers the flow of imagery in the "sous-conversation."

Cette rougeur, cette chaleur, ce sont les signes avant-coureurs, l'éclair qui précède le grondement du tonnerre, presque aussitôt, dans un fracas assourdissant, la foudre s'abat: un homme de paille: c'est cela. Il reste cloué sur place, petrifié, calciné: un homme de paille. Tout est clair: ce n'est plus la peine de chercher... ils ont su dégager cela de tous les mélanges, de toutes les combinaisons les plus variées, un corps simple qui se combine à d'autres corps simples de cent façons différentes et forme cent corps composés, mais ils ont su l'isoler et ils lui ont donné un nom, ils ont étudié toutes ses propriétés...un homme de paille--c'est cela. Et je suis cela, moi, moi! Son homme de paille. Un nouvel éclair, le tonnerre, la foudre tombe, il brûle: son homme de paille... (p. 191-192; underlining mine)

Just as the sub-conversation threatens to destroy at every moment the form and seeming stability of conversation, conversely, the clichés of conventional attitudes may also enter the inner monologue to provoke the instinctual reactions of the tropism. As Martereau finds a name for his situation in the image of "un homme de paille," rather than exorcising his fears, the cliché seems to introduce the external values of society into the monologue, for the epithet is a derogatory term which seems to apply to himself. Here the interpenetration of the personal and social levels of reality, instinctual and conventional, are manifested by the contrast between the cliché and tropistic imagery—an interplay in which "the conventionally-oriented statement is necessary as a springboard for the hidden truths."15

In the absence of communication brought about by the use of plati-
tudes within the discourse, and, as with other writers, "dans le chaos des formes, dans le désert des mots" Sarraute has reached toward "un objet absolument privé d'Histoire...la fraîcheur d'un état neuf du langage." Consequently, the artistic technique of Nathalie Sarraute counterpoints the poetic discourse of renewed images and metaphors with the bankruptcy of the cliché and the commonplace as they are revealed within thought and conversation.

Whereas the commonplace recurs in Martereau to underline the banality of conventional language and platitudinous sentiments, in The Sacred Fount the cliché performs a different function. Characters in Henry James's novels generally employ trite commonplaces to express what are often the most unconventional theories. In such instances the proverb supports and normalises a personal utterance by investing it with the weight of a general truth.

The cliché forms a nexus between the linguistic code from which it is drawn and the cultural code which supplies its value and meaning. Proverbial statements lay bare the ideological perspective of the utterance, as they are written

Dans ce mode obligatif par lequel le discours énonce une volonté général, la loi d'un sociétée, et rend inéluctable ou ineffaçable la proposition qu'il prend en charge.17

Social laws buttress the many proverbs that are uttered in The Sacred Fount, giving such utterances greater plausibility; however, at the same time, such sayings are undermined by the context in which they are spoken and by the polemical purposes of the speaker. Whereas in Martereau the proverbial statement characterises both the speaker and the nature of the conversation as trite, such statements are revivified in
The Sacred Fount by their unconventional application in highly self-conscious and witty conversation.

Sayings of the most concrete variety are extended to evoke highly abstract ideas, furthering the Jamesian technique of "converting mental acts into entities." Obert responds to the vague question of the narrator--"What makes you think that what you speak of was what I had in my head?" (p. 65)--with the statement, "Well, the way, simply, that the shoe fits." Alluding to the collaboration between himself and Mrs. Briss, the narrator reminds her: "I gave you, you see...what's called 'rope'." (p. 242) Mrs. Briss completes this suggestion with the related saying: "I don't suppose you mean," she exclaimed, "for me to hang myself! For that, I assure you, is not at all what I'm prepared for." In contrast with the emotionally-blunted tone of conversation in Martereau, the spirited banter of The Sacred Fount is sprinkled with cliché and proverbs that assist in concretising the rather abstract discussions of the novel.

The mystic theory of a sacred fount is described, for example, in practical terms by Mrs. Briss who, in "thinking of how to name such mysteries," formulates her theory in terms of an ancient dictum: "One of them--you know the saying--gives the lips, the other gives the cheek." (p. 80) The saying dates back to Aristophanes' The Frogs--"There is always one who kisses and one who only allows the kiss"--and becomes paradigmatic of the way in which events are to be interpreted in the novel. It provides the necessary air of age-old authority to enable Mrs. Brissenden to make her point with the acutely critical narrator. This adage is particularly significant since it gives expression to the plot and theme of the novel, compressing them into a commonsensical saying. The
melding of the farfetched interpretations of the narrator with such a commonplace expression produces the verbal tension running through all late Jamesian fiction attributed by Yeazell to "a fascination with concealed meanings lurking in well-worn phrases, with dramatic plots which suddenly emerge from cliché metaphors."20

Again, the adage evokes a gnomic code common to all the participants of society, forming a place of meeting between the many idiosyncratic theories voiced in The Sacred Fount. By stressing the operation of a common linguistic code, the saying also serves the phatic function of drawing the characters together over the common enjoyment of shared idioms. Even as Obert attempts to draw away from collaboration with the narrator over the sacred fount theory, he clears the terrain for understanding in his use of a common expression. Like Pilate, Obert claims to have "washed his hands" of the matter. The scene of Obert's defection from the narrator's camp anticipates Mrs. Brissenden's decision in the following scene, as Obert tries to disengage himself from the quest:

"I thought you said just now we did--recognising, as you ought, that you were keen about a chase of which I washed my hands."

"No--I wasn't keen. You've just mentioned that you remember my giving up. I washed my hands too."

It seemed to leave him with the moral of this. "Then, if our hands are clean, what are we talking about?"

I turned, on it, a little more to him, and looked at him so long that he had at last to look at me; with which, after holding his eyes another moment, I made my point: "Our hands are not clean."

"Ah, speak for your own!"--and as he moved back I might really have thought him uneasy. (p. 212)

The repetition pattern of the dialogue indicates the narrator's attempt
to communicate on the same terms, although he ends by converting Obert's original expression to his own purposes, as he repudiates Obert's presupposition that if they have washed, their hands are clean. Since the narrator has appropriated his expression, Ford is obliged to spell out his meaning in indisputable terms, saying, "I assure you I deny all responsibility. I see the responsibility as quite beautifully yours."

Such clichés, by definition trite and inexpressive, exploit the semantic potential of language, as they are received and repeated by the listener in a Jamesian dialogue: the repetition of minimally expressive sayings endows them with a density of meanings that they would not otherwise possess.

As the characters of *The Sacred Fount* focus on codified expressions, they often subvert the rules of use by rediscovering the literal meaning of the words. Society at Newmarch often delights in displaying the worn and dusty objects of the storehouse of language, only to dust them off and reveal the original polish. The cliché is a homely object among the linguistic treasures of wealth and wit; however, it recalls origins and draws high-flown conversation down to the eminently practical level of commonsense.

Sarraute, on the other hand, reproduces the stock utterances of everyday conversation in order to reveal the failure of authentic communication in her novels. Utterances that emphasise the code aspect of language illustrate the short-circuit of meaning that occurs when the speaker fails to connect his experience with the precision of language, thus succumbing to convention, and the listener remains consequently ignorant of the real content of the message. The omission of personal impressions from the dialogue in the novel heightens the meta-
lingual aspect of language, with the consequence that the reader and character alike must locate communication on a non-verbal plane.

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NOTES:


2 Henry James, _The Sacred Fount_, (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1979)p. 65. All quotations are from this edition and will be placed in parenthesis in the text.

3 Nathalie Sarraute, _Marteau_, (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), p. 175. All quotations from this edition will be placed in the text.


6 Ibid., p. 176.

7 Leo Spitzer, quoted by Bakhtin,ibid., p. 186.


10 Ibid.


12 Bloch-Michel, p. 59.

13 Ibid.


17 Ibid., p. 106.


THE PHATIC FUNCTION: La conversation par excellence

The phatic function reinforces the element of contact, whether physical or psychological, in the communication schema. Messages centred on such topics as questions of health or the weather often contain little information, but rather serve to "meubler le discours en affirmant une présence et en établissant un contact." The following excerpt of a dialogue by Dorothy Parker succinctly illustrates this aspect of conversation:

"Well!" the young man said. "Well!" she said. "Well, here we are," he said. "Here we are," she said, "Aren't we?" "I should say we were," he said. "Eeyop! Here we are." "Well!" she said. "Well!" he said, "Well.

Conversation in such circumstances serves no longer as an exchange of information, but rather continually establishes the possibility of exchange. Stripped of all informational content, the above conversation clearly manifests the uneasy attempts of the interlocutors to maintain contact in the face of one of the most basic conversational principles: conversation abhors silence.

In her fiction, Sarraute posits the phatic function as the motivating principle of the characters' actions and conversational exchanges, whether impelling movement toward each other, or conversely, causing a counter-motion. Sarraute's novels depict the oscillations of her characters as they respond to the elementary physical and psychological drives to seek solitude or human contact.
Whereas Sarraute explicitly acknowledges her fascination with this element as it is found in the fiction of Dostoevsky and Kafka, James dramatises the social intercourse of his characters in *The Sacred Fount* in such a way that the phatic function becomes a readily discernible element of the narrator's investigation. This function introduces the social context to the linguistic utterance, motivating the "social twittering" in James and the "parlerie" of the characters of Sarraute.

Although almost any conversation in *Martereau* would serve to illustrate the way in which Sarraute's characters strive for contact with others through conversation, the conversational tactics of Martereau provide the best example of this function. The character in whom Sarraute's theory of "les conversations les plus banales, les gestes les plus quotidiens" is best incarnated, Martereau tends to converse, most disarmingly, of next to nothing at all:

"Les derniers beaux jours, c'est le soleil d'automne déjà, il fait un peu frais vers le soir, mais en ce moment il fait bon, quel bon vent vous amène? Comment va? Il y a longtemps qu'on ne vous a pas vu...vous voyez, nous nous apprêtons à déménager, à rentrer à Paris, je profite des derniers beaux jours..." (p. 239)

This conversation is similar to many of the preceding "dialogues" in the novel in that the narrator's words are suppressed, as he reports the banal statements of Martereau. However, the conversational climate between the protagonist and the narrator has undergone a radical change since the opening of the novel, due to the increasing suspicions of the narrator regarding his old friend. As a result Martereau's words have lost the reassuring, innocuous effect they formerly possessed, as the narrator becomes aware of the nature of Martereau's speech: "Il me parle
..quelques mots... ce qu'on peut dire en pareil cas, pas de quoi fouetter un chat, quelques formules de politesse sans importance..." (p. 239). The innocuous nature of his words becomes suspect nonetheless, and the narrator hears an alternate voice behind Martereau's conventional speech. The phatic function, couched as it is in terms of extremely minimal expression, helps to alert the narrator to the content of the unsaid.

The statements "Eh alors... vous ne dites rien... quoi de neuf?... qu'est-ce que vous fabriquez de beau?" catalyse the narrator's consciousness, as he passes from the reflection that they are merely "des formules banales, des mots anodins," to the realisation in an epiphanic moment that "il n'y a pas de mots anodins entre [eux], il n'y a plus de mots anodins, les mots sont des soupapes de sûreté minuscules par où des gaz lourds, des émanations malsaines s'échappent, m'entourent..." (p. 240).

Thus the very quality that had irresistibly drawn the narrator to Martereau—that is, the reassuring nullity of his expressions—now reveals itself as a façade disguising less sympathetic motives. In a sense this realisation reveals the true nature of "la communion phatique" to the narrator: the need to establish contact with another person may be assuaged "par la haine, par le mépris, par la souffrance infligée ou par quelque action d'éclat" as well as by affection. This final revelation, enacted in the last chapter of Martereau, has not revealed to the narrator any aspects of the phatic function of which he was hitherto unaware; however, whereas Martereau had been previously excluded from the unsavory motives that he perceived in others, now the narrator realises that such "mouvements à peine perceptibles" form part of all conversational exchanges. Martereau too is implicated in a duplicitous social world in
which the most innocuous utterances suggest a second level of reality.

A second aspect of the phatic function forms an integral part of the drama of human relations in *Martereau*. The narrator discovers early in the novel that the phatic function is often a double-edged weapon in conversation, for as a character draws near to another this emotional liaison is almost always made at the expense of a third person. Indeed, the phatic communion between two people in the novel is generally motivated by the need to form an alliance against a third person, who then becomes an outsider with respect to the tidy confines of a microcosm "à deux."

In the following scene the aunt joins forces with the narrator in order to express her critical feelings regarding her daughter. The narrator responds to the non-verbal undercurrents of the monologue, expressing the import of her words in physical terms:

*Elle se serre contre moi, se frotte contre moi, me caresse, me flatte...nous sommes du même côté, entre gens de bien, énergiques et raffinés, nous nous comprenons à demi-mot, nous parlons la même langue, sus à l'ennemi commun...* (p. 54).

As the narrator lends an apparently sympathetic ear to the aunt, he makes the serious error of agreeing with her analysis of her daughter's problems, and although he attempts to extricate himself from this difficult situation, he finally realises that he has overstepped the margin of safety. His aunt terminates the conversation, and in the next scene, the narrator perceives that his cousin and aunt are reunited, and he suspects that the alliance has been formed at his expense:

*C'est moi, bien sûr, cette fois, la proie toute désignée que la mère pour apaiser sa propre rancune ou ses remords a offert en pâture à son enfant. (p. 64)*
This phenomenon takes place *mutatis mutandis* repeatedly throughout the novel.

The aspect of human relations that Sarraute has so clearly charted in her critical essays also forms a major element of social interaction in *The Sacred Fount*. The phatic function predetermines the larger structural units of conversation in the novel, motivating the amount of contact between characters and the consequent length and intensity of conversation. The predominance of the phatic function, although rarely discernible on the basis of what is said, manifests itself in the very form of conversation which embodies in the most concrete fashion "ce besoin continuel d'établir un contact." As Sarraute notes,

> Quoi de plus propre, en effet, que ces interrogations passionnées et ces réponses, que ces approches, ces reculs feintes, ces fuites et ces poursuites, ces chocs, ces caresses, ces morsures, ces étreintes...\(^6\)

common in everyday conversation to illustrate the hidden vibrations that cause man to seek companionship with others?

In the tragi-comic divagations of May Server, Henry James has created a dramatic situation which epitomises this struggle to establish contact with others. May Server, though a source of gossip and amusement at Newmarch for the way in which she almost compulsively pounces on one man after the other, differs little in fact from the protagonists of the novel, who give evidence of a similar restlessness as they attempt to piece together the puzzle of the sacred fount theory without exposing their own weak spots. The narrator depicts the movements of May Server much in the same way that Nathalie Sarraute describes the actions of many of Dostoevsky's
characters with their "mêmes bonds furtifs, les mêmes passes savantes, les mêmes fausses ruptures..."7. The narrator describes the movements of Mrs. Server as follows:

She dodged, doubled, managed, broke off, clutching occasions, yet doubtlessly risking dumbnesses, vagueness and other betrayals, depending on attitudes, motions, expressions, a material personality, in fine, in which a plain woman would have found nothing but failure.... (p. 99)

The narrator interprets these outward movements as evidence of an alternating desire to "cultivate contacts" and "to bring the contact to an end before exposure" (p.99), drawing attention to the phatic function of Mrs. Server's behaviour. The imagination of the narrator is fired by the gothic aspects of Mrs. Server's predicament—he toys alliteratively with the idea of "something infinitely touching and tragic in her loneliness—possibly in her terror (p. 96)—and consequently the erratic activities of May Server appear unique among the mundane encounters of the visitors at Newmarch.

However, in fact, the endless clandestine meetings of Mrs. Server are mirrored by the many conversations that take place among the other characters with Mrs. Server as the object of discussion. Ironically, the narrator reflects in his own actions the precautions that he ascribes to Mrs. Server, as he describes her "pursuing in vain, through our careless company, her search for the right shade of apparent security, she felt herself none the less all the while the restless victim of fear and failure." (p. 96) The narrator undertakes his frenzied pursuit of truth throughout the novel, pausing only with the rest of the company as he enjoys the music in the evening. Here he considers "the pause in the career" of May, re-
fleeting that "there was for the time no gentleman on whom she need pounce, no lapse against which she need guard, no presumption she need create, nor any suspicion she need destroy" (p. 168). Presumably, this pause offers the same advantages to the narrator, who has been involved in similar activities as he speaks on behalf of Mrs. Server, creating presumptions and destroying suspicions in a like manner. Although the narrator is conscious of the primal need that induces Mrs. Server to seek out the company of various men, he is blissfully unaware of his own need to establish contact with anyone who will offer an ear to his abstruse reasonings.

That the phatic function is occulted with respect to the narrator's own behaviour is scarcely surprising, for he tends to varnish over his own emotions with a protective coating of highly abstract and intellectual language. However, as the other members of Newmarch society grow increasingly tired of his incessant questions and chatter, this aspect of the narrator's social intercourse comes into view. "Cette forme conventionelle d'enonciation revenant sur elle-même, se satisfaisant de son accomplissement, ne comportant ni objet, ni but, ni message," the phatic function reveals itself as the hidden component that motivates much of the conversation at Newmarch.

While the narrator continually focuses his interlocutor's attention upon the object of their inquiry, one increasingly suspects that the narrator is sustained—indeed, becomes bloated—on the contact that he experiences with Mrs. Brissenden and Ford Obert. Viewed in this light, the drama of The Sacred Fount lies in the renewed attempts of the narrator to keep his audience's interest in his theory, and thus in himself, without exposing his emergent feeling for Mrs. Server. His repeated interrogations
and interruptions serve the purpose of keeping his interlocutors on tenterhooks. Frédéric Berthet indicates the reason for which the hidden purpose of conversation, namely the need to make contact, must remain covert:

Si le phatique est l'objet interne de la communication, alors cette objet interne ne doit pas se faire l'objet d'une conversation: toutéflexivité est alors agressive jusqu'au malaise, précisément pour ce qu'elle met en jeu de la cohésion sociale.

Reference to the hidden purpose of conversation is thus a major social taboo, for it admits the possibility that the topic of conversation merely serves as a pretext to engage in social relations. Such a comment as "tu parles pour ne rien dire" endangers the contact that has been established by directly calling the phatic function into question.

Mrs. Brissenden adopts precisely this tactic as she counters the narrator's theory during their encounter at the end of the weekend, beginning by declaring what her expression had tried to suggest earlier: "What on earth do you mean by your nonsense?" (p. 293) and later by stating that his influence has made her "too big a talker of nonsense." Even this direct approach, while discrediting the content of the narrator's speech, does not directly challenge the covert purpose of his numerous interviews with her. Mrs. Brissenden puts the point another way:

"You see too much."

"Oh, I know I do--ever so much too much. And much as I see, I express only half of it--so you may judge!" I laughed. "But what will you have? I see what I see, and this morning, for a good bit, you did me the honour to do the same. I returned, also, the compliment, didn't I? by seeing something of what you saw. We put it, the whole thing, together, and we shook the bottle hard. I'm to take from you, after this," I wound up, "that what it contains is a perfectly colourless fluid?"

I paused for a reply, but it was not to come so happily as from Obert. "You talk too much!" said Mrs. Briss.

I met it with amazement. "Why, whom have I told?" (p. 262)
Not surprisingly after the garrulous response of the narrator, Mrs. Briss perseveres in driving her point home by stating bluntly that he talks too much; however, even here, the narrator persists in misunderstanding the import of her accusation, presupposing that "talking too much" involves including others in the secret, rather than merely talking to excess. Mrs. Briss slices away at the theories on which they have collaborated, and by blowing down the narrator's house of cards, she eliminates the point of contact between them, eventually rendering the narrator's attempts to communicate utterly futile. By contrast with Gilbert Long of whom it has been said, "He talks to talk, but he's really amusing" (p. 59), the narrator's conversational powers are less appreciated, as his single-minded pursuit of one topic makes even such verbal gymnastics as he indulges in tiresome. As Lady John so succinctly informs him, "You can't be a providence and not be a bore." (p. 176)

Doubtless, the epistemological theme of both Martereau and The Sacred Fount provides a pivotal point for many of the conversations in the novel; however, a deeper reading of the action reveals the quintessential purpose of talk—to renew contact with other people. This feature of conversation, explicitly acknowledged by Sarraute, constitutes the significant sub-text of The Sacred Fount, offsetting the narrator's ostensibly academic motivations for immersion in the affairs of other people.
THE PHATIC FUNCTION: NOTES


4 Ibid., p. 9.

5 Ibid., p. 44.

6 Ibid., p. 50.

7 Ibid., p. 40.


9 Frédéric Berthet, "Eléments de conversation" *Communications 30*, (1979) p. 129.
THE REFERENTIAL FUNCTION: "Impressions too fine for words"

The referential function of discourse corresponds to the context factor in the communication schema, involving the situation and world in which the utterance is spoken. Indicating different kinds of extra-linguistic entities such as objects, states of affairs, and facts, the referential function identifies the external elements for the speech act. In conversation, this situational framework may be indicated by a pointing finger or a gesture, or it may be designated in an ostensive manner by the discourse itself through the oblique reference of those indicators which include the demonstratives, the adverbs of time and place, and the tenses of the verb.¹

The context defined by the characters in each novel closely involves the development of the epistemological theme, for in the numerous discussions in The Sacred Fount and Martereau, a world gradually emerges—a world built up by the discursive presentations of the characters.

Thus the situation of any utterance is not so much the world perceived or imagined by the speakers as something or someone which forms the object of the discourse and has no existence outside it.² By an accumulation of referential details in both texts, the nature of the central gaps in the two novels gradually unfolds in the dialogue, as varying definitions of Martereau's character and the name of the mystic 'Egeria' are proposed. These contexts are evidently of a nature more theoretical than physical, and play a more significant role in the action of each novel than the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the context.
The intangible quality that is the hallmark of all James's later works is especially in evidence in the often almost impenetrable conversations of *The Sacred Fount*. One grammatical feature that greatly contributes to this effect is James's sustained use of deixis, "words which have no content at all, only a deictic or pointing function, referring backwards (or forward) to other words." As Chatman observes in his stylistic analysis of later Jamesian fiction,

Deictic nouns as well as pronouns are very prevalent: almost empty words like 'thing' (anything, something, nothing) abound, as well as 'item', 'matter', 'a great deal', 'former', and 'latter', 'one', 'another', 'the other' and so on. The semantic vagueness of such terms is heightened in James's pseudo-detective story, as many characters use pronouns for which the antecedent is either obscure or absent. A hyperbolic example of the problem of decoding deixis occurs amid the linguistic chaos of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where such questioning of the referential function anticipates the difficulties that abound in *The Sacred Fount*:

"...and even Stigand, the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable--"

"Found what?" said the Duck.

"Found it," the Mouse replied rather crossly: "of course you know what 'it' means."

"I know what 'it' means well enough, when I find a thing," said the Duck: "it's generally a frog or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?"

On a measurably higher intellectual plane, the characters at Newmarch tend to ask variants of the same sort of question:

"Do you ask me that in order that I shan't speak to her of this?"
I showed myself at a loss. "Of this'--?" (p. 118)

- "Well, that's just it!"
  "But just what?" (p. 118)

- "She did and said nothing special, nothing striking or extraordinary; but that didn't matter--it never does: one saw how she is. She's nothing but that."

"Nothing but what?"

"She's all in it," he insisted. "Or it's all in her. It comes to the same thing." (p. 68)

Referential vagueness is due to the tendency of James's characters to use personal and deictic pronouns when there is no clear antecedent. Sometimes this propensity for vagueness indicates a "lazy society verbalism," while at others, obscurity results from the evident desire for concealment. Conversations often seem to proceed remarkably smoothly at Newmarch in spite of this characteristic foible, although the reader may be mystified at times by conversations which seem to consist of one non sequitur after the other. The narrator tries to get Obert to clarify his assertion that Mrs. Server has "changed back" with the following result:

"Back to what she was when you painted her?"

He had to think an instant for this. "No--not quite to that."

"To what then?"

He tried in a manner to oblige me. "To something else." (p. 213)

If this lack of clarity appears to mask quite effectively any information that the speaker intended to impart, nonetheless the narrator concludes that Obert's statement "fits" his own assumptions.

The flow of talk is sometimes abruptly interrupted when one character becomes aware of the failure to communicate, as when Ford Obert exclaims:
"How on earth can I tell what you're talking about?" Obert shows that he has underestimated his adversary, since the narrator merely ignores the imputation and proceeds in a new direction:

"Did you happen to count them?"
"Count whom?"
"Why, the ladies as they filed up. Was the number there?" (pp. 205-6)

In his usual fashion the narrator expects others to understand what he is alluding to with minimal indications from him, yet this idiosyncratic speech trait is not fortuitous, as it becomes evident that the narrator often dangles elliptical statements in his listener's face to challenge him to rise to the bait and complete his utterance.

This strategy comes to the forefront on a number of occasions, including the preceding conversation, when the narrator attempts to put Obert's understanding to the test:

Once more I just waited. "But suppose I should find Mrs. Server--?"
"Prowling there on the chance of you? Well--I thought she was what you wanted."
"Then," I returned, "you could tell what I was talking about!" (p. 206)

The narrator drives his point further when he encounters Ford Obert in the smoking room a few minutes afterward and he exclaims for the second time,

"Then you could tell what I was talking about!" And I added, to complete my reference, "Since you thought Mrs. Server was the person, whom when I stopped you, I was sorry to learn from you I had missed." (p. 208)

This rare occasion on which the narrator pauses to "complete his reference" occurs when the narrator is clearly misleading one of his listeners, and thus his desire to be unequivocal stems from the necessity of propagating the lie.
In an attempt to force Mrs. Server to commit herself to a definite statement about the person whom she expects to find with Lady John, the narrator consciously exploits the vagueness of the personal pronoun. Believing that he has correctly understood May's unexpressed thoughts, he states rather irrelevantly:

"I parted with him, some way from here, some time ago. I had found him in one of the gardens with Lady John: after which we came away from her together. We strolled a little and talked, but I knew what he really wanted. He wanted to find you, and I told him he would probably do so at tea on the terrace. It was visibly with that idea—to return to the house—that he left me."

(p. 142)

Although the narrator has launched into this explanation believing that he is continuing her own stream of thought, he realises upon seeing her reaction that she is actually quite puzzled by this vague reference and seizes upon this chance as an "objective test" for his theory.

Fully aware now of the implications of his verbal slip, the narrator holds May in suspense, profferring only, "Don't you know how she's perpetually pouncing on him?" by way of attenuating her confusion. The dubious ethics of the narrator's quest, represented now by such hunting analogies as "his prey," "on the scent," "on the track" and so on, is clearly articulated in the image of torture used to convey May's suspense: "She had an uncertainty, in other words, as to whom I meant, and that it kept her for some seconds on the rack was a trifle compared to my chance."

(p. 143) However, contrary to his expectation, Mrs. Server does not break down and refuses to attribute the personal pronoun to anyone, as she titters, "Do you mean--a--do you mean?...There are so many gentlemen!"

May emerges the victor of this brief, yet highly perilous, exchange and the narrator finally capitulates by acknowledging that he had meant "poor
Briss." That Mrs. Server appears to repudiate any connection between Briss and herself is construed by the narrator as a clever attempt to throw him off the track.

Among the narrator's conversational strategies, referential vagueness constitutes not only one of his most distinctive stylistic traits, but also a foremost means of inducing his listener to utter what he refuses to voice himself. The motive for the narrator's circumlocutions, vague references, and obliqueness may be located in what he feels is his responsibility toward the victims of the phenomenon he is observing, and as his trail becomes more and more difficult to follow due to his feintes and doublings-back and lies, the reader may attribute these conversational moves to his realisation that "an individual would be compromised if he didn't now take care." In addition to this "sustained attempt to avert that disaster," as the narrator rather heroically describes his activity (p. 48), it is not difficult to perceive his perverse enjoyment in obfuscating others. Not surprisingly, the way in which the narrator structures the context reflects his own beliefs, needs, and desires, revealing here a tendency to intellectual hubris which causes him to delight in bewildering others, albeit in rather elementary ways. The continual difficulties arising out of the referential function in the dialogue of *The Sacred Fount* suggest the alienation of the characters at Newmarch, for a common referent is often presupposed between interlocutors when in fact, each individual is pursuing quite different lines of thought. The concatenation of misunderstandings resulting from the absence of a common context has rather pessimistic implications for the possibilities of communicating at Newmarch.
Whereas the referential function with its concomitant vaguenesses and obliquities in *The Sacred Fount* renders a richly suggestive novelistic world, conversation in *Martereau* has precisely the opposite effect. Language becomes a means of reducing the highly complex reality of the world into predictable, water-tight categories. Sarraute emphasises the conventional nature of language as code, so that her characters utter, if possible, even more hackneyed ideas than those found in natural conversation. A context is thus constructed in Sarraute's novels that has little to do with reality but everything to do with the limitations of commonplace language. Sarraute describes this prison-house of language in the following way:

Là où le langage étend son pouvoir, se dressent les notions apprises, les dénominations, les définitions, les catégories de psychologie, de la sociologie, de la morale. Il assèche, durecit, sépare ce qui n'est que fluidité, mouvance, ce qui s'épand à l'infini et sur quoi il ne cesse de gagner.7

The topics of conversation in *Martereau* substantiate Sarraute's preoccupation with the transformation of essential, dynamic movements into commonplace statements.

Unlike the often witty rhetoric found in *The Sacred Fount*, conversation in *Martereau* lies at the opposite end of the spectrum, illustrating the author's intention to render "la phrase la plus banale du dialogue le plus commun qui soit"8—superlatives which are in every way justified by the achievement of *Martereau*. The referential function of conversation in this novel is thus committed to the task of reproducing canonical statements about the world. This characteristic is therefore more interesting in the breach than in the observance, for it is then that conversation is seen to provoke tropistic movements in the listener in a straight-forward, causal manner.
When in the restaurant, the nephew observes a man cutting his son's meat for him—a reassuring scene which evokes the image of two men striding through fields together. In the next scene the narrator re-situates himself and his uncle, "nous", in place of "eux." The ontological status of this scene is doubtful, as the narrator generalises the occasion by the term "parfois" and the beginning of the scenario duplicates the earlier imaginary scene; however, the description of the action and responses is highly specific, suggesting that the essential kernel of the scene is based on experience.

The nephew announces the topics of conversation that are discussed as they walk—

...sociétés anonymes, conseils d'administration, bénéfices et pertes; inflation, déflation, stagnation en bourse; risques de guerre; valeurs refuge; baisse des cours au Maroc; hausse des terrains en Argentine; passeports; paquebots; renvoi du chauffeur—(p. 35)

and although the clear suggestion is that this is a monologue rather than a conversation, the nephew feels safe within these confines. The nephew destroys the links that attach them temporarily to each other, as he dares to change the subject, drawing his uncle's attention to the landscape: "Écoutez ça...ces clochettes...cette source...Regardez là-bas le ligne des bois...le chalet..."(p. 35) "L'imprégnation proustienne" that manifests itself in much of Sarraute's work is especially evident here, when Sarraute transports the sensibility of Proust's protagonist into this emphatically masculine context. Evocations of the countryside, very similar to Proust's "clochers de Martinville" and "la source de la Vivonne" at Combray, become replete with dangerously effete overtones in this particular setting.
The uncle reacts instantaneously and violently to these few words, battling in his typical manner by breaking the contact and withdrawing from the conversation. If speech is "the natural correlate of man's gregarious nature...another man's silence is not a reassuring factor, but, on the contrary, something alarming and dangerous" and the uncle resorts to this weapon throughout the novel.

In addition to the taboo nature of the topic that the narrator has proposed—"Le sentiment de la nature, hein? La petite fleur bleue? La pureté?" (p. 36)—the fact that he uses the imperative form of the verbs (écoutez, regardez) is not accidental, for it implies that he has the authority to make such a suggestion to his uncle. Abandoning then this topic with its unhealthy connotations of "les petits énervés, les dégoûtés, les 'esthètes'" (p. 36), the nephew resumes the context that is familiar to his uncle in the conversational mode that he prefers, as once again the nephew invites his uncle to pontificate on "l'univers solide et dur" (p. 36).

Thematically, the referential function plays a significant role in the novel with regard to "l'inconnu," Martereau, whom the others attempt to define throughout the novel. Georges Raillard identifies this theme as the

Motif organisateur de chaque livre, cette recherche agressive de la nomination (où le centrement anxieux d'un 'je' prend le masque de la visée d'un 'il', d'une conjugaison équitable de "partenaires") affiche son aventure rêvée, et sa déception.

The question of Martereau finally resolves itself near the conclusion of the novel to the formula of whether he is "honnête" or "un filou"; the characters of the novel attempt to name Martereau and "le langage convenu pose aussitôt la plaque de ciment de ses définitions."
THE REFERENTIAL FUNCTION: NOTES

1 Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory, (Fort Worth, Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), p. 34.


4 Ibid.


6 Chatman, p. 54.


8 Ibid. p. 36.


11 Sarraute, p. 37.
THE CONATIVE FUNCTION: The Other-directed Discourse

The conative function emphasises the role of the receiver in the speech act. Like the pronoun "I", which can be identified only by the speech act which contains it, the "you" in the discourse refers to the allocutor, or individual to whom the discourse containing the pronoun "you" is directed. In Problèmes de linguistique générale, Benveniste defines the nature of pronouns in the above manner, emphasising the potential reversibility of the "I" and the "you" as the essential characteristic of discourse.

Sarraute dramatises this possibility of reversal inherent in the use of the "vous," which can not only be redirected toward the speaker, but may refer to varying configurations of characters. This linguistic fact is an important verbal feature of Martereau, which recasts the neutral nature of the pronoun, like the word itself, into "l'arme quotidienne, insidieuse et très efficace, d'innombrables petits crimes."

The narrator comments on this phenomenon before it is presented scenically in the restaurant, describing the effect of the pronoun "vous" as it is aimed at the nephew, his aunt and cousin. Divining the thoughts of his uncle, he interprets them in the following way:

"Vous n'en faites jamais d'autres"..."Vous' pouvez vous faire de ces idées"..."Vous' avez une façon de regarder les gens"... "Vous"..."Vous"..."Vous"...et nous nous ratatîons, nous nous blotissons l'un contre l'autre, nous nous tenons serrés, pressés les uns contre les autres comme des moineaux éffrayés. (p. 25)

Noting the expression of the uncle--"Il les regarde fixement de son air hostile, il a son visage affaissé, renfrogné" (p.26)--the nephew interprets
the contents of the uncle's supposed thoughts in an interior monologue, or "sous-conversation." Initially, the nephew views the women from the perspective of his uncle, ranking himself beside him and facing the women, who appear like "deux poupées; la fille déjà une réproduction de la mère" (p. 26). The narrator vacillates between aligning himself with the uncle or the two women as he tries to fathom their carefree attitude in the face of such hostility. He reflects,

Mais elles ne sentent rien, ou peut-être ne peuvent-elles plus quitter cette forme où un charme jeté par lui les tient enfermées, ou bien, prises de vertige et se sachant condamnées tendent-elles d'elles-mêmes, pour précipiter leur sort, la tête sous le couperet, ou, trop sûres d'elles et se sentant soutenues par tous, encouragées, veulent-elles le défier, ou encore, tout simplement, se laissent-elles aller à cette espèce de gaieté débile, d'excitation molle à laquelle elles s'abandonnent parfois malgré elles, grisées de facilité, de sécurité paresseuse, de frivolité.... (p. 28)

Abandoning himself to myriad speculations, the narrator, much like his Proustian precursor, fixes his thoughts in a series of disjunctive alternatives marked by the repetitious "ou, ou bien, ou encore" that punctuate the passage. Whereas the narrator is able to enter into his uncle's thoughts quite readily, those of his aunt and cousin are an unknown quantity to him, and seem potentially more menacing. Faced by the dilemma of joining the ranks of his uncle or the women, the narrator elects the latter alternative, responding to the directives given by the women in conversation:

"Vous avez vu, regardez, à la table qui est derrière vous... la bonne femme avec le grand chapeau... vous pouvez l'apercevoir dans la glace... Là, tournez-vous doucement, là, près de la fenêtre... la femme blonde... elle ne vous voit pas." (p. 29)

The emphasis on the allocutor is manifested by the repeated use of the second person, serving to single out the nephew and draw him into their
trivial world. At this point the nephew is clearly aligned with "elles" against the uncle:

Le pacte est conclu... j'ai accepté l'avilissante promiscuité, l'ignominieuse fraternité... il nous observe, notre sort est lié maintenant, pareils tous les trois, elles et moi, logés à la même enseigne, rampant dans l'abjection... (p. 29).

The reported dialogue in this scene is minimal, erupting out of the flow of the sub-conversation in a venomous jet as the uncle finally declares, breaking the silence: "'Vous' avez une façon de dévisager les gens..." (p. 31).

The words denote a simple observation on the part of the uncle; although critical, the statement appears harmless enough. Yet, sensitised to the import of the pronoun by the preceding expanding commentary on the meaning of "vous," the reader recognises the significance of the words.

'Vous'... son arme la plus sûre. Son coup le plus adroit, venu de très loin, longuement préparé, toujours bien assené, admirablement précis et fort. (p. 25).

The pronoun "vous" stands in opposition to the "je" according to a correlation of subjectivity: the "vous" is accusatory precisely because it represents that which is "non-moi." However, while opposing the "je" as non-subjective person, the "vous" forms an extension of the "je" on an existential axis.²

Because of the isolation of the characters depicted in Sarraute's novels, the conative function acquires a singular importance, representing the verbal equivalent of the handshake, the hug, or negatively, the attack. All responses, however, acknowledge the existence and psychological needs
of the listener, reinforcing his participation in society. Often the con-
active function predominates in the reconciliation scenes of the novel, form-
ing a welcome antidote to quarrelling tactics which include withdrawal
of contact and silence. The repetition of the second-person pronoun, with
its attendant suggestion of recognition of the listener, concretely illus-
trates a renewal of interest and friendship.

After the misunderstanding that has taken place between the aunt and
uncle in chapter III before they arrive to view the house, attempts are
made to re-cement relations in the unfamiliar atmosphere of a possible
dream house.

...nous grossissons, nous bourgeonnons de besoins réprimés, de
désirs inassouvis, de caprices, de rêves...L'endroit idéal ici...
"pour toi...juste ce que tu voulais...Regarde ça, si ça ne ferait
pas un atelier magnifique...il y a même une entrée séparée..." (p. 99)

Characteristically, the appeal is made to the nephew rather than to each
other; rather than displaying forgiveness unreservedly, they use their
nephew as an intermediary for this overflow of amiability. However, in
the Sarrautian world of Martereau such promises of interest and affection
are highly suspect, varnishing over more unsavory motives. For the nar-
raotr, this invitation to communion with the family presents dangers, since
it involves immersing his own identity in the collective group. As the
narrator attempts to disengage himself emotionally from these words, he
senses the unvoiced resistance of his aunt and uncle:

...pas de lâche défection, d'abandon déloyal, c'est trop tard,
nous sommes ensemble, unis dans la même aventure, livrés au même
sort, il me tirent, m'enserrent, ils me font mal... (p. 100)

This latent sub-text is masqued by the declarations that follow which con-
tinue to convey concern and affection for the narrator:

"Ça par exemple, c'est nouveau....Mais c'est toi qui y viendras le plus j'espère, pour ta santé...C'est pour toi tout ça surtout. Tu as plus besoin de campagne que nous..." (p. 100)

Recurring after the interceding commentary, these statements contrast the tone of the "sous-conversation," revealing an important aspect of the other-directed word in the world of Nathalie Sarraute. Interest in the listener of the conversation tends to indicate more than a rudimentary attention or concern for another person: it may be part of "ce besoin presque mani- aquede contact" that motivates almost all of the conversation in the novel.

As the conative function predominates in the communicative act, focusing on the presence of the listener, Sarraute's analogy likening conversation to a battlefield appears most appropriate:

Ces drames intérieurs faits d'attaques, de triomphes, de reculs, de défaites, de caresses, de morsures, de viols, de meurtres, d'abandons généreux ou d'humbles soumissions, ont tous ceci de commun, qu'ils ne peuvent se passer de partenaire.

The conversational partner is further described as,

La menace, le danger réel et aussi la proie qui développe leur vivacité et leur souplesse; l'élément mystérieux dont les réactions imprévisibles, en les faisant repartir à tout instant et se développer vers une fin inconnue, accentuant leur caractère dramatique.

Just as this element forms an essential constituent of Sarraute's "new novel," inasmuch as it serves to catalyse the movement of tropisms and the flow of the "sous-conversation," this description of the dynamics of dialogue also applies to the novels of Henry James. The dramatic character of the dialogue in James's fiction is due precisely to this transformation
of the participants of conversation from confederates and accomplices into opponents. As the narrator of The Sacred Fount is largely unaware of such phenomena as tropisms however, the reader must be alert to the changing conversational tones inscribed in the dialogue.

Like some of Proust's characters, the narrator of The Sacred Fount has a decided propensity to monopolise the conversation; however, he differs from Proust's monologuists in one important respect. While Proust's M. de Charlus and the duke of Sidonia "avaient pris la détermination, non de se taire, mais de parler chacun sans s'occuper de ce que dirait l'autre,"5 the characters of Henry James suffer the opposite excess. If Proust's characters "ne parlent que pour eux-mêmes," James's characters are extraordinarily aware of the effect of their words on the listener. This consciousness of the listener's response produces a corresponding degree of self-consciousness on the part of the speaker, who resorts to various linguistic tactics and stratagems in an effort to provoke or otherwise influence the hearer.

The most evident grammatical forms of such an orientation toward the receiver are the apostrophe, the imperative, and the vocative. The imperative in the text represents a mode of action rather than a means of conveying informational content; as Benveniste states, the imperative "se caractérise comme pragmatique et vise à agir sur l'auditeur, à lui intimer un comportement."6 Conversely, the imperative, while clearly directed at the listener, implies an emotional movement on the part of the speaker, who is attempting to command, persuade, or provoke a result: its usage implies "un dialogue (réel ou fictif) au cours duquel le locuteur cherche à agir sur quelqu'un ou quelque chose."7
As the speaker initiates the utterance, assuming a role in the discourse, he suggests a form of behaviour for the listener, who is given two alternatives: to obey or disobey. This characteristic of the imperative makes it particularly valuable in the tangled fictional worlds of later Jamesian fiction, in which the difficulty often resides precisely in the impossibility, both for character and reader, to resolve the uneasy ambiguities of the situation. The imperative mobilises the protagonist, crystallising the numerous unspoken dichotomies of the narrative and spurring a decision on the part of the character. This decision in the drama of consciousness of the later novels is more aptly presented as a choice of vision—of choosing to enter into the abysses of the subterranean regions of morality and social life, or to remain on the surfaces of convention.

The imperative thus plays a pivotal role in many of the later fictions, differing dramatically from the quizzical syntax of interrogation and repetition so predominant in Jamesian dialogue. In addition to the varying syntax and mode of the imperative, it is often further differentiated from other utterances by its placement in a terminal position in the dialogue. The Golden Bowl provides a good example of this, as Maggie's words "Find out the rest!", and the repetition "Find out for yourself!" bring the discussion between Maggie and the Prince, and the chapter, to a dramatic close. Similarly, in The Wings of the Dove, the drama reaches a minor climax when Susan Stringham reveals her perceptions to Densher, encouraging him to grasp the implications she sees:

Oh how he knew he hung back! But at last he said: "You're absolutely certain that she does believe it?"

"Certain?" She appealed to their whole situation. "Judge!"

Such abrupt imperative statements also feature in The Sacred Fount, as one
character directs another to discover the evidence himself. The most
typical example of James's use of the imperative occurs when the narrator
concludes a conversation with "poor Briss," who follows the conversation
at a few paces behind, with the impatient directive, "Well, for all those
things, and in spite of what you call your fear, try her!" With which now
at last I quitted him." (p. 126) In all of the foregoing instances, the
imperative functions as an exclamatory challenge from one character to an­
other; however, with the use of such abstract cognitive verbs as "Judge!"
and "Find out for yourself!", James reaches beyond the epistemological un­
certainties of the characters to embrace those of the reader and to provoke
his personal assessment of the events that have taken place. This heightened
use of the imperative aids in intensifying the action of the story, which
consists quite simply in the widening vision of the character, as it chal­
lenges the ability of the reader. James demands that his reader also re­
pond to such pleas by reaching "a level of awareness that will allow for
his most subtle effects."

The imperative also concretely illustrates the nature of relations
between the characters, indicating the degree of intimacy between them and
manifesting the relative social power of each. As the characters in The
Sacred Fount become increasingly annoyed with the narrator's incessant
questions and obscure allusions, they resort to issuing directives to him,
reversing the nature of relations that have prevailed throughout the novel.
Ford Obert, hitherto receptive to the suggestions of the narrator, finally
puts him off with the repeated injunctions,

"Go and see for yourself!"

"I think you ask too much of me," he at last brought out. "Take care
of your ladies, my dear man, yourself! Go," he repeated, and see." (p. 206)
In a subsequent conversation with the narrator, Obert makes explicit his underlying desire to deny his complicity with the obsessed narrator-detective. To the narrator's assertion that indeed their hands "are not clean," Overt retorts, "Ah, speak for your own!" and goes on to elucidate, "I assure you I decline all responsibility. I see the responsibility as quite beautifully yours." (p. 212)

The conative function occupies an increasingly significant proportion of the interactions as a consequence of the frequent confrontations between the characters, confrontations now of a more direct nature than previously; for not only are the characters more familiar with each other, but the stakes are higher and the conversational risks increasingly great.

In the terminal conversation of the novel, the greater frequency of the conative function illustrates a linguistic transformation that has taken place in the conversations of the narrator with Mrs. Brissenden. Earlier in the novel, their interchanges tend to be impersonal as they attempted to form laws and parables to describe their observations; the final dialogue, however, documents the awareness on the part of both of their personal involvement in the situations they observe. The narrator tries to persuade Mrs. Briss to show him where she has abandoned their theory with the following rather tongue-in-cheek pleas:

"Tell me," I pleaded, "and teach me."
Equally with her voice her face echoed me again.
"Teach you?"
"To abandon my false gods. Lead me back to peace by the steps you've trod." (p. 277)

Although the narrator parodies the religious overtones of the words, his speech betrays a substantive change in their respective positions: the nar-
rator surrenders his superior, rather pedantic attitude momentarily, as his wish to learn from Mrs. Briss confers upon her a measure of power. In an effort to extricate herself from his renewed clutches, Mrs. Briss resolves on the most direct tactic, informing the narrator that she believes he is crazy. When even this assertion fails to make the narrator surrender his obsession, Mrs. Briss must find a clearer means of expression to convey her renunciation of the quest: this means is the use of the imperative, as a grammatical form which tends to efface the speaker while directing attention toward the listener. Mrs. Brissenden responds to the repeated requests of the narrator to account for her defection by refusing to acknowledge the part she has played vis-à-vis the narrator. The narrator explains,

"I do speak of your change. There must have been a given moment when the need of it—or when, in other words, the truth of my personal state—dawned upon you. That moment is the key to your whole position—the moment for us to fix."

"Fix it," said poor Mrs. Briss, "when you like!" (p. 281)

Of course, this retort is not the final word on the topic as Mrs. Briss so obviously planned: the narrator neatly reverses her exclamation in order to re-instate her in the dialogue, protesting,

"I had much rather...fix it when you like."

...Then as this plea seemed still not to move her, I once more compressed my palms. "You won't help me?"

The narrator profits by the possibilities of reversal inherent in the conative function, for if Mrs. Brissenden's retort serves to eclipse her role in the inquiry, the narrator compensates for this regressive movement by pursuing her with a series of "you"-oriented statements. As in Martereau, the other-directed discourse can serve the speaker as "son arme la plus sûre."
THE CONATIVE FUNCTION: NOTES

4 Ibid., p. 119.
6 Benveniste, p. 274.
8 Ibid., p. 265.
THE EXPRESSIVE FUNCTION: Must We Say What We Mean?

It could not but be exciting to talk, as we talked, on the basis of those suppressed processes and unavowed references which made the meaning of our meeting so different from its form. (p. 272)

In the communities described by Henry James and Nathalie Sarraute, the rules of expression are scarcely less stringent than those articulated by the Red Queen of Lewis Carroll—"Open your mouth a little wider when you speak and always say 'Your Majesty',"—for, although such a code remains implicit in the fictional worlds of the former authors, it guides nonetheless the possibilities of expression in all the conversation conducted at Newmarch and Paris. Pertaining to the direct expression of the subject's attitude toward what he is saying, the expressive function may consist of such indicators as interjections, exclamations, and intonation to give an impression of the speaker's emotion. In view of the intense emotional excitement experienced by both narrators, the dialogue in fact reveals very little of authentic, personal content. Emotions form the powerful undercurrent which sets in motion the eddies and flow of conversation, yet they are rarely manifested on the surface.

Because direct expression of emotion is generally concealed for the sake of propriety, each text formulates a language of innuendo, allusion, and implication to circumvent the difficulty of frank expression. Both Martereau and The Sacred Fount present narrators who, in their quests for knowledge of the social life they observe, undergo an apprenticeship in
indirect language. In order to examine the expressive qualities of implication in both novels, it is necessary to begin with an understanding of the kind of emotion and attitudes that do find expression in the dialogue.

In *Martereau* the uncle is the character who gives way most openly to his emotions, confronting "les écorchés vifs" (which denotes those who receive his attacks badly) with a barrage of hostile sarcasm, "ce petit sifflement de calcaire que corrode l'acide." (p. 145) The narrator presents an example of the uncle's anger when the latter predictably reacts to his daughter's satisfaction at having successfully carried out her father's commission. The simple question voiced by the uncle—"et le reçu?"—does not take in the narrator, who is conscious of the strategy it suggests, as the uncle seeks an excuse to release his anger. Even this emotional expression, while voiced and directed at the objects of his anger, finds issue through indirection, albeit of the most elementary variety. The irony of the uncle is immediately understood by his addressees, since it consists of readily reconstructable antitheses:

"Ah! c'est moi, c'est moi bien sûr...j'ai eu tort...j'ai toujours tort...c'est ma faute, toutes les bêtises que vous faites...Je ne vous considère pas assez comme des demeurés pour vous prévenir qu'on ne verse pas comme ça deux millions huit cent mille francs de la main à un monsieur...Non, mais c'est inouï..." (p. 147)

This scene, by contrast to the more menacing contests of silence in the novel, clearly sets forth the expressive function in a text in which non-expression is the norm.

The statements made by the uncle belong to the grammatical class of assertive, or representative, speech acts—utterances which, by contrast to imperatives and questions, are concerned with "getting the addressee
to believe or know or think something rather than to do something. However, it is clear that the purpose of the statements is not to convince the nephew and daughter of the truth value of the assertions; instead the uncle "is not only reporting but displaying a state of affairs, inviting his addressees to join him in contemplating it, evaluating it, and responding to it." The distinction between statements and exclamations is germane to this discussion of the expressive function, inasmuch as it illuminates the specific nature of what may be expressed in a Sarrautian context. Exclamatory assertions are by definition assertions "that display states of affairs, presenting them for tellability." In order to be appropriate to an exclamatory statement, this state of affairs must be either problematic or unusual, as is the uncle's antithetical expression of anger. The notion of the "display-text" establishes a difference "not between two types of information but between two uses of information": here, the uncle's verbal exhibition of his feeling invites inquiry into the purpose of this display.

The narrator suggests an answer to this problem in his analogy of "les vases communicants": an image depicting the system of emotional compensation between the characters. When the level of one vessel descends, the other immediately rises. In response to the inordinate display of satisfaction shown by the daughter and nephew, the uncle has no option but to demonstrate the opposite attitude. Such "display-texts" in which emotions and attitudes are freely manifested do not correspond to the virulent feelings that find expression only through indirection. The linguistic concept of the "display-text," as applied to this scene, specifies the conditions and nature of its production in reported discourse,
differentiating it from other statements by its particular purpose. In the conversational context of Martereau, the "display-text" corresponds to what Sarraute terms "trompe-l'œil," for reality is staged at the level of imperceptible inner movements. The expressive function is antithetical to the reality that Sarraute seeks to depict in her novels, as overt indicators of feeling tend to mask the finer movements of authentic emotion. Since the nature of emotion as Sarraute would depict it is inexpressible, it is necessary to examine the way in which language translates primal emotions into commonplaces, betraying the merest trace of their origins.

The social interactions in Martereau and The Sacred Fount, by contrast to the emotion displayed by each narrator, seem particularly blunted emotionally. The extreme emotions experienced by the two narrators not only contrast the content of the statements uttered, but they also incite the protagonists to concealment tactics, rendering conversation an exchange of trivial commonplaces. If the overt expression of emotion is proscribed, indirect means of expression is proportionately greater, and it is a measure of the lack of candour displayed by the characters that the expressive function corresponds to such a profusion of rhetorical devices in each novel.

The opening scene of Martereau dramatises the role of indirect language in conversation, establishing the narrative perspective of dialogue in the novel. This scene contains in fact a greater proportion of commentary than the norm in the novel, as it serves the dual function of dramatic presentation and introductory exposition in order to initiate the reader into the perspective of the "sous-conversation." Although the narrative commentary is an essential component of the scene, situating the dialogue
within a specific perspective of language, an examination of the independent function of character discourse will bring into focus the salient characteristics of indirect language in Martereau.

The aunt recounts to her nephew the romantic circumstances of the early years of marriage to his uncle, embellishing the details of "le bon temps" for the narrator's benefit. The dialogue, which is presented as a monologue in which the narrator merely affirms that the communicative channel is open by nods and facial expressions, progresses smoothly while the aunt utters a series of platitudes:

"Oui, je me suis réveillée un beau matin—c'est le matin, au réveil, qu'on voit ces choses-là clairement—je me suis assis sur mon lit et je me suis dit: Ma pauvre fille, mais qu'est-ce que tu fais là? Mais qu'est-ce que tu es en train de faire de ta vie? Un oiseau dans une cage dorée, voilà ce qu'on a fait de toi. Un objet de luxe." (p. 15)

The nephew is flattered by the confidences his aunt is making to him, although he is conscious that this amicable balance is in fact precarious. The apparent stability of the exchange is undermined little by little as the aunt exults, "Mais ce qu'on a pu y travailler!...Ah! si vous saviez quelle flamme chez ces gens-là...Quand on avait trimé tout son saoul, on sortait..." (p. 19) The narrator reacts to this picture involuntarily, so that the aunt continues in the same vein, enlarging on the glorious virtues of work as only a person of leisure can:

"Oui...Et vous savez que je gagnais ma vie. Je m'étais mise à fabriquer des bijoux dans le style nègre...Au début j'ai eu du mal, mais peu à peu, j'ai eu des tas de commandes. Presque trop. Il m'arrivait parfois de veiller toute la nuit...car le jour je peignais...Mais quelle joie quand j'ai touché ces premiers sous! De l'argent gagné par moi, "à la sueur de mon front," pensez-donc! L'indépendance..." (pp. 20-21)

Although nothing in this speech betrays the attitude of the aunt with
regard to her listener, the narrator easily reconstructs the implications of these impersonal statements, realising that each utterance is aimed indirectly at his own life. Each statement has an antithetical correspondence to his life: he does not earn his living, he is obliged to rest a great deal, and he is dependent on his aunt and uncle.

This conversation is paradigmatic of all the conversational exchanges in the novel, in which innocuous statements veil personal attacks on the listener, who responds accordingly. The expressive function is muted, personal attitudes are suppressed, and the intention of the speaker is channeled into a covert means of expression. The context and the addressee of the conversation emerge as the most important elements in determining the hidden meaning of the message, for there are no indicators within the message itself that would suggest a secondary level of expression, or "sous-conversation." The verbal messages in Martereau are internally consistent, with no suggestions of irrelevance or implications that would indicate a secondary message; hence the context in which the message is spoken becomes most significant.

The conversation in which the uncle delivers a panegyric on work to Martereau, the aunt, and nephew indicates the way in which the speech acts in the novel convey secondary intentions. The uncle recalls the hard work of his youth, then bringing the topic back to the present, he sums up:

"...eh bien, en fin de compte, c'est la seule chose qui ait compté pour moi dans l'existence, cet intérêt pour ce que je faisais, cette curiosité...Il n'y a que ça, moi un métier qu'on choisit pour gagner de l'argent, ça me dépasse, je n'aurais jamais pu, j'aurais préféré crever de faim...il y a des gens --et des gens instruits, notez bien, des gens intelligents--qui ne tiennent pas en place... ils changent de métier comme de chemise.." (p. 110)

Although this speech does not contain any manifest criticism of his
listener, all that he says directly confronts Martereau's way of life, so that each word reflects an implicitly antagonistic speech act. This conversational characteristic of the novel is analogous to the substance that

Se dissimule derrière le monologue intérieur: un foisonnement innombrable de sensations, d'images, de sentiments, de souvenirs, d'impulsions, de petits actes larvés qu'aucun langage intérieur n'exprime.  

This preverbal element surfaces and expresses itself obliquely in dialogue which contains a hidden polemic. In this form of discourse, the other speech act of the utterance remains outside of the boundaries of what is spoken, yet it shapes the whole structure of the other's speech.

In his work on Dostoevsky, Bakhtin defines this type of utterance in the following terms:

Here one utterance focused on its referential object clashes with another utterance on the grounds of the referent itself. That other utterance is not reproduced; it is understood only in its import; but the whole structure of the author's speech would be completely different, if it were not for this reaction to another's unexpressed speech act.  

The nature of this linguistic phenomenon underscores significant aspects of Sarraute's "sous-conversation" technique. The tropistic movements of the conversation are engendered by this element of the hidden polemic, for, even as the conflicting viewpoint remains unexpressed, the double-voiced utterance senses its presence and reacts to the opposition. Consequently, the speech acts in the novel, while appearing to focus on "some referential object which it denotes, depicts, expresses" actually clashes with another speech act on the grounds of the referent itself.

Thus, the uncle obliquely strikes at Martereau, whom he knows to have held many kinds of work, by speaking on the ostensibly harmless topic of
advice to the young. Until the uncle articulates his disapproval of people who change careers, it seems that he and Martereau are joined together versus "les jeunes générations," who do not appreciate what real work is.

In aiming specifically at "tous ces gens-là qui ne peuvent tenir en place," however, the uncle is able to level a concealed attack at his listener. Interestingly enough, the very terms of the cliché he employs evoke and reconstitute Martereau's name, since the expression "taper sur le même clou" suggests the close phonological cousin to Martereau, 'marteau'.

The internally polemical speech act is a brilliant technical device, essential to all of Sarraute's novels, for it reproduces the elements of debate, without revealing the source of antagonism. Hidden polemic produces speech acts that seem to sense a dissonant perspective close by addressed to the same referent, and thus reflects this dissonance in its own internal structure. Because the true referential object of hidden polemic is obscured, conversation in Sarraute's novels possesses the art of evoking violent opposition without openly revealing the covert intention.

The expressive problem encountered by the characters in Martereau—"dire et ne pas dire"—corresponds to a similar difficulty in The Sacred Fount; however, the nature of what may be uttered or suppressed is altogether different. While emotions form the problematic material in Sarraute's novel, in The Sacred Fount, the inexpressible is of a more cerebral nature. The distinction made by one critic is relevant here, for, as Mimica Cranaki notes, Sarraute's characters are "machines à reflexes beaucoup plus qu'êtres à réflexions." While this observation tends to stress only the instinctive aspect of the behaviour of Sarraute's characters, the
distinction is nevertheless valid as an assessment of Sarraute's modification of the traditional character. In general terms Nathalie Sarraute is interested in the responses that precede thought, while James documents the drama of consciousness; and furthermore, the question confronting the narrator in *The Sacred Fount* is to a much greater extent intellectual. As he attempts to solve the riddle of the "mystic Egeria" who is giving Long his intelligence, he must try to keep the rest of the guests present ignorant of different points of the problem—and conversely, certain guests also withhold evidence from the narrator.

The transformation of the expressive function in the novel is thus primarily motivated by the desire to suppress attitudes and information on points that implicate the speaker. Since the narrator considers his knowledge of all the parts of the problem the most complete, he is the character who is most motivated to remain silent about certain aspects of the mystery: for example, he does not want Mrs. Briss to discover her role in the theory, and he must likewise keep Mr. Briss dark on the same point; he must protect May Server from both Mrs. Briss and Ford Obert; and Lady John, with her vulgar suppositions, must also be kept in suspense. After the initial encounters of the narrator with Long, Mrs. Briss and Obert, in which he initiates them into the sacred fount theory, the narrator plays the game of testing the interest of the other characters, in order to discover what they know without revealing his own level of awareness. The narrator's flair at inducing others to tell while he remains silent infects the other characters, spreading a contagion of circumspection and discretion through the character discourse of the novel.

The expressive function, consisting of occasional ejaculations and exclamatory interjections, is transformed into the conative function, as
the predominant form of expression becomes the question rather than an expression of attitude or personal conviction. The hermeneutical significance of the question-and-answer method comes to the forefront in *The Sacred Fount*, as the maieutic productivity of the dialogue, using the word as midwife, emerges as the predominant feature of this intellectual detective story. In the measure that withholding information becomes a salient feature of communication in the novel, the predominance of the question increases. The question functions not only as a means of eliciting information, but also as a means of shifting the communicative focus from the speaker to the listener. Thus, the expressive function may be viewed obliquely through the indirect speech acts of the speaker.

In *The Awkward Age*, James's experimental dialogue novel, the central character Nanda Brookenham notes a conversational feature of their select circle that applies equally well to Newmarch: "Of course what's so awfully unutterable is just what we most notice." The "unutterable" similarly occupies a central position in conversation in *The Sacred Fount* for reasons of propriety—naming adultery, betrayal, or deception would comprise a major faux pas in James's novels. However, the central evidence of vampiric relationships is just what puts pressure on the surfaces of polite talk in the novel, stretching and deforming the expressive function to encourage maximum expression within the limits of secrecy.

Such a form of communication requires the linguistic devices of innuendo, allusion, and ellipsis, as well as non-verbal aids of intonation, facial expression and gesture to suggest that more is communicated than what is actually said. The narrator employs all these techniques in order to discuss the delicate topic of vampiric couples with one of the members of such a pair, the unsuspecting Mrs. Brissenden. Although Mrs. Briss has
helped to formulate the sacred fount theory with regard to Gilbert Long, she is not aware of the narrator's suspicions of her role vis-à-vis her husband. The narrator, confronted with the problem of "just what's so awfully unutterable," succumbs to the temptation to play with Mrs. Briss's ignorance as far as possible.

The narrator tries to induce Mrs. Briss to name the phenomenon they are observing:

"You asked me just now," I pursued, "what the signs of such a secret would naturally be. Well, bethink yourself a moment of what the secret itself must naturally be." ...

"Awfully charming--mustn't it?--to act upon a person, through an affection, so deeply."

"Yes--it can certainly be no vulgar flirtation." (p.35)

Since it is impossible to discuss more frankly than this the sexual nature of the sacred fount theory, the characters proceed by indirection, indicating by negation what it cannot be, and creating metaphors to suggest the nature of what it is.

The narrator alludes to the phenomenon in a number of ways, comparing it first to a sacred fount (p. 29), which he then likens to "the greedy man's description of the turkey as an 'awkward' dinner dish. It may be sometimes too much for a single share, but it's not enough to go round" (p. 29). He draws Mrs. Briss's attention to the impossibility of Lady John's part in bestowing intelligence on Long by the following metaphor:

"How can she possibly be a woman who gives absolutely nothing whatever; who scrapes and saves and hoards; who keeps every crumb for herself? The whole show's there--to minister to Lady John's vanity and advertise the business--behind her smart shop-window. You can see it, as much as you like, and even amuse yourself with pricing it. But she never parts with an article." (p. 35)
This metaphor allows Mrs. Briss to make a cognitive leap between the unutterable sexual signified and the mercantile signifier; such metaphors aid the narrator's pedagogical purpose by wedding two disparate objects without actually naming the offensive reality implied.

Such analogies are an important feature of conversation in the novel, as is evidenced by the way in which characters often take up each other's metaphors for examination, but a still more risky means of allusion is found in the comparisons the narrator makes between the laws of the theory and the couples present. In order to establish the fact the "mystic Egeria" of Long must be in presence, the narrator forms an analogy between Long and his mystery benefactress and Mr. and Mrs. Briss. He states, "It's my belief that he no more goes away without her than you go away without poor Briss" (p. 40). While the correspondence between the two couples is obvious to the reader, Mrs. Briss fails to understand the connection. This puzzle sets in motion a series of questions and answers in which the narrator amuses himself at treading as close to the truth as possible without actually disclosing his thoughts. Dramatic irony lends the conversation humour, as the narrator states as openly as he dares the vampiric relationship that exists between his listener and Mr. Briss:

"You have the advantage, for your beauty, of being admirably married. You bloom in your husband's presence. I don't say he need always be at your elbow; I simply say that you're most completely yourself when he's not far off. If there were nothing else there would be the help given you by your quiet confidence in his lawful passion." (p. 41)

The narrator's statements are double-edged and ironic. He states his observations in almost literal terms, for such a metaphorical statement as "You bloom in your husband's presence" obtains, in the highly figurative context of the sacred fount analogy, the force of direct expression. Though
the narrator's elucidation appears uncomfortably close to the truth, he mentions only the beneficial side of the contract; later he will insinuate that Mrs. Server is drawn to "poor Briss" out of sympathy for a fellow victim:

A new possibility, as she spoke, came to me with a whirr of wings, and I half-expressed it. "She may have a sympathy."

My interlocutress gazed at space. "You mean she may be sorry for him? On what ground?"

I had gone too far indeed; but I got off as I could. "You neglect him so!" (pp. 76-77)

The "half-expressed," through the use of ellipsis and innuendo, though not susceptible to the problems of the explicit utterance, serves the essential purpose of allowing that which is unutterable to be suggested. The narrator's description of the speech act—"I half-expressed it"—emphasises the common denominator of all implication, which consists, according to Ducrot, of the following:

La signification implicite apparaît—et quelquefois même se donne—comme surajoutée par rapport à une autre signification, que nous appellerons 'littérale'. Pour définir un peu mieux ce caractère de rajout ou de surplus, on fera remarquer d'abord que la signification implicite laisse toujours subsister à côté d'elle la signification littérale.12

The narrator often manipulates literal statements in such a way that the reader immediately resurrects the implicit meaning, while the other characters merely suspect the presence of additional meaning.

After having explicitly stated the example of the Brissendens to prove to Mrs. Briss that they are seeking the depleted member of the couple, the narrator states, "It's a case of shining as Brissenden shines." He further completes this elliptical statement:
I wondered if I might go further—then risked it. "By sacrifice." I perceived at once that I needn't fear: her conscience was too good—she was only amused.

"Sacrifice, for mercy's sake, of what?"
"Well—for mercy's sake—of his time."
"His time?" She stared. "Hasn't he all the time he wants?"
"My dear lady," I smiled, "he hasn't all the time you want!" (p. 43)

The narrator acknowledges the risk inherent in suggesting the darker side of the analogy to Mrs. Briss, but the illicit pleasure of exploring the linguistic taboos at Newmarch draws him on as he adds the missing key to Mrs. Briss's information: "By sacrifice." Mrs. Briss's interjection—"for mercy's sake"—is ironically transformed through the narrator's repetition to suggest "poor Briss's" motivation. With his final statement, the narrator expresses the double-entendre, "...he hasn't all the time you want," completing the informational gaps in Mrs. Briss's knowledge of her situation. That she continues to remain unconscious of the source of the narrator's innuendos can only be attributed to her "good conscience," or lack of understanding to decode the message, for the narrator has approached the limits of implication through his elliptical statements.

The use of the linguistic device of implicature necessarily suggests the extra-linguistic component of psychological motivation, indicating the speaker's attitude and emotions. The narrator betrays a certain prurient pleasure in mentioning the unmentionable, thus risking the disclosure of potentially harmful information. Expressed most clearly by interjections, exclamations, and other such markers of emotion, the expressive function operates nevertheless in a more indirect way through the use of implication or the "sous-entendu." The muting of the expressive function arises from the phenomenon noted by O. Ducrot:
Il y a des thèmes entiers qui sont frappés d'interdit et protégés par une sorte de loi du silence (il y a des formes d'activité, des sentiments, des événements, dont on ne parle pas). Bien plus, il y a pour chaque locuteur, dans chaque situation particulière, différents types d'informations qu'il n'a pas le droit de donner, non qu'elles soient en elles-mêmes objet d'une prohibition, mais parce que l'acte de les donner constituerait une attitude considérée comme répréhensible.¹³

The sacred fount theory comprises the theme that, at different points of the novel with various characters, is governed by the law of silence. However, the refusal of speech is no less revelatory than speaking, and consequently, conversation is full of incomplete or allusive statements. The narrator draws the reader's attention to the phenomenon, as he comments on the way in which the expressive function is recast into the "happy duplicity" of veiled meanings by Mrs. Briss:

She explained now, she explained too much, she abounded, talking herself stoutly into any assurance that failed her. I had meanwhile with every word she uttered a sharper sense of the pressure, behind them all, of a new consciousness. It was full of everything she didn't say, and what she said was no representation whatever of what was most in her mind. (p. 245)

If the expressive function ideally denotes the process of communicating the speaker's emotions and attitudes, The Sacred Fount presents conversation in which the purpose is to speak without taking full responsibility for the utterance, through implication of various kinds, or to state the reverse of what is really at issue in a lie. This novel reveals the sophistication of language, as man, Plutarch's speaking animal, is transformed into the animal with the ability to lie.

The expressive function in Martereau, on the other hand, emerges as a means of display in conversation: it emphasises a state of affairs and invites the addressee to examine its form. The expressive function in a
Sarrautian text is thus diametrically opposed to authentic expression. Its value resides in its function as a kind of "trompe-l'oeil," which is to the "sous-conversation" what "particularités physiques, tics, traits de caractère de certains personnages, anecdotes, usages mondains\textsuperscript{14} etc. are to the narrative discourse: the expressive function gives utterance to those elements of social life which do not find frank expression in everyday conversation.

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NOTES:

2 Ibid., p. 136.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 139.
5 Sarraute, L'Ere, p. 115.
7 Ibid., p. 188.
9 Ibid., p. 29.
13 Ibid., p. 6.
14 Sarraute, p. 71.
THE POETIC FUNCTION:

In what way can the ordinary language of conversation be considered poetic? The prevalent view of everyday language holds that it is a communication which "transmits merely information about the outside world." As we have seen, the conversational utterance is clearly not restricted to this referential function; however, whether poetic language is a feature of naturalistic dialogue, such as in the novels Martereau and The Sacred Fount, is a question that merits examination.

The binary split of language into poetic and non-poetic categories continues to prevail in literary criticism today. The Formalists defined poetic language in terms of its "literariness," which is determined by intrinsic textual properties and aesthetic structures. Ordinary language is thus viewed as a kind of aesthetic "degree zero" onto which poetic language material is imposed for effect. Jakobson's six-part model of communication counters this dichotomous view of poetic/non-poetic language and transforms this opposition into the two poles of a continuum: Jakobson substitutes the binary difference of kind by a difference of degree. This proportional definition of discourse has important repercussions in literary theory in that it diminishes the distance between ordinary and poetic language, thus suggesting parallels between the production of literature and the speech act. Literature, or poetic discourse, is defined simply as discourse in which the poetic function is dominant, due to a shift in emphasis to the message.

The poetic function predominates in any utterance in which the form
of the message is emphasised due to the internal organisation of the message itself. Poetic devices such as repetition, parallelism, alliteration, and figural tropes are found in both literary and non-literary discourse alike, as they represent "similar ways of displaying and contemplating experience which differ in their manner of composition and transmission." Thus, the notion of "literariness" may be attributed to conversational utterances which display the features of the message.

To the formalist question "Does the poetic function dominate the verbal organisation of this message?" Labov, a sociolinguist, suggests the pragmatic questions, "What is the speaker trying to do in forming this discourse?" and "What does the hearer do when he receives it?" The poetic function may be dominant in oral narrative for various contextual reasons requiring a heightening of the medium of narration. Rather than an ornamental feature of literature, the poetic function is a structural response to extra-linguistic needs. This context-dependent view of the poetic function in language takes into account the role of the message as product—a nexus of relations in which the five other fundamental features are actualised.

Poetic discourse differs from referential discourse in that the sign itself becomes more important than that which is designated. The Prague Circle of 1929 notes this tension between the representational and poetic aspects of language in the following statement:

Dans son rôle social, il faut distinguer le langage suivant le rapport existant entre lui et la réalité extra-linguistique. Il a soit une fonction de communication, c'est-à-dire qu'il est dirigé vers le signifié, soit une fonction poétique, c'est-à-dire qu'il est dirigé vers le signe lui-même.
Whereas the communicative function of the reported discourse, or dialogue, is self-evident, the poetic function of language in conversation has been generally ignored, as it has been too long considered the exclusive property of literary discourse.

As we shall see, the poetic function in the conversation of *The Sacred Fount* is by no means a minimal component of speech in the novel, as is apparent in the highly coloured speech of the characters. On the other hand, the poetic function is notably absent from speech in *Marteau* for reasons which bear on the artistic project of Nathalie Sarraute. The poetic discourse in Sarraute's work describes the fluctuating consciousness which precedes verbalisation.

The dialogue of *The Sacred Fount* abounds in figurative and poetic language, since the participants in the narrator's quest resort to analogies to express that which is either unobservable and conjectural or simply unmentionable. The narrator formulates his notion of the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Briss in the form of the sacred fount metaphor to illustrate the way in which he supposes Mrs. Briss retains her youthfulness. The metaphor initiates Obert into the mystery, and provides a "great light" (p. 63) for his further observations. Obert acknowledges his apprenticeship to the narrator's metaphorical vision as he expatiates on his own figure of speech, declaring that the theory represents "a torch in the darkness" (p. 64). The painter remarks, "You've given me an analogy, and I declare I find it dazzling. I don't see the end of what may be done with it" (p. 64). Obert's active participation in the narrator's quest is indicated by his use of metaphor; figurative speech provides a means of creating a world in which the events they fabricate
are possible.

To speak metaphorically in *The Sacred Fount* is to collaborate with the narrator in constructing an elegant "palace of thought." Metaphor constitutes the substance and measure of wit in the society of Newmarch; it also provides evidence of individual reflection and growth in understanding. The development of Obert's image of the torch, which, "flaring and smoking has guided [him] through a magnificent chiaroscuro of colour and shadow, out into the light of day" (p. 222), inspires the respect of the narrator, who notes, "I was really dazzled by his image, for it represented his personal work" (p. 222). Speaking figuratively conveys the linguistic, hence intellectual, competence of the speaker. The display of colourful and original tropes serves to reflect the stature of the speaker vis-à-vis his interlocutor, as the narrator's following comment indicates:

*I wound up, as I say, but only for long enough to have, with the vibration, the exaltation of my eloquence, my small triumph as against her great one.* (p. 312)

More than any other feature of the speech situation, epideictic style forms an index of the speaker's ability and the success of his conversational strategies. When the narrator states that Mrs. Briss "remained silent, as if really in the presence of the rising magnificence of my metaphor" (p. 312), he attributes to the metaphor a capacity to awe, and thus silence the addressee, much as a fine work of art might do.

In the speech situation at Newmarch, where the nature of the topics discussed makes candid discourse imprudent, the use of figurative expression plays a role in the ambiguity and obfuscation favoured by the speakers. The narrator concedes that "the interpretation of my tropes and figures isn't 'ever' perfectly simple" (p. 284). The effect of the poetic function
is to thicken and hypostatise the utterance so that like the reader, the addressee in the text must evaluate and interpret the form and meaning of the message. Henry James writes that he was "positively struck by the quantity of meaning and the number of intentions, the extent of ground for interest...in each of my illuminating occasions..." He employs the analogy used by Ford Obert to describe

The nocturnal passage where the conduct of so much fine meaning, so many flares of the exhibitory torch through the labyrinth of mere immediate appearances, mere familiar allusions, is successfully and safely effected....

The polished surface of Jamesian speech derives much from the "flares of the exhibitory torch" furnished by metaphor and allusion: the brilliance of poetic language arrests the attention of both listener and reader upon the seductive form, rather than the content and meaning of conversation.

Jamesian dialogue, and that in *The Sacred Fount* particularly, manifests a high degree of semiotic density. In addition to employing unusual analogies, metaphors and highly symmetrical constructions, the guests at Newmarch also comment upon and evaluate the talk of others. The addressee often arrests the flow of conversation to draw attention to his/her interlocutor's remarks, making such comments as,

"Thank you for"after all'!" (p. 77)
"'If I am' is lovely!" (p. 278)
"Thanks," I smiled,"for the way you say it." (p. 283)

In each of the above instances, the speaker emphasises the use of an expression in order to focus on the composition of the message at the expense of its meaning.

As each speaker reflects on the appropriateness of the expression, he
tends to concretise the remarks of conversation into a text. In isolating the words of an utterance, the speaker acknowledges the implications of the message. Characters signal their recognition, or "uptake" of implication by pointing out and evaluating certain words, or the value of a remark, as for example, Mrs. Briss comments here: "Your expressions are not of the happiest" (p. 275).

The narrator takes up the straightforward terms of Mrs. Briss's denial—"Of course I deny it" (p. 271)—in a flurry of anadiplosis and subordinate clauses:

"Your 'of course' would be what I would again contest, what I would denounce and brand as the word too much—the word that spoils, were it not that it seems best, that it in any case seems necessary, to let all question of your consistency go." (p. 271)

But this concentration on the potentialities of the lexicon represents merely one element of the poetic function, and this interest of the addressee in the formation of the message is perhaps less significant than the preoccupation with creating appropriate metaphors and analogies. What this feature of conversation does suggest is that if the garden party consists of a number of verbal artists and self-conscious beaux parleurs, their transitory performances are acknowledged by an attentive audience.

Nathalie Sarraute's interest in the communication situation resides precisely in the latter elements of conversation: the deep content of intentions and impulses cloaked in the harmless and gratuitous form of words. The banal appearance of the utterance, and its reputation of "gratuité, légèreté, d'inconscience", provide the necessary qualities for exchanges that mask violent and aggressive intentions with speech laden
with sustained triviality and small talk. While the spoken language in Sarraute's reported discourse is eminently transparent and referential, it is interesting to note that the poetic function becomes predominant at the juncture between subconscious and conscious thought. Sarraute describes the process of verbalisation itself in the form of hesitant and associative expressions of thought. The movement of the word from the blurred, pre-verbal apprehension of the subconscious mind takes the form of phonetic groping from one synonym, one homonym to the other. Although the notion of the existence of a pre-verbal consciousness is subject to dispute, Sarraute posits this reality as a salient feature of the cognitive activity in her work. The silent verbal discourse of the narrator is often highly poetic, employing assonance, alliteration and onomatopoeia "to suggest the movement through the subconscious of instincts and reflexes too ephemeral and amorphous to be described by purely referential means."9

The disordered subconscious of the nephew-narrator of the novel is described in the following verbal gymnastics as he seeks to examine his anxiety:

Il me semble quand je tressaille que c'est moi le coupable; moi la brebis galeuse, la bête puante qui ferait--si j'osais me plaindre à eux--se détourner avec dégoût tous les braves gens: ils refuseraient d'examiner mes blessures, toutes ces prétendues morsures, ces atteintes, ces coups bas que personne d'autre ne reçoit, ne perçoit, dont personne n'a jamais songé à apprendre à qui que ce soit à se préserver; moi qui pêche en eau trouble, qui trouble les eaux calmes par mon image reflétée, mon souffle; qui vois dans l'air la trajectoire invisible de Dieu sait quels cailloux que personne ne m'a lancés, et qui rapporte ce que personne n'attend; moi qui sans cesse éveille ce qui veut dormir, excite, suscite, guette, quête, appelle; moi l'impur. (pp. 72-73)

Sarraute thus examines the contours of the material that lies below the surface of speech. Although these impulses often find expression in con-
versation, they resemble the minimal appearance of the iceberg, which, though frequently insignificant on the surface, is joined to a sub-surface bulk of great proportions. Thus, the stylistic innovation of Sarraute's work is perceptible only in the discourse of the narrative commentary, in which the transitions between psychological states are evoked.

The semiotic density resulting from poetic discourse tends to highlight those areas of the novel which are most significant in terms of the aesthetic purposes of the author: for James, allusive conversation, and for Sarraute, inchoate states of consciousness. Discourse which reflects the message of the speech act, whether conversational or literary, indicates areas of stylistic renewal and exploration. In both novels, the poetic function circumscribes and articulates the process of the hermeneutic explorations of the narrators: in Martereau, sound patterns and associative phonetics portray the movements of the mind, whereas in The Sacred Fount, the use of metaphor as both a process and product of discovery forms an index of each character's understanding.
THE POETIC FUNCTION: NOTES


3 Ibid., p. 73.

4 Ibid., p. 73.


7 Ibid., p. 117.


PRINCIPLES OF CONVERSATION: Discursive strategies

The discrete elements of the communication situation, divided as in the foregoing discussion into the six factors proposed by Jakobson, combine within conversation to form the series of manoeuvres that constitute the events of each novel. Conversation, and its significant counterpart, silence, no longer evoke events external to themselves. As Todorov points out with reference to The Awkward Age, "Conversations form the story but do not recount it." Furthermore, as each author deploys the dialogue form in a distinctive manner, conversation forms the basis of the structural impasse to which all the episodes in each novel lead.

More than mere conversation, the speech acts of each novel constitute discursive strategies, inasmuch as they represent "une séquence d'actes de langage qui vise à construire un certain type de situation discursive." Language, beyond the rudimentary functions of expression and representation, thus performs the function of communication, which serves to influence the addressee. In his analysis of the functions of language in the theatre, Roman Ingarden stresses that

The function of influencing the person addressed and the other people taking part in the total action of the work is the main achievement of the speeches of represented persons.

Strategy theory outlines the means available and conditions present when one party sustains an attempt to prevail over another. An examination of the conversational manoeuvres of each novel in terms of strategy theory
reveals the essential convergence of Sarraute and James in their use of dialogue.

The term "strategy" is applicable to a series of acts in which the four following conditions are fulfilled:

1. a situation of uncertainty, stemming from either the unforeseeable behaviour of a partner, or partial ignorance of the structure of the situation;

2. a goal, whether consciously intended or not;

3. rules of the game, defining the possible plays and allowing evaluation of the successive situations;

4. a series of planned choices, whether conscious or not.1

The pertinence of strategy theory with regard to the novels at hand becomes more evident in the light of the linguistic application of the concept to illocutionary acts. As one theorist notes,

C'est au niveau illocutoire que la notion de stratégie nous paraît trouver un champ d'application particulièrement intéressant: une succession d'actes de langage, régis par des règles conventionnelles, visant à établir entre les partenaires certaines relations 'juridiques' correspond parfaitement aux conditions énumérées plus haut.5

The situation of uncertainty inherent in conversation renders the plans and goals of the speakers extremely problematic, as both the narrators of James and Sarraute acknowledge in their testimonies of defeat. The development of discursive strategies, illustrated dramatically throughout the verbal interchanges in both texts, shapes the irresolvable structure which ultimately evolves from the various plays in this game.

The analogy employed by both authors which best describes the features of conversational strategies in the novels is the comparison of talk
with a game of cards. The tension deriving from the ignorance of one's partner's hand, the complex rules of play, the carefully defined goal, and the importance of developing a plan of combat make the analogy to conversation particularly apt in both novels. In Martereau, the narrator links the uncle's verbal prowess with the flourish of a good play in a game of cards:

Il s'adresse à moi, montrant, selon toutes les bonnes règles du jeu, qu'elle est indigné: "Tu lui as demandé un reçu?"
Les cartes qu'il vient de recevoir sont si bonnes, sa chance est si grande que je serais presque tenté de me réjouir pour lui....J'admire la sûreté de ses coups. (p. 144)

In The Sacred Fount, numerous allusions are made to "playing the game," while more specific references to cards are contained in the expressions, "withdrawing with one of her sweeps," "I couldn't certainly in that case hurry after her without spilling my cards," "she knew the strength of Long's hand," (all p. 256) and finally, "I for an instant almost miscalculated her direction and believed she was really throwing up her cards" (p. 302). The image of the card game, in which the participants are identified as opponents rather than collaborators, justly illustrates the nature of conversation in both novels.

A complex, rule-governed form of behaviour, speaking a language involves not only the intralinguistic rules of forming sentences, as in the locutionary act, but also the extra-linguistic rules pertaining to the context of the message. Ill-defined and unstable, the latter set of rules are most problematic for the narrators. The narrator of Martereau is most sensitive to this aspect of conversation. He states in the opening paragraph of the novel, "J'observe scrupuleusement les règles du jeu" (p. 7).
For the narrator, this entails a carefully maintained appearance of invulnerability, for as he later informs the reader, the game is often brutal, possibly bloody, and must be played to its inevitable conclusion. The narrator recalls his uncle's anger in an instance when his opponent unexpectedly yields to him: "Le jeu avait mal tourné, le partenaire avait abandonné la partie au moment le plus excitant" (p. 43). While the rules of conduct are provisional and inconstant, certain psychological laws deduced by the narrator appear invariable. For example, the law of "les vases communicants" observed by the narrator states that an excess of emotion demonstrated by one party inevitably produces the opposite state in the other party: "Quand dans l'un le niveau descend, aussitôt dans l'autre on le voit qui monte" (p. 124). This empirical truth is observable in the conversation in the novel, for as one character refuses to speak, the other becomes proportionately more voluble.

The ground rules in *The Sacred Fount*, defining the permissible limits of deception and circumspection in function of the speakers, are formulated verbally by the characters as they participate in the investigation. The narrator's playful comment, "I know...but nothing could induce me to tell" (p. 57), heralds a series of interplays with the other characters in which the narrator attempts to inculcate strict guidelines regarding the use of information: the guests must maintain total secrecy with the others while revealing all to the narrator. Lady John ridicules this unstated law, and the narrator's methods, scoffing, "Asking me everything and telling me nothing, you nevertheless look to me to satisfy you?" (p. 179) Nevertheless, this is the controlling rule of the game as it is established and sustained at Newmarch.
If conversation is largely regarded by both Sarraute and James as constituting a form of game, the goal of each interchange is a constant, yet understated, element of the whole. In terms of the detective story plot, the ostensible goal of each narrator is to determine the nature of the relations between certain characters in *The Sacred Fount*, and to ascertain whether the eponymous hero of *Martereau* is honest or a swindler. However, while these inquiries appear relatively academic, the manner in which both self-appointed detectives pursue the truth through a series of heated exchanges makes their detachment questionable. That ulterior motives may subsist in the most objective of inquiries is a commonplace truism of a post-Freudian age: it is axiomatic in Sarraute's work, as is shown in the bipartite division of deep and surface reality, while in *The Sacred Fount*, the juxtaposition of the narrator's highly logical language to his evident emotional upheaval suggests this reality.

The conversational goals perceived by the narrator of *Martereau* do not fully correspond to the usual definition of the term, for the requisite volition and intentionality originate at a pre-conscious level. However, on this plane, and it is the only authentic level of human relations in the novel, goals and strategies, albeit subconscious, are the realities of which the narrator is most sharply aware. The speaker's goal may be observed in that aspect of the speech act termed the perlocutionary act, having to do with the consequences of the utterance. Whereas illocutionary acts are conventional, depending on custom and procedures for fulfillment, perlocutionary effects are contingent and unpredictable, depending upon natural, rather than conventional laws. A basic constituent of communication, the element of indeterminacy is
nowhere greater than in the perlocutionary act, and for Sarraute, the unpredictable instinctual movements which precede the perlocutionary effect are a source of abundant interest.

The hidden goals of the speaker, though never articulated in Sarraute's work, manifest themselves in the listener's consciousness, where the unvoiced thrust of the utterance is often figured forth in the form of an image or a tropistic response. In Martereau, the nature of the speaker's purpose—if a subconscious end may be thus termed—reveals itself to the narrator in the course of conversation in the following terms:

Elle ne cherche pas à me gratifier, ou à peine. Son but principal—car il y en a toujours plusieurs, on s'étonnerait de voir, si l'on consentait à regarder de plus près, comme ils se pressent, bien plus nombreux qu'on ne pourrait l'imaginer, devant les mots en apparence les plus insignifiants—son but, conscient ou non, doit être ailleurs...(p. 18)

The narrator acknowledges the fact that the goal of a discursive strategy may not always be conscious nor well-defined; as the conversation proceeds, however, the speaker inevitably singles out the sensitive areas in his/her listener.

...cette fois, je dois le reconnaître, elle a misé juste: comme à cet astronome auquel ses seuls calculs ont permis de découvrir l'existence et l'emplacement des planètes invisibles, les indices qu'elle avait relevés sur moi à mon insu...lui ont permis de jouer à coup sûr. (p. 20)

Because there are no normative rules that would guarantee performance of the intended perlocutionary act—and the effect is always dependent upon the addressee's response—the games depicted are at once highly unpredictable and inexorably repetitive.

Whereas Sarraute describes the stakes of the game in terms of
psychological and emotional goals in *Martereau*, portraying the inner effect of speech upon the listener, James emphasises the sender of the perlocutionary act, whose goal may be to persuade, to annoy, to rebuke, to induce discussion, or even "to have the last word." James's narrator frequently comments on his own ulterior motives, and as he becomes increasingly conscious of the nature of his own impulses, the motives of the others become increasingly suspect. Soon after he has unwittingly embued Ford Obert and Mrs. Brissenden with his own enthusiasm for the sacred fount theory, the narrator realises that his indiscretion may harm the people involved, as he claims as follows:

I hadn't in the least had it in mind to "compromise" an individual; but an individual would be compromised if I did not now take care. (p. 47)

The narrator's mimetic stylistics illustrate the reversal of thought, reflected in the chiastic sentence structure, which prompts the narrator's more cautious behaviour. The narrator's game plan--"a sustained attempt to avoid disaster" (p. 48)--gives rise to the ellipsis, insinuations, even the lies, he employs to stave off the other characters's realisation of what he "sees." This master plan guides all of the narrator's subsequent actions and speech, although he adapts the successive choices he must make according to the specific knowledge and situation of each character.

The narrator's genius, and that of the novel, resides in the combination of a dizzying number of game plans employed by the six main characters, each adapted to the ignorance or awareness of the character encountered. The narrator attempts to protect Mrs. Server from Mrs. Brissenden's belief that she is the "mystic Egeria"; he blocks Obert's search for the man who, as he believes, is being depleted by Mrs. Server; and he attempts to console
both victims, May Server and "poor Briss," although spoken acknowledgement of their sacrifice is out of the question. The permutations of this global plan are numerous, as each new meeting introduces a different facet of the problem with the experience of each character, his specific knowledge, and personal blind spot.

Because speech does not always permit candid discussion of the matter in question, and such frankness is also subject to misinterpretation, the narrator must carry out his plan without a clear understanding of what his interlocutor believes to be true, and with such circumspection that he may subsequently deny the implications he makes. The vicissitudes of each chapter compound the confusion, as the initial situation of the novel undergoes frequent alternations through the addition of different character configurations, new viewpoints, and finally, varying theories to accommodate the conflicting data. The narrator's intellectual adventure is ultimately subsumed by the intricate pattern formed by the successive choices, plans, and counterplots effected by each character.

The notion of the plan in the discursive strategy is no less applicable to Martereau, although the plan is discernible only at the micro-level of each transaction, since the controlling enigma of the novel concerning Martereau's character merely forms the context of the discursive situation. As plans are generally conceived and even enacted without the full consciousness of the speaker, they are often perceived on a similar non-intellectual basis as in the following example. Sensing the hidden goal in the ostensibly random remarks of his uncle, the narrator is able to discern the plan underlying his conversation, commenting, "Je pressens chaque mot qu'il va dire, j'ai envie de le devancer tant je sens où nous allons, mais je
conserve encore un peu d'espoir" (p. 108-9). Although aware of his uncle's hidden agenda, the narrator does not attempt to steer the conversation in a different direction.

It is significant that while the characters in Martereau deploy an array of conversational tactics to implement the game plan while on the offensive, the same characters generally prove passive and ineffectual in the face of their interlocutor. Thus the dialogue in a Sarrautian context proceeds virtually monologically, since the plan determined by one of the partners tends to determine the course of the conversation. The dyadic interaction typical of Jamesian dialogue, replete with interruptions, requests for definitions, echoes and denials, becomes the univocal "parlerie" described by the narrator in Martereau: in this situation, the roles distributed at the beginning of the conversation are generally maintained throughout, the aggressor completing his plan while the victim submits to the attack. In any case, the fabric of the plan, with its linguistic intricacies, interests the narrator less than does the unvoiced content of the exchange, so that in the majority of scenes, the second voice is occulted.

On the rare occasion that the narrator initiates a conversation, implementing his own plan, the situation becomes impregnated with the possibility of failure. Even as the narrator declares, "cette fois, je crois bien que toutes les chances sont de mon côté, les risques d'échec à peu près nuls" (p. 206), he betrays an awareness of the essential nature of conversation as presented in Martereau: that any conversation involves an element of indeterminacy, rendering the consequences uncertain. The inexorable quality of conversation in the novel derives from the narrator's fatalistic sensibility which attributes the course of social exchange to
the operation of "la loi du plus fort."

Since the action of both novels is carried out in the form of language, specifically in the various subterfuges of discursive strategies, the conflicting realities represented in the divergent speech acts of the characters are brought to the surface in a final confrontation. The vehicle of the drama in Martereau and The Sacred Fount, illocutionary acts form the basis of discussion in the dénouements of the two novels. In a movement of self-critical reflection, each novel portrays the necessary conditions of successful, or "felicitous," illocutions, as the characters attempt to clarify the extra-linguistic situations of conversation. If, as Sarraute claims,

Les paroles possèdent les qualités nécessaires pour capter, protéger, et porter au-dehors ces mouvements souterrains à la fois impatients et craintifs, the utterances in parallel scenes of the two novels merit close examination.

The scene in which the uncle demands an explanation from his wife and nephew of Martereau's indignant reaction to his request for a receipt presents the conflict in the anomalous form of a traditional play, in which the reported words are distinctly separated from the diegetic context. Thus, illocutionary acts, which emphasise the nature of the actual purpose of the utterance, are highlighted in this climactic scene. In the dénouement of The Sacred Fount, illocutions are accorded similar interest as the narrator questions Mrs. Briss in order to discover whether she has "talked."

The dramatic structure of each scene hinges on the same illocutionary acts: accusation, denial, and finally, a pledge of honour. The
uncle demands to know who has informed Martereau about his suspicions, while the narrator of *The Sacred Fount* tries to discover whether Mrs. Brissenden has discussed the theory with Long. In both cases, the speakers accuse their interlocutors of an infraction of the rules of the game: that is, talking to someone outside the verbal compact. In both novels, the accusation is made indirectly in the form of an interrogation, although the parties involved immediately construe the illocutionary force of the utterance as it is intended. In *The Sacred Fount* the narrator asks, "What am I not, in fine, to think of your intelligence, if, deciding for a resort to headquarters, you've put the question to Long himself?" (p. 263). Because the narrator is convinced that she has done so, he "risks such directness only by making it extravagant" (p. 264), overlaying the question with irony so that it is possible for her to lie.

Mrs. Briss denies the accusation in a number of ways, declaring, "I've not spoken to a creature" (p. 265), "Not a creature has spoken to me" (p. 267), and finally, "I've not communicated the least mite". (p. 267). The deliberately light tone of the accusation and denial in *The Sacred Fount* contrasts the same speech acts in *Martereau*, where the dialogue is emotional, even melodramatic. The uncle demands to know who has spoken to Martereau, stating "Je veux savoir qui trahit ici...Qui va raconter au-dehors ce qu'on dit dans la maison, ce qui se passe ici, chez moi?" (p. 218). The nephew gives his word of honour, pledging his fidelity to the compact, and the problem of Martereau's suspicion is finally unravelled by the aunt's explanation.

In *The Sacred Fount*, Mrs. Briss asserts that she accuses no one, yet the three negative statements to this effect induce the narrator to plead innocence, giving his word of honour to buttress the assertion. The dénoue-
ment of the novel is carried out by illocutions which serve to denote the
nature of the speech acts which have defined their involvement in the mys­
tery:

"Poor May--'claiming'? When I insisted it wasn't!"
"You didn't insist it wasn't anybody!" (p. 268)

"I've had to protect others and, at the cost of a decent appear­
ance, to pretend to be myself half an idiot. I've had even, for
the same purpose—if you must have it—to depart from the truth." (p. 302)

Discursive strategies and verbal subterfuge constitute the very subject of
the inquiry, since the material alteration of the faculties of two of the
participants is manifested by their "talk"; and furthermore, the discussion
of the theory--formulated in various imputations, assertions and interroga­
tions--cannot ultimately be separated from the object under investigation.
As the two interlocutors change their respective positions, the movement
is not only cognitive, for as the conflict unfolds through the illocutions,
each speaker attempts to attain a position of power through verbal domin­
ance.

Conversation in James enacts the collision of values, desires, and
motives that takes places with the verbal encounter. If at best conver­
sation is a means of collaboration--a place to "compare and exchange wea­
pons and manoeuvres" (p. 295)--it generally represents a competition in
which the wit, the power, and the verbal resources of the participants are
in question.

For Sarraute, the dialogue constitutes an indispensable means of set­
ting into motion the actions and reactions that are in perpetual activity
beneath the social surface. The dialogue examined above, however, repre­
sents a stylistic departure for Sarraute, who is less interested in the illocutionary force of language—what the speaker is doing with words—than the effect of the words upon the addressee. In the scene in question, the action of the plot is performed through the utterance of the speakers, while the essential sub-plot common to all Sarraute's work—the "sous-conversation"—is omitted. The narrator comments upon the anomalous narrative presentation of the passage, stating,

Mais je ne peux pas me maintenir longtemps hors de mon élément: La lumière m'aveugle, l'air me fait mal, le grand mouvement m'étourdit. Aussitôt revenu derrière les coulisses, seul dans ma chambre, j'aspire à redescendre vers les molles vases putrides qui frémissent au fond des eaux stagnantes. (p. 219)

It is important to note, however, that if the perlocutionary force of the utterance is what most interests Sarraute, this element of the speech act is nevertheless inseparable from the verbal event that produces it.

Tropisms—the subterranean component of the perlocutionary effect—derive their existence from words, or more specifically from the dyadic interaction found in dialogue. Words are in fact the alpha and the omega of the tropism:

...déposées en lui elles enflent, elles explosent, elles provoquent autour d'elles des ondes et des remous qui, à leur tour, montent, affleurent et se déploient au-dehors en paroles.7

The role of dialogue in Sarraute's work has often been understood solely as a means of contrasting banal utterances with the authenticity of tropistic imagery. The divergence between these levels, however, is not merely an ironic or comic device, but rather a dynamic relationship of cause and effect: Sarraute states that dialogues "have been placed in my work, on the contrary, to bring forth these tropisms."8 Thus, despite the
relative paucity of dialogue in Sarraute's second novel, Martereau, the
dialogue remains an essential underpinning of the tropistic action of the
novel, shielding and at the same time, revealing tropisms.

As theme and form of the two novels, talk creates a sense of immediacy
by removing the authorial voice, so that the reader is placed at the locus
of interaction with the characters and invited to participate in the drama
of "some sinister underworld, heaving in its pain, its power and its hate."9
The opacity, mystery, and indeterminacy intrinsic in spoken language are
exploited as a form of "trompe-l'oeil" by both authors, so that the dis­
cursive strategies of which the reader becomes aware through the dialogue
of the novel tend to obscure the more authentic strategies of the subcon­
scious mind. The role of the narrator in both elucidating and obscuring
the meaning of both verbal and non-verbal intercourse is a salient aspect
of both works and requires attention, since the meaning of each novel is
produced through the interplay of the character and narrative discourse.


4 Caron, trans. mine, p. 181.

5 Caron, p. 182.


7 Ibid., p. 123.


PART TWO: Narrative Discourse

Quelque chose d'insolite, de violent, se cachait sous ces apparences familières...

Nathalie Sarraute

My scheme called for the suggestive nearness (to all our apparently ordered life) of some sinister underworld, heaving in its pain, its power and its hate; a presentation not of sharp particulars, but of loose appearances, vague motions and sounds and symptoms, just perceptible presences and general looming possibilities.

Henry James
THE NARRATIVE DISCOURSE: How to Do Things with Dialogue

The reported discourse, or dialogue form, endows the speech events that take place in each novel with a semblance of realism. Sustained scenic presentation has the effect of effacing the narrator, so that the point of view appears objective. However, in conjunction with the speech of many characters, the narrative discourse presents the central perspective to which all the utterances are submitted. In examining the narrative discourse of these two novels, the fundamental similarity of both texts on the basis of formal characteristics is immediately evident: each novel is mediated by a narrator who actively participates in the events recounted. The nature of the involvement of each narrator-protagonist in the narrative discourse yields two radically divergent effects however.

In The Sacred Fount the concrete, material quality of the spoken word has the effect of relegating the narrative discourse to back-stage; while the narrative discourse is conjectural and analytic, the dialogue constitutes an event. In contrast to the apparent density of the narrative discourse, reported speech conveys an effect of accessibility and clarity. Typographical conventions reinforce the promise of disclosure offered by dialogue; the text appears to open up with the juxtaposition of dialogue to narrative discourse. Reported speech also acquires the ontological status of an event, while narrative discourse often occupies an indefinite position in time and space.

These features of conventional dialogue contribute to the reader's receptivity to reported speech; as James comments,
One had noted this reader [the Anglo-Saxon] as perverse and inconsequent in respect to the absorption of "dialogue"—observed the "public for fiction" consume it, in certain connexions, on the scale and with the smack of lips that mark the consumption of bread-and-jam by a children's school-feast, consume it even at the theatre, so far as our theatre ever vouchsafes it, and yet as flagrantly reject it when served, so to speak, au naturel!

In order to produce dialogue "organic and dramatic, speaking for itself, representing and embodying substance and form," James creates a spoken medium of remarkable economy and compression. In conjunction with this constructive, autonomous dialogue, the narrative discourse provides a context for the speech, representing collateral actions and expressions, controlling its insertion in the text, and interpreting the meaning it conveys. The narrative voice thus forms a "usurping consciousness," ordering and dominating the speech events.

In *Martereau* the proportion of spoken and even unvoiced discourse to the narrative material is low. Furthermore, Sarraute avoids the characteristic effect of realistic dialogue upon the reader by embedding it directly in the narrative context. The ontological status of the utterance in Sarraute's work is often uncertain, since the borders between voiced and unvoiced speech are deliberately blurred. As the act of narration is contemporaneous with the action, the narrative distance is reduced to zero. Although the narrator presents a unifying voice for the discrete utterances, he does not have the sovereign independence of the Jamesian narrator from the temporal, spatial, and psychological world of his fiction. The distinctive typographical format of Sarraute's work, in addition to the unique way in which the narrator fulfills his various functions, give rise to the inimitable aesthetic experience of *Martereau*. 
Among the various typologies suggested by studies of narrative technique, the functional approach of Lubomir Doležel, at once sufficently refined and remarkably simple, is the mode of analysis best suited to our interests in this study. In his work entitled *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature*, Doležel examines the narrative role in terms of two kinds of functions: the primary functions of representation and control, and the secondary functions of interpretation and action. The secondary functions of the narrator correspond to the primary functions of the character, and vice versa, as is shown in the following diagram:

![Diagram of narrative functions](image)

As the narrator takes part in the action of the story, or conversely, as a character undertakes the role of representing the action, the opposition between mimesis and diegesis is neutralised. A thorough analysis of these verbal forms and functions is needed to understand the aesthetic effects of *Martereau* and *The Sacred Fount*, and to evaluate the success of each particular narrative mode with regard to the artistic project of each author.
THE REPRESENTATIONAL FUNCTION: Recording the unspoken

The representational function of the narrator corresponds to the narrative task that Genette terms the "fonction proprement narrative," from which, he notes, "aucun narrateur ne peut se détourner sans perdre en même temps sa qualité de narrateur." The narrator thus assumes responsibility for material which cannot be relayed figurally through the medium of dialogue: this includes such material as description and transcription of both voiced and unvoiced statements. The responsibility for the content of the voiced material is assumed by the character discourse, whereas the narrator undertakes the representation of verbalised information that is not voiced but rather formulated by the speaker.

Each novel contains varying amounts of silent discourse that is "reported" by each narrator. Such silent discursive forms as the interior monologue or stream-of-consciousness techniques have long been staples of the first-person narrator's art. What is more unusual in the texts of Nathalie Sarraute and Henry James, however, is the attribution of silent discourse by the narrator-character to other characters, whose thoughts can only be speculated upon or imagined by the narrator. While the "sous-conversation" is the predominant form underlying the dialogue in Sarraute's novels, its rare occurrence within the more conventional modes of communication in the traditional novel creates a striking effect in The Sacred Fount.

The Jamesian narrator, in keeping with his exalted notion of his own intellectual powers, occasionally disrupts the conventional narrative
role of reporting conversation by reporting silent discourse. The first example of this variant of "sous-conversation" occurs within a dialogic context in a form consistent with ordinary spoken language. The narrator attempts to prove to Mrs. Briss that Lady John cannot be deeply implicated with Gilbert Long, or at least not in a way that would render him more intelligent. He parodies Lady John's self-satisfied opinion of her social brilliance,

"'Of course Mr. Long's clever, because he's in love with me and sits at my feet, and don't you see how clever I am? Don't you hear what good things I say--wait a little, I'm going to say another in about three minutes; and how, if you'll only give him time too, he comes out with them after me? They don't perhaps sound so good, but you see where he has got them. I'm so brilliant, in fine, that the men who admire me have only to imitate me, which you observe, they strikingly do.'" (p. 36)

The essentially parodic intention of this utterance differentiates it from reported silent discourse in the Sarrautian sense, for the nature of the "sous-conversation" prohibits its expression in conversation as it occurs here. Another salient feature of reported silent discourse as it is found in James's novel is that rather than "throwing open the world of silent thought"5 of the character to whom the discourse is ascribed, this verbal feature reflects more clearly than any other utterance the mind of the narrator himself.

The narrator's hostility toward Lady John crystallises in the tone of scathing sarcasm found in the caricature. In fact, the narrator's ridicule is directed at the very personality trait made evident in himself as the weekend progresses: that is, a tendency to overvalue one's intellectual powers. If Lady John appears complacent as the bestower of Long's intelligence, the narrator later considers himself in an analogous situation
with regard to Mrs. Briss, who acknowledges the parallels between the two relationships: "You've made me sublime. You found me dense. You've affected me quite as Mrs. Server has affected Mr. Long..." (p. 81). The narrator confirms the suitability of this analogy by his exclamation, "I do feel remarkably like that pair of lips. I feel drained--I feel dry!" (p. 81). His response to the suggestion that he has made Mrs. Briss sublime differs little in fact from the attitude that he critically ascribes to Lady John in his parodic monologue.

The device of reporting silent discourse proves an effective means of throwing the searchlight upon the unguarded mind of the narrator. It is important to note that the case of parody merely intensifies and exaggerates the relationship which the narrator holds with regard to all character discourse in the novel, for

Such speech [character discourse] has its own immediate referential object, yet it does not occupy a position on the same plane with the direct speech of the author; instead, it stands at a certain remove from the author's speech, as if in perspective. It is meant not only to be understood in terms of its own referential object, but, by virtue of its character-defining capacity, or its typicality, or its colorfulness, it also appears as the object of another (the author's) intention.6

An extreme limit of conventional character discourse, the parody embeds in the narrative voice an intention which is directly opposed to the original one. Consequently,

The second voice, having lodged in the other speech clashes antagonistically with the original, host voice and forces it to serve directly opposite aims. Speech becomes a battlefield for opposing intentions.7

The narrator differentiates the second utterance from his own syntactically as well as in terms of verbal content. He succeeds in setting Lady John's
chatty style in opposition to his own conversational tone, although the content of the parody applies equally well to his own hubristic pretensions.

The foregoing report of silent discourse belongs rather to the character discourse than to the representative function of narrative, in which the narrator undertakes a description of verbal and scenic events. In both forms, the narrator reveals the inner working of the mind of a character, though in the instance of character discourse this form of reporting takes on a parodic, rhetorical purpose, while, when lodged in a narrative context, it attains the status of a Jamesian "sous-conversation."

The interior monologue reported by the narrator occurs when he meets Mrs. Server in the wood as evening approaches. After inviting her to sit down, the narrator exchanges a few words with Mrs. Server, who asks him "indeed as if with an effort and from a distance, 'What is it that has happened to you?'
" The narrator deftly reverses the question, as if to underscore the fact that she is the one who has been altered. In the ensuing silence, the narrator discerns in Mrs. Server "a supremely unsuccessful attempt to say nothing. It said everything..." (p. 135)
The narrative pace of the scenic presentation slows, and the scene becomes a privileged moment in which the narrator recives a surge of finer perceptions into the sacred fount enigma.

Musing that "it was prodigious what, in the way of suppressed communication, passed in these wonderful minutes between us"(p. 138), the narrator construes Mrs. Server's confession out of this telling silence:

"Yes, my dear man, I do understand you--quite perfectly now, and (by I know not what miracle) I've really done so to some extent from the first." (p. 141)

In contradistinction to the "sous-conversations" that play such a major role
in Sarraute's novels, this "mute address" is non-antagonistic and undifferentiated syntactically from ordinary speech. However, the content of this attributed interior monologue departs radically from the nature of normal conversation in the novel, for it acknowledges a fund of deep emotional feeling that generally remains unspoken. The narrator's remarks about Mr. Brissenden are germane at this point to his own use of quoted inner monologue, for to "draw him on Mrs. Server was in truth to draw him indirectly on himself." (p. 112)

The quoted monologue represents a wish-fulfillment dream on the part of the narrator rather than profound insight into Mrs. Server's thought, as the dichotomy between the thoughts he attributes to her and her own train of thought ironically demonstrates as they resume conversation. Mrs. Server's utter failure to complete the narrator's elliptical statement that follows the monologue disconfirms the applicability of the passage to her inner feelings. While there have been earlier instances of speaking gestures and telling glances, this passage reveals the discontinuity between external, visible signs and inner meaning. The scene dramatises the narrator's extreme readiness to read volumes into the merest facial indication. As the narrator notes, "all that had passed between us had passed in silence, but it was a different matter for what might pass in sound" (pp. 144-45), for he attempts to render the decline of Mrs. Server's consciousness--"the expiring struggle of her native lucidity" (p. 145)--in strongly affective language. The surrounding imagery of this passage is highly vivid, describing Mrs. Server's mental condition through such visual analogies as shipwreck and disaster. James's imagery differs from the animal imagery favoured by Sarraute both in tenor
and vehicle: the tenor of Jamesian imagery refers to mental states rather than the pre-cognitive processes evoked by tropisms, while Jamesian metaphors are generally non-biological. James heightens the drama of Mrs. Server's condition by describing her attitude in the following way:

She moved, groping and panting, in the gathering dusk of her fate, but there were still calculations she could dimly make. One of these was that she must drag no one else in. (p. 146)

Like the controlling animal metaphor of James's short story "The Beast in the Jungle," in which the beast forms the vehicle for Marcher's suspended fate, this image illustrates Mrs. Server's plight in concrete and dynamic physical terms.

This description alludes to the subterranean movements which take place in the unexamined, shadowy regions of Mrs. Server's consciousness, complementing the silent discourse that the narrator attributes to her. The omniscient stance of this observer, whose limited point of view and heightened subjectivity tend to make an unreliable witness, lends irony to his transcription of Mrs. Server's silent colloquy, undermining his narrative credibility still further.

Silent discourse in Martereau serves a principal purpose within the narrative objectives of Nathalie Sarraute, furnishing the means of representing "ces très subtils frémissements" that are concealed by ordinary conversation. In her fine analysis of narrative functions in the work of Sarraute, Ann Cothran distinguishes the textual indicators of voiced transcription from silent transcription, noting that "differentiation between the two types cannot rely on internal evidence. Since both types of transcription record verbal statements, ambiguity is theoretically possible."
Sarraute's work reveals an increasingly problematic combination of voiced and silent material, as the oral nature of her novels becomes progressively greater.\(^8\)

The narrative presence in the early novels reduces the ambiguity of voice and point of view, or "optique," as the various viewpoints are subsumed by the authority of the narrator. As Newman puts it,

...le choix d'un narrateur-personnage entrave le développement du jeu de l'optique. Malgré toute l'ingéniosité de la présentation, l'intérieurité tropismique des personnages est révélée par une conscience pensante, celle du narrateur, celle des autres restant forcément liée à ses suppositions.\(^9\)

As the narrator projects himself into the perspective of the other characters, however, he relinquishes his dominance over the text. The scene in which the narrator imagines the aftermath of the uncle's visit to Martereau engenders four contrasting scenarios, viewed through various perspectives. Though the four scenes remain the responsibility of the narrator, as Booth points out, "any sustained inside view, of whatever depth, temporarily turns the character whose mind is shown into a narrator."\(^10\) The four repetitions of the scene between Monsieur and Madame Martereau liberates the point of view to the greatest extent possible in the first-person narrative.

The four scenes are homologous, each beginning with the departure of the uncle and concluding with Martereau's words as he goes out. Though the narrative voice tends to become increasingly submerged in the imagined scenes, the introductory context presents the narrator's situation in strikingly cerebral terms: "J'ai besoin de réfléchir, de regarder d'un peu plus près...de ruminer encore un peu..." (p. 177) The punctuation demarcates
the flow of thought into the oneiric scenes that follow by the use of suspension points, indicating a change in the narrative mode.

The narrator projects himself into Martereau's situation and speculates upon the response of Mme Martereau, whose thoughts are revealed as a function of what Martereau suspects is on her mind:

Ah, il n'en fait jamais d'autres, elle devrait être habituée, mais à présent, elle n'en peut plus, elle vieillit, elle est fatiguée, ça ne finira donc jamais cette vie de chien, il y a des moments, tenez, où l'on voudrait...mais que voulez-vous, il faut continuer... (p. 200)

Even as Mme Martereau's voice asserts itself, Martereau's point of view returns to assess his wife's attitude ironically:

Elle l'inciterait au crime quand elle prend ce ton, cet air, elle le pousserait à je ne sais quels excès: Une brute: elle a raison: un bourreau...Il lui saisi le poignet: assez de comédies, parlons un peu, ma belle, tout seuls, là, entre nous, c'était, n'as-tu pas trouvé, il lui prend le menton, une bonne soirée bien réussie, pas, ma chatte... (p. 201)

With the exception of such brief reminders of the narrator's presence as "je ne sais quels excès," it is true that "le récit imaginaire commence à faire sentir le jeu des optiques." Martereau illustrates the extent to which a first-person narrative may enable the expression of various viewpoints. For fuller development of this effect the narrative voice must yield to a direct apprehension of tropisms through a variety of viewpoints, as in Sarraute's subsequent works, for "dans cet univers où tout acte semble être un acte de parole, personne ne parle, pour que celui qui 'voit' devienne celui qui ressent."
THE CONTROLLING FUNCTION:

In the novel the nexus between conversation, or character discourse, and narration is formed by the controlling function of the narrator, through which the character discourse is incorporated into the narrative by means of such devices as introductory phrases, the specification of intonation, the tone of the character's speeches etc. As Doležel points out, "the representational function of the narrator is always coupled with the controlling function: the narrator dominates the narrative text structure." 13

This function corresponds to the function that Genette terms "la fonction de régie," in which the narrator delimits the internal organisation of the narrative text. However, whereas the controlling function is an essential narrative component in Doležel's typology, Genette defines it as an explicit meta-narrative function. 14 The manipulation of this function within the context of the dramatic novel represents a central concern of both Henry James and Nathalie Sarraute, second only to the construction of the dialogue itself.

In attempting to renew traditional dialogue techniques, James sought the ideal of "that really constructive dialogue, dialogue organic and dramatic, speaking for itself, representing and embodying substance and form," 15 whereas Nathalie Sarraute envisioned "une technique qui parviendrait à plonger le lecteur dans le flot de ces drames souterrains." 16 Like James, Sarraute emphasises the expressive possibilities of the dialogue which,

Tout vibrant et gonflé par ces mouvements qui le propulsent et le
The problem of creating dialogue that adequately embodies such ideals is exacerbated by the difficulty of placing this character discourse in an appropriate narrative context. Both authors level criticism at traditional modes of tagging utterances in the novel—those invidious and repetitious "dit Jeanne, répondit Paul, qui parsèment habituellement le dialogue." James ironically comments that the adoption of the typographical conventions of dramatic dialogue, as found in the play, would not be tolerated by his readership:

...but dishonour would await me if, proposing to treat the different faces of my subject in the most completely instituted colloquial form, I should evoke the figure and affirm the presence of participants by the repeated and prefixed name rather than by the recurrent and affixed 'said he' and 'said she'.

The inquit formulae adopted by Henry James and Nathalie Sarraute bridge the figural and authorial discourse: "Ils sont le lien léger mais solide qui rattache et soumet le style et le ton des personnages au style et au ton de l'auteur." The auctorial context of direct discourse discloses two aspects of the controlling function of the narrator, showing him in a capacity of both receiver and transmitter of the message. Responding to the discourse of the characters, the narrator directs information to the virtual reader. Whereas the reported speech itself represents an objective document of its reception, as the listener in turn responds to the utterance, the framing and tagging devices of the narrator also shed light on his response to another speech act. The work of the Russian theorists Vološinov and Bakhtin in the area of dialogic speech provides a productive point of
departure for the study of speech and narrative context in the novel. Vološinov expresses the central questions as he asks,

How, in fact, is another speaker's speech received? What is the mode of existence of another's utterance in the actual, inner speech-consciousness of the recipient? How is it manipulated there, and what process of orientation will the subsequent speech of the recipient himself have undergone in regard to it?20

Vološinov's analysis of speech clearly favours an ideological approach to language, as he states: "Language reflects, not subjective, psychological vacillations, but stable social relationships among speakers."21 Although the social basis of language is always an important factor of expression, nonetheless, the novels of Sarraute and James place greater emphasis on the psychological peripeteia of the characters. This preoccupation with the inner states of consciousness, or "psychological vacillations," is reflected in the concern of both authors to innovate the narrative context of speech.

The narrative framework in The Sacred Fount records the reactions that take place among the characters in great detail, forming an informative sub-text that conveys the tone and tempo of the dialogue. The narrator presides over the physical and emotional reactions of the speakers, often envisaging conversation as a form of indoor sport. The tactics of each character are carefully described, as in the final scene in the novel representing the disagreement of the narrator and Mrs. Briss. Here conversation becomes a fast-paced verbal duel, as a short survey of the modus, or narrative tag, illustrates:

Oh, how it sharpened my look! "...
"...," Mrs. Briss laughed.
I kept it up. "..." Mrs. Briss was not behind. "..."
This was brisker still, but I held my way. "..."
It seemed for a little, between humour and sadness, to strike
her. "..." I could only echo it. "..." I then proceeded, "..."
It pulled her up a trifle. "..." My eyes had been meeting hers
without, as it were, hers quite meeting mine. But at this there
had to be intercourse. "..." It pulled me up a trifle. She hesi­
tated; then, as if at my tone, gave a laugh. "..." I really
couldn't but admire her. "..." I cast about. "..." But she had
it ready. "..."

This exchange proceeds briskly, in stichomythic alternation between the
two speakers. The narrative formed by the succession of these framing
devices alerts the reader to the perlocutionary aspect of the speech act.
The narrator attends to what the speaker is "doing" in making a given
utterance: the speaker, besides saying something (the locutionary act),
does something in saying (the illocutionary act), and yields effects by
saying (the perlocutionary act).

The first two kinds of speech act—the utterance act and the illo­
cutionary act—are rule-governed. Moreover, they are governed by consti­
tutive rules—rules that define the very acts they govern. Following
these rules guarantees successful performance of the act. As J.L. Austin
defines them,

Illocutionary acts are conventional acts: perlocutionary acts are
not conventional. Acts of both kinds can be performed—or, more
accurately, acts called by the same name (for example, acts equi­
valent to the illocutionary act of warning or the perlocutionary
act of convincing)—can be brought off non-verbally; but even then
to deserve the name of an illocutionary act, for example, a warning,
it must be a conventional non-verbal act: but perlocutionary acts
are not conventional, though conventional acts may be made use of
in order to bring off the perlocutionary act.22

The nature of the perlocutionary act is context-dependent, as its meaning
exceeds presupposed syntactic and semantic conventions. For example, the
statement, "I will be back at five o'clock," easily explicable in terms of
syntax and primary meaning, may generate a number of different perlocutionary acts depending on the context. It may be uttered as a promise, a threat, or a warning, depending on the circumstances. Thus, in the novel, a specific context is constructed which determines the perlocutionary force of all the utterances. This aspect of speech constitutes the most unstable element of conversation, as it is precisely that which is not contained explicitly in the utterance itself. Furthermore, the perlocutionary effect intended by the speaker does not necessarily coincide with that apprehended by the listener. Austin discerns two kinds of effects of the perlocutionary act: it "may either be the achievement of a perlocutionary object (to convince, to persuade) or the production of a perlocutionary sequel.... What is the perlocutionary object of one illocution may be the sequel of another."^23 The surplus of meaning in ordinary conversation is thus brought to the fore as the effect of the speech act imprints itself in the narrative.

The narrator of *The Sacred Fount* examines and records a number of effects due to the perlocutionary or rhetorical aspect of language. As each character speaks, he/she often intends a specific perlocutionary effect by the statement, such as to persuade, to convince, to confuse, or even to threaten the allocutor. In the foregoing narrative context of the final scene, the narrator records the listener's reactions, formulating them in such vague terms as "it pulled me up a trifle," "it seemed to strike her," and "she hesitated." Like much expression in *The Sacred Fount*, the perlocutionary effect of speech is often covert, for the key to the game of language in the novel is deniability. This aspect of speech will be examined in greater detail as we examine the interpretative commentary of the novel, for the perlocutionary effect of speech is but one of the many elements found in the narrative matrix describing conversation.
The chief function of the narrative frame of speech is to designate the speaker and describe the way in which the utterance is produced. Both James and Sarraute tend to avoid the conventional form of the tag, which represents to verb "to say", expressing this idea in one of three ways: a lexical substitution for the verb "to say," an image, or a scenic indication. 24

The most direct means of framing the dialogue involves the lexical substitution of one term of the verb "to say" for another less conventional term. Henry James favours the "racy two-word verb"25 in order to avoid the formulaic monotony of "he said, she said." A brief sample of the rich variety favoured by James in The Sacred Fount is as follows: "drew him on," "broke in," "went on," "came back to," "took him straight up," "turned it over," "hung fire," "put to her," "wound up," "met the question," "fixed it," "threw out," "risked it," "pieced it out," "got the matter straight," and so on. The effect of substituting such expressions for the more direct terms denoting speech is that the resultant dialogue is semantically rich and stylistically varied. It may be misleading to refer to the substitution of one term for another, for although the denotations of the verbs may be equivalent, the connotative values of the words vary considerably. The effect of the compound verbs preferred by James is both graphic and colloquial, and the vague reference of the egregious "it" contained in many of the terms invests the topics with an indefinite, yet ostensibly concrete, quality. Accordingly, words become things in their own right, susceptible to being "picked up, turned over, thrown out"—in short, adapted to any use the listener cares to give them.

Such semantic substitutions for the verb "to say" appear to be
motivated by the desire for stylistic variation, rather than a concern for indirect expression. The common verbs denoting various verbal acts are also liberally scattered throughout the novel. Like the modus employed by Sarraute, many of the indirect speech markers are syntactically independent from the reported speech. Newman makes the following assessment of this stylistic trait:

D'où la conclusion paradoxale que chez elle ces détails sont à la fois plus autonomes et plus étroitement liés aux discours, liés par un rapport qui n'ait rien de conventionnel, étant motivé dans et par l'oeuvre même; liés par une nécessité qui est celle de la perception des discours par les personnages mêmes et de leur affectivité....

The use of unusual words and images to suggest the speech acts highlights the perceptions and emotions of the narrator, even as it draws attention to the scarcely perceptible movements of the dialogue. The sub-drama that shapes the social talk in both novels motivates the use of a highly descriptive and metaphorical narrative context and necessitates renovating the literary modes of designating the speaker.

Lexical substitutions in the novels of Nathalie Sarraute systematically replace the verb "to say" and its semantic equivalents. In Martereau, where appendices designating speech are used, these verbs tend to characterise and differentiate the speakers. "Bougonner" suggests the uncle, "roucouler" the aunt, and "zézayer," the daughter. In Sarraute's later novels, the narrative context is less susceptible to be applied to the notion of individual characters. In her subsequent work, the characterising function of the modus diminishes as the tag assumes a greater role in Sarraute's narrative technique, expressing the affectivity of the inter-
locutors in more violent and shocking forms.

There is indeed no equivalent of the colloquial inquit formulae found in the Jamesian novel in Sarraute's work. The lexical substitutions indicating speech tend to evoke an image of the speech act, as in the following examples:

"...il trouvait tout de suite l'instrument contondant, il m'en assenait un bon coup: "..." (p. 178)
"...il frappait de nouveau, "..." (p. 178)
"...nous allons, je le sens, toucher le point d'où se dégageait l'étrange odeur..."..." (p. 61)
"J'ai été aussi loin que je pouvais: le membre gangrené est presque sectionné; je n'ose faire plus. (p. 62)
"...elle rassemble toutes ses forces pour un suprême effort: "..." Le lien est tranché, l'ablation douleureuse est achevée. Le membre malade n'est plus qu'une masse flasque de tissus sanguinolents qui gisent détachés du corps. (p. 62)

These imagistic substitutions for conventional verbs denoting speech evoke independent spatial and temporal co-ordinates, juxtaposing an imaginative context to the actual utterance.

Indicating more descriptively the emotional states of the locutor and allocutor, the image accentuates the unspoken drama that accompanies the conversation. Nathalie Sarraute employs images extensively to replace conventional inquit formulae with a narrative context that actually enacts the subterranean forces of conversation. Thus, in a conversation with Martereau, the narrator illustrates the emotional accompaniments of his words metaphorically:

"Je m'élan"..." je saute au-dessus du vide "..." j'ai pris mon élan gauchement, mais il est trop tard, "..." j'ai sauté, atterri tant bien que mal de l'autre côté, je m'accroche pour escalader l'autre bord, je me cramponne "..." je rampe, je me hisse à la force des bras, le vide est sous mes pieds "..." j'ai le vertige."
The narrative context sketches the risks and perils of communication as they are experienced by the narrator. The emotive function, suppressed in the reported discourse, manifests its presence in this dialogue through the resonances of the narrative voice.

Such vivid extended metaphors as in the foregoing passage are present in the Jamesian text to represent the silent strategies of social inter-course. Lady John speaks to the narrator, who records his response as follows:

This toss of the ball was one that, I saw quickly enough, even a taste for sport wouldn't justify my answering, and my logical interest lay moreover elsewhere. (pp. 179-180)

As conversation is arrested by the sight of Gilbert Long and Mrs. Briss sitting together, the narrator continues to document his speculations on Lady John's rival interpretation of the relationship through a highly-imaged narrative context. He extends the sport motif that he had noted earlier to refer to the unexpressed musings of each character, stating that

Vast, truly was the world of observation, that we could both glean in it so actively without crossing each other's steps. There we stood close together, yet—save for the accident of a final dash, as I shall note—were at opposite ends of the field. (p. 185)

This metaphor concludes with the final dash that the narrator's vision may be taken as representing,
It offers us, to be exact, as jostling each other just sensibly—though I only might feel the bruise—in our business of picking up straws. Our view of the improved acquaintance was only a straw, but as I stooped to it I felt my head bump with my neighbour's.... I felt in fact that, since we had even pulled against each other at the straw, I carried off, in turning away, the larger piece. (p. 188)

This conceit transforms the unarticulated thoughts of the two observers into a contest of skill similar to many of the dialogues in the novel, thus directing attention to the battle of investigative strategies in *The Sacred Fount*.

The third set of narrative indicators surrounding the direct discourse comprises markers that denote aspects of physical presence. These descriptive and narrative elements are more or less closely linked to the communication situation, serving to modify the nature of the verbal act. Newman categorises the set of scenic markers in the following way:

**Présence physique**

1. Actions | 2. Gestuel | 3. Expression

| divers | mouvements | gestes | regard | visage | sourire/rire |

The schema depicts a spectrum of scenic indicators in which

...il y a une progression évidente de gauche à droite, allant de l'action circonstancielle (sans autre rapport avec les paroles que celui d'être dans un même enchaînement) à travers le gestuel (où l'action s'associe aux paroles) jusqu'à l'expression (où la contiguïté physique, délimitée par le visage, est étroite). À l'intérieur de l'ensemble expression la progression continue, aboutissant dans le rire, acte vocal.27

A comparison of the use of such contextual indicators will illuminate the role of such factors as kinesics, or body movements and facial expressions,
and proxemics, or spatial relations, as ways of communication in the narrative.

Actions are rarely noted in a Sarrautian context. Such movements as "elle enlève son manteau d'un air décidé" (p. 93) and "ma cousine—c'est un geste qu'elle fait souvent, par timidité sans doute, pour se donner une contenance—passe sa main sur son front" (p. 141), serve to complement the concealing function of words: few actions are revelatory of the inner movements of the characters. While watching the reassuring dexterity of Martereau's fingers as he attaches hooks and bait to his line, the narrator conflates additional memories of Martereau's gestures that have seemed suspicious on other occasions; however, he reassures himself by repeating that there is "pas de quoi fouetter un chat." With the dissolution of the narrator's confidence in Martereau, suspicion destroys the authenticity of his actions as well as his words.

Henry James inhabits the transitional period prior to "l'ère du soupçon." Such actions as lighting a cigarette, sitting down, tracing a gesture serve to indicate certain "looming possibilities" in man's inner condition. The predominance of absolute standards of behaviour as codified in rules of etiquette emerges as a salient feature of James's narrative context. Kinesic markers provide a relatively objective means of evaluating behaviour within the social context of Victorian England.

The scene in which the narrator encounters May Server in the wood is earmarked as a particularly significant occasion. It is differentiated from other scenes of the novel in terms of diction, atmosphere and narrative pace. Occurring at the midpoint of the text, the scene forms a coda in which past events are gathered up into stillness and the frenetic activity of the narrator abates. Scenic indicators, when not an indepen-
dent means of communication, counterpose the verbal elements of conversation.

The narrative context formulates and defines the narrator's view of a semiotics of behaviour:

I sat straight down on the nearest of our benches, for this struck me as the best way to express the conception with which the sight of Mrs. Server filled me. It showed her that if I watched her I also waited for her, and that I was therefore not affected in any manner she really need deprecate. (pp. 130-131)

As Mrs. Server walks toward him, he invites her to sit down, then accompanies his words with an illustrative movement:

I had finally got up, as a sign of welcome, but I had directly afterwards resumed my position, and it was an illustration of the terms on which we met that we neither of us seemed to mind her being meanwhile on her feet. (p. 132)

This "illustration" may well be mute for the modern reader; however, to any reader familiar with the Jamesian canon, the gesture speaks volumes. In The Portrait of a Lady (1881), James shapes the dramatic recognition scene with the everyday materials of convention and social habit.

What struck Isabel first was that he was sitting while Madame Merle stood; there was an anomaly in this that arrested her. (...) Their relative positions, their absorbed mutual gaze, struck her as something detected.28

Although Isabel remains ignorant of the full significance of this tableau, she nevertheless retains the impression that it is highly charged with meaning, indicating that there is a depth in her husband's relationship with Madame Merle that she had hitherto little suspected.

In a later novel, the protagonist of The Bostonians (1886) is a victim of the same drawing-room convention, as a woman holds him away from the rest of the party by her refusal to be the first to stand up:
It was in his simple code a gross rudeness to withdraw from conversation with a lady at a party before another gentleman should have come to take one's place; it was to inflict on the lady a kind of outrage.

This short scene focuses the differences between the two worlds of the protagonist's American South and Boston, dramatises an important decision on the part of the hero, and marks the break of his friendship with the lady in question.

In contrast to the scenes in the above novels, the narrator in The Sacred Fount does not perform a passive role as decoder or victim-participant in this social code; instead, he orchestrates the movements of sitting or standing with the purpose of creating communicative signs. The narrator's perceptions seem to reveal "the promise of a morally legible universe to those willing to read and interpret its signs." Seen in this light, the scenic markers of position and movement are rarely fortuitous in The Sacred Fount: the narrator views all such features of social relations as a form of "suppressed communication" (p. 138) which dumbly asserts that which language is inadequate to convey. Although kinesic and proxemic indications often reveal less or more than what the narrator postulates, they nonetheless represent an index to modes of feeling and behaviour that cannot be otherwise communicated.

For Nathalie Sarraute all aspects of the continuum of physical presence, from the most arbitrary actions to the closest companion of speech, are contaminated by their intention to dissimulate, whereas actions and movement are for the most part valid signs of human behaviour in The Sacred Fount. As one nears those aspects which are most closely tied to the speech
act, however, an element of suspicion enters in. To begin with the most unrelated aspect of expression to speech, the "regard," as expressed by eye-movement, represents a significant aspect in both novels.

Eye-movement is a particularly significant extra-verbal feature of conversation, as it tends to emphasise the relationship of the speakers by suggesting whether the listener is "with" the speaker. The primary function of eye-movement is to establish contact between the interlocutors and to maintain the channel of communication. In the final scene of The Sacred Fount, for example, the narrator notes that whereas he is meeting Mrs. Briss's eyes, she fails to meet his, until she makes the point "that requires intercourse"—that her husband is the source of her information. In order to establish the truth of this information it is essential that she meet the narrator's eyes. The correspondence between eye-holding and making a point, and eye-aversion and dissimulation is drawn on numerous occasions throughout the novel.

Indeed, on certain occasions, the look alone suffices for communication. The narrator enlists the communicative powers of the meaningful glance in order to separate Mrs. Briss from May Server: ...

to separate the two ladies I gave the more initiated a look in which I invited her to read volumes. This look, or rather the look she returned, comes back to me as the first note of a tolerably tight, tense little drama...(p. 48)

The narrator then relates what Mrs. Briss has understood by his look: "that she had better leave me to get at the truth—owing me some obligation, as she did, for so much of it as I had already communicated" (p. 48). This "tacit pledge" is cemented by the characters through their mutual glance, or so at least the narrator believes. Later in the day, the narrator accuses
Ford Obert of not so much as looking at him a while before, and Obert retorts that it was hardly the time to wink, as he was accompanied by a charming woman. (p. 211) He then remarks to the narrator: "Your winks—come—are portentous!" (p. 211), as he mocks the narrator's elaborate devices for silent communication.

The merest indication of a communicative failure at this point fore­shadows the upcoming exchange with Mrs. Brissenden. The latter explains to the narrator in verbal terms what she has tried to communicate non­verbally earlier, when the narrator notes that she is sitting with Gilbert Long. Mrs. Briss remarks that she had tried to telegraph the following message to him: "What on earth do you mean by your nonsense? It doesn't hold water!" (p. 293), meaning that Long remains the dull individual he has always been. Though the narrator has not received and deciphered this message, he has construed her telling glance as "an assurance that, whatever train she should take in the morning, she would arrange it that it shouldn't be, as it had the day before, the same as mine" (p. 190). Though the narrator seems to be adroit at picking up the signals of his fellow guests, there is little evidence of his accuracy in decoding them. The narrator invests the dialogue with the non­verbal material of conversation that he considers important, thus providing the reader with objective contextual information.

The narrator integrates both the non­verbal components of language and the verbal message, indicating that he has an advantage over the person who responds to only one part of the social situation. The narrator's approach to representing the conversation attests to a pragmatic view of communication, which may be stated in the following terms:
... if it is accepted that all behaviour in an interactional situation has message value, i.e. is communication, it follows that no matter how one may try, one cannot not communicate. Activity or inactivity, words or silence—all have message value: they influence others...

The conversational situation, impregnated with hesitations, silences and avoidance, is charged with meaningful signs and indices for the narrator, who attempts to invest them with some form of significance. Once transcribed in the text, these scenic indicators comprise a form of set directions for the reader, who is then able to reconstruct the underlying conditions of the action without recourse to the narrator’s interpretations. Scenic indicators tend to destabilise the content of conversation by adding a physical, extra-verbal component to speech which either confirms or refutes the veracity of the utterance.

The final scene of the novel adumbrates with hidden suggestion, since what is meant is often not said, while what is said is rarely what is meant. Facial expressions and involuntary eye movements give concrete representation of the reactions to each character in the conversation. The narrator's question—"You didn't suppose I had asked her?" (p. 268)—causes him to reflect, "The point was positively that she didn't; yet it made us look at each other almost as hard as if she did" (p. 268). The mounting distrust and suspicion experienced by each character toward the other is traced in the text through eye movements: "She looked down a little, as if again at a trap," "Then she held up her head," and finally, "She looked about at the top of the room" (all p. 269) Eye-averting thus becomes an index of discomfort and avoidance, while eye-holding often constitutes an overt method of maintaining the other's attention and signalling good faith. Consciously of the value of such extra-verbal indicators, the narrator mani-
pulates his listeners by fixing their eyes, as in this scene with Obert:

I turned on it, a little more to him, and looked at him so long that he had at last to look at me; with which, after holding his eyes another moment, I made my point. (p. 212)

Whereas in James's transcription of the dialogue, the description of eye-movement primarily serves to provide an extra-verbal indication of the speaker-listener relationship, and secondarily to designate the speaker, in Martereau, such descriptions of "le regard" occur in order to differentiate the voiced statements from unvoiced. In Anthony Newman's comprehensive study of Sarrautian discourse, he notes that there is a direct correspondence between the eye-holding and speech. Briefly, the relationship may be noted in the following homology: se taire: parler: ne pas regarder: regarder. The following examples illustrate this point:

Elle baisse les yeux, mais les relève aussitôt courageusement: "..." (p. 10)
Elle plisse les paupières et fixe un point au loin d'un air nostalgique, elle soupire... "..." (p. 13)
Elle me regarde gravement, il me semble qu'elle se ramasse sur elle-même, se décide: "..." (p. 13)
Il baisse ses lunettes pour mieux me voir: "..." (p.163)

In the absence of an explicit modus, the glance substitutes for the inquit formula in a natural, though not entirely systematic way. Eye-movement in Sarrautian conversation thus serves primarily as a substitutive notation for a verbal act.

The vigour and drama of the narrative modus in both novels furnishes an ironic counterpoint to the polite, rather insipid conversation. The unique perceptions of both narrators, proscribed by ordinary talk, are represented in the surrounding narrative tags, forming a discrete imaginary
context to the more realistic representation of conversation. The fictional worlds of the two novels are permeated with the personal vision of the narrators, as is evidenced by the interpretative commentary made in the narrative discourse. What is less evident is the influence of the narrator upon the direct discourse.

The convention regarding direct discourse makes responsibility for speech a straightforward matter. The speaker is responsible for the utterance, whether he believes what he says or not. In the utterance 'Jimmy Carter is a good president,' the evaluative "good" is my responsibility, despite such variables as intonation and paralinguial signals which may express doubt or sarcasm.

This pattern of responsibility applies to directly reported discourse as well. As Partee (1973) and Banfield (1973) have shown, in the construction, "Harry said: 'Carter is a good president,' there are two speakers, the reporting 'I' and 'Harry'. The reported sentence is Harry's responsibility, while the introductory clause is the responsibility of the speaker 'I'.

In Martereau, the direct discourse in the novel remains free of the narrative voice. Sarraute distinguishes, in this early novel, one character from the other by imbuing each speaker with distinctive traits of speech. Moreover, the narration is consonant with the story-time, giving the illusion of an ongoing verbal transcription of conversation, thought and evanescent inner movement. The narrative controlling function is effaced in order to shift the emphasis to the events of the story. Few references to narrative order occur, and even these represent oral, rather than written transcription. The narrator notes the recurrence of a topic at the
beginning of the fifth section—"(je l'ai déjà dit, nous fonctionnons comme des vases communicants)" (p. 143)—however, whether this editorial note is directed at the implied reader or himself (present or future) is not clear.

Dealing with the fictional first-person form, Dorrit Cohn notes the unique problem of narrative in which *histoire* vanishes into pure discourse, "where—as Starobinski says— the 'event is none other than the unrolling of the monologue itself, independently of the reported 'facts', which become immaterial.' At this point,

The discourse of a monologist no longer conforms to Benveniste's definition of discourse as 'every utterance assuming a speaker and a hearer,' unless we extend this definition to include a hearer who is identical to the speaker.36

*Martereau*, located in a "durative present, passing through hopeless conditional and negative future"37 represents the speaker's predicament in the figure of a vicious circle:

...sans autre adversaire que lui-même; ne griffant, ne mordant, n'étreignant que lui-même, tournant sur lui-même, chien stupide qui se mord la queue, derviche grotesque. (p. 22)

Though *The Sacred Fount* is a retrospective first-person narrative in which the narrator examines a past steeped in delusion, the same kind of circularity prevails as in *Martereau*, for the real addressee of the narrative appears to be the narrator himself. The tale is motivated by his desire to examine the events of a weekend which shed new light on disagreeable aspects of his personality; the text represents the protagonist's need to contradict Mrs. Brissenden's last word—"the word that put me altogether nowhere" (p. 319)—in an effort to reconstruct his past and present.
The problem of the narrator's mnemonic credibility arises early in the novel, for the changes that the narrator perceives in his acquaintances are based on a time gap of approximately two years. In his study of James within the context of an impressionist aesthetic, Stowell draws attention to the importance of two temporal gaps in the novel: the period between his first and second meeting with the other guests, and the gap between the anecdote and the time of writing. Given the indeterminacy of the time of writing, it is not possible to establish the role of memory, either as an accurate mirror of events or a distorting lens, in the narrative. Be that as it may, the narrator invokes the convention of perfect memory, as for the most part, he quotes whole conversations verbatim with little reference to the accuracy of his report.

As we have noted, the problem of point of view in direct discourse is negligible, because the attributed speaker must assume responsibility for the quoted material. However, the narrator undermines this convention by commenting on his directive role in the narrative:

These remarks—of which I give rather the sense than the form, for they were a little scattered and troubled, and I helped them out and pieced them together—these remarks had for me I find unexpected suggestions... (p. 49)

On another occasion, the narrator fails to quote a conversation with Long, stating that he could "do little justice to the pleasant suppressed tumult of impression and reflection that, on my part, our ten minutes together produced" (p. 163). In fact, the narrator provides the reader with very little of the evidence that would support or oppose the view that he has become intelligent. Later the narrator draws the reader's attention to a detail that he has forgotten: whether Mrs. Server was first designated by
Lady John or himself. (p. 183) He foregrounds his fallibility as a narrator, noting,

There is perhaps an oddity—which I must set down to my emotion of the moment—in my not now being able to say...reminiscence of that shock is not one of those I have found myself storing up. (p. 185)

These memory gaps detract from the narrator's reliability as a reporter; not only does he have a limited viewpoint due to his physical and emotional limitations, but it also becomes apparent that the narrative voice is suspect. Though the direct discourse form of *The Sacred Fount* appears to offer a variety of viewpoints and voices, in fact, the narrative controlling function exposes the extent to which the dialogue is riddled by the presence of the narrator.

A stylistic study of language in *The Sacred Fount* reveals the narrator's propensity for such tropes as chiasmus, anaphora, epistrophe, antithesis and anadiplosis, both in his speech and commentary; however, the other characters tend to use many of the same devices. Though it is possible to discern a veritable contagion of the narrator's conversational strategies among the other characters in the novel, such highly structured and artificial devices are less easily transferred from one speaker to another. Thus, the narrative presence enters into the objective, figural pole of the novel, infecting the vocabulary, syntax, and perhaps even the content of the reported discourse.
THE INTERPRETATIVE FUNCTION:

The conversational novel presents social life as it is refracted by the multiple perspectives of a variety of characters engaging in discussion. The very nature of conversation dictates the situation of uncertainty that prevails, since any utterance may generate unforeseen replies. In conversation, there is no hierarchy of perspectives: each voice tends either to confirm or repudiate the view presented by the preceding speaker. However, this conversational free-play in each novel is interrupted by the presence of a narrator who comments upon and evaluates the statements made by the characters.

Such narrative intervention is obviously problematic within the poetics of James and Sarraute, for while the aesthetic imperative to remove the author from the literary work motivates both authors, the authorial voice re-enters the novel in the form of the narrator. As we have noted, this surrogate-author is carefully characterised in *Martereau* as a highly strung and even rather paranoid young man, while the narrator of *The Sacred Fount* is excessively curious about other people's affairs and fanciful. Though these idiosyncrasies contribute to the unreliability of each narrator, nevertheless, the narrator's interpretative statements have the authority accorded to the unifying perspective of the novel. This narrative strategy has important repercussions on the dialogue form of each novel, inasmuch as commentary provides a means of unifying and orienting the disparate elements of many speech acts and multiple viewpoints. Paradoxically, even
as the commentary in *Martereau* alludes to the wholly subjective and fragmentary nature of reality, the narrative voice prevails over the views suggested by the other characters of the novels, whose viewpoints appear commonplace and inadequate to the tenor of reality shown in each novel.

The anonymous narrators of *The Sacred Fount* and *Martereau* reveal their attitudes to the information they report through various forms of narrative commentary. The function of interpretation dominates the text as the narrator expresses "specific attitudes, comments, and evaluations regarding the narrated events." As Doležel points out, "through the effect of the interpretative function, the character of the narrative discourse changes dramatically." The interpretative function may be broken down into three distinctive forms of narrative commentary; from the least obtrusive to the most evident narrative intervention, they are expanding, assessive, and code commentary. Expanding commentary takes the form of "an analytical expansion of another element" and constitutes an especially important narrative feature of Sarraute's work. Assessive commentary represents a generalising function, inasmuch as it provides a synthetic assessment of various categories of information. The third form of commentary deals with the narrative code, forming a technical explanation of the process of writing.

While these critical terms were formulated in order to deal with the specific problems and techniques found in Sarraute's novels, they serve the useful purpose of extending the author's very distinctive critical vocabulary to other manifestations of a similar function. And while there are few instances of the literary tropism beyond the work of Sarraute, expanding commentary represents a general category of this feature as it is
found in a variety of narratives. Thus, these categories, arising out of a study of Sarraute's narrative techniques, prove equally applicable to a Jamesian text.

§

Expanding Commentary

Expanding commentary modifies material found in the spatial and temporal boundaries of the story, as it is interpolated through either the transforming medium of comparison or substitution, through the tropes of simile or metaphor. Tropisms are distinguished from other forms of expanding commentary by content rather than by narrative function: tropisms involve "the use of a limited number of instinctual reactions presented in terms of animal or plant, attraction or repulsion images."41

The motivation and substance of all Sarraute's novels, the tropism is also a feature, with certain significant alterations in content, in The Sacred Fount. In the following passage the Jamesian narrator describes the state of the two victims of vampiric relationships, "poor Briss and May Server, in terms of a tropism:

I caught no look from either that spoke to me of service rendered them; and I caught none, in particular, from one of them to the other, that I could read as a symptom of their having compared notes. The fellow-feeling of each for the lost light of the other remained for me but a tie suppositious—the full-blown flower of my theory. It would show here as another flower, equally mature, for me to have made out a similar dim community between Gilbert Long and Mrs. Brisenden—to be able to figure them as groping side by side, proportionately, towards a fellowship of light overtaken; but if I failed of this, for ideal symmetry, that seemed to rest on the general truth that joy brings people less together than sorrow. (pp. 169-70)
Indeed, the very absence of visible signs denoting the "lonely fight with disintegration" (p. 167) of the two victims only gives the narrator greater cause to "render a fresh justice to the marvel of their civilised state" (p. 167). Like Sarraute, James notes the discrepancy between the decorous forms of social life—composed of facial expression, gesture and etiquette—and the authentic content of experience. However, while Sarraute focuses on the substance of "des mouvements indéfinissables, qui glissent très rapidement aux limites de notre conscience"—the secret source of man's existence—James is more interested to document the forms these impulses take in talk and behaviour. When the perceptible signs of a liaison are reduced, as in the passage cited above, to evidence of mere contiguity, the narrator is obliged to seek clues by speculation.

Conceding that "if one hadn't known it one might have seen nothing," the narrator hypothesises that Mr. Brissenden and Mrs. Server are deriving some form of support from "their dim community" (p. 169). The botanical analogy is sustained in the narrator's description of Gilbert Long and Mrs. Briss "groping side by side, proportionately, towards a fellowship of light overtaken"—a metaphor gleaned from the natural phenomenon of phototropism. Both images suggest the reality portrayed by Sarraute, in which the weak band together against the strong, and the latter eschew association with the weak. More importantly, the convergence of vision between James and Sarraute are expressed in this instance in a strikingly similar manner. Though possessed of vastly divergent ideas in many areas, both narrators, nonetheless, capture the mundane reality of the events observed in colourful, often melodramatic images and vignettes which expand a detail of the material situation.

Rather than the subterranean movements generated by contact with other
human beings evoked by Sarraute in the form of the tropism, James describes such unseen activities as they occur in his character's encounter with imaginative vision. Once entered into, the world of imagination constitutes a tangible force for the narrator, and its various forms of entrapment are expressed in physical terms. The narrator often embroiders upon the experience of imagination in the form of expanding commentary—a technique which transforms the narrator's subjective adventure into concrete terms. The narrator refers to his intellectual experiences in the following sundry images:

This connection hooked itself, like a sudden picture and with a click that fairly resounded through our empty rooms, into the array of the other connections, to the immense enrichment, as it was easy to feel, of the occasion, and to the immense confirmation of the very idea that, in the course of the evening, I had come near to dismissing from my mind as too fantastic even for the rest of the company it should enjoy there." (pp. 254-55)

and

In infinitely less time than I have needed to tell it, I had achieved my flight into luminous ether and, alighting gracefully on my feet, reported myself at my post. (p. 255)

It had for my imagination a value, for my theory a price, and it in fact constituted an impression under the influence of which this theory, just impatiently shaken off, perched again on my shoulders. (p. 202)

The world of ruminations and thought which interests James in The Sacred Fount is seen in Martereau as an illusory world whose apparent autonomy is in fact ruled by subconscious emotions and impulses. Whereas the narrator of The Sacred Fount senses "the mere brush of Lady John's clumsier curiosity" (p. 174) and "the sharpest jostle to his thought" (p. 295) caused by Mrs. Briss, the narrator of Martereau employs such physical imagery to plumb the unavowed feelings that give rise to what is expressed
in conversation.

In contrast to the brief sub-context accompanying the dialogue in James, the expanding commentary in Martereau is often extensive, occasionally constructing independent spatial or temporal co-ordinates in parallel to the main event. A characteristic of Sarraute's later work is the co-existence of multiple images, so that the notion of what really happened and what is imagined becomes blurred, and ultimately unimportant. In Martereau, however, extensive expanding commentary tends to be relegated to after-the-fact reminiscence, as the nephew reconstructs a conversation, attending to the sub-currents which were barely perceptible at the time. A comparison of two descriptions of the scene in which the nephew visits Martereau and his wife serve to illustrate this point.

The first description of this encounter is rendered scenically: the narrator supplies stage directions with the gestures, positions, and movements of each character. Such set directions, rare in Sarraute's novels, may be justified psychologically by the narrator's declaration that "leur seule apparition en chair et en os suffit pour tout balayer..." (p. 166). When Martereau delivers the verbal blow that causes the narrator to resurrect the scene in memory later, the expanding commentary is restricted to the narrator's reaction: "Je me recroqueville un peu, je recule..." (p. 172). The actual utterance is rendered by the kinesic image, "il se tourne enfin vers moi."

Recollecting the scene afterwards, the narrator endows the utterance with the following imaginative context:

...il me repousse, il m'envoie rouler dans un coin, il lève son pied: "Oh, vous, mon petit, vous savez comment on l'appelle, votre maladie?"...tout recroquevillé, les yeux levés, j'attends ...un pied immense de géant, une énorme semelle cloutée...Mais il ne m'écrasera pas. Juste un coup pas fort, un saint n'y
résisterait pas, mais il se retient. Il me laisse partir, il me pousse dehors..." (p. 234)

The use of expanding commentary thus provides a non-analytical means of viewing past events, so that Sarraute circumvents the problem of the wholly intellectual vantage point of one in the present viewing the past. With the removal of the first-person narrator, and thereby the necessity of motivating the narrative material psychologically, Sarraute later achieves a more complete fusion between the expanded tropism and the event that triggers it.

It is clear that expanding commentary plays a different role in each text: the metaphorical commentary enables James to heighten the comic or dramatic value of the reported discourse in which the essential drama is played out, while in Martereau, the tropism continually subverts this plane of reality. These dissimilarities of the use and function of expanding commentary in the two novels are significant, for they delineate the gap between traditional narrative devices and the innovation of the New Novel.

§

Assessive commentary

Since it involves not only a direct interpretation but also a process of abstraction which generalises a series of narrative elements, assessive commentary stresses the distance between the spatial and temporal framework of the narrative continuum and the narrative instance.42

The generalising character of assessive commentary distances the narrator
from the fictive world; through his attitudes and value judgements, he separates himself from the world of the characters, setting himself above them and the story he tells. The subjective personal stance of the narrator is transformed through this function, as the narrator assumes a rhetorical role with respect to the story.

The Sacred Fount opens with assessive commentary, in the narrator's reminiscences about the beginning of the weekend at Newmarch:

It was an occasion, I felt—the prospect of a large party—to look out at the station for others, possible friends and even possible enemies, who might be going. Such premonitions, it was true, bred fears when they failed to breed hopes, though it was to be added that there were sometimes, in the case, rather happy ambiguities. (p. 1)

This passage sets forth the dichotomous polarities—friends, enemies, hopes, fears—that inhabit the narrator's imagination and further implies that among such apparently irresolvable antitheses, there may be "happy ambiguities," thus alerting the reader to the fallibility of the narrator's dualistic vision. He expands on his original idea in the following gnomic statement:

One was glowered at, in the compartment, by people who on the morrow, after breakfast, were to prove charming; one was spoken to first by people whose sociability was subsequently to show as bleak....(p.1)

Parenthetically, the narrator fails to heed his own generalisation, since he construes Long's sociability as an indication of his general intellectual improvement; and although this sociability is "subsequently to show as bleak," the narrator does not revise his initial impression of the transformation of Gilbert Long. Assessive commentary of this nature provides an ironic counterpoint to the events of the novel, since the narrator's proclivity
for symmetry and balance engenders the many laws and parables found in the novel. The logical constructions formulated by the narrator create tidy oppositions and analogies that have little to do with the events at hand.

The proportion of assessive commentary to the two other forms of interpretation in the narrative discourse of *The Sacred Fount* is high. The narrator's preoccupation with forming apothegms and extracting the general laws of social situations motivates this mode of discourse and restricts the authority of the statements to the narrative voice. Whereas assessive commentary generally interrupts the world of the story, extending itself to the world of the reader, here, the commentary reflects back upon the mind of the narrator, further describing his mental foibles.

In *Martereau* the abstract nature of the assessive commentary in the novel tends to produce an analytical narrative distance, not dissimilar to Proust's characteristic method of stepping back to evaluate past events. The narrators of the early novels of Sarraute are prone to analysis, a tendency not unlike the one that Sarraute notes in her precursor: that is, "il cherche à dégager de ses observations des principes généraux." Although the commentary in *Martereau* is generally contemporaneous with the action, unlike the privileged bifocal vision of Proust's narrator, the effect of assessive commentary is to create a gap between the narrative instance and the story.

In the following example the suggestion of immediacy evoked by the mimetic presentation of the scene in the form of dialogue is interrupted by the subsequent analysis of the narrator. The scene presents the aunt and nephew as they discuss the shortcomings of her daughter (pp. 51-64). The narrator then proceeds to sum up the significance of the conversation:
Tout le monde plus ou moins partage avec nous ce besoin qui de temps en temps—et même assez souvent—nous prend de nous tendre ainsi les uns aux autres un os à ronger pour tromper notre faim, un hochet à mordiller pour calmer notre sourde irritation, notre démangeaison. (p. 64)

The narrator extends the reactions of the two people in a particular conversation to "tout le monde," and stretches the particular occasion examined to "de temps en temps—et même assez souvent," thus extracting general principles from an insignificant and trivial conversation. The narrator goes on to evoke the authority of the social gurus of the present day—"les moralistes, les satiristes, les psychologues" (p. 64)—in order to reinforce the cultural code from which this law originates. Sarraute underscores the conventionality of this notion in order to draw a familiar idea onto new ground, as the narrator compares "ces passe-temps courants et somme toute assez anodins" (p. 65) to the imperceptible movements that represent the subject of the novel: these common games are as "d'aimables jeux de société aux jeux sanglants du cirque" (p. 65). The author—for the narrative voice blends indistinguishably at this point with that of the author—announces explicitly the nature of social interaction that forms the basis of her work. Such assessive commentary articulates the unique literary concerns of Nathalie Sarraute, providing polemical views similar to those collected in her essays, L'Ere du soupçon. This narrative strategy, while perhaps inevitable at this point in the evolution of her craft, is modified in the later novels, so that commentary and the corresponding authorial voice are fully integrated into the discursive structure of her work.

The assessive commentary of Martereau often underlines the universality of the phenomena Sarraute evokes by stressing familiar elements of experience, as in this passage:
Souvent ainsi, quand le sort nous comble, quand la réalité que nous avons toujours évoquée, appelée, est là à notre portée, nous ne la reconnaissions pas d'abord. (p. 78)

The general assertions of this passage override the specificity of person and place in the novelistic world of Martereau to affirm widely applicable truths. Such assessive commentary invites the reader to acquiesce with this presentation of proverbial reality before initiating him into the unfamiliar tropistic world of Sarraute. The inclusion of the reader within the novel through the pronoun "nous" is an important strategical feature of interpretation as it is deployed by Sarraute in her early work.

However, the analytical thought represented in assessive commentary undermines the consistency of Sarraute's literary project, which is to explore the pre-conscient regions of her characters. Sarraute dramatises the choice between two modes of perception contained in the narrator's thought:

...nous avions senti, émanant d'elles, un effluve douceâtre, une fade odeur...et, comme le médecin qui flaire une plaie ou aperçoit une pale rougeur fait aussitôt son diagnostic...mais non, ce n'est pas vrai, nous n'avons eu le temps de rien penser, nous n'avons rien diagnostiqué, ce qui s'est levé soudain en nous, sans que nous sachions bien pourquoi, est comparable plutôt à la fureur gloutonne du tigre qui sent palpiter-sous la patte, toute molle et déjà résignée, sa proie... (p. 59)

To the analytical, or "diagnostic," mode of rational thought, the narrator opposes the unmediated, instinctual realm of feeling, which is best expressed in visual or tactile imagery.

This form of assessive commentary thus serves the pedagogical process of forming the ideal reader of the Sarrautian novel—a reader who is able to descend below the plane of generality and proverbial truths to explore the idiosyncratic micro-reality of human experience. However, assessive
commentary strikes an inevitably didactic note within the novelistic framework of Martereau, and the distancing effect of the device contrasts the unmediated vision of particularities offered by the narrator. Where assusive commentary appears in The Sacred Fount, on the other hand, the narrative voice is used to ironic effect, evoking an authoritative tone even as it states laws that seem at best spurious, if not actually fantastic. In both texts, the process of abstraction expressed in the form of assusive commentary serves to illuminate the orientation of each narrator's partial perception, typifying his idiosyncratic perspective on reality.

§

Code Commentary

In attempting to transcribe the words of various characters in dialogue and describe the concomitant social context of speech, the narrators of James and Sarraute evince a certain uneasiness deriving from the difficulty of translating their experiences into the medium of writing. Each narrator explicates various aspects, means and problems of this encoding in a form of commentary that reflects upon the nature of writing. The diegetical co-ordinates are strongly interrupted by this narrative instance, as "code commentary accentuates the narrative nature of the text and clarifies the narrative procedures."44 As the narrator intervenes with reflections on the basis of his writing, the implied reader is drawn into communication with the implied author of the work, and is indirectly informed about an appropriate form of aesthetic response to the text. In commenting
upon the problematic nature of encoding, each narrator delineates the ideal reader capable of responding to the specific demands of the non-traditional narrative.

In Martereau the divagations of the "sous-conversation" perform the invisible dramas that are silently enacted as characters encounter each other in conversation. Although the content of these interactions is best described on an instinctual, rather than intellectual plane, the narrator is restricted to the medium of words as he attempts to convey the nature of tropistic reality to the reader. The narrator infrequently suspends the flow of "sous-conversation," rendered in style indirect libre, in order to indicate the inadequacy of this narrative technique as a means of authentic expression. Located in the opening section of the novel, the following passage of code commentary serves to orient the reader to the discursive reality of Martereau:

Tout cela, et bien plus encore, exprimé non avec des mots, bien sûr, comme je suis obligé de le faire maintenant, faute d'autres moyens, pas avec de vrais mots pareils à ceux qu'on articule distinctement à voix haute ou en pensée, mais évoqué plutôt par des sortes de signes très rapides contenant tout cela, le résumant— (p. 30).

Sarraute opposes "ces sortes de signes très rapides," translated in her writing into tropistic imagery and metaphor, to verbal reality, whether in the form of conversation or thought. Thus, the traditional schism between individual and social realities is replaced here by the gap between an inexpressible plane of reality and that which may be expressed verbally. The code commentary of this narrator mirrors the frustration of a writer who is attuned to the shortcomings of language as a means of expression.

The distance between the narrator-character and the author is virtually dissolved in the instance of code commentary, for the preoccupations
of the writer confronting his text, which we are in the process of reading, are so similar to those of the narrator as to be indistinguishable. Sarraute, like her narrator, expresses the view that her task as a writer is to translate a pre-existent reality into words. This perspective maintains the traditional disjunction between the world and language, in which the latter serves to represent experiential reality. The "strange innocence" that Heath notes in her theoretical writings derives from her somewhat unfashionable notion of the novel as a representational, mimetic medium.\textsuperscript{45} The commentary in Martereau thus reflects Sarraute's concern with a reality composed of shifting and impalpable signs that the narrator must "retrouver par bribes et traduire gauchement par des mots" (p. 30). This fundamental suspicion of language, perceived as external and essentially alien to experience, impells the author to search for innovative modes of expression, in which a hitherto unknown field of activity can be represented. The problematic nature of words—"des minces capsules protectrices qui enrobent des germes nocifs" (p. 114)—compounds the difficulty of the narrative project, which attempts to reproduce the activity of evanescent and scarcely perceptible material.

The fundamentally untranslatable nature of reality as it is perceived by Sarraute engenders self-consciousness on the part of the narrator, as he tries to construct a narrative which adequately embodies his perceptions. The problems inherent in encoding material that is not accessible to ordinary modes of perception, and thus traditional means of expression, are made manifest in the form of explicit commentary which deals with the practice of writing.

Henry James's narrator of \textit{The Sacred Fount} discusses the disposition of the narrative elements—whether to include all the material available
and how to arrange the events in time—rather than with the appropriate expression of his material in the medium of words. The focus of the code commentary in *The Sacred Fount* stems from the disjunction between the story time and writing time, or between the two selves of the narrator—the "Erzählende Ich" and the "Erzählte Ich"—as opposed to the dichotomy between experience and verbal expression found in *Martereau*.

The narrator of *The Sacred Fount* recognises the discrepancy between the information that was available to him at the time due to his partial vision of the events and what is now accessible to more objective perception. The code commentary of the novel articulates the narrator's nascent consciousness of certain elements in his story of which he was hitherto unaware. The following statements express the writer's knowledge of his former lack of consciousness:

I didn't of course analyse this sense at the time; that was still to come. (p. 85)

This odd feeling was something that I may as well say I shall not even now attempt to account for. (p. 95)

Why I should have minded this, should have been anxious at her anxiety and scared at her scare, was a question troubling me too little on the spot for me to suffer it to trouble me, as a painter of my state, in this place." (p. 94)

The code commentary in *The Sacred Fount* clarifies the problematic relationship of the narrator to his former self, while still maintaining the restricted viewpoint that obtained at the time. Though the novel is impregnated with the narrator's present opinions of past events, the role of the code commentary is to specify when this bifocal vision produces a point of view that the narrator could not have held previously. One of the most intriguing elements in *The Sacred Fount* is the question of the way in which the events related affect the subsequent experience of the narrator, and while the code
commentary suggests that he is not now as benighted as he had previously appeared, it does not fully describe the present state of his awareness.

Nevertheless, the narrator does acknowledge his awareness of the personal deficiency that shaped and restricted his former vision:

Or rather, to be more exact, I already saw her as necessarily stupid because I saw her as necessarily vain. What I see now of course is that I was on my own side almost stupidly hard with her—as I may also at that hour have been subject to her other vice. (p. 177)

The narrator's allusive use of the words "her other vice" for "conceit" or "vanity" and his restriction of this failing to a particular moment in the past suggest that the divergence between the two selves of the narrator is perhaps less pronounced than he would admit. Although the narrator of The Sacred Fount does not discuss the process of encoding the actions, gestures, and speech of the characters he describes, nevertheless, the novel encapsulates directions for its own interpretation through a scene depicting the critical process. The aesthetic problems stemming from direct communication between the narrator and the reader, as in commentary, are circumvented by James's dramatisation of the hermeneutic activity within the story itself. Martereau also presents in mise en abyme the production of its own text in the form of a play, generating a dynamic, non-didactic dialogue between the author and reader. In each case the author designs a dramatic forum in which to stage the activity of interpretation. Code commentary is thus replaced by a dramatic correlative, which serves as an alternative means of elucidating the complementary activities of creation and explanation.

James illustrates the interpretative process, as the characters of
The narrator and Mrs. Server overhear Gilbert Long as he discusses the merits of the painting with the artist Ford Obert. The scene presents significant elements of plot, since it illustrates Long's intellectual improvement to the narrator, although here again, the reader is not permitted to perceive the quality of his speech directly, since various circumstances conspire to make Long hold his tongue when requested to give account of his thoughts. The painting is highly significant thematically, since it seems to portray the narrator's theory of exchange in human relationships: the narrator describes the picture as that of a man, who, having exhausted his own resources, is about to put on, or take off, the face of life.

As is the case for all other scenes of the novel, the narrator's perspective is supplemented by the talk of the other guests, which reduces the authority of the narrative voice to the status of one character among many. This scene, in which the characters of the novel are requested to formulate an opinion on the meaning of the painting, resembles a similar dramatic situation in the novel *Moby Dick* in the chapter entitled "The Doubloon." As the various characters of the novel perceive a "certain significance" in the symbols inscribed on the coin, Captain Ahab's remark sums up the meaning of the scene: "There's another rendering now; but still one text. All sorts of men in one kind of world, you see." The author thus draws attention to the nature of interpretative activity: a situation in which "understanding is circular and not linear, since understanding is necessarily situated, and as the situation changes, so does the understanding." Just as the doubloon chapter reveals greater depths of each character through his personal mode of vision, at the same time illuminating the
nature of the hermeneutic activity, the scene describing the guests's encounter with the portrait in *The Sacred Fount* surpasses the specificity of plot and theme to examine the relation between the consumer and the work of art.

In placing his characters before an ambiguous work of art, James examines the dynamic relationship between the critic and the artifact in a scene that recalls the author's dramatisation of the plight of contemporary literary criticism in "The Figure in the Carpet" five years earlier. Like *The Sacred Fount*, the tale embodies the personal perceptions of a first-person narrator who seeks the hidden meaning of a phenomenon: here, the pattern in the works of a certain author. This artist/critic fable focuses on the false aesthetic assumptions of the critic, as he attempts to solve the puzzle of Vereker's work by revealing its mysterious meaning. In an insightful essay on "The Figure in the Carpet," Wolfgang Iser discusses the way in which the tale generates a critique of the interpretative norms of the day, articulated by the artist in an appeal for responsible criticism. Iser comments,

...Vereker denounces both the archeological ('digging for meaning!') approach and the assumption that meaning is a thing which—as is made explicit in the text—embodies a treasure that can be excavated through interpretation. 48

Although the narrator-critic fails to grasp the implications of the author's suggestions, persisting in a desperate hunt for a non-existent secret, the inadequacy of such a critical approach becomes manifest to the reader. Like many of James's artist fables *The Sacred Fount* reflects the creative process, as the narrator's imaginative construct grows into the novel we have before us. If the perils of the creative imagination are illustrated by the narrator's experience, the pitfalls of criticism are dramatised in the characters's enactment of the interpretative process as they examine the enigmatic
portrait. Appealing to Long to repeat the substance of his remarks to Obert on the painting, the narrator remarks,

"Do, my dear man, let us have it again. It's the picture, of all pictures, that most needs an interpreter. Don't we want," I asked of Mrs. Server, "to know what it means?" (p. 55)

The narrator thus sets the parameters of discussion as a quest for the meaning of the painting, and the discussion that follows indicates the way in which meaning is recuperated by the viewer.

The portrait is described to the reader by the narrator so that, like all the signs in the novel, the painting is distorted by his partial perceptions and judgement. The narrator's description of the portrait yields two impressions, of which the first one appears the most objective, and the second reflects the preoccupations of the narrator; thus, the object "that strikes the spectator at first as some obscure, some ambiguous work of art" is the least coloured by the narrator's personal perspective. The second view, in which the object appears to be "A representation of a human face, modelled and coloured...in some substance not human" is confirmed by the name that Mrs. Server gives to the painting--"the mask of Death." This title forms an organising principle that defines the amorphous outlines of the enigmatic object and limits the "free-play" of the structure. Ironically, Mrs. Server's interpretation of the portrait parallels the apocryphal events of the novel as perceived by the narrator, in which the vampiric relations of some of the characters rob their partners of their vitality.

Not content to analyse the form of the portrait, the viewers exploit the representational value of the visual medium, equating the man and the mask with certain guests at Newmarch. The "blooming and beautiful" face of the mask, as the narrator sees it, is likened to Mrs. Server, while the
white visage of the man recalls "poor Briss"—a suggestive yoking of the two characters singled out by Mrs. Briss at the conclusion of the novel as having carried on a flirtation.

This particularly pregnant scene of the novel announces the dichotomous conclusion of the weekend, when the narrator and Mrs. Briss posit irresolvably conflicting theories based on their interpretations of the same signs, since Mrs. Server's view of the portrait diametrically opposes that of the narrator. Where Mrs. Server sees a mask of Death, characterised by "an awful grimace," the narrator sees a mask of Life, "blooming and beautiful" (p. 56). The same signs of the portrait thus engender divergent logical construction, just as, in the novel as a whole, the process of semiosis yields two separate and symmetrical constructs. As Shlomith Rimmon indicates, in this scene the characters of the novel "enact our position vis-à-vis The Sacred Fount: two opposed possibilities and no choice."49

The novel which has been so often linked to The Sacred Fount, Sarraute's Portrait d'un inconnu contains a similar self-duplication of the novel, as the protagonist examines a work of art that depicts an unknown man. This portrait, unlike the other paintings of the gallery, does not triumph over "l'effort, le doute et le tourment"50 of its production, but rather reproduces "les contours fragmentaires et incertains" of the creative process. Just as Sarraute re-examines traditional literary productions in the light of her own aesthetic credo, the protagonist of Portrait compares the art of Franz Hals and Rembrandt to the anonymous painter of "l'Homme au Pourpoint":

Cela manque de trouble ...d'un certain...comment dirais-je...de tremblement...on y sent trop d'assurance...de certitude satisfaite ...de..de suffisance...Je préfère, je crois aux oeuvres les plus
achévé, celles où n'a pu être maîtrisé... où l'on sent
affleurer encore le tâtonnement anxieux... le doute... le tourment
(pp. 191-192)

The uncertainty manifested by the narrator's hesitant speech pattern duplicates the artistic values he expounds, leading his listener to regard his critical precepts as a mere reflection of his neurosis: she comments, "Ça ne donne jamais rien de bon, ce... ce contact... trop personnel... la recherche de ces sortes d'émotions..." (p. 194).

If, however, like the Man with a Mask, the "portrait d'un Inconnu" provides a locus of revelation of character and theme, the narrator's description of this painting presents a self-reflexive discourse, as elements of the portrait mirror the composition of the novel. The painting accentuates the other aspect of reality accessible only to the marginal man, or the neurotic, and which the narrator attempts to grasp by his own habits of observation. The narrator employs an image to convey this technique:

Il y a un truc à attraper pour le saisir quand on n'a pas la chance de le voir spontanément, d'une manière habituelle. Une sorte de tour d'adresse à exécuter, assez semblable à ces exercices auxquels invitent certains dessins-devinettes, ou ces images composées de losanges noirs et blancs, habilement combinés, qui forment deux dessins géométriques superposés; le jeu consiste à faire une sorte de gymnastique visuelle: on repousse très légèrement l'une des deux images, on la déplace un peu, on la fait reculer et l'on ramène l'autre en avant. On peut parvenir, en s'exerçant un peu, à une certaine dextérité, à opérer très vite le déplacement d'une image à l'autre, à voir à volonté tantôt l'un, tantôt l'autre dessin. 51

The narrator focuses on the formal elements of certain "dessins-devinettes," which, like Escher's illusions, "direct attention to their mode of operation not only by the constant switches which they impose on the observer but sometimes also by incorporating miniature images of themselves." 52
narrator's analogy of certain "trompe-l'œil" devices with observation is later embodied in the very composition of the novel: in Martereau the novel concludes with the superimposition of two opposing perspectives. The visual analogy in Portrait d'un inconnu crystallises the compositional principle of ambiguity, which posits two disjunctive possibilities co-existing in the same plane, in much the same manner as the Man with a Mask in The Sacred Fount presents the enigma of the art work.

An understanding of the nature of ambiguity is crucial to the reading of Martereau, an open work, or a "question-producing mechanism, an ambiguous multilevel message that exposes the contradictions internal to its own system and the cultural codes it assumes." However, the limited activity of the play of two alternative images, as suggested by the analogy to the optical illusion, no longer forms an adequate comparison of the textual strategies of Sarraute's second novel. Constructed on the dramatic principle of "scene" and "dialogue", Martereau inverts traditional uses of these elements, converting scene into a scarce-defined locus of interaction, and dialogue into "sous-conversation." With the first page of the novel, the reader is aware of the operation of a new code, in which the dialogue indicates topics that are not expressed, and the scene represents an accumulation of similar exchanges rather than a distinct setting. The narrator clarifies these dramatic innovations, and thus the process of encoding the New Novel, with the contrasting juxtaposition of a traditional scenario replete with stage directions and dialogue.

The narrator introduces the dramatic situation, commenting, "C'est vraiment comme au théâtre. Nous sommes des acteurs en train de jouer. Autour de nous, dans l'obscurité, un public silencieux nous regarde et veut savoir
ce qui va arriver" (p. 216). The setting is a "salon bourgeois," in which the uncle peruses the paper and the aunt and nephew play cards. Scenic indications suggesting eye movement, facial expression, and gesture are substituted for the description of tropistic movements, and the dialogue lacks the hesitant quality of ordinary conversation in the novel. The expressivity of language alternates here, however, with silences that are inscribed in the text like the stage directions of a Pinter play; these silences interestingly relate both what can be put into words and what is deliberately concealed. Here the expressive value of silence is exploited most richly, as the nephew refuses to "go behind" the text to comment on the specific significance of each refusal of words. Each unit of silence tends to exacerbate the drama of the preceding words and to heighten the potential energy of the speakers, who for the time remain silent.

The narrator reproduces the speech and action of the scene in the succinct manner of the traditional dramatic script, introducing the setting, time and characters as follows:

La scène: un salon bourgeois. Le soir, après le dîner. A gauche près de la cheminée, assis dans un grand fauteuil, en train de lire son journal—le mari (mon oncle) (p. 216).

When the narrator's world, full of "nos flageolements habituels, innomables, à peine décelables, nos pales miroitements," is ruptured by the startling glimpse of his aunt accompanied by Martereau, he is forced to confront the possibility of adultery. The vision of "quelque chose de fort, de net, de bien visible...quelque chose que chacun assitôt reconnaît et nomme: un adul- tère" (p. 216) is almost inaccessible to the narrator, who inhabits a tropistic world in which treason, secret liaisons and aggressive acts occur in the substratum of social intercourse. The notion of an adulterous relationship
between his aunt and Martereau imbues the succeeding events with an air of
irreality for the narrator. This "vraie action" causes him to reevaluate
the scenes in which Martereau has played a part, either as a participant or an
object in the discussion, and to examine the conversations on the plane of
visible reality.

As is fitting in the dramatic context of the novel, this scene depicts
"une tempête dans un verre d'eau," as the uncle's denunciations and accusa-
tions appear to be without foundation and a common-sense explanation for
Martereau's behaviour is found. The narrator dislocates this scene from
the Sarrautian dramatic context by using the conventional signs of theatri-
cal presentation: that is, the description of setting and character, the
dramatic typographical format as a substitution for the novelistic inquit
formulae, and finally, the formula, "le rideau tombe" to denote conclusion.

The melodrama generally reserved for the subtext of the novel surfaces
in this scene as the uncle reports a conversation he has just had with
Martereau in which the latter mentions that he was well aware of the uncle's
suspicions. Despite the fact that the uncle has made these suspicions quite
clear to Martereau by his own insinuating remarks, he nevertheless demands
to know "qui va raconter au-dehors ce qu'on dit dans la maison" (p. 218).
These words take on new meaning in the light of the narrator's apprehensions
of a clandestine relationship between his aunt and Martereau, and the "tra-
hison" in question takes on another form. The aunt brings the situation to
order when, displaying great sang-froid in the face of these accusations,
she suggests a rational explanation for Martereau's awareness.

In reproducing the visual signs of the scene, taking into account ges-
ture, facial expression and body movement, the narrator examines the external
accompaniments of conversation in an attempt at objectivity. When faced with
the possibility of a "real action"—adultery—the narrator is forced to ascend to this plane in order to assess other related events. Intonation, gesture, expression and words—all prove to be forms of camouflage that have little or no relation to the inner movements concealed by the façade.

This juxtaposition of traditional scenic presentation and the narrator's customary dramatic technique corresponds to the psychological shock he sustains in his intuition of this clandestine relationship. Adultery, a staple of the nineteenth century novel, appears strikingly unsuited to the material of a Sarrautian drama, and it receives parodic treatment in this larger-than-life scenario.

As well as providing an alternative point of view for the narrator, the scene serves to accentuate by contrast the features of the form of dramatic presentation found in the novel. Through the defamiliarisation technique, Sarraute encapsulates the formal characteristics of the "unmarked," or traditional, case of a dramatic text, signalling the defeat of such methods in "the age of suspicion." Set in a Sarrautian context, the scenario generates an awareness of the distinctive signs of a text dealing with microscopic, subliminal activity. For both Sarraute and James, the necessity of formulating reflections on the code in scenic form rather than by commentary remains a significant element in their aesthetic approach: the Jamesian critical caveat seems to inform both texts, urging each author to "dramatise, dramatise!"
CONCLUSION:

In a long progressive comparison of the formal aspects of each author's fiction, the necessity of making distinctions and clarifying dissimilarities may have the unfortunate effect of stressing the differences between the two authors. If there is divergence in style, method and tone, however, this disparity serves to make the depth of kinship manifest in common themes and images all the more striking. The parallels between Martereau and The Sacred Fount suggest that the divergence between the diverse methods of Sarraute and James indicates rather two approaches to a similar subject matter.

The first-person narrator of both novels is extremely sensitive and imaginative, deriving much interest from the dramas enacted about him. Both narrators adopt the stance of an observer, formulating theories and watching for situations that appear to confirm them. The narrator of The Sacred Fount attests to "a rare intellectual joy, the oddest secret exultation, in feeling her begin instantly to play the part I had attributed to her in the irreducible drama" (p. 102) and the narrator of Martereau echoes this sentiment:

Ce que j'eprouve en ce moment ressemble à la satisfaction, à l'excitation du savant qui voit son hypothèse hâtive confirmée par l'expérience. (p. 60)

The speculative theories of each narrator are often substantiated by observations that are suggestive only in the light of the theory, as James's narrator states:"...if one hadn't known it one might have seen nothing, but
I was not less aware that one couldn't know anything without seeing all" (p. 169). It is no doubt significant that both narrators are anonymous and isolated within the groupings of each society: Sarraute's narrator is an orphan and James's narrator arrives at Newmarch unaccompanied.

The theme of vampiric depletion, at the heart of the investigation in *The Sacred Fount*, embodies the narrator's view of human relations in *Martereau*, as when he regards himself as "le parasite, la molle excroissance fixée sur l'autre, puisant dans l'autre le suc nourricier" (p. 56). In another instance he compares a conversational attack to a vampiric act: "Le coeur battant, haletants, ils auraient collé leur bouche là où le sang afflue, où le pouls bat, ils auraient sucé, mordu" (p. 196). The characteristic mode of description of each author is discernible if one compares the use of the image in each text. The image in *The Sacred Fount* remains an understated analogy that is most often expressed metonymically by such terms as "dry," "bloated," "drained," and "full," for the term used at Newmarch for exploitive relationships is the more lofty analogy of the "sacred fount." Where a vicious phenomenon is alluded to in *The Sacred Fount* in somewhat idealistic terms, in *Martereau*, shocking and violent imagery is used to comment on ostensibly innocuous conversation.

The narrator of *The Sacred Fount* is extremely susceptible to the pictorial qualities of the evidence he examines: he constantly compares the other guests to paintings—Briss is a Velasquez, Mrs. Server a Greuze pastel—and the signs of visual harmony and symmetry are favoured above other evidence because they "fit" aesthetically. As he builds a "perfect palace of thought" on the foundations of such signs, he reminds himself of the difference between art and life: "Things in the real had a way of not
balancing; it was all an affair, this fine symmetry, of artificial proportion." (p. 182-83)

If the English narrator has a proclivity for highly composed tableaux, his French counterpart manifests suspicion when confronted by "artificial proportion" in real life, as when Martereau and his wife stand together at the door "comme font les amoureux sur les cartes postales en couleurs, lui la tête inclinée vers elle, elle le visage levé vers lui..." (p. 159). Sarraute's vision of the deceptive nature of external signs could act as a corrective to the Jamesian narrator who continues to believe in the correspondence between signs and "evidence of relations."

The intellectual joys found in observation satisfy the narrators initially, but as the various forms of evidence mount up both narrators engage in creative acts in order to make sense of their findings. James's narrator roams freely in the realms of imagination, embellishing the evidence with his own conjectures:

I had created nothing but a clue or two the larger comprehension I still needed, yet I positively found myself overtaken by a mild artistic glow. (p. 104)

In Martereau, the narrator assumes the role of the novelist when he imagines four different versions of a scene based on the same dialogue and actions, projecting himself into the various viewpoints of Martereau and his wife. Each artist-figure ultimately fails to substantiate his views to the other characters (the uncle is convinced of Martereau's good faith and Mrs. Briss declares that the narrator is mad), and each novel concludes with an unbridgable gap between the narrator and his society.
Given the fundamentally uncommunicable nature of each narrator's imaginative vision, the use of dialogue in the novel becomes highly problematic. For Sarraute, the possibilities of reversal inherent in dialogue make the medium of conversation an appropriate means of exploring a new kind of fictional character, who, unlike the traditional monolithic figure of the novel, forms a collection of contradictory and unstable attributes. Sarrautian dialogue portrays the way in which her characters define and redefine themselves in conversation as they respond to specific stimuli introduced by the words of others. Our analysis of the various functions of the reported discourse shows how discrete elements of conversation provoke the continual subliminal movements which constitute Sarraute's essential subject. This approach reveals the spoken word in Sarraute's work as the sine qua non of tropistic movement.

In *The Sacred Fount*, composed as a series of witty and polemical conversations, a detailed analysis of the functions of speech clarifies the operation of what James termed the novel's own "little law of composition" (p. xxx). Balanced between the objective reported discourse and the narrator's commentary, *The Sacred Fount* enables the reader to perceive the events through the distorted lens of the narrator while at the same time affording a glimpse of what a more objective viewer may have seen. The repertoire of Jamesian conversation, as examined through the constituent functions of communication, forms a rich tapestry of hints, suggestion, innuendo, repetition, sudden suspensions, tentative assumptions, and verbal duels. The narrator reproduces rhetorical flourishes which, in drawing attention to the means of expression, seem at the same time to suggest the shadowed content of conversation. The hidden struggles and liaisons
that form the drama of Sarrautian fiction are verbally represented in the polished rhetoric of collusion and opposition in The Sacred Fount.

Both Henry James and Nathalie employ conversation, and its unspoken counterpart, the "sous-conversation," in order to situate the reader in the immediate world of the text. In Jamesian fiction, the reader is forced to participate in the questioning process of the characters if he is to emerge from bewilderment to some sort of understanding of the given situation. The recurrence of blanks and semantic dead-ends (such as the echo device) in the reported discourse stimulates the reader's imagination to project the material that has been withheld. The commentary in The Sacred Fount limits the possibilities of the gap traced in speech to those which are apprehended by the narrator, whose judgment becomes increasingly dubious.

In seeking to involve the reader directly in the violent activity of tropisms, Sarraute documents the fine vibrations of these inner movements, which are described in terms of archetypal, mythic and biological imagery in order to make them as universal as possible. Sarraute reproaches the behaviourist novel with its tendency to regard actions as the only means of revealing character;

...ils poussent leurs personnages à accomplir des actions insolites et monstrueuses que le lecteur alors, confortablement installé dans sa bonne conscience et ne retrouvant dans ces actes criminels rien de ce qu'il a appris à voir dans ses propres conduites, considère avec une curiosité orgueilleuse et horrifiée, puis écarte paisiblement pour retourner à ses moutons....

By staging the action at a preconscious level of reality, Sarraute reaches the reader with the immediacy of images that form part of the stock of human experience.
The gap-filling operation performed by the reader of most Jamesian fiction is performed by the narrator in Martereau. The narrator completes the unvoiced suggestions of conversation either by reporting the content of what is meant in the form of the "sous-conversation" or describing the impact of the message in the form of a tropism. Like the narrator in The Sacred Fount, the narrator of Martereau may be unreliable due to his own rather morbid sensitivity.

The dialogue form is not only a naturalistic device for presenting the reality of social interaction, but a structural principle of each novel. The question-answer, or action-reaction, sequence of the dialogue comprises a structure that resists resolution, since the norm of dyadic interaction established in the novel brings about a form of momentum. In Martereau the repetition of certain scenes reviewed by the narrator produces a para-tactic structure that tends to resist conclusion. The dénouement of the novel occurs when the uncle receives Martereau's letter and reverses his position once more so that he is ranged in the opposite camp with Martereau. Having concluded that perhaps Martereau is truly different from the others—"ses actes, ses gestes, ses paroles—des traits nets et purs qui le dessinent parfaitement, l'expriment" (p. 237)—the nephew revisits Martereau and his suspicions are aroused once again. The vicious cycle motif, introduced in the image of a dog turning in a circle as he bites his own tail (p. 22), is repeated at the end of the novel:

Il n'y avait rien: rien que bulles d'air, billevesées, mirages, fumée, reflets, ombres, ma propre ombre après laquelle je coursais, tournant en rond. (p. 237)

The novel concludes with Martereau's own words, innocuous and banal as
always, but which are now irrevocably imprinted with the scarcely perceptible activity of tropisms. The narrative commentary concludes with the characteristic suspension points, and Martereau's speech ends the novel with a period: the full-stop suggested by the punctuation is, like the dialogue of the novel itself, illusory, for the reader knows that the action of the novel continues in an endless series of "sous-conversation," tropism, and revision. For as James points out,

Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle in which they shall happily appear to do so.55

That Martereau continues beyond the dénouement indicates the inertia produced by the ceaseless microactions which, unlike the events of the plot, literally stop nowhere.

By contrast, the dialectical plot of The Sacred Fount appears to conclude rather decisively with Mrs. Brissenden's "negations arrayed and her insolence recaptured" (p. 318) and the narrator's theory in a state of collapse. In actual fact, the narrator's elaborate palace of thought does not collapse into a "mere heap of disfigured fragments" (p. 311) as he as supposed:

"It's in point of fact so beautifully fitted that it comes apart piece by piece----they're not even in this state---see!" I wound up--"a pile of ruins!" (pp. 311-12)

Because Mrs. Brissenden's asseverations are merely negative and fail to transfigure the elements of the theory, the narrator's conjectures end in a state of collapse rather than utter ruin. Concluding the tale, the
reader is left juggling two opposing viewpoints and two equally intricate houses of cards. The element of uncertainty inherent in conversation in both novels appropriately produces the ambiguous note on which *The Sacred Fount* and *Martereau* conclude.

In the comparative process the novels of James and Sarraute prove to be mutually revealing: the *nouveau roman* highlights the antagonistic undercurrents of conversation in *The Sacred Fount*, and the novel of manners suggests the significance of the spoken word in the banal conversation of *Martereau*. In the light of Sarraute's exploration of the evanescent, imperceptible elements of human intercourse, the following comments made by James reveal him as an important predecessor of the Sarrautian tradition:

For nobody to whom life at large is easily interesting do the finer, the shyer, the more anxious small vibrations, fine and shy and anxious with the passion that precedes knowledge, succeed in being negligible.

In creating a form of dialogue that manifests at every point the strain and pressure of the small vibrations of what is unsaid, James complements Sarraute's vision and realisation of the material that precedes expression. Quoting Henry Green, Sarraute comments that the centre of gravity of the novel is being displaced due to the ever-greater role of dialogue. "Le signe de bouleversements profonds qui pourraient remettre en question toute la structure traditionnelle du roman," this increased use of dialogue requires concomitant innovations in the art of narration so that the context of speech elicits and discloses those "suppressed processes and unavowed references" (p. 272) which make the meaning of communication so different from its form.
THE NARRATIVE DISCOURSE: NOTES

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 90.
8 For detailed statistical information, see Anthony Newman, Une Poésie des discours, (Gêneve: Librairie Droz, 1976) pp. 22-3.
9 Ibid., p. 174.
11 Newman, p. 175.
12 Ibid., p. 154.
14 Genette, pp. 261-63.
15 James, p. 106.
17 Ibid., p. 117.
18 James, p. 107.
19 Sarraute, p. 131.
21 Ibid., p. 152.
THE NARRATIVE DISCOURSE: NOTES


23 Ibid., p. 118.

24 Newman, p. 25.


26 Newman, p. 43.

27 Ibid., p. 35.


33 Newman, p. 35.


36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., P. 193.

38 Doležel, p. 7.

39 Ibid.

40 Cothran, pp. 262-63.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., p. 265
THE NARRATIVE DISCOURSE: NOTES

43 Sarraute, p. 137.
44 Cothran, p. 266.
51 Ibid., p. 28.
52 Rimmon, p. 233.
55 James, Art of the Novel, p. 5
56 Ibid., p. 149.
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