

Collective Poetics
Community in the Modern American Short Story Sequence

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Tutkielmani kategorisoi, analysoi ja tulkitsee kerronnallisia keinoja, joilla kirjallisuus voi tuottaa kokemuksia kollektiivisuudesta ja yhteisöllisyydestä. Tutkimalla yhteisöjen ja kollektiivisten kokemusten representaatioita yhdysvaltalaisessa modernistisessä kirjallisuustraditiossa selvitän, miten kollektiivisuuden poetiikkaa on tuotettu tietyssä historiallisessa ja kulttuurisessa kontekstissa. Koska tutkimuskysymykseni on laaja, rajaani työni käsittelemään teoksia, jotka edustavat paikallismodernismin (regional modernism) ja novellisekvenssin (short story sequence) genrejä. Kohdeteokseni kattavat noin sadan vuoden mittaisen ajanjakson modernismin kulta-ajalta, 1900-luvun alkupuoliskolta, aina sen 2000-luvun nykyseuraajiin asti. Kahtena tärkeimpänä kohdeteoksena, ja tämän ajanjakson ääripäinä, toimivat Sherwood Andersonin *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) ja Elizabeth Stroutin *Olive Kitteridge* (2008). Näiden lisäksi analysoin muun muassa William Faulknerin, Katherine Anne Porterin ja John Steinbeckin novellimuotoisia teoksia.

Tutkimukseni sijoittuu teoreettisesti narratologian ja modernismitutkimuksen risteykseen. Tämä teorioiden ja kohdeteosten yhdistelmä pyrkii siirtämään aiemman kirjallisuudentutkimuksen painopisteitä sellaisiin aiheisiin, jotka ovat aiemmin jääneet tutkimuksellisesti marginaaliin. Modernismitutkimus on perinteisesti painottanut kaupunkikuvauksia paikallismodernismin maaseutukuvausten kustannuksella, kun taas kysymykset kollektiivisuudesta ja novelliteoriasta ovat kulkeneet paljon suositumpien aiheiden, kuten yksilökuvausten ja romaanitutkimuksen, jäljessä.

Narratologiassakin kysymykset yhteisöllisistä äänistä ja kollektiivisuuden kuvauksista ovat nousseet esiin vasta viime vuosien aikana kognitiivisen narratologian uusien mieli-käsitysten myötä. Vaikka nykykognitiotieteistä ammentava kognitiivinen narratologia onkin tuottanut mielenkiintoisia väitteitä ajattelumme sosiaalisesta ja ruumiillisesta olemuksesta, kohdeteokseni kyseenalaistavat tällaisten käsitysten epähistoriallisuutta ja universaalisuutta. Vaikka narratologia, sekä klassisessa että jälkiklassisessa muodossaan, toimii tutkimukseni tärkeimpänä teoreettisena viitekehystenä, on teorian ja kohdeteosteni tulkinnan välinen suhde jännitteinen. Työkälypakkina toimimisen sijaan narratologia onkin yksi tutkimukseni kohteista, jota pyrin muokkaamaan diakroniseen ja kontekstualisoivaan suuntaan.

Ehdotan kollektiivisuuden poetiikan tutkimiseen kolmea tasoa: fiktiiviset mielet, henkilöahmot ja kerronnalliset hierarkiat. Osoitan muun muassa, että sosiaalinen mieli voi toimia taiteellisenä ja fiktiivisenä keinona tuottaa illuusio kollektiivisuudesta, ja että yksittäiset henkilöahmot voivat yhdistää kyläyhteisöjä toimimalla suullisen tarinankerronnan kohteina ja tuottajina. Samalla tutkimukseni haastaa perinteisen käsityksen autoritäärisen ja kaikkietävän kerronnan katoamisesta modernismissä ja tuo esiin, miten paikallismodernismi ottaa osaa ideologisiin keskusteluihin amerikkalaisuudesta, ja paljastaa yhdysvaltalaisen paikallisyhteisöjen sukupuolittuneet ja rodullistuneet jakautumiset.

Avainsanat: narratologia, modernismi, yhteisö, amerikkalainen kirjallisuus, novelli

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1 Introduction

1.1 Collective Experience, Narrative Fiction, the U.S.

At the core of this work lies a fascination in the links between narrative fiction and the feeling of collective experience. How can the illusion of collectivity be created - or, to the same extent, undermined and dismantled - in a textual and fictional manner? By examining representations of communities and collective experience in the American modernist tradition, I intend to study the poetic principles according to which collectivity can be constructed in a specific historical and cultural context. My target literature ranges from works dating from modernism's heyday at the beginning of the 20th century to its contemporary followers, and as the two main case studies, as well as rough ends of this temporal spectrum, are Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (= *WO*, 1996/1919) and Elizabeth Strout's *Olive Kitteridge* (= *OK*, 2008). I place both works under the genres of regional modernism and the American short story sequence, and my analysis shows how the question of collective experience becomes especially highlighted and thematized in these genres. The idea is to study the relations between the structures and themes of collectivity: why do these modernist texts about communities so strongly thematize loneliness, fragmentation, (in)ability for self-scrutiny, and a longing for authentic experience, and how do these themes become mirrored in the structures of narrative? It is both a starting point and a thesis of this work that community-building and the construction of collective experience happen precisely through storytelling, for example in the form of narrative fiction, and it is the poetics of such storytelling that deserve and need to be analyzed in a detailed manner.

The idea of community as a construction of sorts is hardly new, and the discussion extends well beyond literary criticism. For example, Benedict Anderson, who examines the rise of nationalism and nation-states in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2006/1983), sees nation as a social construct and as an imagined political community; imagined because none of its citizens can meet or know the majority of their fellow citizens, yet in their minds lives an image of shared connection. Anderson argues that it was particularly the genres of the novel and the newspaper that offered tools for depicting imagined communities much like that of a nation. Thus, he entwines the birth and

development of the novel with the socio-political history of the nation-state. (Anderson 2006, 24–25.)

The focus of my work, however, is not on real-life communities as social constructs, but on poetic constructions of community and collective experience in literature, created with specific formal and narrative tools. Within literary studies, it is precisely the novel form that has been studied most in terms of its ability to represent communities,¹ and in the less common instances where community has been analyzed in connection to the short story and the short story sequence, the focus has more often been on what kinds of communities are depicted and what their socio-historical roots are, rather than on *how* they are depicted.² This despite the fact that short story genres have their own particular, formal ways of thematizing these questions.

Thus, the aim is to locate my research theoretically in the intersection of modernist studies and narrative theory, and analyze collectivity within regional modernism and its short story sequences. With this combination of theory and primary literature, my hope is to shift the emphasis within literary studies towards less analyzed genres and topics. Modernist studies have traditionally focused on the urban and the metropolitan at the expense of the countryside depictions of regional modernism (Herring 2009, 2). Similarly, literary scholarship has been overwhelmingly preoccupied with the genre of the novel and the depiction of the self,³ while theories of the short story genre and questions of community have often lagged behind, especially when it comes to formal interpretation. And yet, as my analysis attempts to show,

¹ For a recent example from modernist studies on the relationship between the novel and the question of community, see Jessica Schiff Berman's *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community* (2001). Berman's work differs from my own not only in terms of the analyzed genre but also through her theoretical focus; she juxtaposes key modernist texts with historical fields for a more contextualizing look at the political engagements of modernism (2001, 4). However, I share her view that communities, like nations, "come into being to a large extent in the kinds of stories of connection we have been told or are able to tell ourselves" and should, therefore, be analyzed as narrative processes (Berman 2001, 3).

²A wonderful exception to this can be found in Sandra Zagarell's "Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre" (1988), where she coins the genre "narrative of community" by examining works that "take as their subject the life of a community" (499) instead of individual characters. She further argues that structural elements, such as episodic narration, reflect the genre's commitment to rendering the local life and continuity of a community (1988, 520). Zagarell's primary literature, which was often written by white middle-class women imagining and preserving a traditional and preindustrial era, can be seen as a sort of predecessor to the regional modernist texts I study here.

³ In addition, these studies on the novel and the self typically go hand in hand. As a couple of canonical examples, see Georg Lukács's (1971) and Ian Watt's (1957) influential works on the birth and development of the novel and the novel as a representation of the modern self. Sandra Zagarell (1988, 499, 512) frames her discussion on narratives of community by aptly examining the historical and theoretical idea that Western literature is overwhelmingly about the self and, furthermore, argues that the novel has predominated as a genre when male authors have sought to represent community.

the short story form together with regional modernism produces a burning point for an analysis of the poetics of collective experience, simultaneously offering new insights to our understanding of the modernist movement.

Narrative theory is integral to such a study of the *poetics* of collectivity. Narratology, however, does not function here as a mere theoretical toolbox from which to draw concepts for close readings of literary communities. Rather, the point of this work is to make interventions into the methodology itself and thus contribute to theoretical discussions that aim to make narrative theory more sensitive to diachronic and contextual readings. Questions of community, communal voice, and collective experience have served quite a marginal position within narrative theory in the past,⁴ and a heightened interest for such questions has risen only very recently, in the past couple years during which this work has been written as well (e.g. von Contzen & Alders 2015; Bekhta 2017; Fludernik 2017). One of the main reasons that has led to a renewed interest in collective experience is the rise and hegemonization of cognitive narratology. Drawing from contemporary ideas in cognitive sciences, cognitive narratologists refute previously held Cartesian understandings of thinking as private and disembodied, and instead see our minds as inherently embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended. While such theories on the significance of collectivity fit well for my study, they also tend to be quite universalizing in their views of human cognition. My primary literature, with its depictions of American regional communities and their gendered and ethnic divides, poses a challenge for some of these contemporary theoretical turns within narratology, and thus theory and textual analysis will work hand in hand in my study, one informing and renewing the other.

"America is so vast that almost everything said about it is likely to be true, and the opposite is probably equally true" (James T. Farrell)

The Irish-American author's words echo the much-shared view of the U.S. as defying any clear definitions or fitting into one national box; the more you learn about the country, the clearer the differences between its regions, states, cities, and suburbs becomes.⁵ Farrell's

⁴ With the significant exception of feminist narratology, which has attempted to expand narratology's focus on the individual self and examine questions of community and communal voice, as well. See, for example, Lanser's (1992) seminal work *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice*.

⁵ While I strongly sympathize with Farrell's idea on the vastness of the U.S. and the seeming impossibility to neatly categorize and define such a diverse country, it is important to note that this kind of generalizing has the

words are able to point to my reason for selecting American literature for the study at hand - for I think that the question of collective experience becomes increasingly interesting in the American context precisely because of the nature of the country. How do representations of towns and their communities deal with collectivity and social cohesion - as well as a lack of these - in a country that is geographically, politically, ethnically, and culturally as diverse as the U.S.? The aim is to study both the communities within the storyworlds of my primary literature, as well as the broader construction and understanding of collective experience in the American (literary) context. I am interested in how a community can be created in such a fragmented country, and, as a literary scholar, this question boils down to how such an experience can be constructed textually in narrative fiction.⁶

Partly because of the scope of these research questions, my work focuses exclusively on regional modernism - the undercurrent of modernist writing that in the midst of urbanization, cosmopolitanism, industrialization, and other developments of modernity focuses on describing local color life, typically in small towns located somewhere in the countryside, and often in the short story form. All of my primary literature is located in American small towns and in the lives of closed communities in different parts of the country: Anderson is known for his descriptions of the Midwest, whereas Strout deals with the New England region. In addition to these two authors and their texts, Katherine Anne Porter's and William Faulkner's short stories of the South, as well as John Steinbeck's stories of the West will become important points of comparison in my analysis. However, it is necessary to note that this is neither an area study per se, nor a historical survey of the development of communal representations. Rather, I am looking for the commonalities and differences in the poetics of these texts, asking whether regional modernist literature creates a sense of global union between people under the "America" umbrella and a longing for a communal past, or if it only constructs isolated local communities and thus emphasizes the fragmented and discriminatory nature of the country.

dangerous potential of preventing any sort of critical discourse and debate. To say that all claims made about the U.S. are "probably equally true" undermines the possibility to distinguish well-justified arguments from mere opinions and simultaneously validates *everything*; when it comes to understanding the U.S., anything goes. And yet, not all things said about the U.S. are of equal truth-value, and the vastness of the country does not exclude the need for critical scrutiny - quite the opposite.

⁶ Though I emphasize the word "textual" here, since I am analyzing fiction produced in the modern world of print culture, my primary literature showcases a tension between textual and oral storytelling traditions. Oral storytelling has significantly influenced the genre of the short story as well as American modernism in general, and I argue that it also impacts the narrative voice employed in my primary literature. I will discuss the manifestations of the oral storytelling tradition in my primary literature more in chapters three and four.

This inquiry into the poetics of collective experience will move in three steps from the micro- to the macro level of the works; through a zooming out from the insides of characters' minds to the roles and functions of individual characters and their actions in the storyworld, and, lastly, to the hierarchies of voice and broader thematic issues of regional modernist texts. Thus, while recent takes on collective poetics have analyzed, for example, collective narrators and linguistic markers of collectivity (e.g. Fludernik 2017; Bekhta 2017), my work joins these discussions and complements them with new case studies and a different theoretical focus.⁷ Throughout the chapters of this work, the exposition, use, and re-evaluation of narratological theoretical frameworks will take place entwined with my discussion of the primary literature. In the following sections of this introductory chapter, I will give a short explanation of the main theoretical tools used here, as well as introduce my primary literature and some of the literary scholarship it has received thus far. This theoretical introduction starts with the broader background of regional modernism and the short story sequence, and then moves towards the narratological discussions that will frame my analysis of the voices, characters, and minds constructed in the short story sequences.

1.2 American Modernism, Regional Modernism, Short Story Sequence

American modernism as a literary movement is typically understood to begin at the turn of the 20th century, with its most important era taking place between the two World Wars. During the dislocating period of change from the 1880s to the 1940s, major transformations were taking place on all fronts - from politics to technology, economy, and living environments - and the majority of contemporary authors were reflecting on the changing and disrupted world around them (cf. Nagel 2015, 39). The key features of industrial, corporate, and urban society were created in the U.S. during this time, and consequently the country became an epitome of modern living to the rest of the world. In 1925 New York City overtook London as the most populous city in the world, and massive migration from the countryside to growing cities changed the way Americans viewed the city and the country

⁷ For example, Monika Fludernik's (2017) recent article, which she calls a "preliminary step in the development of a poetics of collective narrative," (139) analyzes the linguistic markers of groups in crowd scenes and we-narration in both factual and fictional narratives. Similarly to me, Fludernik also traces the collective in three narratological dimensions, yet her focus and definitions differ from mine. More specifically, Fludernik's (2017, 139, 141, 143) dimensions include 1) action (which she also terms as "collective protagonists" and "agency," i.e. groups that *do* things on the plot level), 2) thought or attitude (which she also calls "mind" and even "consciousness") and 3) narration (groups that engage in collective storytelling). Out of the three forms of collectivity Fludernik proposes, I only study collective thought, with some remarks on collective action in the form of gossip. Collective narration falls outside the type of narration used in my primary literature.

(Dumenil 1995, 4). During this time period, the country's role in the world was changing as well; American military and corporations were spreading their footprint over the Americas and the Pacific (Dumenil 1995, 35-36), and in addition to these imperialist movements, the U.S. started to dominate culturally. Especially Hollywood movies and American music, such as jazz, became an important part of European culture from the 1920s onwards (Saunders 2005, 347).

At the same time talk on the "acids of modernity" spread around the country. Some viewed the modern times as eroding marriages, localities, as well as geographical, linguistic, and cultural communities which Americans had held in previous times. The changes that took place - that were both celebrated and criticized - had major effects on the literary scene, too. (Dumenil 1995.)⁸ Some of the features that came to distinguish American modernism were the artists' and authors' focus on questions of temporal disjunction, the past, and racial identity. American writers often looked at modernist discontinuities; on the one hand the cities, technology, and infrastructure were applauded, but on the other the status of indigenous people and rural areas became increasingly problematic. Simultaneously, the topic of race and ethnicity surfaced: it is quite rare to find a major American modernist who is not engaged in racial identity - whether in the works of African-American authors as a part of the Harlem Renaissance movement, or writers connected with nativism and ideas of pure identity, such as Ezra Pound.⁹ My own work looks at temporality in the fourth chapter, as I examine my primary literature's relationship to modernity's past, while questions of race are discussed in the third and fourth chapters, where I examine the problematic whiteness of my primary literature through character and narrator analysis.

Because of this socio-political and cultural context, for a long time modernist studies focused on literature from and about the big metropolises around the world, and on texts written at the time of the changes about the transformations taking place. Since the mid-1990s, however, a

⁸ In her book *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*, Lynn Dumenil (1995) discusses the phrase "acids of modernity" (coined originally by Walter Lippmann, a journalist and popular writer of the time) as a way of understanding modernity in the US. Dumenil examines the twofold reactions to modern developments: while many Americans were excited about technological progress and cultural changes that challenged old traditions and embraced pluralism, there were also anxieties about issues such as urban poverty, disorder, and decline in community autonomy (1995, 5-6). While some reveled in modernity, others resisted change, and as a result, defensive social movements such as the Ku Klux Klan originated during this time period as well (1995, 148).

⁹ For a critical look on modernist studies on race - and the baffling lack of such scholarship - see e.g. Michael Bibby's (2013) fascinating article "The Disinterested and Fine: New Negro Renaissance Poetry and the Racial Formation of Modernist Studies."

scholarly movement termed New Modernist Studies has questioned canonical understandings of modernism, with a mission of expanding the scope of modernist studies both temporally, vertically, and spatially.¹⁰ As a result of this paradigmatic shift, the field of modernist studies as well as the understanding of modernism and its canon have significantly changed in the past twenty years. Scholars have started to look deeper into history for the roots of modernism, as well as search for its contemporary followers; previously unrecognized authors especially from the African-American community and regions outside of the major cities have been brought up to the forefront, and their importance in the development of the movement has been acknowledged; and, finally, the locations of modernism both in the U.S. and globally around the world have been re-evaluated. (e.g. Mao & Walkowitz 2008.)

This spatial shift in understanding the locations of modernism leads us to regional modernism and the focus of my work. Regional modernism refers to texts often published outside the major cities of the time, and to literature that in the midst of the modern turmoil turns inwards to scrutinize the countryside regions and small towns of the U.S. The historical background of the genre can be found in the Local Color movement of the 19th century, which is usually associated with female writers, such as Sarah Orne Jewett and Harriet Beecher Stowe. The skill of Local Color writers such as Jewett was in describing local practices and customs that caused pride in townspeople and brought them together, and the texts often focused on depicting old homes, little villages, vibrant nature, and village women living alone or in reduced circumstances (Nagel 2015, 107–108). During modernism's heyday, cultural movements became viewed as increasingly gendered, and regional modernism - associated with the earlier Local Color movement - became effeminized and antiquated (Herring 2009, 3). As a result, the genre was seen as anti-modernist and it became largely marginalized and forgotten in literary scholarship.¹¹

¹⁰ See Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz's (2008) manifesto, "The New Modernist Studies" on the particularities of this movement.

¹¹ As Herring (2009, 2) notes, the term "regionalism" was originally coined in architecture studies, and only later migrated to literary scholarship, where it still battles for proper recognition.

Even recent scholarship hosts examples of the urban bias of modernist studies, where texts focusing on the countryside are often seen as antithetic to modernism. For example, James Nagel (2015, 42) describes Faulkner as "something of an anomaly as a Modernist in that throughout his career he used many of the techniques and subjects of the Local Color movement." Thus, despite being the most inventive of the modernists "in terms of aesthetics" (2015, 43), the rural content of Faulkner's texts with the "entire corpus [--] set in a single fictional county in Mississippi" (2015, 42) makes him somewhat of a deviant modernist in Nagel's account.

Despite this lack of recognition in literary history and criticism until recent decades, regional modernism holds a central place in American modernist literary history. Regional modernist texts were produced simultaneously with urban modernist experimentations and, therefore, they have been a major part in the world-building of the modernist movement in the U.S. (see also Herring 2009, 5). Set in the American countryside and small towns, regional modernism is able to negotiate what meaning these localities have in the midst of urbanization, industrialization, the rise of mass market and consumer culture, as well as the emergence of the U.S. as a growing world power. What makes regional modernism such an interesting genre for the study at hand is precisely its ability to critically examine modern developments from the viewpoint of communities that are often seen as peripheral. Through the theme of community, my primary literature asks what is modernity's relationship with the past, as well as what happens to authentic contact and expression in modernity. My work examines whether these texts show the countryside and its small towns as anti-modern, pre-modern, or as something that will be lost (unless preserved) within modernity.

Thus, regional modernism - or modernism in general - is not in my view simply a time period, during which all texts produced fall under the modernist category. Rather, the texts classified as regional modernist here are modernist not only because of the time of their production, but also because of their formal experimentality - which I study specifically through the issue of voice - and through their focus on the conditions of modernity. One such condition that regional modernism discusses is the concept of American culture and nationalism. For example, Susan Hegeman (1999), Leigh Anne Duck (2006), and Ryan Poll (2012) have all analyzed the relationship between specific regions and the nation as a whole as represented in modernist texts, although with very different critical approaches and focuses on particular regions of the U.S. Following these scholars, I see regional modernism as negotiating what it means to be American, and what place the region has in the national discourses of the time: whether these localities were the utopian projections of the country, or whether they were seen as the 'other' to not only modernity, but to American identity in general.

Thus, the classic markers of modernism as metropolitan, formally experimental, and transnational are not, in my view, oppositional to regional modernism in the sense that such topics and techniques would be outside the discussions that regional texts take part in. Even transnationality can be seen as a (more or less implicit) part of regional modernist texts, as they take part in producing or hiding an image of the U.S. as an ever-growing world power

with an all-consuming mass culture (cf. Poll 2012). As has become clear by now, many of the most important features I define here for regional modernism are ones that can be used to describe American modernism in general. That is not to say that regional modernism is the same as all American modernism - rather, that the particular localities of regional texts produce specific ways to deal with these topics and to create textual communities.

Lastly, I will focus the scope of my research within modernism to the genre of the short story sequence, which became one of the most important forms of regionalist writing in the early 20th century. As much as modernist studies have emphasized the urbane over the regional, they have also foregrounded the novel at the expense of the short story, and thus followed the general trend of the preoccupation with the novel genre within literary studies. This novel-centrism has taken place despite the fact that the short story form became big business in 20th century U.S., as both little magazines and nation-wide newspapers began to call for and publish them, while many major authors from F. Scott Fitzgerald to Katherine Anne Porter made their living specifically through short story publications while working on their novels (Nagel 2015, 40).¹²

Since the short story sequence has largely gone unrecognized, much of the discussion has been outdated and in need of re-evaluation. The major theorizations on the genre have taken place roughly once a decade, starting in the 1970s with early works attempting to name as well as define the genre and its structure as distinct from that of the novel.¹³ At the core of my understanding of the genre lies Susan Garland Mann's (1989) articulation of the relationship between the different stories, characterized by both self-sufficiency and interrelatedness:

¹² In fact, regional modernism could be additionally defined according to its modes of production. Though the material aspects of modernism fall outside the scope of my work, regional modernist texts were often published outside the major cities of the time and some of their main modes of publication were the several different little magazines of the time. For a discussion on the relationship between local modernisms and little magazines, see, for example, White (2013).

¹³ The first major work on the short story sequence/cycle is Ingram Forrest's (1971) *Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century*, where he defines the genre by differentiating between composed, arranged, and collected short story volumes. This approach has later been criticized for its attempt to base its definitions on the intentions of authors (Nagel 2001, 11; Kennedy 1995, ix). Another important text that helped establish the field is Susan Garland Mann's *The Short Story Cycle: A Genre Companion and Reference Guide* (1989), where she lists some of the elements that connect separate short stories together, such as repeated and developed characters, themes or ideas, imagery, myth, setting, plot or chronological order, and point of view.

More recently, scholarship on the American short story and short story sequence has typically been focused on historical accounts on the development of the genre. Such surveys often look at multiple different authors based on, for example, time period or ethnicity (e.g. Nagel 2001, 2015; Bendixen & Nagel 2010).

On the one hand, the stories work independently of one another: the reader is capable of understanding each of them without going beyond the limits of the individual story. On the other hand, however, the stories work together, creating something that could not be achieved in a single story. (Mann 1989, 15.)

Though Garland refers to the genre as the short story *cycle* - as did much of earlier scholarship in general - such a term connotes circularity and closure that do not quite fit the type of modernist literature I am looking at. Thus, I have selected the competing term *sequence* which, as J. Gerald Kennedy (1995, vii) argues, emphasizes the genre's progressive unfolding and cumulative effects.

My aim, however, is not to study the history of the short story sequence or provide a new definition for it; rather, I broaden the study of the genre by linking it to regional modernism and my research questions on the collective. Thus, for me, genre becomes more of a platform for starting to think about the general poetics of collective experience. Instead of dedicating a separate section for a study of the genre, I will discuss the short story sequence's implications for my theoretical interventions and interpretations of my primary literature in different parts of the work. As an underlying question of this study is why regional and communal descriptions happen so often in the short story sequence, not only in the early 20th century but even today. In other words, what formal aspects of the genre lend themselves so well for these kinds of representations?

In relation to this, starting in the 1990s and continuing to the 2000s, discussions around the short story and the short story sequence have moved from issues of genre classification towards more ideological and contextualizing readings. For example, James Nagel (2001) has considered the ethnic possibilities of the genre and its ability to function well for authors of minority groups, while J. Gerald Kennedy's (1995) edited volume of articles looks at the genre through its ability to produce illusions of fictional communities. In his own chapter, Kennedy argues that the modern short story sequence poses an analogy - though an ironically distanced one - to communities (1995, 194). At the core of the genre lies its dynamic of connection and disconnection; while the stories resemble the "gathering of a group to exchange the stories that express its collective identity" (Kennedy 1995, 194), this semblance of community is more of an illusion, since the structural discontinuities between stories can also highlight the breakdown of communal relations (Kennedy 1995, xiv, 195).

I find Kennedy's insights regarding the genre and its relationship to community illuminating and hope to expand on these thoughts through the following chapters. Even though scholars

have tapped on questions of community before - both regional literature and the short story sequence have been studied in terms of their ability to represent communities - formal questions seem too often to be left outside the conversation. Even in Kennedy's compiled volume, despite its subtitle of "Composite fictions and fictive communities," the extent to which the articles discuss the poetics of the genre, or even the topic of community, varies significantly, as do the methodological approaches that range from feminist aesthetics to narrative analysis and biographical readings. More often the focus of literary scholarship has been on interpreting the types of communities being depicted, instead of how a collective experience can be achieved textually. Closest to my work comes Kennedy's own article with his interpretation of Winesburg as a site of lost community, which I will return to and compare with my own analysis later on in the fourth chapter.

While the expansions of New Modernist Studies have immensely broadened the understanding of material, historical, spatial, and ideological aspects of modernism, the experimental and formalist side of the movement seems to have fallen under the radar. This study hopes to bring back some of that formalist perspective, and the following section introduces the narratological debates through which I examine my primary literature, as well as maps out the following chapters of the work.

1.3 Interventions into Classical and Cognitive Narratology; Overview of Chapters

The theoretical framework used here to tackle the question of collective poetics draws heavily from the narratological tradition, and especially from recent debates within narrative studies about cognitive narratology and theories around fictional minds. As a result of the interdisciplinary "narrative" and "cognitive turns" within academia in the past three decades, scholars have begun to find and study narratives everywhere - from political ads to patient histories and the ways in which we comprehend our lives - and simultaneously the definition of narrative itself has changed. Monika Fludernik's (1996) influential work, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, understands narratives as schematic and functioning according to prototypes that are based on everyday oral storytelling situations. Most importantly, in natural narratology, narrative is all about human experience and a way of structuring our lives.¹⁴

¹⁴ Natural narratology has produced a counter-movement called unnatural narratology, which typically focuses on genres that most clearly defy any naturalizing readings, such as postmodern or sci-fi literature (Alber et al.

Thus, the definition of narrative has moved from the classical structuralist emphasis on plot and causality to a new focus on experientiality and consciousness. Or, as David Herman (2009, 143–144) explains when recontextualizing Fludernik in the light of philosophy of mind, narrative deals with "qualia," a sense of "what it is like" to be someone or something. Similar definitions centering around mind and experience can be seen elsewhere in cognitive narratology. For example, Alan Palmer (2010, 9) goes so far as to argue that fictional narratives are, in essence, mind in its different forms; even events and the plot have little significance to the reader unless they become mental experiences of the characters.

To be clear, narratology has always been interested in minds - even before the cognitive turn - largely due to the way in which classical narratology was based on studies of the modernist canon. The early decades of narratology focused on the works of such authors as Marcel Proust, William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, and Katherine Mansfield (e.g. Chatman 1978; Genette 2006/1980), and narratological scholarship often defined modernist texts through their focus on consciousness representation and the psychological lives of individual characters. Thus, modernism has been theorized as a turn towards subjectivity, and this preoccupation with the inner lives of characters has affected narratological studies, as well. Despite this historical interest in characters' interiority, the more recent turn towards narrative as experience has changed the narratological tools used to study fictional minds. In classical narratology, consciousness representation has traditionally been studied linguistically, following the works of Dorrit Cohn. Fictional minds have been seen as distinct and different from real minds through their transparency and through the reader's ability to have access to someone else's inner thoughts and feelings (Cohn 1978, 1999). Especially the speech category model of direct, indirect, and free indirect discourse has been a significant tool for traditional studies of minds in fiction. In the rise of cognitive and natural theories of narratology, however, classical narratology and the speech category model have been criticized for understanding literary minds too narrowly as exceptional, private, and linguistically-oriented (e.g. Palmer 2010, 2011; Herman 2011).

Meanwhile, new approaches have risen and old terms are continuously replaced with newer ones, as cognitive narrative theory can only stay as relevant as the most up-to-date studies in cognitive science and philosophy of mind. Perhaps most significant for the discussion at hand is the second generation or "4E" approach of cognitive sciences, which argues that minds are

2010). See also Maria Mäkelä's (2011b, 30-33) comprehensive discussion and critique of natural - as well as unnatural - narratology.

embodied, embedded, enactive, and extended (e.g. Caracciolo 2014). Due to these discoveries, 21st century narratology has witnessed a paradigmatic change towards understanding our thinking as embodied and shared, as exemplified for example in Palmer's (2010, 2011) concept of the social mind, as well as lengthy debates over Theory of Mind and fiction's relationship with mind reading (e.g. Zunshine 2006; cf. Hyvärinen 2015). As a result, literary scholars should no longer see thinking as solely internal or draw a dichotomy between minds and bodies in fiction, but instead study the embodied ways of our thinking.

In addition to this critique of narratology's sole focus on the internalist side of thinking at the expense of the externalist one, recent enactivist approaches have brought out the problematic way in which concepts such as "consciousness" are understood as objects - things to be found in and constructed from texts by the reader - in literary scholarship. Marco Caracciolo (2012, 42, 46) has argued that when scholars such as Herman, Palmer, and Zunshine discuss fictional minds, they in fact discuss *characters* and their psychological states and traits ("psychological minds"), not consciousnesses per se. Thus, despite giving valuable insights into our understanding of character psychology, this type of cognitive narratology has been quite functionalist and in opposition to the enactivist and phenomenological branch Caracciolo himself represents, where consciousness is defined as the subjective quality of our experience (2012, 42). Thus, consciousness is only something you can either enact in first person, or attribute to someone else (whether a fictional character or a real person) in third person (2012, 59). As a consequence, one should not talk about "consciousness representation" at all, since consciousness is neither an object nor something one can represent - it is not a *thing* at all (2012, 43, 45).¹⁵

Now, this makes matters somewhat difficult for literary scholarship that is heavily invested in precisely the ways in which texts represent. Intuitively, I would describe my own work as focusing, for example in the third chapter, on the representations of the embodied minds of characters. As such, my work would probably be categorized under the "character and psychological trait" analysis represented by earlier cognitive scholars - which has little to do

¹⁵ It is important to highlight that Caracciolo's (2012, 50) approach puts the reader in the center; readers can either *attribute* a consciousness to a character - which is "their most natural stance towards fictional characters" - or, with the help of textual cues and always under the effects of their own experiential background, readers may *enact* a character's consciousness. In such an enactment, the reader's consciousness and the character's attributed consciousness seem to merge and bridge the division of first-person and third-person approaches to consciousness (2012, 57). Enactments can only take place in what Caracciolo calls "consciousness texts," i.e. in homodiegetic narration or internal focalization in heterodiegetic contexts, because such texts provide the illusion of imagining a character from the inside (2012, 50). In such instances of merger, the reader experiences "the fictional world through the narrow gap between being ourselves and not being ourselves" (2012, 59).

with consciousness in the way enactivists understand it - and criticized for neglecting the reader's role in experiencing the texts I study. And yet, while I draw on earlier narratological scholarship that uses the term "consciousness representation," and while I analyze literary texts that propose a heavily Cartesian worldview where minds *are* private and inaccessible, it is quite impossible to avoid using terms and ideas that are old-fashioned and even contradictory from the point of view of 21st century cognitive sciences. Thus, what I lose in cognitive terminology's accuracy, I hope to gain in my interpretations of the ambiguities these fictional texts push forth.

Therefore, it is relevant to ask why I examine cognitive narratology at all, and what my approach to the field will be in the following chapters. While I find the theoretical innovations of cognitive narratology insightful and intriguing when it comes to the reader's relationship with texts, I am still waiting to see if future scholarship on the topic will broaden our understanding of the thematic of texts, as well as the ambiguities and difficulties of interpretation. Reading fiction, after all, is a lot more complex than the type of sense-making some cognitive narratologists seem to propose.¹⁶ Thus, I will approach cognitive narratology here precisely from an interpretive point of view to see its applicability to textual analysis. By employing some of the newly emerged concepts - such as the social mind and embodied thinking - my work brings new theoretical light to the ways in which modernist texts construct collective experience. In this way, I show how some of the ideas that cognitive narratology has brought up could possibly be helpful tools for literary analysis, if we focus on the actual interpretative questions that they bring up. As an example, for the concept of "social mind," this would mean moving from typology (of size and depth of different social minds) to asking whose voice we actually hear when fiction presents a social mind, and what kinds of ideologies can be produced through it. At the same time, my interventions into

¹⁶ For an apt discussion on the problematic relationship between narratology and cognitive science, see Ryan (2010). For an analysis on how classical and cognitive narratology understand sense-making and interpretation, see Mäkelä (2012). Though at times it has seemed that interpretation and thematics run contrary to the interests of cognitive narratology, with its focus on the shared and basic levels in which readers make sense of texts, I find hope from scholars such as Caracciolo, who points out that:

[--] talk about meaning in literary studies is generally associated with the interpretive or thematic meanings constructed by professional critics in exploring the social, political, or aesthetic relevance of a given text. This equation can lead to a rift between literary criticism on the one hand, and the reading practices of non-professional readers on the other. Empirical approaches to literature have sometimes overemphasized this gap by presenting experiencing and interpreting literature as radically different activities. (Caracciolo 2013, 438.)

Caracciolo attempts to bridge this constructed gap between scholarly interpretation and readerly experiencing (or sense-making) by arguing that experiential responses and interpretation fall on a continuum: "they are different - but often mutually reinforcing ways of articulating the relevance of a narrative text" (2013, 438–439).

cognitive studies as a branch of narratology show how cognitive scholarship relies on problematically universalizing ideas on readers' cognition,¹⁷ while my case studies in the following chapters pose challenges to the universal and ahistorical application of 21st century cognitive theory. My primary literature, after all, stems from historical and cultural contexts where our contemporary ideas of thinking can seem quite anachronistic, to say the least. Thus, rather than applying narratology - classical or cognitive - as a clear-cut toolbox for the purposes of close reading, the relationship between interpretation and methodology in this work is one characterized with tension.

My inquiry into the poetics of collective experience begins with a look at fictional minds. Palmer's theory of social minds and the criticism it has received frame the following, second chapter of my work, where the depicted small town inhabitants' minds - both private and social - come to the forefront of my analysis. In this chapter, I study the textual construction of individual and collective experience through an analysis of fictional minds and simultaneously expand the current discussion of social minds to the genre of the modernist short story sequence.¹⁸ I will take a critical look at some of Palmer's bold statements and argue that the concept of social mind becomes particularly useful when understood metaphorically - and not literally, as Palmer (2010) suggests in his discussion of the novel genre. For example, in *Winesburg, Ohio*, the references to a collective mind emphasize the contrast between the apparent unity of the town and the isolation of each individual character. When Winesburg is described to feel or think something in union, it is the *narrator* talking and producing a collective cognition as a narrative trick. The social mind becomes a motif that - instead of actually tying together the citizens of Winesburg - artistically ties together individual chapters of the sequence by emphasizing the text's thematic of loneliness.

These results will be contrasted to *Olive Kitteridge*, where social minds can again be analyzed as a narrative tool, but this time as a summarizing device of the talking and gossiping of the

¹⁷ These universalist tendencies have been noted by feminist scholars, some of whom have been skeptical about the possibilities cognitive narratology can offer. Lanser (2013) explains how "gender has thus far been a sidebar to cognitive narratology, and some feminist thinkers find its penchant for universal theories of mind to be as problematic as the universal structures proposed by classical narratology." I agree with these concerns and hope to challenge cognitive theories through a feminist lens; for example, by asking interpretive questions that look at the intersections of gender, race, and class in my primary literature.

¹⁸ In the conclusion of *Narrative's* special issue on social minds, Maximilian Alders and Eva von Contzen (2015, 228) call for more research on the topic, specifically pointing out that "much more territory needs to be explored," including texts in such subgenres of prose fiction as the modernist short story sequence. Furthermore, Alders and von Contzen suggest that narratologists should expand the concept of 'social mind' to a broader study of collective experience. In accordance with the terminology of the special issue, I use the term 'collective' - rather than 'communal' - experience here.

small town that simultaneously heightens the newsworthiness of the stories being told. I will analyze the ideological implications of the social mind and emphasize throughout my work how it is, similarly to free indirect discourse, an example of the blurring of voices that is so specific to fictional storytelling. This blurring and loss of source is, furthermore, one of the reasons why it can be questionable to draw real-world implications of our thinking based on literary fiction.

The third chapter moves from questions of fictional minds to a broader study of individual characters as the basis of community and collective experience. The point is to address the question of how and why an individual character becomes the source of collective experience to a community of people in nearly all of the texts I analyze. In Strout's and Faulkner's works the characters of Olive and Miss Emily occupy this position, whereas for *Winesburg, Ohio* it is George Willard, a reporter and confidant of the town, who comes to tie all the other characters together. As a way of diving into these questions, I will examine recent developments within character theory, firstly around ideas of mind reading and source-tagging that post-classical and cognitive approaches have brought into the narratological discussion of characters and narrators. A myriad of concepts such as Theory of Mind, mind guessing, mental state attribution, and folk psychology have become ubiquitous in cognitive narratology, from Lisa Zunshine's (2006) path-breaking work to later critiques and redefinitions of the terms by narratologists, sociologists, and philosophers of mind alike (e.g. Hutto 2011; Hyvärinen 2015). I contrast these approaches with more classical narratological theories around the concept of voice, which bring forth fiction's ability to blur sources as well as produce polyphony, and thus problematize cognitive theories. When discussing these debates and their methodological possibilities, the focus is, again, on interpretive questions; this time regarding my primary literature's characters' positions within the represented communities. For example, who takes on the positions of teller, listener, or represented within the stories? Why do specific characters become the target or source of mindreading, and how do their positions in the community affect their ability to tell and construct, or, on the other hand, be depicted by others? These, furthermore, become very gendered questions in my primary literature, as characters marked as male or female come to hold different positions within the hierarchies of voice.

Secondly, the third chapter looks at character theory through the idea of characters' bodies as an equally important aspect of their voice and agency as the study of their minds. Though

embodiment has become one of the highlights of cognitive narratology, earlier work on characters has already pointed out narrative theory's Cartesian bias that favors minds over bodies (e.g. Babb 2002). Here, I attempt to deconstruct the separation of mind and body through Genie Babb's (2002, 198–199) separation of bodily experience into aspects of "Leib" and "Körper" - concepts which she draws from the phenomenological tradition of philosophy. The third chapter analyzes whether or not Olive, Emily, and George are given agency through different styles of bodily descriptions, and how such descriptions are inscribed with intersectional issues of, for example, gender, race, and class. At the same time, I point out how cognitive theory, as exemplified for example by Palmer and Zunshine, has implicitly continued to rely on a mind-centering notion of our thinking (cf. von Contzen 2015).

The final, fourth chapter draws together the results on the poetics of collective experience in order to analyze regional modernism's use of narrative voice and its relationship with the past. Despite the fact that all of my primary texts represent small town communities, most of them rely on surprisingly authorial and individualistic narrators. Even with a focus on descriptions of community, my primary literature lacks any proper communal voice. This not only counters traditional understandings of modernist narrative form as polyphonic, multi-perspectived, and subjective (e.g. Matz 2004), but also suggests that my primary literature views collective experience as the product of storytellers' artistic craftsmanship.

Although the fourth chapter questions narrative theory's narrow understanding of modernist voice and experimentation, the focus shifts from previous chapters' emphasis on narratological debates into interpretations of regionalism's place within modernist studies. With a combination of theories from modernist studies and a diachronic approach to narrative theories on voice, the final chapter looks at larger thematic interpretations of regional modernism and its relationship to the new social conditions of modern life in the U.S. I argue that the omniscient and authorial narrative style of regional modernism can be tied to the loss of oral storytelling tradition - in line with Walter Benjamin's (1936) thoughts on the modern information era - and, furthermore, linked to a critique of the homogenizing and expanding U.S. nation. Themes of time, nation, and region will, therefore, be examined carefully: are the depicted small towns seen as opposite and adverse to modern developments, and do they construct idealized versions of America - or rather emphasize its regional differences?

Throughout my work I am interested in the relationship between an individual and a larger collective, for example on the levels of thinking (private versus social mind), characters

(individual characters versus the town community), as well as the entire text's structure (individual story versus the sequence). In all of the following chapters I analyze the short story sequence's special ability to highlight these kinds of relationships, as well as interpret how the genre's pull between oral and textual storytelling traditions affects the types of collective experience it is able to construct.

Despite insisting on the poetic focus of my work, it is necessary to point out that I believe the poetic study of literature to be inherently related to the political. Therefore, while analyzing the narratological aspects of collective experience in short story sequences, I am simultaneously taking part in important ideological and thematic discussions on the topic of collectivity, as well as about modernist writing in general. Without a rigorous study of the poetic aspect, our understanding of the politics of these texts is significantly lacking, too.

1.4 Texts under Scrutiny

Finally, something should be said about my primary literature and reasons for selecting Anderson's and Strout's texts as the two main case studies of this work. Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* vacillates somewhere between a novel and a short story collection, and the text is narrated by a third person narrator who describes different people and events in the fictional small town of Winesburg. The stories are linked together through their common milieu and characters, and through the narrator who zooms from one character to another, creating connections between the townspeople and their minds. The exact same description can be given about Elizabeth Strout's *Olive Kitteridge*, a sequence of stories that are all located in the fictional town of Crosby, Maine, and in which the private and inner lives of the inhabitants are revealed through a third person narrator. Whereas in Strout's work it is a retired school teacher, Olive, who becomes a connecting link in the lives of the townspeople and the stories of the sequence, in Anderson's text we can find a similar role played by George Willard, the town's journalist and confidant.

Anderson's text seems like an obvious and inevitable choice for the study at hand; *Winesburg, Ohio* has had a significant influence on the American short story tradition and 20th century versions of regional writing. The text inspired major modernist authors from William Faulkner to John Steinbeck and Gertrude Stein, and in scholarly reviews it is often mentioned

as the first and foremost example of modern American short story writing.¹⁹ And yet, despite this legacy, interest in Anderson and his works has declined in general in the last couple of decades. Since Anderson's most famous work is categorized as regionalist, it does not fit with the hegemonic notion of modernism as metropolitan and urban, and, simultaneously, Anderson's attitudes towards race and gender have become questioned. As contemporary modernist scholarship is looking for ways to broaden the canon by focusing on texts that center for example on women and ethnic minorities - and justifiably so - Anderson's masculinized writing of Caucasian characters has been pushed away, turning Anderson into a sideline modernist.²⁰ While I strongly agree with the project of refuting and expanding old canons, I hope to add to these discussions by studying the problematic white masculinity portrayed for example in Anderson's writing.

While Anderson was still in fashion, his style was analyzed especially in terms of its engagement with the city and the country, as well as his ambivalent relation to both. Anderson was drawn to small-scale communities, and his texts have been understood as more or less nostalgic projections of the past and these communities; as a longing away from modernity itself. For example, Thomas Yingling (1990) has famously read *Winesburg, Ohio* as portraying the end of collective experience in the U.S., where modernization and consumerism block communication. J. Gerald Kennedy (1995, 196), commenting on Yingling's analysis, has further analyzed the characters' feelings of isolation and estrangement, which structurally correspond with the textual divisions of the sequence. Thus, regional modernists such as Anderson have often been understood as longing for a time of collective and authentic experience that was lost as the island communities in the U.S. turned into a homogenized, connected, and modern nation. Kennedy even muses that the short story sequence's continued popularity in the U.S. after the 19th century is perhaps due to a "determination to build a unified republic out of diverse states, regions, and population groups" (1995, viii) and he sees the genre as having an inherent element of "communal dialogue" due to its "mixed voices and multiple perspectives" (1995, 194).

¹⁹ For example, both Nagel (2001, 1) and Kennedy (1995, vii) start their books on the genre by mentioning *Winesburg, Ohio*.

²⁰ The same can be said of D. H. Lawrence, Ernest Hemingway, and John Steinbeck, whose works have become less taught in the second half of the 20th century. These authors are, from a contemporary perspective, often understood as rejecting modern ideas on gender and ethnicity. For instance, James Nagel (2010, 2015), in his two most recent handbooks for general audiences on the topic of American short stories, does not mention Anderson or *Winesburg, Ohio*, except as a source of inspiration in chapters dedicated to other authors.

My point is to expand and complicate these discussion by bringing in a narrative analysis of the minds, characters, and voices produced in my primary literature. I argue that narrative theory is able to counter previous readings of the modern American short story sequence as portraying nostalgic longing, nation-building, and multiplicity in voice. In my reading, *Winesburg, Ohio's* relationship to nostalgia turns out to be problematic and tensioned, and the issue of lost community is in fact portrayed as region-specific and as something that precedes modernity. Moreover, the sequence, with its omniscient and authorial third person narrator, turns out to be quite monological²¹ in its handling of voice. Thus, I not only counter canonical interpretations of *Winesburg, Ohio*, but also the assumption that the short story sequence as a genre is inherently polyphonic or communal in its narrative style.

Anderson's text establishes not only many of the thematic questions that later regional texts picked up on, but also some of the major formal and structural features of American modernist and short story writing. Thus, it becomes the perfect starting point for my analysis, as well as a point of comparison to *Olive Kitteridge*, the 21st century version of the same genre. Strout's Pulitzer Prize-winning text has become a bestseller and the basis of a 2014 TV-miniseries, but it has been ignored in scholarly discussion so far.²² Through a comparative analysis, my work asks how and why Strout's text continues the tradition of regional modernist short story writing nearly a hundred years after the publication of *Winesburg, Ohio*. *Olive Kitteridge* also provides a fitting contrast and mirror for Anderson's text; despite their structural and storyworld-related similarities, I argue that they bring out different interpretations on collective experience, even when using similar poetic strategies. In addition to these two major texts, I will also refer to works published in between them during modernism's heyday - works such as William Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily" (=RE, 1931/1930), as well Katherine Anne Porter's sequence *The Old Order: Stories of the South* (=OO, 1958/1955) and John Steinbeck's *Pastures of Heaven* (=PH, 1995/1932) - to get a more comprehensive sense of how the themes and structures of collective experience have been used in the genre.

While prose fiction has often been seen as a privileged medium for the representation of community, recent critical innovations in the field of cognitive narratology and especially

²¹ For a discussion on polyphonic versus monological narration, see Bakhtin (1984).

²² Only two articles have been published on the text: Katherine Montwieler's (2012) short account on memory in *Olive Kitteridge*, and Rebecca Cross's (2016) comparative analysis of longing and frustration in *Olive Kitteridge* and David Schickler's *Kissing in Manhattan*.

social minds theory have added a new element to such claims. These theories will provide tools for a fresh analysis of representations of collectivity, as well as help establish new readings on both the canonical and the contemporary examples of the genre. Regionalist modernist texts such as *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Olive Kitteridge* deliberately produce a contrast between the private minds of individual characters and the social mind and shared thinking of a small town to thematize questions of community and collectivity, and it is through a study of these fictional minds that I will begin my inquiry into the poetics of collective experience.

2 Poetics I: Social and Private Minds in Fiction

2.1 Shared Talking, Private Thinking?

In Winesburg, Seth Richmond was called the "deep one." "He's like his father," men said as he went through the streets. "He'll break out some of these days. You wait and see." The talk of the town and the respect with which men and boys instinctively greeted him, as all men greet silent people, had affected Seth Richmond's outlook on life and on himself. He, like most boys, was deeper than boys are given credit for being, but he was not what the men of the town, and even his mother, thought him to be. No great underlying purpose lay back of his habitual silence, and he had no definite plan for his life. (*WO*, 72.)

The description of Winesburg's young thinker, Seth, and his relationship with the rest of the (masculine side of) town points to many of the particularities of Sherwood Anderson's narrative style in *Winesburg, Ohio*. Here we have a heterodiegetic, omniscient narrator who moves from intersubjective thoughts and ideas that flutter around as the "talk of the town" to the private experiences of solitary characters, while simultaneously turning the seemingly specific and individual instances of Winesburg into generic examples about manhood - with an emphasis on *man*, especially in the heavily gendered passage above. It is not only Seth, but "most boys" who are not credited for their depth in the (narrator's) world, and the way in which Seth is "instinctively" greeted is in fact how "all men" greet the silent types.

What this description of Seth shows, furthermore, is the text's typical way of playing around with separations of talking and thinking, public and private, as well as the shared and the personal. The passage starts with a notion that the whole town - which, in the following sentence, is narrowed to the men of the town - seems to agree upon: "In Winesburg" Seth is "the deep one." At first, the focus is still on *speaking*: Seth was "called," he was the topic of "talk," but towards the end of the paragraph this public talking has turned into shared *thinking*, as the narrator comments on how Winesburg "thought him to be." Not only does the narrator hint at the possibility of intersubjective and shared thoughts, he also points towards the idea of others knowing and molding our minds. Does not the fact that Seth's "outlook on life and on himself" is affected by the town's talk and thinking suggest that his mind - rather than being subjective and internal - is the result of outer action and reflection from others?

And yet, the paragraph ends by completely dismantling any such ideas it may have humored the reader with mere seconds ago. By affirming that Seth was *not* what the town or even his

closest family members "thought him to be," the narration places Seth's true self as private and inward - something that is not easily accessible or summarizable in the town's collective.

With the same manner that the narrator moves Seth's subjective mind away from the townspeople, he also moves it closer to his own elevated position. Unlike the other characters, the narrator knows that the imagined depth of Seth's silence is an illusion, as no "great underlying purpose lay" behind it. Seth himself builds a contrast between public speech and his own silent doing and thinking when he ruminates the town's annoying habit to endlessly "talk and talk" while he simply wishes to "work and keep quiet. That's all I've got in my mind" (*WO*, 76). The narrator, however, is able to go even deeper into Seth's thinking:

He was depressed by the thought that he was not a part of the life in his own town, but the depression did not cut deeply *as he did not think* of himself as at fault. (*WO*, 74.)²³

Seth may be aware that his mind is preoccupied with two ideas - those of being quiet and working - but he is not aware of the shallowness of his thoughts and self-recognition. The narrator can, over and over again, point out what Seth himself does not know, realize, or be conscious of; he can comment on all that which is *not* going on in Seth's mind. Thus, the possibility for narrative empathy or mockery steps in as well. The town does not know Seth very well - but neither does Seth! - and hence the story and its character, titled "The Thinker," become cast in a tone of irony. The only agent doing much in-depth thinking here is the narrator.

Whether we see minds as inner subjectivity or outer action, as produced by the characters themselves or molded by the people around them, the minds of individual characters in *Winesburg, Ohio* are staggeringly unsocial. What Seth's story implies is that the one with access to these inner depths is the narrator, who not only knows what others do not understand of Seth, but even what Seth himself does not comprehend. And yet, despite this narratologically conventional and established hierarchical access to fictional minds, there seems to exist a form of resistance. On the background of the events and inner depictions, the townspeople of Winesburg continue to "talk and talk" (*WO*, 76), suggesting another form of thinking - one that is shared and public. With the help of cognitive narratology, the following sections will further delve into the types of issues that Seth's case points towards and that occur throughout my primary literature; from tensions between private thinking and public

²³ All italics used in citations throughout this work have been added by me, unless otherwise noted.

talking to the degrees of accessibility in fiction, and, furthermore, to the legitimacy of individual and social forms of knowledge.

2.2 Social Minds and Fictional Collectivity in *Winesburg, Ohio*

Already through its title, *Winesburg, Ohio* places emphasis on the milieu of the events it describes, and directs its reader to think about questions of community and collectivity. The text's collection of stories is grouped together under the name of the fictional small town in Ohio, creating a geographical link between the individual characters that each chapter represents. The extent to which this shared location is able to actually connect its citizens becomes, however, questionable as the text progresses.

Winesburg, Ohio has often been characterized and studied through its strong focus on individual interiority,²⁴ and the text does in fact, in each separate chapter, describe different characters and their private minds and thoughts. However, the narration also hosts a number of references to the collective thinking of the town that have not been studied previously. Even though critics of the text have been interested in the question of community and the townspeople's difficulty to communicate with one another,²⁵ these topics have not been researched through the aspect of fictional minds. The lack of narratological and linguistic analysis of the fictional - and especially social - minds in Anderson's text is in fact rather surprising, given the fact that consciousness representation is such a thoroughly commented and studied aspect of modernist writing in general.²⁶

²⁴ For instance, Arnold Weinstein (1993), in his study of Anderson's style, continuously notes how the text shares "one's unsharable inner life" (94) and gives "unforgettable instances of what thinking looks like" (96). Weinstein's ideas are, thus, quite idealistic and praising, and rely heavily on the idea of thinking as completely internal and private.

²⁵ For an analysis of *Winesburg, Ohio*'s communication as an illusion that produces relief and optimism in the teller, see Merva (2006). For a study of the text's community as a construction that helps the individuals to create fictions of their own selves, see Lindsay (1993).

²⁶ Modernist writing - and especially the modern novel - is often distinguished from other literary movements and previous traditions by its preoccupation with the inner life of characters. Modernism has been theorized as a movement away from omniscient and authorial narration and the realist tradition; as a turn towards subjectivity, fragmentation, and multiple points of view (e.g. Matz 2004). *Winesburg, Ohio* becomes an interesting case-study in this context: it is, along with its modernist contemporaries, heavily invested in the depiction of inner lives, making it a suitable text for the use and analysis of classical and cognitive narrative tools developed for consciousness presentation. Yet, it heavily diverges from typical modernist texts with its omniscient and authorial narrative style. I will examine this issue further in the fourth chapter.

This kind of new analysis proves to be crucial as I argue that through its narrative style, *Winesburg, Ohio* is able to produce and play around with a contrast between the private minds of individual characters and the social mind and shared thinking of a small community. On the one hand, there is a strong sense of isolation and loneliness in the lives of individual characters. The narrator, by moving from the private mind of one character to another, is able to show the reader the gaps of communication and understanding that take place in the townspeople's lives. In these portrayals, the unified small town community turns out to be a gathering of separate individuals who often end up misunderstanding and misinterpreting each other. This isolation is, of course, further emphasized through the text's formal style of consisting of separate short stories, each focusing on a different character. However, on the other hand, the third-person narrator often refers to the townspeople of Winesburg as a collective entity that thinks, feels, and judges individuals as a unified group; the townspeople are described as sharing social and cultural ideas and being connected to one another through something like intermental thinking. This contrast needs to be interpreted - and not only pointed out - in order to reach conclusions about what kind of potential such intermental thinking can have in a fictional text.

The point of this chapter is, thus, twofold: starting with Anderson's text and continuing to Elizabeth Strout's *Olive Kitteridge*, I will discuss the implications these texts have on our understanding of theories on social minds, while also filling a gap in previous studies of minds and community in the two texts, in order to get a better grasp of their poetics of collective experience. Therefore, my work not only draws from but also participates in and critiques the recent emergence of theories on social minds and intermental (or intersubjective) thinking in fiction. First started by Alan Palmer (2010) in his study *Social Minds in the Novel*,²⁷ this discussion has continued most diversely in *Style* 45.2 (2011), where Palmer received some heavy criticism from narratologists, cognitive scientists, and philosophers alike, as well as in *Narrative* 23.2 (2015), where the idea of intermental thinking was welcomed and broadened towards a historical study of narrative in different genres.²⁸

²⁷ As well as his summarizing article "Social Minds in Fiction and Criticism" (2011). In addition, Palmer (2004, 130-169) has discussed the concept more briefly in a chapter titled "The Social Mind" in his earlier book *Fictional Minds*.

²⁸ It is important to note that questions of collective and social topics in literature are not entirely new to narratology. As Maximilian Alders (2015, 115-116) points out in the "Introduction" to *Narrative's* special issue on social minds, ideas of communal voice, focalization, protagonists, and even genres have been previously studied especially in feminist-narratological scholarship, for example by Susan Lanser, Sandra Zagarell, and

The most important concept from this discussion for the work at hand is the idea of the "social mind," which requires some further explication. For Palmer (2010, 39), our understanding of minds can be separated into two different categories: the internal and the external perspectives. Whereas the internal perspective emphasizes the private, individual, inward, and lonely characteristics of thinking, the external perspective brings out the public, active, outward, and social aspects of the mind - the idea of a social mind. Palmer (2004, 212–215) himself has supported the externalist perspective already in his earlier work, and included to the concept of the "whole fictional mind" a range of actions from thinking to gestures and physical acts.²⁹ His main thesis is that literary scholarship has exclusively focused on the internal perspective of the mind, and thus too much emphasis has been placed on such concepts as free indirect discourse and stream of consciousness (Palmer 2010, 39–40). Due to this, the existence of social minds has not even been acknowledged in academic discussions even though, according to Palmer, they are, and have been, a central part of fictional storyworlds.

Even though social minds have been studied, for the most part, in terms of their appearance in the novel, *Winesburg, Ohio* shows how they can be used in the short story sequence to highlight the genre's ability to play with the contrast between the individual and the whole. In Anderson's text, furthermore, this interplay between the individual and the whole, between private and social minds, is used to push forth the conflict between the private and the public. As mentioned above, in addition to representing the minds of individual characters, the narration of *Winesburg, Ohio* also hosts a number of references to the collective thinking of the town; the individual minds seem to constitute a collective unity that shares opinions and ideas of different townspeople and their lives. The small town and its inhabitants are often referred to as a collective entity and as a shared, social mind:

Winesburg was proud of the hands of Wing Biddlebaum in the same spirit in which it was proud of Banker White's new stone house and Wesley Moyer's bay stallion, Tony Tip. (WO, 10.)

Pamela Bromberg. What Palmer brings into this narrative discussion of collectivity is the focus on mind and thinking.

Furthermore, the *Narrative* issue also hosts some critical and diachronic approaches to social minds. For example, Eva von Contzen (2015, 140-153) argues that there is no methodological use for the concept of social mind when studying medieval literature, where understanding of the self is more action-oriented than mind-oriented.

²⁹ More specifically, Palmer (2004, 213) sees thoughts and actions not as inseparable but as placed on a continuum, and stresses how instances of action descriptions in literature can also be regarded as thought report, since they provide important information about the functioning of characters' minds.

Louise and her husband did not live happily together and *everyone agreed* that she was to blame. (WO, 36.)

Joe Welling's love affair *set the town of Winesburg on edge*. When it began *everyone whispered* and *shook his head*. (WO, 56.)

There was something biting and forbidding in the character of Kate Swift. *Everyone felt it*. (WO, 88.)

The citizens of Winesburg form a unity that collectively thinks, evaluates, and responds to the events and people of the town. They not only mentally agree and take pride on specific topics, but even physically feel and act in union, whispering and shaking their heads.³⁰ According to Palmer's (2010, 48) typology, social minds fall into different categories according to their size and depth: from small to medium-sized and large intermental units, and from random "intermental encounters" that require a minimal level of intermental connectivity for conversations to take place, to actual "intermental minds" in which "so much successful intermental thought takes place that they can plausibly be considered as group minds." Interestingly enough, Palmer never explains how exactly the "successfulness" of intermental thinking can be defined. He does suggest, though, that the bigger the unit, the less emphasis is placed on individuals knowing exactly what another person is thinking, and more on people thinking the same way - whether aware of their shared thinking or not (Palmer 2010, 48). The small town communities I study both in *Winesburg, Ohio* and in my other primary texts fall under these medium-sized and large units where opinions and consensus are - at least seemingly - shared intermentally between citizens, as in the examples above.

Such a broad definition of the social mind, however, makes it applicable to any sort of thinking *or* action that takes place between more than one person, and my hope is to narrow the concept as I study what kinds of forms social minds take in my primary literature. And yet, once we move from typology towards interpretation, things get even trickier. Whose voice do we actually hear when fiction represents a social mind - the characters' or the narrator's? The possibility to interpret intermental thinking as "successful" in fiction is completely dependent on the reader's ability to trust the narrator, yet what if a text employs third person narration that is not entirely reliable? Furthermore, what do these suggested collective moments tell about fiction's ability to portray communities?

³⁰ According to the external perspective of the mind, both the mental and the physical instances in these examples would be placed on the thought-action continuum of manifestations of mind.

According to Palmer, fictional minds bring out the social and interactive characteristics of thinking that also take place in real life. In other words, he sees fictional minds as examples of real-life thinking, and thus the instances of Winesburg's social minds *would* function (but do not, as I argue later) as proof of not only the successful intermental thinking in Anderson's text, but as examples of how thinking occurs in an external and social way even in our own lives.

This idea of equating fictional minds with real minds - and seeing fictional minds as an example of how thinking occurs in reality - has gained popularity within literary studies in recent years as a result of the cognitive turn in narratology. Along with Alan Palmer, for example David Herman (2011) criticizes what he calls the "exceptionality thesis" of classical narratology: the idea that fictional minds are distinct from real ones. There are, however, many theorists who continue to argue for the importance of classical narrative studies and the distinctions of fiction. Brian McHale (2012, 119) has given a thorough account on why Dorrit Cohn's speech category model is still a valuable tool in the study of consciousness representation, and brought out how Palmer's theories on the "whole mind" pose a risk of subsuming everything in a text into "a manifestation of the fictional mind." Furthermore, Maria Mäkelä (2011b, 2013) has analyzed the many ways in which fictional minds - being textual, intentional, mediated, and constructed - are not just similar, but also different from our real minds,³¹ while Stefan Iversen (2013) has convincingly drawn from philosophy of mind to show the contradictions in Herman's own argumentation.³²

Palmer's theories have, however, raised criticism even within cognitive science. For example, Patrick Colm Hogan (2011, 244) has questioned the concept of social minds by stating that - despite our minds being "*social in some sense*"³³ - cognitive studies have provided no evidence for the existence of intermental thinking in real life in the manner that Palmer describes it. In fact, while associating with McHale, Mäkelä, and other "exceptionalists" (or rather "conventionalists"), I would argue that the problem in such cognitive narrative theories

³¹ In addition to these, unnatural narratologists have contributed to the discussion by searching for and analyzing postmodern and fantastical texts that speak for fiction's distinct and anti-verisimilar features. See, for example, Alber et al. (2010).

³² Herman's (2011, 18) thesis is based on what he terms the Accessibility Argument and the Mediation Argument. While agreeing with the former, Iversen (2013, 142) debunks the latter in his larger attempt to "question the validity and applicability of a unified theory of narrative based on similarities on a sense-making level of reception." In this way, Iversen goes against natural narratological theories by emphasizing the differences between reading fictionalized and non-fictionalized narratives.

³³ Italics in the original.

is the attempt to draw so many correlations between fiction and reality. Not only are the distinctions of fiction and textuality dismissed, but also heavy assumptions about cognitive mind theory are made. However, I do not want to devalue the idea of intermental thinking and I claim - unlike Palmer - that the concept of a social mind is precisely a *fictional* construction and therefore useful when studying narrative fiction.³⁴ Thus, in order to go towards the interpretation of literature, we need to put "cognitive" claims aside and move on to textual analysis.

The fictionality of social minds is evident in *Winesburg, Ohio*, as well; the collective thinking presented in the text is always separate from the descriptions of individual townspeople's thoughts. In the representation of a single character's mind, there is never any sort of evidence of their thoughts being connected to other inhabitants of Winesburg. The characters show no awareness of any sort of social mind in town; on the contrary, they often express complete isolation from everyone else around them.³⁵ It is not only a matter of not being able to know and interpret what the rest of the town is thinking, but even on a more basic level the characters do not share thoughts in the sense of agreeing with one another. When Winesburg is described to "agree" (*WO*, 36), "feel" (*WO*, 88), or "shake" (*WO*, 56) its head, it is the *narrator* talking and producing a collective cognition.³⁶ When characters' thoughts are analyzed separately, there is very little shared feeling or agreement on anything at all - and certainly no "successful" intermental thinking.

Thus, the town's social mind can be seen to function metaphorically as a narrative trick, instead of as a literal example of intermental thinking. The references to a collective mind emphasize the contrast between the apparent unity of the town and the isolation of each

³⁴ See also Manfred Jahn's (2011) argument against a literal understanding of the term in his article on the metaphorical origin of the social mind. Jahn sees social mind as "an aggregate of minds, hence a metaphorical "mind," projecting the ordinary meaning of mind to a new subject and a new context [--] [thus it is] compatible with the nature of metaphor in general, comparing something new (social mind) to something known (private mind)" (2011, 251-252).

This critique has been further echoed in Monika Fludernik's (2017, 155) recent article on we-narration and collective poetics, as she states that collective consciousness "even in factual narrative [--] is a fiction." Though collective mindsets "occur pervasively in historiography, everyday conversational narrative, and fiction", Fludernik states that they are "speculative attributions" of attitudes, opinions, and dispositions (155).

³⁵ Starting from the very first character, Wing Biddlebaum, who is introduced in "Hands" as someone who "did not think of himself as in any way a part of the life of the town where he had lived for twenty years" (*WO*, 9).

³⁶ Emma Kafalenos (2011) has made a similar point in her criticism of Palmer by asking what role the narrator has when fiction represents social minds. In her Master's thesis on the American suburb as a narrative and thematic frame, Emma Laakso (2014, 30) follows Kafalenos and considers instances where judgments and evaluations do not fall under characters' (private or social) minds but seem to belong to the narrator.

individual character. These references take place in several different chapters, yet in each chapter they serve a similar function. By showing up in the midst of descriptions of the private minds of individual characters, they only highlight the actual misrecognition and misunderstanding that take place in Winesburg, thus shattering any sense of collectivity and turning it into a mostly fictional construction. The social mind becomes a motif that - instead of actually tying together the inhabitants of Winesburg - artistically ties together individual chapters of the sequence by emphasizing the text's thematic of loneliness.

Furthermore, the instances of intermental thinking within the entire town can be interpreted to function as an ideological apparatus.³⁷ The appearance of the social mind is, in fact, quite normative; it not only describes but simultaneously produces a standard of what a Winesburg inhabitant is supposed to, for example, be proud or ashamed of ("Winesburg was proud of the hands [--] in the same sense if was proud of [--]" [WO, 10]) or what to disapprove of and whom to blame ("everyone agreed that she was to blame" [WO, 36]). The judging collective does not show up in the thoughts of individual characters because it is an ideological tool that does not really exist. Not everyone is simultaneously disturbed by and shaking their head at Joe's love affair - yet if a character does not identify with this statement, she is functioning against the set norm, behaving just as out of place as Joe.

Thus, in a way, the appearance of a social mind in fiction tells us less about how thinking works (a group of people in a fictional town who are represented as thinking of something in a similar way does not yet validate the idea of successful intermental thinking in real life) and more about how social norms and hegemonic discourses work. Producing the illusion of a collective through a social mind is even more influential because the act of feeling (pride, embarrassment, resentment, etcetera) can be understood as something that comes intuitively and instinctively, thus having associations of being *natural* instead of socially or artistically constructed. Therefore, it makes sense that the social mind shows up in instances where a character is behaving against set norms and ideas, creating a conflict between town and individual.³⁸ Such is the case of Elizabeth, the mother of the central character George Willard, while growing up in Winesburg: "Once she *startled the town* by putting on men's clothes and riding a bicycle down Main Street [--] *In her own mind* the tall dark girl had been in those

³⁷ Jan Alber (2015) has studied the ideological implications of social minds in 20th century we-narratives by comparing fictional and factual narratives.

³⁸ Palmer (2010, 61-62) makes a point that social minds come forth especially in such instances where an individual character goes against its shared values and norms, yet he draws ideological interpretations out of the range of his research (e.g. 2011, 219) and defines his work as non-ideological (e.g. 2011, 200).

days much confused" (WO, 20). Both Elizabeth and the town are confused, yet this doesn't create a mutual understanding between the two. The social mind of the town fails to recognize the inner struggles and motivations that drive young Elizabeth to her actions, while she also fails to consider how her actions may be seen in public opinion. What the appearance of the social mind (and its startled state) shows is simply the fact that Elizabeth was doing something that should be considered out of the ordinary; it validates the weirdness of her actions.

Thus, the social mind can function as a motif that puts characters back into their place. The idea of "everyone" (WO, e.g. 36, 88) else feeling or acting in a specific way has the power to assure an individual to abide - or be cast as different. Instead of giving a voice or any sort of narrative authority to the town and its characters, the social mind in *Winesburg, Ohio* functions more as a form of conforming and a strategy to explain away some of the loneliness of the townspeople; the characters do not act as "all of Winesburg" (WO, 65) expects, and thus become trapped in their state of loneliness. It is the covertly authoritative narrator who gets to decide what the social mind of Winesburg feels or thinks during particular times, and this produced social mind clashes heavily with the self-alienation and loneliness of the private minds of the text, thus undermining the town's ability to function as a healthy collective.

So far, I have analyzed the functioning of the social mind on the level of the entire town. Anderson's text, however, not only shows the contradictions between the public and private in the relationship between a town and its inhabitants (i.e. the large unit of intermental thinking), but it also explores the misunderstandings that take place in smaller units, for example in the relationships between individual characters:

Louise Bentley took John Hardy to be her lover. *That was not what she wanted but it was so the young man had interpreted her approach to him*, and so anxious was she to achieve something else that she made no resistance [--] All during the first year *Louise tried to make her husband understand the vague and intangible hunger [--] tried to talk of it, but always without success*. Filled with his own notions of love between men and women, *he did not listen but began to kiss her upon the lips*. That confused her so that in the end she did not want to be kissed. *She did not know what she wanted.* (WO, 49.)

Over and over again, the citizens of Winesburg fail to communicate; whether we study large-scale or small-scale intermental thinking, the text points to a lack of sharing and understanding. The social mind of the town turns out to be a metaphor and a trope, and meanwhile, in the thinking and communication between two characters, there is complete

misrecognition and misunderstanding of one another instead of any sense of connectivity. This conflict and source of tragedy is, of course, revealed to the reader through internal focalization. Often inner thoughts are left completely unspoken, but even when there is an attempt to communicate one's interiority, as in the case of Louise Bentley, it fails and ends up altering one's entire life in tragic ways. The scene between Louise and John is a perfect example of the differences between fictional and real minds; the characters of *Winesburg* do not have access to one another's interiority and can only attempt to understand and "interpret" (*WO*, 49) each other's talk and gestures. In this way, their situation is similar to our own real-life communication. Meanwhile, the reader has some kind of an access to these fictional minds through the narrator. As a fictional text, *Winesburg, Ohio* is able to give us access to someone else's interiority and reveal the miscommunication that takes place in the characters' lives. This access brings up ethical implications as well; whose interiority gets to be shown, and is internal focalization in this case a chance for the characters to be heard, or an intrusion of their privacy?

Before turning to the ethical questions the narrative style poses later on in this work, it is important to further consider the private minds of *Winesburg, Ohio*, as well as compare them to both private and intermental thinking in *Olive Kitteridge*. The ending of the scene between Louise and John implies a significant shift that happens throughout Anderson's text. From a disconnect between the social and the private, and from the misunderstanding of the other, *Winesburg, Ohio* moves over and over again to emphasize a misunderstanding of the self. What is significant in the end is that Louise didn't even know herself "what she wanted" (*WO*, 49). The real modernist tragedy and issue at hand becomes that of self-recognition: how could there be a sense of collective experience and connection to others in the absence of true recognition of one's self?

2.3 Private Minds and Surface-Level Interiority in *Winesburg, Ohio*

Winesburg, Ohio not only represents social and private thinking, it also creates a poetics of its own about the significance of mind representation in literature. Anderson's text does not simply have a strong focus on descriptions of interiority, it also explicitly addresses the importance of knowing someone else's thoughts through instances in the narrator's commentary and the characters' dialogue:

[Narrator explains to the reader:] The thing to get at is what the writer, or the young thing within the writer, *was thinking about*. (WO, 5.)

[Kate to George Willard on writing:] The thing to learn is to *know what people are thinking about*, not what they say. (WO, 90.)

What is significant here is the connection that is made between mind reading, authorship, and readership. In order for George Willard to become a talented writer, his former teacher, Kate Swift, advises him to know what others are thinking. Similarly, the narrator needs to guide his reader to focus on the characters' thoughts in order to understand the "thing" about his story. Following the narrator's own logic and metafictional commentary, does *Winesburg, Ohio*, then - with a major part of its narrative consisting of consciousness representation - become an example of a successful text?

As mentioned earlier, in classical narratology fictional minds have been studied linguistically with the help of the speech category model that consists of direct, indirect, and free indirect discourse.³⁹ Dorrit Cohn's (1978, 116–17) seminal works have studied the ways in which narrators often gradually shift focus and zoom closer into a character's consciousness through these different modes. Direct discourse has been traditionally understood to show the most verbal and self-aware thoughts of a character in her own words, whereas with indirect discourse the narrator can not only "order and explain a character's conscious thoughts better than the character himself," but also "effectively articulate a psychic life that remains un verbalized, penumbral, or obscure" (Cohn 1978, 46). And, ultimately, free indirect discourse has been theorized through its ability to blur the lines between a narrator's and a character's voice while probing hidden and repressed layers of consciousness and heightening the possibility for narrative empathy or irony.⁴⁰

³⁹ When discussing the speech categories, Cohn (1978, 104–105) herself uses the terms "quoted monologue," "psycho-narration," and "narrated monologue," but, for clarity's sake, I will use the linguistic terms of direct, indirect, and free indirect discourse.

⁴⁰ The speech category model has later received much revision and re-evaluation, most recently by scholars such as Alan Palmer, Laura Karttunen, and Maria Mäkelä. Whereas Cohn (1978, 107) emphasizes free indirect discourse as "at once a more complex and a more flexible technique for rendering consciousness than the rival techniques," Palmer (2005, 604) has focused on expanding theories around indirect discourse (which he names "thought report"), while arguing it to be "the most flexible and the most versatile category." In her work on the hypothetical in literature, Karttunen (2015, 54) examines how direct discourse has a tradition of being misunderstood because of the written language bias in Western philosophy, and she brings out how direct speech can, in fact, "involve no directness, no speech, and no representation." Meanwhile, Mäkelä (2011a, 2011b) has extensively analyzed free indirect discourse, for example through its ability to give narrative agency to figural voices.

Although Anderson's focus on interiority has often been noted in criticism on *Winesburg, Ohio*, the different levels of thinking and the depth of this interior representation haven't received much analysis. Applying Cohn's speech category model can be useful here, because it brings out what I think is perhaps most notable about the representation of minds in the text; namely, the extremely linear, coherent, verbal, and almost surface-level style in which mental life and thinking are described. This can be seen in the way characters' private thoughts are almost always expressed in direct discourse. Often there is a movement and zoom between direct and indirect, but never to free indirect discourse:

"This is as it should be," she [Helen] thought. "This boy is not a boy at all, but a strong, purposeful man." Certain vague desires that had been invading her body were swept away and she sat up very straight on the bench. (WO, 76.)

[Louise was] determined to find him and tell him that she wanted him to come close to her, to hold her in his arms, to tell her of his thoughts and dreams and to listen while she told him her thoughts and dreams. *"In the darkness it will be easier to say things," she whispered to herself. (WO, 47.)*

In the first quote, Helen White's internal focalization takes place completely in direct discourse; the narrator shows the self-monitored, self-aware thoughts that Helen is using to get rid of any "vague desires" (WO, 76) she isn't able to deal with consciously. The function of these extremely conscious thoughts is similar to the function of the whispers Louise uses to reassure herself in the second quote. The whispers of these female figures - whether said out loud or repeated only in their minds - are a way to repress the difficult and conflicted feelings that are only hinted at but never represented in the narration itself. The use of direct discourse points at something being buried even deeper within, but as much as the characters repress the mess in their lives, so does the text, as well.

The characters' direct discourse is marked with clear linguistic and grammatical cues (explicit quotation signals, change of verb tense from past to present and change of person from third to first) and thus explicitly separated from the narrator's voice which could - through narrative mediation in the form of indirect discourse - further explain the vague desires and other incomprehensible aspects of the characters' minds. Yet the narrator does not go deep in these interventions; he merely alludes towards that which is repressed. Cohn (1978, 68) notes how such a rapid shuttle between direct and indirect modes can create dissonance (or, depending on the context, harmony) between narrating and figural voices: "the mere fact that a narrator stops to quote a figural consciousness introduces a measure of disparity." In *Winesburg, Ohio*

the use of these two modes increases the distance between the narrator and the characters and again points towards the narrator's heightened position as the mind-reader of Winesburg. But, most importantly, by alternating between direct and indirect discourses, and by not showing the messes and unorganized streams of (un)consciousness of the characters, the narrator only reveals what the citizens of Winesburg allow to reveal to themselves. Expressing thoughts in a direct, verbal, and self-aware way is a mode of self-preservation here; language becomes a means to make life straight within one's own head and an attempt to hide away all the actual misunderstanding and miscommunication that take place between characters and within each character's mind.

We can see the same pattern repeat, for example, in the story of George Willard's mother:

The communion between George Willard and his mother was *outwardly* a formal thing without meaning. (*WO*, 17.)

The habit in him, she felt, strengthened the *secret bond* that existed between them. A thousand times *she had whispered to herself* of the matter. "He is groping about, trying to find himself," she thought. (*WO*, 18.)

Silence fell upon the room where the boy and woman sat together. *Again*, as on the other evenings, *they were embarrassed*. (*WO*, 21.)

George's mother believes there is a "secret bond" (*WO*, 18) between herself and her son that others are not aware of. The narrator in fact supports this interpretative frame in the beginning of the chapter by mentioning how their relationship may "outwardly" (*WO*, 17) seem to be without meaning - implying that this is not the case when looked at from the inside. Thus, the narrator favors the internal at the expense of the external again, as in the case of Seth's character earlier. Yet the narrator's description soon takes an ironic turn when the reader is shown the contrast between the mother's interpretations, expressed once again in direct discourse and whispers, and the actual physical awkwardness of her encounters with George. If there truly is a deep connection between the two, that bond manifests itself only in the mother's thoughts that are, like elsewhere in the text, extremely self-monitored, self-aware, surface-level, and, ultimately, misinformed. While the mother continues to (convince herself to) believe in the secret bond with her son, the narrator hints at a different interpretation behind her back; their time together is characterized with "silence" and "embarrassment" and their relationship is described as that between "boy and woman" (*WO*, 21), not mother and son. Although the unconscious layers of the mother's mind are not revealed, the narrator's descriptions, contrasted with the mother's direct thoughts, reveal the depth - or rather lack of depth - with which she is able to scrutinize her own thoughts, let alone the thoughts of others.

The characters in *Winesburg, Ohio* seem to have repressed, hidden, and constructed their thoughts to the point of almost complete misunderstanding and misrecognition of the self; all that is left are the self-monitored thoughts expressed in direct discourse. Inner drives and conflicts are hidden away. What the descriptions of fictional minds in Anderson's text ultimately show is in fact not a character's deep consciousness but the fabrication that is left after attempts to manipulate one's thinking.⁴¹ There are occasional moments of indirect discourse which point at something deeper and more authentic, yet those moments are few, brief, and expressed in the narrator's words; what the reader - and characters - are ultimately left with, are the moments of misunderstanding of the self, represented first and foremost through direct discourse. Under these circumstances, moments of collective understanding and thinking become rare; in the end it seems that geographical proximity is the only thing connecting the characters of Winesburg to one another.

2.4 Internal or External Minds? The Conflicts of Mind-Building in *Olive Kitteridge*

I have, perhaps paradoxically, started the inquiry into the poetics of collective experience from a text that seems to undermine the possibility for any such feelings, and rather points at the absence of community. By bringing in Elizabeth Strout's *Olive Kitteridge* to the discussion, I will, through a comparative method, continue the analysis of collectivity with a different case study and new perspectives. The point is to ask how similar poetic strategies of social and private minds function in a text that is - through its form, setting, and style - so akin to *Winesburg, Ohio*, yet written nearly a century later.

Olive Kitteridge has been defined by some critics as a novel in stories, because it wavers somewhere between the genres of the novel and the short story sequence. The text is narrated by a third person omniscient narrator who describes different people and events in the fictional coastal town of Crosby, Maine. In the center of the text is the character of Olive

⁴¹ Here, I have chosen examples from chapters focusing on women, but I would like to note that the internal focalization of male and female characters in *Winesburg, Ohio* is very similar. Regardless of gender, fictional minds are represented through direct (and indirect) discourse, and both female and male interiorities are repressed and self-monitored by the characters themselves. Lack of self-recognition as analyzed here can be also found, for example, in the stories focusing on Jesse Bentley, Elmer Cowley, and the Reverend Curtis Hartman. Although lack of self-recognition is similar for male and female citizens, the text does seem to emphasize that a lack of recognizing the other is a specific problem *between* men and women - in the relationships between a man and a woman.

Kitteridge, a retired teacher, who functions as a link between the separate stories of the text by always being present in one form or another. Either she is the main character and focalizer of a story, or simply a passer-by in the lives and thoughts of other citizens.

Like *Winesburg, Ohio*, so does Strout's text concentrate on offering insights into the lives of different townspeople. Even though the majority of narration focuses on the inner lives of these characters through private internal focalization, there are - like in Anderson's text - appearances of social minds, as well:

Still, after a year had gone by, people in this small New England coastal town of Crosby agreed: Both Kitteridges were changed by the event. (*OK*, 104.)

And while Olive Kitteridge had *never* in anyone's memory felt inclined to be affable, or even polite, she seemed less so now as this particular June rolled around. (*OK*, 104.)

People thought the Larkin couple would move after what happened. (*OK*, 140.)

Remind *me* never to have shock treatments in Portland, people said. (*OK*, 141.)

Had the Larkins stopped going to visit their son? Nobody knew [--] sometimes people driving past the house [--] even turned their heads away, not wanting to be reminded of what could happen to a family that had seemed as pretty and fresh as blueberry pie. (*OK*, 141.)⁴²

When moving on to the analysis of these minds, however, the similarities between the two texts come to a halt. The references to people in Crosby thinking or acting intermentally take place quite seldom: the instances of social minds in *Olive Kitteridge* condense into few specific chapters, instead of occurring in several stories in the dispersed style of Anderson's text. These couple chapters are, furthermore, distinct from the rest of the text through their narrative style that strongly resembles oral storytelling. The first two quotes come from a story that describes Olive and her husband Henry's experience being trapped as hostages in a hospital, while the other two describe the Larkin family's sink into madness and murder. Whereas the majority of *Olive Kitteridge's* narration focuses on the private, mundane, and even boring experiences of individuals, these two chapters are structured around events that are boundary-breaking and clearly out of the ordinary. The stories that feature the town of Crosby as a collective unit are more tellable, and in both cases, the appearance of the social mind happens right in the beginning of the chapter, thus creating a frame of gossip and drawing in the reader-listener's attention.

⁴² Italics in these quotes in the original text.

Thus, the social mind motif can be analyzed again as a narrative tool, but this time as a summarizing device of the talking and gossiping of the town that simultaneously heightens the newsworthiness of the story at hand. The mystery of the Larkin family becomes even more interesting because it affects so many people - making townspeople not only gossip but physically "turn their heads away" (*OK*, 141) to avoid strong emotional responses. Whereas the social mind in *Winesburg, Ohio* contrasts a single character's solitude with the (fake) communal sense of the entire town, in Strout's text it rather thematizes how storytelling functions; how an incident turns into a tellable story, how the act of storytelling and gossiping can unite a group of people, and how that group's (imagined or told) collective response to an incident heightens the significance of the story.

This interpretation is, of course, a much more naturalizing reading of the social mind concept. Instead of understanding the quotes as examples of actual intermental thinking, they become narratorial summaries of public talking. At the same time, the appearance of this collective talk/think and the boundary-breaking quality of the stories relates back to the idea of transgressing norms. What makes the events so tellable is the fact that something goes against seemingly shared expectations and set rules; thus, the idea of a collective unity needs to be raised again in the stories. However, even though the social mind motif can again have the potential to normalize what is and is not acceptable behavior, the collective experience of Crosby is quite different from the one analyzed in *Winesburg*.

Not only are the occurrences of the social mind less harsh and criticizing in Strout's text, they are also less totalizing than the ones in Anderson's sequence of stories. There is quite a significant evaluative difference between, on the one hand, the people of Crosby agreeing that the Kitterridges "were changed" (*OK*, 104) by an event, or assuming that the Larkins would "move away" (*OK*, 140), and, on the other hand, the town of *Winesburg* agreeing that Louise Bentley "was to be blamed" (*WO*, 36) for her family's unhappiness, or experiencing Joe Welling's affair as unacceptable (*WO*, 56). The collective voice in Crosby is less judgmental; even when Olive is described as never being affable or polite, it is presented in a matter-of-fact style - she simply hasn't been "inclined" (*OK*, 104) towards such characteristics. Linguistic choices become critical here: whereas the narrator in *Winesburg, Ohio* unifies the entire populace under the totality of "the town of *Winesburg*" (*WO*, 56), "all of *Winesburg*" (*WO*, 65) or "everyone" (*WO*, e.g. 36, 88) being proud, ashamed, or condemning of someone's

actions, Strout's text most often refers to "people" (*OK*, 140–141) giving space for disagreement and variance amongst citizens.

In addition, *Olive Kitteridge* shows how the social mind can be presented to stem more from the characters themselves - their actual talk - than simply be determined or invented by a narrator. In Strout's text the townspeople occasionally even show awareness of their collective voice through dialogue, for example when Cynthia Bibber legitimizes her worry of the Kitteridges on grounds of the town's shared thinking: "*People* have noticed a change in Henry [--] and you, too" (*OK*, 107). Even more importantly, the narrator in Strout's text does not evaluate or comment on the accuracy of the town's shared thinking/talking, which gets us back to the issue of the possible power of such shared action. Unlike in *Winesburg, Ohio*, in *Olive Kitteridge* the social mind has the potential to produce a different kind of voice for the characters - one that is shared and public.

Now the question remains, is this social voice to be trusted, and should it even be discussed as "mind" and "thinking" if we read it as a narratorial summary of public talking? I will approach these issues by switching, as with Anderson's text, from the study of social minds to an analysis of private minds, this time through a study of Olive's character. In addition to linking specific stories of the text to the power of gossip and oral storytelling, the social mind in *Olive Kitteridge* also points towards the theme of private and public interpretations of Olive's character, as well as the internal and external aspects of her mind. As the first two appearances of the social mind suggest, the town has a collective interest in Olive's character - in what kind of a person she is and how she has changed (*OK*, 104) - and in addition to these two examples of the social mind interpreting Olive, there are several instances throughout the text where individual townspeople produce ideas of Olive in their private minds.

In fact, Olive's character is constructed to the reader through a mixture of outer and inner sources. The focus is again on the internal; just as most of the text consists of internal focalization of private minds, with some appearances of social minds, so does the majority of descriptions of Olive happen through her private perspective, mixed with some outsider accounts of her. In fact, when the reader first gets to see Olive, this happens through the eyes of other townspeople surveying her. Because the narrator moves from one focalizer to another throughout the chapters, the reader produces an understanding of Olive by combining information from these different points of view. Thus, the text creates a contrast between

Olive's own understanding of herself and the townspeople's image of her; between how an image of Olive is produced in her own mind, and how others read Olive and her behavior.

At times, these two points of view support and strengthen one another: for example both internal and external accounts of Olive bring out Olive's straightforward and stubborn nature. Another remarkable detail is the amount of attention both Olive and the townspeople pay to her large appearances; many of the chapters describe how Olive fills an entire space or becomes comparable to animals and masculinity due to her looks:

Olive Kitteridge stood in the doorway to the dining room, almost filling the space up. (*OK*, 94.)

Mrs. Kitteridge was shouting [--] Waving her arms like a huge seagull. (*OK*, 46.)

[Olive's] shoulders rolled up behind her neck, and her wrists and hands seemed to become the size of a man's. (*OK*, 62.)

[--] and she felt like a big fat field mouse [--]. (*OK*, 123.)

She felt like a whale, imagining her large back from his eyes. (*OK*, 261.)

Out of these examples the first two describe Olive from the point of view of other individual Crosby citizens, whereas the latter three are from the internal focalization of Olive. Even though both the inner and outer viewpoints highlight her size and animal-likeness, the quotes host a different kind of atmosphere and evaluation. The descriptions from the townspeople emphasize how Olive cannot *not* be seen and how she, because of her physical size, seems to differ from the other characters while simultaneously penetrating into their lives. In contrast, in Olive's own thoughts the animal similes are exaggaratingly negative and critical; she not only sees herself as big but also as "fat" (*OK*, 123) and repulsive. In her own mind, Olive grows into the size of a man and imagines others to picture her as appalling: "imagining her large back *from his eyes*" (*OK*, 261). Olive's negative self-image is further foregrounded by the fact that she considers her outer appearances in situations where she feels insecurity and unease: in her son's wedding, when remembering tragic events, or when pondering what others think of her.

In fact, the most significant conflicts in the text take place when both Olive and the reader have to face the contradictions between these inner and outer viewpoints. In the talk and thoughts of many townspeople, Olive is represented as somewhat intimidating; she is self-confident to the point of becoming a threat to others: "But she'd say these weird things, very powerfully. That's partly why kids were scared of her" (*OK*, 195). In addition, these

descriptions often accentuate Olive's lack of friendliness and politeness, which could already be seen in the example of the town's public social mind: "And while Olive Kitteridge had *never* in anyone's memory felt inclined to be affable, or even polite, she seemed less so now as this particular June rolled around" (*OK*, 104).⁴³ In this way, the social mind of town brings forth similar interpretations as individual Crosby citizens when they privately characterize Olive. On the other hand, Olive is at times also seen as caring and helpful; she is for example described comforting an anorexic girl (*OK*, 96) and a recently widowed woman (*OK*, 179–180). In stark contrast to the characterizations of Olive from other townspeople's viewpoints, Olive's own internal focalization brings forth a lack of self-confidence and feelings of alienation, panic, and even mistreatment. The collision of these two points of view lead Olive to mentally break down towards the end of the text when she hears from her son his true thoughts of her:

[Olive's son, Christopher:] 'But you can make people feel terrible. You made Daddy feel terrible [--] I'm not going to be ruled by my fear of you, Mom' [--]
 [Olive thinks:] Fear of her? How could anyone be afraid of her? She was the one who was afraid! (*OK*, 210.)

Olive's internal focalization highlights fear and defenselessness, and she often repeats (to herself) how much she has, despite everything, loved her son and worked for her family. These experiences crash with Christopher's account of Olive as a threatening tyrant, thus raising the question of whether the 'true' Olive is best reached through all the different images and descriptions produced in the minds and conversations of other townspeople, or whether Olive is the version that readers have access to through the heterodiegetic narrator describing Olive's own interiority. I argue that *Olive Kitteridge* - unlike *Winesburg, Ohio* - momentarily brings forth the idea that perhaps it is precisely outsiders, not ourselves, who can best understand who we are.

Phenomenological and enactivist branches of cognitive sciences and philosophy of mind - more precisely second generation or 4E approaches - argue that minds are in fact embodied, embedded, enactive and extended. Thus, minds can also be considered to be accessible, instead of hidden in the manner of Cartesian dualist thinking, which is now largely considered outdated.⁴⁴ Cognitive narratologists base their arguments precisely on these ideas, yet the

⁴³ Italics in this quote in the original text.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Iversen's (2013) illuminating discussion of the different branches of cognitive sciences and their relation to the accessibility arguments in studies of fiction and sense-making. Iversen draws partly from

criticism I present here is not targeted towards debunking cognitive science's results, but rather the consequences they have for the analysis of literature. For, as my reading of Anderson's and Strout's texts has shown, it is important to note the *degrees* of accessibility possible in fiction. I started this chapter with an analysis of Seth Richmond's "Thinker" character in *Winesburg, Ohio* and the question of others having the ability to know and mold our minds - a possibility that the narrator of the text continuously questions and undermines. While Anderson's text seems very skeptical of any accessibility to others' thinking - except in the form of artistry and creative writing - *Olive Kitteridge* presents both the outsider, shared and somewhat public side of Olive - that which is clearly accessible to other townspeople - side by side with the inner and private version she herself produces - which is only accessible to the reader through a third person narrator. In Strout's text the characters' minds are shaped in a social way, yet they have their internal characteristic in the sense that they host private (non-)communication that can only be presented to the reader of a fictional text.

Instead of promoting either an internalist or an externalist understanding of self, *Olive Kitteridge* poses a question regarding whose version of Olive is to be trusted. Can the outsiders' views of Olive, produced also in the shared talking of the town, construct a more accurate version of her than her own experience? The social thinking/talking in *Olive Kitteridge* points towards the potential of forming communal and functional understandings of others, as well as towards the idea that Olive's problem is not so much the inaccessibility and secrecy of her mind, as is her poor ability to reflect from others how she behaves and who she is. Whereas *Winesburg, Ohio* suggests that the real modernist tragedy is that of self-recognition - and most importantly a lack of it - leading to a loss of collective belonging and experience, *Olive Kitteridge* seems to present a new solution to the problem: perhaps others know you better than you do, and maybe the answer lies outside of your own head.

Continuing the aforementioned post-Cartesian theories and returning to the issue of social minds, cognitive studies have found interesting support for the embodied and shared nature of our thinking, not just connecting our cognition and meaning construction to our own bodies and physicality,⁴⁵ but also connecting our ability to come up with good ideas and solutions to group-thinking. The latter refers to the idea discussed as "wisdom of crowds," which suggests that groups may achieve increased decision accuracy in comparison to individuals, since

Marco Caracciolo's (e.g. 2012, 2014) work, which presents a comprehensive take on the field of enactivism and its implications for narrative theory, with a focus on how readers can experience narratives.

⁴⁵ E.g. Lakoff & Johnson (1999).

"individual errors in judgment tend to cancel out when imperfect individual estimates are pooled into a consensus choice, leading to a collective decision that is improved" (Albert & Couzin 2014).⁴⁶ My intention here is not to take extensive interdisciplinary jumps from theories within other sciences to the interpretation of characters in fictional texts, but rather to clarify what some of cognitive studies' current ideas on thinking, with concepts such as the wisdom of crowds, do *not* mean for textual analysis. For they do not validate Palmer's "cognitive" ideas on literal intersubjective thinking or having a shared social mind. Quite contrarily, they suggest that groups can reach better conclusions than individuals alone - either, as earlier versions of such studies implied, when their solutions are anonymously pooled together, or, as some of the more recent research on the topic shows, when they are weighed among group members (Albert & Couzin 2014). The theories on shared decision-making - if cognitive studies really need to be applied to textual analysis - strengthen what my literary interpretation already showed: *Olive Kitteridge* does not make the case that Crosby citizens are capable of intermentally pondering and producing Olive, thus validating the existence of social minds, nor that they have easy access to one another's thinking.

What takes place in Crosby is, rather, the representation and construction of Olive from multiple individual points of view, the circulation of these representations orally in gossipy storytelling contexts, and thus the strengthening of specific frames of understanding Olive. As a result, it is as if the sum of all the different versions of Olive become better than any individual or separate one - even that of Olive's own internal account. But there is hardly anything cognitively groundbreaking in such a literary representation; through a narrator using multiple focalizers and summarizing their views, the text is able to show Olive as a complex character with her own contradictions and paradoxes.

Next (and lastly), it is time to draw together theoretical conclusions on the following issues: what do the literary interpretations presented in this chapter mean in terms of cognitive applications to narrative theory, how should the concept of the social mind be defined, and does it work as a poetic device in constructing collectivity? To begin with, the core issue in the adaptation of cognitive ideas on shared and extended thinking is a common confusion of

⁴⁶ This particular study counters the previous consensus within wisdom of crowd theory that a group's decision-making is enhanced the more individuals have input and instead suggests that small groups can maximize decision accuracy. It is necessary to point out, however, that these studies, despite looking at what they name "complex environments" (e.g. Albert & Couzin 2014) focus on quite survivalist group tasks such as deciding on a suitable food patch. The question becomes, then, how to employ such cognitive results when moving from this sort of analysis to the interpretation of complex mind construction in narrative fiction?

terms. When Palmer defines social minds as ranging from a minimal level of intermental connectivity for conversations to take place, to people unknowingly having the same thought or opinion, and, furthermore, to actual and literal intermental thinking between people, he is taking big leaps to bridge together different cognitive branches and understandings of thinking. Having a mind is equated not only with imagining that others have a mind (so called Theory of Mind, see e.g. Hutto's [2011] critique) and ascribing specific thoughts and feelings behind external actions (mindreading or mental state attribution, see Hyvärinen 2015), but also with our minds being somehow connected to one another (intermental thinking and social mind).⁴⁷ As noted before, through such a definition the concept of the social mind becomes applicable to any sort of thinking or action that takes place between more than one person. In fact, even a character like Olive thinking alone could be an example of a social mind, since there is a chance she is having the same thought as someone else in Crosby. Similarly, the isolated private minds analyzed in *Winesburg, Ohio* would in fact be social, since the female characters are represented as figuring out their own thoughts in relation to others around them.

Thus, my previous analysis that separates private and social minds in fictional texts would not work, because, under these problematic conditions, the social mind would be the only kind of mind there is. And this is exactly where the issue lies for literary interpretation. Even if we accept the externalist, embodied, and social perspective of thinking - and, even more importantly, if we see the fictional texts we study to promote or discuss such an understanding - the term "social mind" loses its significance as an analytical tool if all depictions of minds and thinking in fiction are understood through it and as it. For, if the concept of an individual character's (private) mind vanishes, it becomes difficult to analyze the nuances of voice in fiction. I argue that individual characters' mind guessing or mental state attribution on others may point towards the externalist side of thinking, but there is no use in calling such cases social minds.

Rather, I would save the term for the analysis of such instances and sentences in which a collective or a group of characters are narrated to think and share feelings in union, as I have done here both with *Winesburg, Ohio* ("Joe Welling's love affair set the town of Winesburg on edge" [WO, 56]) and with *Olive Kitteridge* ("people in this small New England coastal

⁴⁷ Natalya Bekhta (2017, 171), in her recent discussion on we-narratives, has also paid attention to the vague and broad use of the word "mind" in Palmer's theory and argues, furthermore, that mental functioning should be considered as only one aspect of representing collectivities in narratives.

town of Crosby agreed" [OK, 104]). Such instances can, furthermore, be separately interpreted for example in terms of their source (are they narratorial invention or representations of the actual characters' voices?) and type (should they be understood as instances of (fictional) intermental thinking, or public talking?). Such a separation of private and social minds also helps us better understand the contrasts that these texts produce between individual and collective experience, as well as the successes and failures of intersubjective communication, whether it takes place as talk, thought, gestures, or actions.

This leads me to the second theoretical point I want to make. The difference between fiction and real life is precisely that of being able to determine the successfulness of characters knowing and understanding one another. Whereas Palmer (2010, 48) claims that we can talk of actual intermental minds in real life and in fiction whenever a lot of "successful intermental thought takes place," Anderson's and Strout's texts demonstrate how only in fiction, through a narrator who tells us so, is it even possible for us to interpret whether this social thinking can be said to succeed at all; whether the characters on a more basic level have similar thoughts, or whether, on a much more nuanced level, they can go so far as to reading and understanding each other well. The sad cases of Winesburg show how very little access we have to knowing how well the social and interactive construction of minds - both of our own and those of others - can go. The individual citizens, from Louise Bentley to Elizabeth Willard, have little idea how poorly they read each other - and, meanwhile, the narrator hovering above it all can reveal to the reader the gaps of understanding and communication.

Thus, here I agree with Emma Kafalenos's (2011) critique of Palmer in terms of the epistemological distinction of fiction. Following Hamburger, Cohn, and Genette, Kafalenos states how "[i]n our world, when we sense that we 'know' what someone else is thinking, we have no way to determine whether we are correct [--] Only in fiction can we know what groups think, and for the same reason that we can know what characters in fiction think: a heterodiegetic narrator tells us" (Kafalenos 2011, 256–257). However, Kafalenos's tone becomes quite dismissive towards figural voices as she continues to explain how important it is for readers to make a distinction between what is "*fact* (because a performative narrator tells us) and what is *merely* a character's *opinion*" (2011, 256). Even though I agree with the importance of interpreting between narratorial and figural voices and their different epistemological positions in fiction, it is slightly questionable (and perhaps intentionally simplified in Kafalenos's response to Palmer) to reduce a character's voice to something

lesser: to merely an "opinion" in comparison to the "facts" (Kafalenos 2011, 256) of the heterodiegetic narrator. Cannot characters sometimes be trusted more than their narrator? And, of course, narrators can intentionally guide their readers to either dismiss their characters' voices as mere opinions, like in *Winesburg, Ohio*, or give space to them, as in *Olive Kitteridge*.

In fact, perhaps the most crucial difference in these two texts and their representation of collective thinking and talking is the positioning of and the evaluation performed by the heterodiegetic narrators. After introducing Seth Richmond's character in *Winesburg, Ohio* through the small town's social mind, the narrator explicitly states how Seth was not what the town thought him to be. Such dismissal of the town's collective opinion is not conspicuous, but takes place too often to go completely without notice:

The Richmond house was built of limestone, and, although *it was said in the village to have become run down*, had *in reality* grown more beautiful with every passing year. (WO, 70.)

What we have already seen in the earlier examples of the social mind in *Winesburg, Ohio* is once again repeated here with the description of the Richmond house; the narrator presents the town's collective thought, only to discard it and counter it with how things were "in reality" (WO, 70) - in the reality and point of view of the heterodiegetic narrator, who can see not only facts, but also make correct aesthetic judgments, instead of producing mere figural opinions. In contrast, the narrator of *Olive Kitteridge* does not undermine or comment on the correctness of the town's collective thoughts and opinions as she presents them. The reader is given contrasting views on Olive's character throughout the text, yet the narrator, rather than taking an explicit side on whether the town is able to understand Olive or not, leaves the interpretation for the reader.

The role and style of the narrator is also the reason why, despite their structural and storyworld-related similarities, Anderson's and Strout's texts bring out different interpretations on collective experience, even when using similar poetic strategies such as the social mind. In *Winesburg, Ohio* the possibility for collectivity becomes undermined through a focus on private minds, loneliness, and predominantly unsuccessful communication. Contrasted with these, the glimpses of social minds only turn into narrative tricks and metaphors of a lack of true solidarity. Meanwhile, *Olive Kitteridge* shows more success in intersubjective communication, and the social mind trope is used to push forth a connection townspeople

have through gossip and oral storytelling. Yet even here we cannot talk of "success" without asking for *whom* it is successful. The social mind produces a sense of community within Crosby citizens, yet the reader is left quite alone with the mentally collapsing Olive once she has to face these shared and socially circulated accounts of her.

3 Poetics II: Gender and Embodiment in Character Roles

3.1 Singular Characters Uniting Communities and Story Sequences

Behind her she heard the door open, felt the momentary chill, saw the tinsel on the tree sway, and heard *the loud voice* of Olive Kitteridge say, "Too damn bad. I like the cold." (*OK*, 51.)

"Small world," Mrs. Lydia said again, tugging at her ear with her gloved hand again, not looking at Jane this time, just looking up the stairs at the balcony. Olive Kitteridge was moving through the crowd of people. *Taller than most, her head was visible as she seemed to say* something to her husband, Henry, who nodded, an expression of suppressed mirth on his face. "Better get back in there," said Bob, nodding toward the inside of the church, touching Jane's elbow. (*OK*, 133.)

In Main Street no one was abroad but Hop Higgins the night watchman and in the whole town *no one was awake but* the watchman and young George Willard, who sat in the office of the Winesburg Eagle trying to write a story. (*WO*, 84.)

In all of Winesburg there was *but one person* who knew the story of the thing that had made ugly the person and the character of Wash Williams. He once told the story to George Willard and the telling of the tale came about in this way. (*WO*, 65.)

It is quite fascinating how even in short story sequences describing small town communities, in which the main characters change and focalizers vary from one story to the next, it is possible for a single character to gain a more central position than the rest, both within the community and in its textual representations. *Olive Kitteridge* - already through its title - places the "loud" (51), "tall" (133) and "visible" (133) Olive at the center of its Crosby descriptions; her physical presence and voice interrupt even those stories where she is of marginal importance as the other townspeople (and narration) simply cannot refrain from observing her presence. Meanwhile, *Winesburg, Ohio's* young news reporter and writer, George Willard, is often found sitting and observing on the background of stories about characters other than him, listening to the tales of Winesburg, keeping them hidden in his own knowledge, or writing them down for the town's newspaper.

Therefore, despite my primary literature's focus on the lives of entire small towns and their multiple citizens, the imagined focus on the whole of the community seems to continuously shift to single individuals. In *Olive Kitteridge*, it is always Olive's character that makes the narration and the townspeople's movements halt and digress in order to pay attention to her, while George is often singled out as an exceptional individual in Winesburg - almost as a

silent, omniscient presence: it is "no one but" (*WO*, 84) him who is awake at night, he is the "one person" (*WO*, 65) aware of the town's movements and stories. Out of the thirteen stories in *Olive Kitteridge*, only six are narrated through Olive's point of view, yet every single story mentions her at least once, totaling the references to Olive at over five hundred in the entire sequence. Similarly, in Anderson's text, George and his life are only named as the focus of the final story, "Departure - concerning George Willard," but he appears in passing or more at length in nineteen of the twenty-two chapters, often as one of the focalizers.

Thus, the focus of this chapter is not on all the characters of my primary literature, but on single individuals who gain a dominant position in the short story sequences. The point is to address the question of how and why an individual character becomes the source of collective experience to a community of people. Furthermore, I am interested in inquiring what this tells about fiction's structures and themes: is the need for one central character a structural and generic one (to keep the stories of a sequence from falling apart), an interpretive one related to our general enjoyment of fiction (reader's wish for dominant elements, again to keep meanings from falling apart), or does it reflect a necessity to have a strong individual in order for a sense of community to be formed in the first place? In other words, is this aspect of the texts an aesthetic or an ideological one, or both?

Thus, from the previous analysis of private and social minds, this chapter moves to a broader study of individual characters as the basis of communal identity and collective experience. The theorization of characters within narratology is, however, somewhat problematic. Within classical and structuralist studies, characters have had quite a marginal and depreciated position because scholarship has, historically, focused on understanding narrative through aspects of temporality and communication. With narrators and implied authors considered as the uppermost and, therefore, most important sources of such communication, there has been little need for separate studies of characters. Additionally, when characters have been in the center of narratological and structuralist research, they have been defined largely through their actions and functions as plot-forwarding units (Rimmon-Kenan 1991/1983, 46), due to the classical understanding of narrative as temporality. Following Vladimir Propp's influential analysis of Russian folktales and his division of characters into seven broad and general roles (e.g. helper, villain), classical narratologists have studied not only the different types of roles

and functions characters take on, but also their autonomy and ability to affect the events of the story in comparison to being mere experiencers of events (Rimmon-Kenan 1991, 46–49).⁴⁸

This structuralist-classical approach does not, however, provide the most interesting basis for a study of characters in modernist writing where much of the plot is experience instead of action-packed events, and a major part of the description is that of characters' thoughts and feelings.⁴⁹ Oftentimes, not much seems to happen in the plots of these texts, yet great "events" of pains, desires, and losses are located in the embodied minds of characters, even if rarely brought out to affect the world outside. This supports a more recent understanding of narrative as *experience*, as suggested by post-classical approaches such as natural narratology (Fludernik 1996), instead of the traditional definition of narrative as temporality.⁵⁰ Classical theories on characters thus fail here, because in modernist writing interiority and experience are often what forward the plot, and psychologically complex characters can hardly be reduced into simple roles or single functions within the stories.

Therefore, the theoretical framework used and tested in this work leans more towards recent developments within narratological character theory, firstly around concepts of mind reading and source-tagging that post-classical and cognitive approaches have brought into the narratological discussion of characters and narrators, and secondly around the idea of characters' bodies as an equally important aspect of their voice and agency as the study of their minds. Regarding the first, this chapter examines the myriad of concepts that have emerged in cognitive narratology in relation to the idea of characters (and actual people) "reading" one another based on bodily gestures and expressions (e.g. Zunshine 2006; cf. Hyvärinen 2015). These theories - and particularly the criticism they have received - will further be contrasted with classical narratological theories around the concept of voice. Though characters have often been neglected in narratology, scholarship on figural voice and focalization has discussed characters in relation to the hierarchies of voice in fiction (e.g.

⁴⁸ For a thorough recap on the history of narratological study of character functions, as well as a 21st century revision of these theories within apocalyptic stories, see Mikko Mäntyniemi (2015). Mäntyniemi argues that apocalyptic stories limit the autonomy of their characters; rather than defining them as actors with potential to affect or change the events of the story, these characters should be understood first and foremost as experiencers of the (apocalyptic) events.

⁴⁹ The simplicity of Russian Formalist studies on narrative aspects such as characters and plot, has, of course, already been noted by narratological giants, such as Seymour Chatman (1978) in his major study *Story and Discourse*: "The rigid homogeneity of plot and simplicity of characterization found in the Russian fairy tale are obviously not typical of many modern narratives" (1978, 15).

⁵⁰ Furthermore, some areas of post-classical narratology, such as cognitive narratology and particularly its enactivist followers, are no longer interested in analyzing representations of characters' experiences, but have rather shifted focus to *readers'* experiences during the reading process (e.g. Caracciolo 2014).

Cohn 1978; Genette 1980; Mäkelä 2011a, 2011b). These theories highlight fiction's ability to produce polyphony and blur the source of voices, thus complicating the cognitive concepts I discuss. The second theoretical basis of this chapter - that focuses on bodies and embodiment - stems from cognitive narratology's critique of the Cartesian bias of previous narrative scholarship, where minds have been understood as separate from and favored in relation to bodies. While claiming that some of the cognitive narratological scholarship still relies on this bias that it criticizes, I examine Genie Babb's (2002) helpful distinction of bodily descriptions into aspects of "Körper" and "Leib," as this separation provides a more practical model for deconstructing the mind-bias and interpreting characters' embodied roles.

If there is one character function central to this work, it is that of communal function, and the point is to ask interpretive questions regarding the central characters' positions within the represented communities. For example, are characters such as Olive and George leaders, representatives, or others of the small towns in which they live? In the American short story sequences I study, the focus on a single character often happens through processes of storytelling and speculating the minds of others. Mind guessing frequently turns into an obsessive hobby for the townspeople, and often the target is the text's central female character, as in the case of Olive in *Olive Kitteridge*, or with Emily Grierson in William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (1931/1930). It is not simply that Olive's voice and body interrupt the flow of the other characters' lives, but that the narration turns into an interpretation of Olive's (and, when in Olive's company, also her husband's) mental states as the townspeople begin to interpret their bodies ("she *seemed* to say something to her husband, Henry, who nodded, *an expression of suppressed mirth* on his face," [OK, 133]). Meanwhile, George's presence is what allows the other townspeople of Winesburg to tell their stories: instead of being of interest to others as a source of mind speculation, George's value - and the reason he shows up so often - is in his position as a confidential reader-listener to whom the others can open their minds.

Thus, the communal function of these characters has a lot to do with questions of voice and with attempts to understand the embodied minds of others. This relates directly to aspects of storytelling and power: instead of asking who produces the events or simply experiences them, I ask who takes on the positions of teller, listener, or represented within the stories.⁵¹ Why do specific characters become the target or source of mind speculation, and how do their

⁵¹ Cf. Fludernik (2017), who also discusses singular characters' roles and concludes that in crowd scenes, individual characters may become leaders or victims of a group.

positions in the community affect their ability to tell and construct, or, on the other hand, be depicted by others? These, furthermore, become very gendered questions in my primary literature, since characters marked as male or female come to hold different positions within the hierarchies of storytelling. This chapter will thus proceed in a comparative manner: starting with *Olive Kitteridge*, then moving on to Olive's female counterpart in William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," and, finally, contrasting both Olive and Emily to George's role in the masculine world of *Winesburg, Ohio*.

3.2 Bodies Looked at, Minds Guessed at? Speculations and Lived Experiences of Olive

Even though Olive is the title character of Strout's novel, the text begins with three short stories that focus on other citizens of the small town of Crosby - her husband, a piano player, and her former student - and only in the fourth story does the reader get access to Olive's own mind as the narrator moves to describe events from her point of view. In the first three stories, Olive is a somewhat minor character who gets mentioned in passing as the other townspeople observe and describe her behavior, looks, and speech:

"Stop shouting." Olive told him [Henry] "Do you think that makes you a man? How absolutely pathetic"(OK, 22.)

But she had already let herself in – a big woman, taking up the whole bucket seat, her knees close to the dashboard. (OK, 34.)

When analyzing voices in literary texts, classical narratology draws a distinction between who is telling and who is seeing the reported events. Focalization, a term made famous by Gérard Genette (2006, 189–194), distinguishes the voice of the narrator from the depicted characters; through focalization, the narrator can adopt different characters' points of view and fluctuate between them. The first few times the reader of *Olive Kitteridge* hears Olive, it happens through the focalization of another character: in the first instance, the focalizer of the story is her husband, in the second, her former student. These first few mentions, no matter how short, already contain a lot of detailed information on which the reader begins to build her understanding of Olive's character; she is represented as strong and independent - albeit also physically big and clumsy - as clamorous, cursing, and outspoken to a point of cheekiness and rudeness. She is also defined through her gendered social roles, both by the other characters

and by the third-person narrator: she is named as a wife (Mrs. Kitteridge), a mother, and a teacher.

Therefore, even before the reader has fictional access to Olive's inner thoughts, she is able to produce some kind of an image of Olive based on these outsider references. What is more, the other characters do not simply notice Olive's looks and behavior, but begin to guess meanings and intentions behind her outer actions, as already seen in the earlier example where Olive "seemed to say" something to her husband, whose nod and expression were interpreted as "suppressed mirth" (*OK*, 133) by Bob and Jane Houlton, a fellow church-going couple.

This type of interiority-interpreting based on outer observing that takes place between characters in fiction has become one of the most debated topics within fictional mind studies, as cognitive approaches have begun to pay more attention to characters' abilities to "read" one other. In fact, what Bob and Jane are performing on Olive and Henry is what one such cognitivist, Lisa Zunshine, would define as Theory of Mind (ToM). In her influential - yet much critiqued - research, Zunshine (2006) equates Theory of Mind with mind reading, interpreting it as our ability to understand observed behavior in terms of underlying mental states. This ability of projecting thoughts and emotions on others based on their actions is, according to Zunshine, not only an integral part of our real-life day-to-day communication, but also a skill that makes reading fiction possible in the first place (2006, 5, 10).⁵² Even as we remain, on some level, aware of the fictional nature of the characters we read about, we still equip the same cognitive mechanisms as when approaching people in real life (2006, 16–17). From this process readers also derive their enjoyment and pleasure in fiction; when we read about characters and engage in their mind reading, we get to test our own cognitive abilities (2006, 18–20). Thus, just like we saw earlier with Palmer, similarly with Zunshine's work the cognitive approach to literature seems to entail finding out and emphasizing similarities between fictional and real minds, as well as our understanding of them.

Going back to Jane and Bob's visit to the Winter church concert, we can see that their trip is constantly interrupted by such observations of Olive and Henry:

⁵² Zunshine (2006, 33) uses her version of Theory of Mind as a tool for analyzing the different levels of intention and source in texts, for example in the following manner: "Woolf *intends us to recognize* [--] that Richard *is aware* that Hugh *wants* Lady Burton and Richard *to think* [--]." Thus, it is exemplary of the type of cognitive narratological analysis that stays on a basic level of understanding and sense-making, instead of moving on to interpretation.

The church was slowly beginning to fill up. Olive Kitteridge walked in, *tall and broad-shouldered* in a navy-blue coat, her husband behind her. Henry Kitteridge *touched his wife's arm, indicating* they take a seat in a pew nearby, *but Olive shook her head* and they sat instead two pews closer to the front of the church. "I don't know how he can stand her," Bob murmured to Jane. (OK, 129–130.)

They watched the Kitteridges settle into their pew, Olive shaking off her coat, then placing it back on her shoulders, Henry helping her. Olive Kitteridge had taught math at the school Jane had worked at; very seldom had the two women spoken at length. *Olive had a way about her that was absolutely without apology, and Jane had kept her distance.* (OK, 130.)

The point of view from which Olive and Henry are seen in these two passages is that of Bob and Jane; their personal dialogue as well as moments of internal focalization come to a halt as the narration - through their eyes - explains and interprets Olive and Henry's behavior. The interpretation starts from simple intentionality-building: Henry touches his wife not because of a spasm but because of an underlying mental state, and the Houltons understand this gesture specifically as an indicator of wanting to sit down, instead of, for example, as a way for Henry to show affection towards his wife. However, this basic-level reading (that already contains interpretation and, thus, a chance of misinterpretation!) goes much further into an evaluation of Olive and Henry's characters that Bob's murmur to Jane explicates: Henry is submissive, while Olive is obnoxious and inconsiderate due to the fact that she refuses Henry's suggestion for seating. In Zunshine's idiom, Bob understands that Olive neglects that Henry wants to sit down - thus, it is not simply that we have characters as focalizers, but it is as if they were also able to have access to each other's interiorities.

And, yet, what I find interesting here is not the question of characters' abilities to read each other as Zunshine emphasizes, but rather characters' tendency to use such mechanisms as a means to justify their previous opinions of one another. We can see a similar pattern repeat in the second example: the text gives an account of Olive and Henry's behavior that seems impartial and omniscient, yet is marked by the Houltons' point of view that emphasizes Olive as the selfish one of the married couple. The gestures between the two that Bob and Jane pay attention to are ones that show Henry as the ever-helpful and never-thanked party of the relationship: Olive cannot decide whether to have her coat on or not, but Henry is always there to adjust according to her wishes. At the end of the passage, Jane is revealed to have always kept her distance to Olive, yet instead of attempting to read Olive's mind at the present moment and somehow come close to her, Jane is interpreting Olive's actions in a way that enables her to continue with the frame she already has put in place for her. What is significant

here is that interpreting gestures and expressions functions as a justification to keep one's *distance* from an other, instead of as a means of getting close or even understanding that other.

This point ties together with some criticism that Zunshine's concept of Theory of Mind has received. For example, Daniel D. Hutto (2011) has argued that Zunshine misunderstands the idea of mind reading in her work. According to Hutto, being folk psychologically competent does not imply or require any sort of Theory of Mind or mind reading - instead, we can speculate and guess about someone's reasons for acting without it (2011, 281). Furthermore, Hutto states that we can only read reasons off facial expressions in standard contexts - and when we *are* forced to speculate or theorize, these instances should rather be called "mind guessing" than "mind reading" (2011, 282), thus emphasizing their inherent potential for misunderstanding. Drawing from Hutto and other philosophers of mind, Stefan Iversen (2013, 147) further concludes that while "ToM at some point seemed to offer a unified understanding of fictional and real minds, thanks to the idea of mindreading, the opposite situation now seems more plausible [--]: In real life we rarely, if ever, read minds, while in written narratives we have no choice but to do so."

These critiques highlight the mess of cognitive terms applied to literary studies on minds. From Theory of Mind to folk psychology, mind reading, and mind guessing, these concepts have been used interchangeably or with differing meanings depending on the writer and which fields of cognitive sciences she draws from. In his aptly named article "Mind Reading, Mind Guessing, or Mental-State Attribution?" Matti Hyvärinen (2015, 223) not only distinguishes between the different terms but also debunks the benevolent assumption that Theory of Mind supporters often have about the "self-evidently well-intended process of mind reading" by showing how mind reading (as if trying to understand) can easily slip into mind projection or attribution (attaching various contents for various reasons on others). This can be seen, for example, in such literary instances where a character "spies on people from afar, imagines their minds, and sends them off" (Hyvärinen 2015, 237) rather than attempts to connect with them through basic folk-psychological methods such as direct talking.

While trying to avoid the pitfalls of incorrect or blurry terms, what is important for my analysis here is to note that *Olive Kitteridge* - as a fictional text - produces many layers of constructing minds, and while doing so it also highlights differences between everyday *mind guessing* (as Hutto understands it), and what I believe to be specifically fictional *mind reading*

(as Iversen emphasizes) - the instances where readers are allowed to literally read characters' minds through omniscient narrators and internal focalization. What the other characters do on Olive in all the previous examples is mind guessing precisely due to the fact that they do not have actual access to her mind; they can - as in the examples of Bob and Jane - only speculate what Olive "seems" to be doing, and how her husband seems ("as if") to be reacting. The fact that Strout's novel begins with stories that are *not* told from Olive's perspective is a significant narrative move, because it highlights the multiple layers of minds in fiction. Access to Olive's mind is blocked in the first stories, and therefore the reader is momentarily placed on the same line with the characters of the storyworld. The text plays with the reader's position as the receiver of a fictional text; it first places the reader to mind guess Olive with the other townspeople through external behavior, and only afterwards gives the reader access to Olive's fictional mind and the ability to read it. This initial speculation is, furthermore, based on the other characters' previous ideas of Olive, thus easily turning mind guessing into mental state attribution and a self-perpetuating loop of judgments, rather than into a benevolent way of connecting with others.

To add up, these references to Olive - even though playing a short part in many of the stories - have a significant impact on the establishment of her character and its role to the rest of the small town community. Firstly, the fact that stories focusing on characters other than Olive halt to show Olive through those other eyes means that she gains more focus in the text, starting with the first three chapters of the entire sequence. Secondly, the reader at first learns about Olive solely through the mind guessing performed by other characters in these initial stories, therefore implying from the very beginning that her presence is important for the community of Crosby: she is interesting enough for others to want to interpret and evaluate her. In other words, *there is something at stake in speculating and interpreting Olive*. However, it also means that the first and primary frame readers get of Olive is somewhat negatively-biased; out of the many instances of other characters making outsider observations and interpretations of her, several characterize Olive as blunt, uncaring, and somewhat full of herself. Thus, these descriptions can have a strongly alienating and distancing effect on the reader.

This point of alienating Olive from the reader is further demonstrated once we turn to analyze in more detail *how* she is represented in the stories. Aside from simply proving that Olive gains center stage often in the text, it is important to consider what makes her tellable in the

first place. As already discussed in the previous chapter, what distinguishes Olive from the crowd is often her body and physicality; her big presence has to be seen, heard, and narrated. In some instances the description of Olive's size comes clearly from the point of view of specific focalized characters, whereas in other cases the text leaves room for interpretation and blurriness as to whether it is the narrator highlighting Olive's size, or accommodating other townspeople's perspective on her. No matter who the source is, this "taller than most" (*OK*, 129), "tall and broad-shouldered" (*OK*, 129) "big woman, taking up the whole bucket seat" (*OK*, 34) continuously penetrates into the lives of Crosby citizens and the stories of *Olive Kitteridge*:

Olive Kitteridge stood in the doorway to the dining room, *almost filling the space up*. "Well, look at the tea party. Hello, Harmon." (*OK*, 94.)

Molly Collins, standing next to Olive Kitteridge, both of them waiting along with the rest, has just looked around behind her at that side of the grocery store, and with a deep sigh says, "Such a nice woman. It isn't right." *Olive Kitteridge, who is big-boned and taller by a head* than Molly, reaches into her handbag for her sunglasses, and once she has them on, she squints hard at Molly Collins, because it seems such a stupid thing to say. (*OK*, 164.)

Through her physical presence - which encompasses not only her body but also her loud voice - Olive easily controls situations, fills up spaces, and draws everyone's attention. Though these numerous bodily descriptions may have an alienating effect on the reader, the sequence is simultaneously able to produce a version of Olive that is relatable and humane. It is therefore relevant to ask how we should analyze and pay attention to such embodied aspects of Olive without simultaneously relegating her into a mere physical object or ornament of the storyworld.

In her work on the bodies and bodily experiences of fictional characters, Genie Babb (2002, 198) shows how twentieth-century narratology has largely followed Cartesian dualism and Descartes's notion of the self as autonomous mind - as something "utterly private and unavailable to the external world." Babb criticizes how most narratological models have thus ended up conceiving character as either action or interiority, while simultaneously "ignoring characters' bodies or relegating them to the ornamental space of description, which is in turn neglected because of its supposed spatiality and lack of congruence with narrative as a temporal, linguistic activity" (2002, 197). This consciousness-bias and privileging of the mind over the body can be seen in my own research thus far, too. Although the previous chapter debated the body-mind separatism and brought out how current cognitive theories have

completely questioned Cartesian dualism through such concepts as embodied thinking, I still have, in my analysis so far, focused very much on questions of *mind* (even if embodied mind), while less emphasis has been given to representations of bodies in my primary literature.

And so, even though the mind/interiority-bias has been recently battled (interestingly enough) precisely in studies focusing on fictional minds, the question remains whether this attempt to incorporate the body to such studies has also meant the deconstruction and disappearance of the bias itself. Furthermore, I would add to Babb's critique by suggesting that the lack of interest in the bodies of characters perhaps stems particularly from the way in which narratology has been obsessed with modernist texts, and how modernism has been treated in narratology. The established understanding of modernism as literature focused on epistemological questions (McHale 1987), together with the long tradition of studying modernist innovations in terms of characters' interiority have left little space for questions regarding bodies and embodiment. Granted, it is difficult not to use Cartesian language, especially when some of the primary literature I analyze seems to promote exactly the kind of interiority and mind-favoring view that is now regarded as outdated. However, that does not mean that the modernist short story sequences I study here have nothing to say about the body - quite the opposite. As Olive clearly demonstrates, the central female characters bring embodiment to the center of more traditional narratological issues, such as whose voice we hear and whose interiority we gain access to.

I will approach this issue next, along with the problem of Olive's communal function, by analyzing representations of her body and its (un)readability through the Körper/Leib distinction that Babb (2002) introduces in her character theory. Following the phenomenological tradition of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who theorized the body as involving two aspects - "the physical, objectified body [*Körper*'] studied by science - the sense of the body inherited from Descartes; and '*Leib*,' the lived sensation of embodiment" - Babb (2002, 189–199; italics in the original) suggests applying a similar distinction to our study of literary characters' bodies. Even though this brings us familiarly close with the similarity-finding tendency between real and fictional aspects promoted by cognitive approaches, the Körper/Leib distinction does prove helpful when analyzing Olive's position in the community of Crosby. Thus, I will currently refrain from commenting on whether characters' textual bodies should be understood like our real material ones, and

instead focus on examining how this distinction can open new ways of analyzing the mind-biased nature of both classical narratological studies and cognitive mind reading theories.

All the instances of Olive's appearances analyzed previously - references to her big, animal-like, all-consuming size - are examples of the physical size, shape, and look of her body; the Körper, through which her body becomes an object perceived from the outside. What is significant is that the negative primary frame which Olive's loud voice and rudeness already push forth from the beginning of the text is easily strengthened in these kinds of representations of her body. The process of objectifying Olive - even in small amounts and in passing - distances her from the reader and emphasizes her as some sort of a threat - as something that needs to be kept at a "distance" (*OK*, 130) - or, in less extreme and more benevolent cases, as something out-of-place in comparison to the rest of the townspeople. It is not simply that Olive's body is used as a means to speculate her mind, but that that same body is simultaneously classified in particular ways and placed into particular contexts which make it possible for her to lose or gain power both within the community and in terms of the reader's affections.

This is not to say that all Körper-like descriptions of characters' bodies have an alienating effect on the reader. A very similar point of comparison can be found in Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1995/1896), a canonized short story sequence nowadays considered to be one of the founders of American local color writing and an influence to 20th century regional modernism. One of the New England community's central characters in the text, the herb-gathering and medicine-making Mrs. Todd, is often described by the first-person narrator through her large size and how she - like Olive - cannot go unnoticed or unheard.⁵³ Yet there is a difference of style here in comparison to Strout's text; the manner of the narrator's descriptions in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is particularly loving and affectionate. Todd is a mythic female figure whose size helps her gather and protect not only literally the plants of the coastal town, but metaphorically its inhabitants as well. Descriptions

⁵³ From *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1995):

"Being a very large person, her full skirts brushed and bent almost every slender stalk that her feet missed. You could always tell when she was stepping about there [--]." (6)

"Her height and massiveness in the low room gave her the look of a huge sibyl [--]." (9)

"There was something lonely and solitary about her great determined shape. She might have been Antigone alone on the Theban plain [--] An absolute, archaic grief possessed this countrywoman; she seemed like a renewal of some historic soul, with her sorrows and the remoteness of a daily life busied with rustic simplicities and the scents of primeval herbs." (40)

of Todd's size are not associated with ideas of being an outsider, as is the case with Olive, who seems to be either out of her natural habitat - a part of the animal kingdom - or threatening (and demanding respect) through her habit of "filling spaces" (*OK*, 94) and hovering "taller" (*OK*, 164) than the rest. Whereas Todd's physicality does not take away from her caring (and perhaps even mothering) role in the community, Olive's size in *Olive Kitteridge* seems to be threatening and weird due to its gender-bending potentiality; both in her own and in the minds of others she becomes man-like (*OK*, 62) or animal-like (e.g. "elephant" [*OK*, 45], "seagull" [*OK*, 46], "fat mouse" [*OK*, 123]), not fitting the otherwise feminine-gendered categories of mother, wife, and teacher she holds in her family and within the community.

As a result, what is perhaps most striking in Strout's text is the contrast built between the external depictions of her material body (Körper), and her own lived experience within that body (Leib). Or, what also becomes the contrast between external pieces of information on Olive, and on the actual internal focalization of her; in other words, between the mind guessing that other characters perform on her, and the mind reading that the reader is able to perform on her through the omniscient narrator. Once Olive becomes the focalizer in the fourth story of the sequence, where she isolates herself into a bedroom at her son's wedding, the internal focalization of her private mind shows a character full of repressed panic and uncertainty:

All afternoon Olive had been fighting the sensation of *moving underwater* – a panicky, dismal feeling, since she has somehow never managed to learn to swim. (*OK*, 61.)

"The emphysema brigade," comes Suzanne's bright voice, and the clapping of her hands.

Olive's *eyes flip open*. She feels a *jolt of panic*, as if she herself has just been caught smoking in the woods. (*OK*, 69.)

The confident and even threatening Olive of the earlier stories becomes, here, a person who is mentally distanced from the other townspeople, and who is not able to escape her agonizing and suffocating state of mind. Once the reader gains access to Olive's own perspective, this change in point of view in comparison to the earlier chapters is further highlighted through the surprising shift from past to present tense, as well as through temporal-spatial indicators that simulate a sense of immediacy ("here," "this," "so far," "now" [*OK*, 61–63]). The synching of the narrated time with the time of narration creates a feeling of being close to Olive; an illusion of observing her experiences in real time. At the same time, this narrative

contrast between the fourth and earlier chapters brings out the thematic contradiction between inner and outsider versions of Olive and complicates the reader's antipathies and sympathies towards her.

Furthermore, even though the most significant aspect of the stories focusing on Olive is the access they grant to Olive's interiority, it is important to note how this interiority is not only a matter of mind, but a thoroughly bodily and embodied experience. In fact, mind and body cannot be separated here, because the internal focalization of Olive is filled with Leib - with her bodily being-in-the-world. Her internal sensations of drowning and panic, her imagined underwater motion, and her awareness of external stimuli such as Suzanne's voice all fall under the categories of interoception, motility, and exteroception that Babb (2002) defines in her article as variations of Leib.⁵⁴ Olive's emotional reactions to Suzanne, her new daughter-in-law, invoke sensations that are powerfully embodied and physical - and, to a large extent, not under her control; her eyes flip open and she experiences jolts of panic going through her body from the mere sound of Suzanne's voice.

Olive's body is what connects her to the other townspeople, in both Körper and Leib meanings of the word. Despite hiding herself from the wedding party and the company of others, the presence of the other townspeople filter into Olive's thoughts and the narration of her experience: "The inside door of her son's bedroom is partly open, and voices and sounds make their way from the front of the house, where the party is also going on," "All these smells have managed to move down the hall and drift into the bedroom" (*OK*, 62). In addition to these lived bodily sensations, such as the experiences brought by sounds and smells from the surroundings, Olive is, of course, in relation to others through her physical body as well - and she is just as able to objectify that body as all the other characters. While lying on the bed during the wedding party, she imagines herself from the outside and harshly criticizes her own frame:

But at this stage of the game, she is not about to abandon the comfort of food, and that means right now she probably looks like a fat, dozing seal wrapped in some

⁵⁴ Babb (2002, 203-205) separates Leib into five categories that can be analyzed separately: 1) Exteroception: awareness and experience of external stimuli via the surface organs of the body, 2) Interoception: "internal sensations, originating in the visceral [--] such as the euphoria of an adrenalin rush, the heaviness of fatigue, the pangs of hunger [--] often invoked through or invested with emotion," 3) Motility: spatial-temporal movements (although here, in Olive's case, it is interestingly *imagined* motion of moving underwater), 4) Viscerality: unconscious and unaware sensations, and 5) Habitus: "actions that have become habitual and automatic." In Olive's case, it is especially the first two that become highlighted in narration, along with the more-or-less unconscious and visceral sensations of hunger, nourishment, and digestion.

kind of gauze bandage. But the dress worked out well, she reminds herself. (*OK*, 62.)

Following Cohn's (1978) speech category approach that I examined in the previous chapter, free indirect discourse is used here - towards the end of the first sentence - to express a very harsh critique of Olive's looks; the perception of her own body that Olive does not want to fully admit even to herself. The text paints a very unflattering image of Olive as a fat seal, and only after Olive returns to more positive and acceptable thoughts of herself, does the form of narration also return to a more conscious level through a switch to direct discourse, as can be seen in the last sentence of the quote: "But the dress worked out well, she reminds herself" (*OK*, 62).

What's at stake here is, first of all, realizing that the Leib/Körper division of the body does not necessarily imply or entail a first/third person point-of-view division. Olive is able to objectify her body and see its materiality (Körper) just as we have seen many of the other characters do to her in previous stories of the sequence. However, and secondly, the other aspect of her body - her being-in-the-world (Leib) - is one that only Olive has access to - and even to her these sensations can sometimes be hidden and unconscious, with the narrator revealing to the reader more than Olive knows herself. In fact, what happens in the text is a clash between these two aspects; her Körper, far from being a safe haven, is able to produce dismal sensations to a point of self-loathing, whereas once she loses a sense of her body as an object mere moments later, her bodily being (Leib) becomes a source of great comfort and pleasure:

Through her closed eyelids Olive sees a red light slanting through the windows; she can feel sunlight warming her calves and ankles on the bed, can feel beneath her hand how it warms the soft fabric of her dress, which really did come out nicely. It pleases her to think of the piece of blueberry pie she managed to slip into her big leather handbag – how she can go home soon and eat it in peace, take off this panty girdle, get things back to normal. (*OK*, 63.)

Towards the end of this passage, the narration slips into free indirect discourse again, as we follow Olive's stream of sensations towards the craving for food. In fact, feelings of hunger and nourishment come to play central stage in Olive's character and thematize the Körper/Leib contradiction. Many of the stories mention Olive's appetite; at the wedding party, the idea of leaving and getting donuts seems to calm Olive down (*OK*, 67), whereas in other

stories her hunger is commented on in passing by both herself and others.⁵⁵ Sensations that the imagining, craving, and receiving of food create for Olive are positive and comforting, yet their effect on her material body make Olive despise herself: they tie directly to her big size that excludes and objectifies her. Körper is what takes agency away here and makes it easier for Olive, the other characters, and the reader to turn her into an object that can be judged negatively. In contrast, descriptions of Leib make Olive more easily approachable and relatable: in these descriptions, her body is not inscribed with such clear markers of, for example, gender or social class - or with a lack of fitting into any such categories. Instead, they allow fictional access to Olive's sensations and thus turn the previous alienation into possible processes of empathy and identification.

Therefore, in the fourth chapter of the sequence, Olive is brought closer to the reader not only through the temporal change from past to present tense, but also through a shift in focus from Körper to Leib, and, in the reader's interpretive process, from mind guessing to mind reading. To return to cognitive narratology that highlights thinking as external and looks at various processes of mind reading and guessing, what is problematic is the sort of dichotomy built between knowable bodies and minds in these theories. Whereas classical versions of scholarship on consciousness presentation see the body as external and knowable and the mind as internal, unknowable, and inaccessible (except through the specifically fictional device of internal focalization in omniscient narration), some of these cognitive approaches, even as they attempt to refute and overwrite the idea of minds as internal and inaccessible, still fall into dichotomous thinking that prioritizes the mind over the body.⁵⁶ Stefan Iversen (2013) points out exactly this contradiction while countering David Herman's critique of the exceptionality thesis of fictional minds. By citing philosophers of mind, Iversen brings out how narratological arguments related to Theory of Mind misleadingly draw from an earlier paradigm of cognitive sciences which is based on the Cartesian idea that other minds are

⁵⁵ For instance, in the chapter titled "Starving," where Olive encounters an anorexic girl, Nina: "Olive finished the doughnut, wiped the sugar from her fingers, sat back, and said, 'You're starving.' The girl didn't move, only said, 'Uh— duh.' 'I'm starving, too,' Olive said. The girl looked over at her. 'I am,' Olive said. 'Why do you think I eat every doughnut in sight?' 'You're not starving,' Nina said with disgust. (*OK*, 95-96.)

⁵⁶ I want to highlight, again, that I discuss cognitive narratology as presented in the theories of scholars like Zunshine and Palmer. Recent works, such as Caracciolo's (2014), deconstruct the mind-body binary as they draw fully from enactivist theories and not from previous cognitivist and Cartesian areas of cognitive sciences. Though Caracciolo (2014, 9) also looks at the question of the body and embodiment, he focuses on the *reader* by studying, for example, how the "readers' bodily involvement can strengthen their engagement with a story at the level of socio-cultural meanings." Though fascinating and insightful, it is difficult to draw analytical tools from such an approach for the type of literary scholarship I produce here, as I study the way characters' embodiment is *represented* (a word that enactivists such as Caracciolo find troubling).

hidden away and inaccessible (2013, 146–147). Though Iversen refutes specifically Herman's Meditation Argument by showing how it is based on such Cartesian thinking, the same issue can be found in Zunshine's and Palmer's approaches as well. While embracing the ideas of second generation cognitive studies that stem particularly from phenomenological and enactivist post-Cartesian paradigms - such as the notion of minds as embodied and extended - these scholars simultaneously draw contradictory arguments from other branches of cognitive sciences.

Thus, in such theorizations, body becomes a vehicle; it is through the body, through its "reading" and interpreting that the characters reach into each other's accessible minds. In a sense, such theories only focus on Körper and forget the Leib aspect of the body. Consequently, in communication, body is treated as surface-level, whereas the mind remains internal and superior. It is, after all, the *mind's* contents that the characters and readers are believed to be so obsessed about.

Mind/Body dichotomy of fictional mind theories in narratology:

Classical			(Cartesian) Cognitive
Body <---->	Mind	Body ---->	Mind
Known	Unknown	Known	Becomes known through body

And yet, as Olive has shown, there remains a great deal of inaccessibility between characters, no matter how much mind guessing takes place. Furthermore, it is not just verbalized thoughts that are inaccessible to everyone else except for the narrator and reader, but also bodily sensations of, for example, interoception and viscerality. Olive's thoughts and experiences are bodily, yet it is a very different kind of understanding of the body than what the other characters use when attempting to read her. These visceral and inner aspects are rather ones that only Olive and the reader may use to understand her, and which the other characters cannot detect or have access to. In sum, whereas mind guessing from an outsider perspective focuses on the observable characteristics of someone's body (Körper) and can be performed by characters and narrators alike, the internal perspective of Leib remains knowable only to omniscient narrators and readers.

As a result, when taking into account Leib, we can find further proof, firstly, for the differences between everyday mind guessing and fictional mind reading, and, secondly, for the possibility of misunderstanding and malevolence inherent in acts of mind guessing and

mental-state attribution. The bodily experiences of a character like Olive differ vastly from how others understand her body, and show how her embodied mind may be unreadable, misinterpreted, an inaccessible. This also ties back to the question of alienation and identification; whereas descriptions of Körper and acts of mind guessing in *Olive Kitteridge* may alienate the reader from Olive (turning the Crosby community in some ways into a "her vs. us" one), descriptions of Leib and the reader's ability to mind read Olive during chapters with internal focalization allow the reader to better empathize with her.

3.3 Gossip and Intrusion: Strange Ladies Interrupting Communal Lives

The aspects of *Olive Kitteridge* that I have focused on so far - such as depictions of the town's gossip and speculation, as well as the central place a female character holds in the fictional community - connect the work to another, much earlier piece of modernist writing: namely, that of William Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily." Indeed, Faulkner's story shares many aspects with *Olive Kitteridge*: most notably, for the present work at hand, the milieu of an American small town and the dynamics between a female character and a geographical community which, furthermore, bring out themes of mind guessing and collisions between an individual and a collective.

We have come a long way in analyzing Olive's individual character, and the reason for introducing Faulkner's text at this point through a comparative method is to broaden our understanding of such central characters, while moving towards a discussion of the possible agency that the community-building characters have in regionalist writing. Despite the mimetic and thematic similarities in Faulkner's and Strout's texts, Emily and Olive are associated with different kinds of images and actions and, thus, come to hold different positions within their communities. And yet, their ability to build the communities of Crosby and Jefferson is based on a similar feature: their tellability, which enables the small towns to form a sense of collective experience through gossip about these odd ladies.

Faulkner's canonical short story has received a multitude of scholarly attention since its publication. John L. Skinner (1985, 42) has summarized how the characters of the text may be analyzed to represent "past versus present, North versus South, old versus new or almost any other conflict" and concludes that there is perhaps no good reason for interpreting the story any more. One of the most seminal contributions to scholarship on "A Rose for Emily" comes

from Menakhem Perry's (1979) analysis of the literary and reading dynamics of the text, where he details, for example, the way in which the story is able to question any sense of coherent temporality or linear unfolding of events. More recent narratological scholarship has picked up Faulkner's story in the light of the peculiarities of its we-narration (e.g. Richardson 2006, Fludernik 2017, Bekhta 2017). I will return to the discussion of the text's narrative style a bit later on but, first, I hope to begin the comparison between Faulkner's and Strout's texts with what we concluded about Olive previously: the issue of the body of a female character.

In Faulkner's story, a first-person-plural narrator - a sort of a collectivity of the small town of Jefferson - examines, describes, and interprets Miss Emily Grierson, one of the inhabitants of the town. While Olive dominates the stories of Crosby through her body's physical presence, Emily does the opposite - she is often not visible and this makes the town of Jefferson all the more furiously in need of interpreting her. Faulkner's Emily is apart from the small town community she lives in; she is either completely hidden away in her house or observed from afar and indirectly. The true value of Emily is not in her own actions per se, but rather the chances they provide for town gossip due to her norm-breaking and transgressive qualities. Thus, the narration does not only describe Emily, but also notes the iterative and hidden discourse of the town as the citizens observe and evaluate Emily from afar:

And as soon as the old people said, "Poor Emily," the whispering began. "Do you suppose it's really so?" they said to one another. "Of course it is. What else could..." This behind their hands; rustling of craned silk and satin behind jalousies closed upon the sun of Sunday afternoon as the thin, swift clop-clop-clop of the matched team passed: "Poor Emily." (*RE*, 175.)

Later we said, "Poor Emily" behind the jalousies as they passed on Sunday afternoon in the glittering buggy, Miss Emily with her head high and Homer Barron with his hat cocked and a cigar in his teeth, reins and whip in a yellow glove. (*RE*, 177.)

In these two rare instances, it is Emily who is visible and displaying herself in public daylight, while the other citizens hide themselves "behind their hands" (*RE*, 175) and "behind jalousies" (*RE*, 175, 177) thus distancing themselves from Emily's actions. There is hardly ever direct or substantial contact between the two parties - either Emily is hidden inside her house, or, when out on the streets, the citizens in turn are narrated as hiding from her. What is significant is the potential that Emily provides for contact and communication between the rest of the citizens; the less is truly known of her, the more she creates hypothetical possibilities for others to discuss: "Do you *suppose* it's really so?", "What else *could*..." (*RE*, 175). Emily is not only

objectified through the town's gossip, she is also looked at through frames; either from the windows of the townspeople's houses or later, as she shuts herself at home, through the windows and frames of her own home: "Now and then we would see her in one of the downstairs windows [--] like the carven torso of an idol in a niche" (*RE*, 180). In this way, Emily becomes a figure frozen in time. Rather than being a living being, she is imagined as a representation or a work of art whom the citizens had long thought of "as a tableau [--] framed by the back-flung front door" (*RE*, 172–173).

Emily being thus distanced and objectified, and with no attempt to truly get close to her, the town is able to perform wild mind guessing on her and attribute any states of mind that best please the collective. This distanced speculation allows the townspeople to be highly judgmental and evaluative, shifting their stance towards Emily from shame to pity and happiness, and from condemning her to being her allies, according to their own needs.⁵⁷ Body still holds central stage in the issue of tellability, yet here Emily's Körper, mostly hidden and absent is elevated to an almost heavenly position, making the citizens of Jefferson become all the more obsessed in pursuing Emily's interiority.⁵⁸ This could be seen as a heavily gendered issue; when on public display, it is the town's right to scrutinize and judge the actions of a female body, and when hidden in the private sphere, that same body becomes mysteriously inaccessible.

A final characteristic of Emily's Körper that needs to be highlighted is the ambivalent and contradictory nature in which it is depicted. When Emily's body is not hidden, descriptions of it do not seem to fit together. Faulkner's story is quite peculiar in this sense, because even though all the accounts we get of Emily come from the town's collective outsider source, they seem to pose even more conflicting challenges than the insider and outsider versions of Olive

⁵⁷ Some examples of the town's emotional stances towards Emily:

"That was when people had begun to *feel really sorry* for her [--] When her father died, it got about that the house was all that was left to her; and in a way, people *were glad*. At last they *could pity* Miss Emily. Being left alone, and a pauper, she had become humanized." (*RE*, 172-173.)

"We were *really glad*. [--] and we were all Miss Emily's allies to help circumvent the cousins." (*RE*, 178.)

⁵⁸ In addition, the descriptions of Emily and her movements in the community are considerably metaphorical, as the townspeople attempt to re-define Emily over and over again through language. Throughout "A Rose for Emily," Emily is described through metaphors (she is "a tradition, a duty, and a care [--] a hereditary obligation" [167]), as well as through her vertical-spatial movement: she is a "*fallen* monument" (167), belonging to the "*high* and mighty Griersons" (171) who "*held themselves a little too high*" (172). Furthermore, she had "*resemblance to those angels*" (174) and "*carried her head high* enough - even when we believed that she was *fallen*" (175). Instead of moving linearly in time (as if on a horizontal axis) with the rest of the town, Emily moves spatially up and down on a vertical axis as the generations pass in Jefferson - in this way the community redefines Emily by mirroring her to the changes happening within the town itself.

I previously analyzed in *Olive Kitteridge*. As Menakhem Perry (1979, 36) states in his close analysis of the reading dynamics of Faulkner's text, the narrator of the story continuously fails to provide systematic and consistent information on Emily. This is immediately evident in the narration of Emily's appearances, as she transforms from one extreme to another - from an obese plump veiled in black ("a small, fat woman in black, with a thin gold chain descending to her waist and vanishing into her belt" [*RE*, 169]), to a white and slim figure: "Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background" (*RE*, 172).

These conflicting descriptions create a feeling that there is something perverse about Emily and her relation to time. It is not simply that Emily represents the past and thus thematizes a generational gap between the old and young townspeople, but rather that the narration blurs the reader's sense of time to the extent that Emily can be multiple things at once, while becoming a figure that has always been old. From her "archaic" letters to her house that is characterized with "dust" and "disuse" (*RE*, 168–169), Emily is always connected to the old and long-gone. And yet, if Emily represents the past, then the past in Faulkner's story becomes a stale, haunting entity that is always present: "Thus she passed from generation to generation - dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse" (*RE*, 180). Through Emily's figure and tales about it, ideas of generational development, progress, and linearity become completely warped in the town of Jefferson.

Returning to the issue of the narrator, how is it possible for a single source - the collective of the town - to produce such contradictory accounts that make it impossible to create a coherent frame of Emily? Who exactly belongs to the "we" of the narration, and is it an instance of the type of social mind examined in the previous chapter? Even though Palmer (2010, 41) has used Faulkner's story as proof for his theory, calling it "a notable example" of intermental thought, theories on we-narration complicate any straightforward understandings of the text's narrative voice. Brian Richardson (2006, 58) has famously argued that it is most useful to see we-narrators "as a different kind of figure from the realistic type of first person narrator," because we-narrators are not bound by the epistemological rules of realism. In a similar manner, Monika Fludernik (2017) has stated that we-novels, while representing "the most extended form of communal narrative, putting the collective at their very center" (149), simultaneously "force readers into accepting vague or even quite un-verisimilar situations of

narration" (153).⁵⁹ Furthermore, accounts of we-narration have often highlighted how it is difficult or even impossible to discern who belongs to the narrating "we," and consequently many have interpreted an individual lurking behind the collective mask, speaking on behalf of a group (e.g. Margolin 2000, 599; cf. Richardson 2006, 57–58).

Such theories, however, have received criticism for promoting a Western worldview that centers on the individual self and sees consciousness as a private, inaccessible, and autonomous matter (e.g. Marcus 2008). Natalya Bekhta (2017) has eloquently argued that the we-narrator, instead of being a "postmodern first person narrator who refuses to be bound by the epistemological rules of realism" as Richardson (2006, 88) has claimed, is instead a "new first-person *plural* narrator, whose nature it is to possess *collective* epistemological, perspectival, and other qualities and thus create new *rules of (collective) realism*." (Bekhta 2017, 170; italics in the original). Thus, in Bekhta's view, a "we-narrator creates a holistic supraindividual level that supercedes a mere aggregation of individual characters and thus cannot be identified with or reduced to an 'I' speaking on behalf of such a group" (2017, 165).⁶⁰

Therefore, despite suggesting that in some cases we-narration "can be said to represent what Alan Palmer [--] has identified as a 'social mind,' " (165) Bekhta stresses how another type of collective act besides thinking takes place in "A Rose for Emily":

That a town community in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," for example, knows what happened behind the closed doors of one of its neighbors is not a transgression of narratorial epistemological limitations—since we are not talking about singular I-narrator—but a property of a community where knowledge circulates with the help of gossip. (Bekhta 2017, 171.)

⁵⁹ Richardson's and Fludernik's conclusions about we-narration are thus quite alike, even though Fludernik stresses readers' ability to naturalize we-narration's storytelling to some extent (in line with her approach of natural narratology), while Richardson's opposing paradigm emphasizes the form's unnatural and unrealistic qualities.

⁶⁰ The obsession of figuring out an individual source and a (gendered) body for a we-narrator has been evident in scholarship regarding "A Rose for Emily," as well. Because the beginning of the story divides the town into the men who arrived at Emily's funeral "through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument," while the women came "mostly out of curiosity" (*RE*, 167), many scholars have thought of the narrator as a man. As, for example, Skinner (1985, 49) concludes: "behind the patronizing comment on male respect and female curiosity must lurk a male narrator." Yet, would it not be contradictory for a story that is based precisely on such feminine curiosity to be narrated by a "respectful" man? Moreover, as the townspeople whisper about and gaze at Emily, these actions are not separated into a specific gender - both men and women are assumed to be a part of the collective action. All in all, it is rather useless to try to individualize a we-narrator that is, as Bekhta argues, a *plural* one.

I agree with Bekhta's interpretation and argue that Faulkner's text, instead of proving intermental (or unnatural) thinking, rather thematizes the layering of collective gossiping and oral storytelling. This explains the contradictory way in which Emily is described, as well. Whereas the previous analysis of Olive battled with the question of self and whether my primary literature represents characters' truest identities as stemming from the inside or the outside, Faulkner's text suggests there is no core to be found in the first place. Emily is a mosaic of observations, she is continuously and cumulatively produced - both in the reading process by the reader, as well as within the storyworld by the other characters - through different versions of circulating gossip. She is nothing but all the readings and interpretations done of her, thus highlighting mind guessing theories while also bringing out their never-ending nature and fragility: there is no omniscient narrator here showing the reader which views of Emily are successful and which aren't. As a result, despite being categorized here (and canonized elsewhere) as a stylistically modern text, the concept of self that Faulkner's story pushes forth - a self that has no core but is continuously produced by the discourses around it - is in fact quite postmodern.

To conclude, Emily's story gives us a chance to highlight the ambivalent and interpretive nature of textual communication in general, and draw summarizing conclusions on the issue of social minds. Long before Palmer's theory of the social mind, Seymour Chatman (1978, 207), in his analysis of free indirect discourse in modernist texts such as Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party" (1922), finds what he calls "the suggestion of a kind of 'in'-group psychology." This in-group psychology takes place in a short description of the garden party (given in free indirect discourse, or what Chatman labels "indirect free style"), which Chatman argues is "indistinguishably the thought of one or all of the family, or what one of them said to the others, or the narrator's judgment of the situation" (1978, 207).⁶¹ Assigning a textual utterance to one or multiple characters - or to the narrator - and understanding it as thought or speech is highlighted here as an interpretive and unresolved move. Free indirect discourse has been studied in length precisely because of its ability to blur the source of voice in such a manner, and thus mark interpretive peak points of a literary text.⁶² We-narrators have received a similar approach in recent narratological scholarship, and I would claim that

⁶¹ Chatman (1978, 207) analyzes the following quote from Mansfield in this context: "And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it."

⁶² For a comprehensive account on FID, see Mäkelä (2011a, 2011b). Mäkelä (2012, 2013) has also highlighted the unresolved and ambiguous nature of literary utterances by analyzing how the simultaneous maintenance of contradictory frames is a crucial reading strategy when confronting literary narratives.

instances of social minds are alike in this manner since they, too, require the reader to interpret the social mind's source and type, as suggested already in the previous chapter. Thus, instead of being "neutralized" (as Chatman [1978, 207] suggests of FID), and instead of being clearly taggable to a group and thus function as proof of collective thinking (as Palmer suggests), appearances of social minds have potential for producing ideological and value-filled ideas while remaining seemingly natural and objective as they blur their exact source.

Moving on from the question of Körper representations of female characters to the broader topic of community, it is time to draw some initial conclusions about characters who are able to create experiences of collective experience in the short story sequences about regional small towns. Both Olive and Emily function as connecting links in Strout's and Faulkner's texts, firstly, in terms of the storyworlds they inhabit. Communities are upheld by unwritten rules and agreements on given topics that go by without public notice, and in Strout's and Faulkner's texts these presumed agreements and norms among members are closely connected to the topic of interpreting and producing singular and unordinary individuals who are seen as both *apart* and as *a part* of said communities. When the town of Jefferson chooses Emily's character and actions as the target of gossip it is simultaneously, through the act of judging Emily, maintaining and updating its own ideas and norms about acceptability and normalcy.

Thus, single characters who are interpreted as not fitting the seemingly shared categories help a sense of collectivity be formed. In my primary literature community means excluding people out, but the interesting aspect of Faulkner's story is that Jefferson's sense of collectivity is not produced with a Self vs. Other pairing in terms of the Other being outside the geographical boundaries of the community, but actually living (and having always lived) inside it. Olive's situation is somewhat similar; she, too, is categorized as different from other townspeople, yet she also plays a major and active role within her community: she works her entire life as a teacher,⁶³ and continues to take part in other people's business during her retirement. Both women are kept in - although with reservations - yet Emily's further othering also makes her more central to Jefferson than Olive is to Crosby in the creation of a collective experience. The cases of Emily and Olive show that the more singular and different a

⁶³ It is interesting that Emily, too, served as a teacher of sorts through her china-painting lessons. Once she ends her teaching role, she disappears from sight completely.

character is interpreted to be from the rest, the more suitable she is for creating a sense of "us" within everyone else - no matter how fictional those differences may be.

In addition to creating a sense of community within the other characters of the described small towns, there is also something particularly textual and synthetic in the way Olive creates a sense of collectivity and cohesion as an artistic creation.⁶⁴ Because *Olive Kitteridge* is a short story sequence, the individual chapters require connecting links that hold the totality of the stories together. In this context, it is interesting to consider how Olive is not obsessively followed by the collective of the small town she lives in - as Emily is - but rather it is Olive who appears (often without invitation) and becomes a part of the lives of other townspeople. The constant remarks of Olive's appearances highlight how Olive is too big to go unnoticed; she cannot be rid of. And here lies the difference between the two female characters; Olive is most importantly spatial, she exists only in the present "now" of Crosby with her alive body, defining the community at one point in history with her actions, whereas Emily is oral gossip that passes from one decade of Jefferson to the next.

Thus, whereas Emily is a myth that cannot easily be replaced by another in the creation of the story of Jefferson's community, Olive is more of a textual and aesthetic link in the sequence of *Olive Kitteridge* than an actual link for the town of Crosby. In other words, Olive does not really have a function in a large number of the stories of *Olive Kitteridge*, other than to connect the short story sequence together by interrupting the thoughts of other citizens when showing up and making them (unintentionally) take notice of her and her big presence - while, of course, doing the same to the reader. Consequently, whereas Emily is a piercing presence in the lives of other characters in Jefferson, Olive has a similar function in the textual world and individual stories of *Olive Kitteridge* - she ties together the individual chapters of the sequence. While Emily helps define the lives of her fellow townspeople, Olive rather helps define the work of art in which she appears, and whose title she bears.

⁶⁴ James Phelan (2005, 20), who uses rhetorical narratology to study how all narratives function as communication, distinguishes between synthetic, thematic, and mimetic responses to texts. While a synthetic response would focus on a text as an artificial construct (its conventions and literary devices, which sounds similar to Jakobson's (1985) poetic function, or, in more general, to the issue of literariness in Russian formalism), a mimetic response would compare the story and its characters to our real world, and a thematic one would focus on interpreting the cultural, ideological, philosophical, or ethical issues addressed in a text. According to Phelan, each text emphasizes some of these responses over the others. Furthermore, the characters of literary texts can also be analyzed through these three different aspects (Phelan 1989, 2-3).

Finally, what is significant is that in both cases it is a female body that is marked as the insider-outsider of a community and as the target of mind guessing and gossip. Questions of mind speculation that I have analyzed here (both on behalf of the other characters as well as on behalf of the reader) relate to a pressing question about collective experience in general: namely, we need to ask whether bringing forth one individual as the link of an entire community and short story sequence means that that same character is, simultaneously, in some ways stripped of autonomy and agency. Next, I will conclude this section with an analysis on whether a character like Olive acquires the sole function of linking others and being tellable, and whether the role of being observed and interpreted simultaneously silences her.

As we have seen thus far, Emily is untouchable and transgressive to the point where she is even able to affect the moods of other townspeople with her actions. From her refusal to pay taxes or give a legal reason to buy arsenic, Emily is out of reach from the other townspeople - even more so once she locks herself out of view into her house. Thus, even though we do not hear her voice in the story, the narration does not entirely silence her or deny her from agency. And yet she is, most importantly, an object of depiction - a sort of silent muse who gains mythic features, and whom the reader encounters only through the collective eyes of the town.

The opposite is true of Olive, whose point of view and also voice the reader encounters in several of the stories of *Olive Kitteridge*. What is curious is that in many of these instances we get to hear and see Olive judge precisely the type of behavior that the citizens of Jefferson perform on Emily. When Doyle Larkins murders a woman and causes a stir in the Crosby community, Olive calls for the privacy of the Larkins family, naming the reporters of newspapers "vultures" and scolding anyone attempting to help intrude an event that is none of their business:

And Cecil Green, who brought hot coffee and doughnuts to the reporters who hung around the house those days, took a scolding from Olive Kitteridge. "What in hell ails you?" Olive demanded over the phone. "Feeding the vultures like that— good God." (*OK*, 141.)

Olive is strictly against not mere town gossiping but the general act of reporting - whether in oral or written form - about the lives of other people (one can only wonder what she would have to say about Winesburg's George and his esteemed reporter status). She especially questions and criticizes what earlier was described in terms of Theory of Mind, mind guessing, and mind reading: namely, people's attempts to gain access to one another's

thoughts. This can be seen both in dialogue with others but also in the internal focalization of Olive - even when it comes to the people who are closest to her, such as her own husband. After pondering on her husband Henry's reactions to a shared situation they are in, Olive quickly comes to conclude how "[y]ou could be wrong thinking you knew what people would do" (*OK*, 106). Throughout the sequence, Olive criticizes both people's ability and their need to perform mind guessing on others, and seems to see the potential danger and fictionality inherent in such acts.

This escalates and is thematized in the fourth story of the sequence, where Olive's son, Christopher, marries a woman named Suzanne, and where, during the wedding reception, Olive secretly vandalizes her brand-new daughter-in-law's clothing. In this fourth story, the reader is given a number of external cues from gestures to actions that suggest there is friction between Olive and Suzanne: Olive's eyes flip open and her heart starts pounding as she hears Suzanne's voice (*OK*, 69), and at the end of the text Olive goes so far as to destroying some of Suzanne's personal belongings. Yet the reasons for Olive's attitude are not revealed through a mere mind guessing and "reading" of these outer actions: it is only after an analysis of internal focalization that we can find the actual reasons behind such behavior - and they are, quite interestingly, centered around questions of mind guessing.

Namely, internal focalization of Olive in the fourth chapter reveals (once again) how harshly Olive criticizes people's - and here especially Suzanne's - attempts to understand others. In her private thoughts, Olive denounces Suzanne as "Miss Smarty" with a "know-it-all face" (*OK*, 64), and Olive especially cannot stand how Suzanne thinks she understands Christopher:

The way the bride was smiling up at Christopher, as though she actually *knew* him. Because did she know what he looked like in first grade [--] Did she see him when he was a pale, slightly pudgy child [--] No, what Suzanne was mistaking for knowing someone was knowing sex with that person for a couple of weeks. (*OK*, 67.)

There are extensive descriptions showing how Olive believes that no one can truly know another person - and neither should they believe that they can. However, the use of free indirect discourse is able to simultaneously bring out the circular reasoning and contradictions in Olive's own worldview. Free indirect discourse, by revealing Olive's most private thoughts, shows how Olive paradoxically believes to be right in her own interpretations of other people. In the example, she justifies her criticism towards Suzanne by explaining how much better she knows her own son and his mind, having witnessed him grow through the years. Olive not

only believes to be right in her own characterization of Suzanne, but simultaneously places herself above Suzanne in the hierarchy of mind guessing in order to gain her own agency.⁶⁵

Maria Mäkelä (2011b) has studied how characters may take artistic and narrative authority by constructing the minds of other characters in fiction: in instances of embedded consciousness presentation, the character-focalizer who is the narration's primary focus begins to construct the mind of another character in her own consciousness. Such cases show how devices such as free indirect discourse can be employed by other levels of fictional communication besides the narrative one; a character may just as well make use of such devices and thus, simultaneously, blur the hierarchical levels between narrators and characters (Mäkelä 2011b, 241). This is exactly what I mean with Olive's attempts of taking up her own agency, especially in the case of Suzanne, as she constantly tries to produce possible states of mind and narrative situations for her:

If Olive had told her [Suzanne] that the nasturtiums were actually petunias (which she did not do), Dr. Sue might have said, "Well, I've seen nasturtiums that look just like that." But, still, it was disconcerting how Suzanne looked at Christopher while they were getting married, as though saying, "I know you – yes, I do. I do." (OK, 68.)

The italicized sections reveal to the reader that we are, in fact, encountering constructions of Olive's mind and not descriptions of factual events - while also highlighting how Olive believes she knows Suzanne (whom she criticizes for her "know-it-all" nature) down to her interior core and probable reactions to made-up situations.

Instead of admitting the paradox and hypocrisy in her own way of thinking, this inner conflict manifests itself in Olive's external behavior as she begins to vandalize Suzanne's clothes:

*It does not help much, but it does help some, to know that at least there will be moments now when Suzanne will doubt herself. Calling out, "Christopher, are you *sure* you haven't seen my shoe?" Looking through the laundry, her underwear drawer, some anxiety will flutter through her. "I must be losing my mind, I can't keep track of anything ... And my God, what happened to my sweater?" And she would never know, would she? (OK, 73.)⁶⁶*

⁶⁵ The narrative style of internal focalization is, therefore, very different in Strout's text from that which I analyzed in *Winesburg, Ohio* in the previous chapter. Unlike Anderson's text, *Olive Kitteridge* actually does go deeper into the paradoxes within its character(s), and reveals the more hidden double standards Olive doesn't criticize herself of.

⁶⁶ Italics in the original.

This act of vandalism is a culmination of Olive's attempts to produce Suzanne's interiority and states of mind by writing episodes of uncertainty into her life. Olive takes on narrative authority by creating Suzanne's future reactions while trying to find her lost shoe. Thus, Olive constructs artistically not only Suzanne's public speech to Christopher but also her inner thoughts ("I must be losing my mind") and bodily experiences ("some anxiety will flutter her") - in fact, body and mind are once again deeply embedded with one another as Suzanne's made-up consciousness is filled with Leib-sensations. Thus, the mission of Olive's agency is to produce embodied sensations in Suzanne, sensations that will give the know-it-all Suzanne the feeling of truly not understanding and knowing even her own life.

In his critique of Palmer, Manfred Jahn (2011, 251) has incisively brought out not only why we should be talking about constructing rather than knowing other people's minds, but also how folk psychology often includes contradictory ideas, such as "thoughts are free" on the one hand and "I know what you are thinking" on the other. I would argue that Olive's character, in its double-standard nature, can be read as a critique of our folk psychological tendencies by showing precisely how paradoxical they can be, and how malevolently acts such as mental state attribution can be used. Though Olive is explicitly against the type of gossiping and interpreting that happens to Faulkner's Emily, she comes to take her own autonomy and agency in exactly the same manner.

Moving towards the following chapter's topic of the hierarchy of voices in fiction, we have now seen how the narrator in *Olive Kitteridge* gives space for her characters to take on narrative authority. The reader not only gets to hear Olive's voice and see events from her point of view, but she also gets to witness Olive scheme and write her own plotlines that she hopes will actualize in the world around her. Thus, Olive is not simply the depicted one in the text and the community of Crosby, but, at least in her own mind, also takes the role and agency of a narrator. Whereas Emily is transgressive against the community's norms through her actions, Olive hosts a similar role in her fashion of questioning the gossipy nature and other conventions of the town she lives in, while constructing her own narratives. The last section of this chapter expands on these issues of character embodiment, communal roles, and agency by bringing back under scrutiny Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* with its male hero - to see if these questions are as gendered as they have thus far appeared to be.

3.4 Gendered Agency: White Masculinity and (Dis)embodied Storytelling

Much like we have seen in the instances of singular center-stage holding characters in *Olive Kitteridge* and "A Rose for Emily," the small town of Winesburg in Sherwood Anderson's sequence also hosts one character that gains more visibility than others. The young George Willard, son of a hotel-owning couple and reporter for the town's local newspaper, appears throughout the narrative in association with other townspeople, starting from the very first chapters:

Among all the people of Winesburg *but one had come close* to [Wing Biddlebaum]. With George Willard, son of Tom Willard, the proprietor of the New Willard House, he had formed something like a friendship. George Willard was the *reporter on the Winesburg Eagle* and sometimes in the evenings he walked out along the highway to Wing Biddlebaum's house. (*WO*, 9.)

Doctor Parcival *had a liking for the boy*, George Willard. It began when George had been working for a year on the *Winesburg Eagle* and the acquaintanceship was entirely a matter of the doctor's own making. (*WO*, 22.)

The first details we learn about George are ones that become repeated throughout the sequence whenever he gets mentioned, either in passing or at length. The way in which both Wing Biddlebaum in the first story and Doctor Parcival in the third story are described as having a special bond and a unique "liking for the boy" (*WO*, 22) turns out to be how many Winesburg inhabitants feel about George. He is seen not only as special and trustworthy, but also as the one who understands, listens, watches, and knows. Thus, in the progress of the short story sequence, the narration turns George into a silent confidant of the town, the only person who seems to connect the otherwise isolated inhabitants of Winesburg, and the only one whom the others at least believe to have some sort of a bond with. Simultaneously, George becomes a motif for the reader in a somewhat similar manner as Olive, whose appearances in *Olive Kitteridge* are so common that they become anticipated and almost yearned for by the reader.

In addition to being someone whom nearly everyone has a unique liking for, the two quotes also exemplify what comes to be treated as the most important trait in George: his position as the reporter of the local *Winesburg Eagle* newspaper. These main features - George's trustworthiness, distinctiveness, and position as a reporter - which are assigned to him in a straightforward manner in multiple stories, add up to create an image of George as a

storyteller, a silent listener-watcher always present in the background, but rarely drawn direct attention to.⁶⁷ In fact, the role of a writer is continuously assigned to George, along with high hopes and expectations for his talents:

When George Willard went to work for the *Winesburg Eagle* he was besieged by Joe Welling. Joe envied the boy. It seemed to him that he was meant by Nature to be a reporter on a newspaper. (*WO*, 55.)

“[Kate Swift, George's former teacher:] It would be better to give up the notion of writing until you are better prepared. Now it's time to be living. I don't want to frighten you, but I would like to make you understand the import of what you think of attempting. You must not become a mere peddler of words. The thing to learn is to know what people are thinking about, not what they say.” (*WO*, 90.)

The idea that George Willard would some day become a writer had given him a place of distinction in Winesburg, and to Seth Richmond he talked continually of the matter, “It's the easiest of all lives to live,” he declared, becoming excited and boastful. “Here and there you go and there is no one to boss you. Though you are in India or in the South Seas in a boat, you have but to write and there you are. Wait till I get my name up and then see what fun I shall have.” (*WO*, 72.)

The text draws an interesting contrast between the ways in which George and the other townspeople view authorship; both parties have assumed and embraced (or, in Joe's case, envied) the idea of George as a writer, yet in the minds of others, George is “meant by Nature” (*WO*, 55) to “not become a mere peddler of words” (*WO*, 90), whereas George's passion for authorship is based on a much more lightweight and even naive idea concerning the freedom and easiness of writing, claiming that it is “the easiest of all lives to live” (*WO*, 72).⁶⁸ No matter how far apart George's motivations may be from the other inhabitants' ideas, George being and becoming a writer is what gives him “a place of distinction” (*WO*, 72) in town, and in this way *Winesburg, Ohio* explicitly tells its readers why George is made the central character of the text - even though his presence is often hidden and on the background of events - as well as why he becomes the connecting link between the text's characters.

Already this short look into George's character brings out three major differences between him and his female counterparts in *Olive Kitteridge* and “A Rose for Emily”: Firstly, the straightforwardness of his character descriptions, secondly his likeability, and, thirdly, the

⁶⁷ This is also why George's appearances in the sequence continue to contain an element of surprise for the reader, unlike in Olive's case, where they become anticipated.

⁶⁸ Interestingly, artistic agency in *Winesburg, Ohio* is located in the sphere of men. This is most clearly seen in the example of George's teacher, Kate Swift, who mentors George in writing. Instead of creating her own art, Kate hopes for George to become an author as shown, for example, in the above quote.

lack of depictions concerning his body (Körper). Such differences could be explained away through Anderson's, Faulkner's, and Strout's differing writing styles, yet I will argue that they have interpretive value and need to be considered when attempting to build theories about the role of individual characters in the poetics of collective experience.

What is so peculiar - especially after an analysis of the complexity, mysteriousness, and paradoxical natures assigned to Olive and Emily - is that despite being mentioned in several stories and through the points of view of so many characters, George is always marked through the same characteristics. He is a round character who develops in the course of the sequence, yet there is little intricacy or difficulty in understanding him. Furthermore, his character is not simply made easy to understand, but he is also positioned as likeable - at least for other characters in the storyworld, if not always for the critical reader. Even though Olive and Emily at times gain sympathy (or perhaps pity) from their surrounding townspeople, they do not come close to the enamored spirit in which the town of Winesburg views George. While Emily and Olive are often regarded with hesitation and judgment, George is trusted by the citizens in Winesburg.

These two aspects tie together with what I believe to be the most striking difference in the handling of the central characters of Olive, Emily, and George: namely, the absence of George's body.⁶⁹ His Körper is not commented on in the text, neither is it mysteriously hidden as in the case of Emily. In fact, it is not in any way a topic of interest to the other townspeople, nor to the reader.⁷⁰ In her character theory on the representation of bodies, Genie Babb (2002) analyzes how emphasizing corporeality, for example in the form of Körper descriptions, can easily lead to the objectification of a character, and thus make it

⁶⁹ And here, especially, it would be difficult to claim this is simply due to a feature of Anderson's writing style and a general lack of representing characters' bodies in his short story sequence. For example, George's mother, Elizabeth, is right away marked and described through her looks, age, and posture:

"[--] the mother of George Willard, was tall and gaunt and her face was marked with smallpox scars. Although she was but forty-five, some obscure disease had taken the fire out of her figure. Listlessly she went about the disorderly old hotel looking at the faded wall-paper [--] Her husband, Tom Willard, a slender, graceful man with square shoulders, a quick military step, and a black mustache trained to turn sharply up at the ends, tried to put the wife out of his mind. The presence of the tall ghostly figure, moving slowly through the halls, he took as a reproach to himself." (*WO*, 16.)

Through a focus on the description of her Körper, Elizabeth gains a ghost-like, chilling, and mysterious aura - not far from what we have seen happen to Emily in Faulkner's story. Aspects of Körper are not tied exclusively to female characters in *Winesburg, Ohio*, as we can see in the physical markers that are given of George's father, Tom, in the same paragraph. Yet, it is worth noting how quickly the narration shifts from Tom's looks into describing Elizabeth's body and physical presence again, this time through Tom's point of view.

⁷⁰ What the reader does learn about George's body is mostly centered around Leib, his bodily being-in-the-world, e.g. when his heart beats heavily (*WO*, 102), or as his body shakes (*WO*, 27).

more difficult for the reader to identify.⁷¹ The fact that George's looks are not described might, therefore, be read as an intentional narrative move - along with his multiple appearances - to guide the reader's sympathies and get her to root for George as strongly as the inhabitants of Winesburg seem to do.

Babb's suggestion that the more we know about the physical object-body of a character, the easier it is for us to feel distanced from it may, thus, be one way of interpreting the differing representations of bodies in my primary literature. And, yet, it is impossible to ignore neither the gendered implications of this, nor the broader ideological worldviews that seem to be at work here. The fascinating thing is not simply that George's Körper is left without descriptions in order for the reader to relate, but the fact that it *can* so easily be left without such descriptions. The looks of his body seem to be of no interest to the characters or to the reader, and I would suggest this is largely due to its socially privileged position. As a white, young, heterosexual male, George inhabits the type of body that is naturalized as default value in (Western) society. It is point zero that does not need to be explicitly represented, unlike all the deviations of it - female bodies, old bodies, bodies of different ethnicity, bodies performing other sexualities, etc. - that require to be described and commented on. Thus literary representations do not simply mirror but also produce and strengthen the social hierarchies and power relations at play in society.

Therefore, deconstructing such representations - and the lack of them - can function as a way of becoming aware of the ways of thinking we come to take for granted and as natural. Babb (2002, 203) argues that representations of the body and of embodiment become the site of negotiation between the many different discourses that have inscribed the body - whether aesthetic, religious, medical, sociological, psychoanalytic, or scientific. In my primary literature, the lack of specific types of descriptions of Körper points toward such negotiations and enacts not only gendered but also racial and socio-economical hierarchies. There is presumably no need to even discuss the skin color of the inhabitants of Crosby and Winesburg, because the characters are automatically assumed white. The idealized American small town, at least in the Midwest, is whitewashed. Readers of *Winesburg, Ohio* are supposed to imagine George as white, and yet this goes without saying - the text itself does

⁷¹ In more detail, Babb (2002, 210-211) argues that "[t]his lack of identification seems a result of two factors: in the first place, the vivid depiction of a character's external appearance positions the reader "outside" the character, especially if the character's thoughts and intentions are not made available; in the second place, the more vivid a character's external appearance, the more aware the reader is of the disparity between reader and character."

not explicate the matter. Faulkner's story on the other hand, located in the South and with racial and class hierarchies playing central stage, does comment on issues of race and class, yet again it is the deviations that become explicitly brought out in representation. "A Rose for Emily" marks the "Negro" (*RE*, 169, 170–171, 176, 178, 180) body of Emily's servant as a deviation from the town's whiteness, and it marks the sinking class status of Emily as a deviation from the previous upper class she (and the town) once represented.⁷²

The lack of representing George's body can also be seen as one of the ways in which the worldview of *Winesburg, Ohio* is heavily Cartesian, as already pointed out in the previous chapter. Anderson's text prioritizes the interiority of its characters and promotes the self as utterly private; this can be seen both in the text's focus on fictional minds as well as in its commentary on the importance of authors getting to that which is inside the minds of others (*WO*, 5, 90). In the Cartesian dualism of a private consciousness and a public world, the role of *Winesburg, Ohio's* omniscient narrator becomes that of mediator who can comment on the subjective failures of characters while revealing to the reader the objective facts of the world outside. In this context, the fact that George is not defined through his Körper is a positive thing; he is all mental activity and ability, full of writing potential and talent, even if confused and naive because of his young age. Similarly, in such a Cartesian, mind-favoring worldview, categories of people (for example women) who are seen as inherently embodied come to hold less favorable and valued positions.⁷³

When analyzing the variations in the representations of character embodiment, we can begin to see what markers are used in the construction of gender in my primary literature, as well as what such patterns can tell about the position the central characters come to hold in these texts. When it comes to the female characters of my primary literature, body and embodiment are highlighted. With Olive, this happens both in terms of Körper (the multiple descriptions of her physical object-body through the eyes of other townspeople) and in terms of Leib (the

⁷² For example, in the multiple times the town refers to Emily as "poor Emily," the word "poor" can be used both as a marker of her declining economic/social class as well as a way to describe her pitiful nature. Thus, what is seen as an interior and personal trait is, here, even linguistically tied together with external and economic values.

⁷³ As another example of *Winesburg, Ohio's* Cartesian and masculine worldview, it is striking how chapters that focus on male characters are often titled according to attributes that link the described men with interiority and rational capabilities that seem removed from the body (e.g. "A Man of Ideas", "Thinker," "Philosopher"). Other titles connect men with actions or events they are agents of (e.g. "Departure," "Drink"). Meanwhile, stories that look at female characters are titled, for example, through the social role of the woman at hand ("Mother," "Teacher"). Only Wing Biddlebaum, who had to move to Winesburg after being suspected of homosexuality and pedophilia in another small town, is titled with a focus on body ("Hands").

internal focalization of her is filled with bodily sensations). Meanwhile, the conflicting, metaphorical, and uncanny descriptions of Emily's Körper are exactly what is being used in order to make her tellable and the target of gossip. If the focus on a character's body is what promotes her position as the depicted and interpreted one, then one final reason for the lack of descriptions of George's body can be found in his differing role in the hierarchies of storytelling. Unlike his female counterparts, George is not the one being mind guessed *at* and whose gestures and actions call for interpretation. Instead, George is the person whom others in Winesburg tell their stories to; his disembodied nature moves him from a mere physical body in Winesburg to the position of a bodiless narrator-listener of the town and of the *Winesburg Eagle*. George is the gaze, not the object of the gaze.

Thus, by analyzing the representations of characters' bodies together with the types of mind guessing they are connected with, we can see an opposition build between oral storytelling - which is associated with gossip and feminine intrusion - and written culture, which is more positively linked with masculinity and cohesion.

What I mean by intrusion versus cohesion is the outsider and insider roles of the central characters: unlike Emily or Olive who are more or less othered and intrude the lives of other townspeople, George is in no sense an outsider: he *is* Winesburg, and in the minds of others holds potential for, if not uniting, then at least representing the town: " 'If George Willard were here, he'd have something to say,' thought Seth. 'George belongs to this town.' " (*WO*, 74). There is also a written word bias that twists George's actions into a much more positive light than the negative associations typically made about sharing and making public the stories of others. Even though everyone knows George is gathering knowledge about Winesburgians partly in order to turn them into intriguing pieces for the newspaper, his interest in the private lives of others is never questioned by the townspeople or by the text; he is never seen as a *gossiper* in Winesburg. His position in the newspaper gives him authority and legitimizes his interest in people's private lives - it is not the type of female "curiosity" that, for example, the narrator in Faulkner's text comments upon: "When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: *the men* through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, *the women* mostly out of curiosity" (*RE*, 167). George's actions are seen precisely as respectful and legitimate, and this shows also the gendered associations that are made about oral versus written storytelling.

Furthermore, oral storytelling is heavily embodied: there would be no gossip without people whispering into each other's ears, or without (female) bodies' public gestures and actions that are seen as in need of interpretation. Meanwhile, the written form of storytelling that George is associated with seems to transcend physicality - in his unique ever-presence, lack of Körper representations, and knowledge of the moves of others in town, George comes peculiarly close to the omniscient bodiless narrator of the modern print culture.

In fact, *Winesburg, Ohio* has traditionally been read as a Bildungsroman about the growth of an artist, and George has even been speculated to be the omniscient narrator of the entire text; in other words, *Winesburg, Ohio* has been interpreted as the masterpiece that George will write after leaving town in the last story of the sequence (e.g. Fussell 1960; Stouck 1969). Even though my own analysis does not equate George with the narrator, the idea of George's and the narrator's voices possibly being close to one another is what I would like to conclude this chapter with, as it ties together with the previous section's topic of the hierarchies of voice and figural agency.

Namely, in comparison to *Olive Kitteridge*, the narration in Anderson's sequence goes to great lengths in order to not blur the source of voice. As I will further show in the next chapter, *Winesburg, Ohio's* narrator makes sure to keep his voice on a superior level and not to mix it with the voices of his characters. Thus, it is important to note that even though George is the central and embraced character of *Winesburg*, his voice still remains under the care and custody of the narrator who can reveal to the reader the naiveté and selfishness of George's actions. Even if we interpreted George as the narrator of *Winesburg, Ohio*, his writing self - the narrating "I" - would be the authorial voice of the entire text, retrospectively and dissonantly looking at the younger narrated "I" he once was. In other words, whether seeing George as the narrator or not, all the characters of Anderson's text - including the narrated George - are under the hierarchical and superior position of the intrusive narrator, and in such a monological and authoritative communication model they are distanced from each other as well as from their own selves.

This strict manner of narration has been previously noted by Mark Whalan (2002), who discusses gender and narrative in *Winesburg, Ohio* in connection to militarism and social order. In Whalan's (2002, 242) analysis, the male citizens' desire for control through art shows how narration can work as a mode of empowerment and gender identification, while simultaneously, through its structure as a short story sequence, *Winesburg, Ohio* also

problematizes any ability of "narrative under masculine control to provide continuity and order." My analysis would add community to this list of things that narratives under masculine control cannot provide. Even though oral storytelling is often associated with a combination of intrusive, feminine, and negative connotations in my primary literature, Anderson's text paints a much darker option; for there is something deeply community-destabilizing and destructive in the strict hierarchy and masculinization of voices in Winesburg.⁷⁴

Yet, despite the narrative style and the fact that George is often on the background of events, he does have agency in the storyworld.⁷⁵ In addition to showing George as the town's silent writer and reporter, the sequence also hosts stories that focus on George's actions and thoughts, as in the case of "Nobody Knows," where George has a secret physical encounter with one of the town's lower-class girls, Louise:

A flood of words burst from George Willard. He remembered the look that had lurked in the girl's eyes when they had met on the streets and thought of the note she had written. Doubt left him. The whispered tales concerning her that had gone about town gave him confidence. He became *wholly the male, bold and aggressive*. In his heart there was no sympathy for her. "Ah, come on, it'll be all right. There won't be anyone know anything. How can they know?" he urged.

[--]

George Willard felt satisfied. He had wanted more than anything else *to talk to some man*. Around a corner toward the New Willard House he went whistling softly. [--] Then again he laughed nervously. "She hasn't got anything on me. Nobody knows," he muttered doggedly and went on his way. (*WO*, 29.)

Here we can see the difference in agency - and especially the consequences of agency - between George and his female counterparts I analyzed in the previous section. What ultimately allows George to take advantage of Louise is the gossip that he has heard of her: the "whispered tales" (*WO*, 29) circling the town about Louise's supposedly sexually transgressive nature not only strip George of consequences for his actions, but place any

⁷⁴ In fact, gossip and its representations in literature have been theorized in terms of gossip's ability to produce both positive and negative effects on communities. For example, Blakey Vermeule (2006, 104) discusses how gossip poses an ambivalent problem for the novel: literary narratives especially in the novel genre depend on it (both in terms of their content and form), yet simultaneously disavow it as feminine and frivolous. After describing these negative associations made about gossip, Vermeule mentions how it can also function as a form of intimacy and a resource for the subordinated (2006, 105).

In comparison, Sandra Zagarell (1988) highlights the positive power of gossip and storytelling in small communities. Zagarell explains how, in 19th century narratives of community, "[t]hrough the retelling of stories, the community incorporates change and assimilates new members; it thus maintains its own continuity" (1988, 523).

⁷⁵ Cf. Stouck (1969, 150), who interprets George as a "passive listener and observer."

possible blame on the girl. This short scene exemplifies the male privilege George has; he does not need to worry about pregnant bodies or material conditions keeping him tied and thus, in the end, it is George who is able to leave the entire town behind.

Throughout the sequence, the stories of Winesburg show how its citizens live under extremely narrow and restricting gender roles that block any possibility for true communication or connection between the men and women of the town. For George to be able to perform his masculinity, to become "wholly the male, bold and aggressive" (*WO*, 29) he needs to strip all sympathy for Louise. In such a society, George can only seek understanding from other men - hence his need to "talk to some man" (*WO*, 29) at the end of the story. Yet even this male companionship is fragile as it can, if taken too far, pose a threat of homosexuality to the heteronormative town.⁷⁶ Furthermore, these gender norms seem to be essentialized by the narrator, who blames the developments of modernity for destroying the lifestyle of American small towns such as Winesburg, yet never addresses the white masculinity he portrays as something that can (or should) be solved. In the last remaining chapter of this work, I will turn to interpret my primary literature's relationship to various developments of modernity in more detail, and analyze its effects on the way in which communities are portrayed in regional short story sequences.

⁷⁶ As in the case of Wing Biddlebaum in the opening story "Hands." Wing is a retired school teacher who changed his name and moved to live in seclusion in Winesburg after being accused of molesting his former male student in a Pennsylvanian small town, due to his restlessly wandering hands.

4 Poetics III: Voice and Time: Narrators and Modernist Longings

4.1 Whose Voice Is It, Anyway? Communal Representations without Communal Voice

The point of this work has been to inquire how a sense of community is created through means of textual storytelling in various short story sequences of regional modernism. Whereas the second chapter looked at the concept of mind as a possible connecting element between small town inhabitants, the third chapter focused on individual characters linking a community together through their embodiment and agency. In this final chapter I will turn towards the narrator's role as the artistic creator of collective experience and continue the discussion of the hierarchies of voice in my primary literature.

Since this is a narratological work, the question of the narrator in my primary literature has been mentioned in passing throughout the previous chapters. As I already suggested in the second chapter, the role and style of the narrator is the reason why, despite their structural and storyworld-related similarities, Anderson's and Strout's texts bring out different interpretations on collective experience, even when using similar poetic strategies such as the social mind. Here, I will draw together these initial remarks and give a full analysis of how the type of narrative voice employed strongly determines the sense of collectivity created in regional modernist short stories. For, it is one thing to describe communal life, and quite another to do so in a communal voice. Despite the fact that all of my primary texts represent small town communities, most of them rely on surprisingly authorial and individualistic narrators. This not only counters traditional understandings of modernist narrative form as polyphonic, multi-perspectived, and subjective, but also suggests that my primary literature views collective experience as the product of storytellers' artistic craftsmanship.

The scope of my analysis will broaden in two ways in this final chapter: Firstly, whereas the previous chapters emphasized *how* community and its possible loss are textually constructed, here, through interpreting the role and style of the narrator, I will link my analysis to the larger issue of *why* this is happening. In other words, I will bring in American modernist theory alongside narratology and the focus will shift to larger thematic interpretations of

regional modernism and its relationship to the new social conditions of modern life in the U.S. The main thematic questions center around time, nation, and region. Do these texts show the countryside and its small towns as anti-modern, pre-modern, or as something nostalgic that will be lost (unless preserved) within modernity? Do the various small town communities function as a metaphor for an idealized and uniting version of American culture, or rather show its nature as inherently fragmentary and discriminatory?

Secondly, when answering these questions, I will bring in two additional short story sequences under scrutiny: Katherine Anne Porter's *The Old Order: Stories of the South* (1958/1955)⁷⁷ and John Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven* (1995/1932). This not only helps with contextualizing Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* as the beginning of a larger regional modernist movement in the first half of the 20th century, but it also allows us to look at regional differences in the understanding of community in the U.S. By moving from Anderson's Midwestern small town to Porter's Southern milieu and Steinbeck's pastoral Californian valley - all the way to Strout's contemporary New England landscape - we can see how the setting of the region plays a prominent role in the way in which these localities are imagined to function within the national discourse of the U.S in the era of modernity.

4.2. (Anti-)Modernist Narrators: Regional Modernism and the Legacy of Oral Storytelling

Modernist writing has typically been theorized as a movement away from omniscient and reliable narration of the realist tradition towards narration that is marked by subjectivity, fragmentation, and multiple points of view. According to this theory, which is shared by both scholars of modernism and narratology alike, modernist formal innovation is characterized with a multitude of voices that are limited and fallible.⁷⁸ Alongside this turn comes a

⁷⁷ Although *The Old Order: Stories of the South* was published in 1955, the sequence comprises stories from Porter's early collections, the first of which, *Flowering Judas*, was published already in 1930. Most of the stories in *The Old Order* are connected through the same group of characters that centers around Miranda, her grandmother, and other members of Miranda's extensive Southern family. My focus here will be on these stories, as they produce a narrative development about the role of storytelling in an individual family's network that comes to represent the state of the South, shown as increasingly old-fashioned and anti-modern.

⁷⁸ Modernist textbooks and general surveys of the movement often point this feature as one of modernism's defining characteristics. See, for example, Matz (2004). Though it is typically cited in the context of Anglo-American modernism, the theory extends to other linguistic regions as well. For example, Elise Nykänen (2015) frames her recent discussion on the Finnish modernist author Marja-Liisa Vartio through this understanding of modernism.

heightened focus on the interiority of the individual subject, and the falling away of traditional novelistic characteristics such as a coherent plot line. Within the Anglo-American tradition, authors such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and William Faulkner are often cited as the core examples of such narrative innovations.⁷⁹ The reason often given for such a formal transformation in literature is the epistemological uncertainty brought on by the modern world, where language no longer conveys shared experience or objective truths. In fact, Brian McHale (1987, 9) has famously characterized modernism as being dominated by epistemological questions as opposed to the ontological focus of postmodernist literature. As Elise Nykänen (2015, 22) explains in her dissertation on modernist writing and theory: "Language – both as a tool of fiction-making and of human communication – is no longer conceived as a transparent medium that leads unproblematically to shared worlds. The multiple perspectives are employed to produce the cognitive effect of the loss of the incongruous worlds and the uniform ways of knowing and seeing the world." The modern world - with its First World War and escalated processes of urbanization, industrialization, and the like - brought on new conditions of living and thinking which became further reflected and produced in the narrative choices of literary authors.

This line of thinking has been picked up by scholars of contemporary literature, as well. For example, Paul Dawson (2013, 3), who studies Anglo-American literature from the 1990s onwards, asks "why so many contemporary writers have turned to omniscient narration, given the aesthetic prejudice against this narrative voice which has prevailed for at least a century." Dawson frames his argument with the commonplace narrative that the rejection of omniscience originated from and was fostered by modernism. The modernist ideal of a nonintrusive narrator who allows characters' voices to reign became "entrenched as an aesthetic principle" by the mid-twentieth century (2013, 13), thus turning the omniscient narrator of previous centuries both technically obsolete and morally suspect (2013, 3).

Furthermore, the modernist turn from heterodiegetic and omniscient third person narration to texts that host multiple points of view has been discussed in feminist narratology in relation to

⁷⁹ These changes were often explicitly commented on and reflected by the modernist authors themselves. Modernism was, after all, a very self-conscious and self-theorizing movement. For example Virginia Woolf (1966/1921, 107) summarizes many of the modern literary developments in her famous essay, "Modern Fiction," where she explains how the modern author needs to forget the linear plot and instead convey the varying and unknown spirit of (inner) life: "Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small."

issues of community. Susan S. Lanser (1992, 255) writes in her seminal work, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice*, how modernism, by recognizing multiple perspectives both formally and philosophically, "(re)turns narrative voice from the hegemonic individualism [associated] with the nineteenth century to narrative structures in which two or more characters may constitute a narrating community without suppressing their personal identities."⁸⁰ Lanser (1992, 21) distinguishes three types of communal voice in literary fiction: 1) the singular communal voice, where an "I" speaks for a community, 2) the sequential communal voice with a series of mutually reinforcing narrators (collaborating "I"s), and 3) the simultaneous, first person plural (we) narration where both voice and narration are communal. Although Lanser's diachronic study of different types of communal voice expands to literature both prior and after modernism, it is relevant to ask whether or not modernist literature - with its supposed multiple points of view - is able to produce specifically communal voices. Canonical works such as Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) could be read, on the one hand, as a part of the second category of sequential communal voice. Not only does the novel fade any third person narrative figure to the background to let individual characters' consciousnesses flow, but it also employs the sequential points of view of several Londoners reacting to shared events, such as a car accident and the chiming of Big Ben, in order to form a sort of modern community of their own. On the other hand, a multitude of points of view in and of itself does not guarantee a true communal voice invested in mutually authorizing voices; as Lanser (1992, 256) already emphasized in 1992, collective protagonists do not necessarily entail communal voice.⁸¹ Perhaps the narrative style in *Mrs. Dalloway* rather stresses the individuality of each voice, and the distances between different points of view, even when characters take part in shared events.

As will become evident in this chapter, what makes American regional modernism's approach to the issue of modernity so distinct is precisely its common use of omniscient, even authoritative third person narrators who do not fit into these traditional ways of understanding narration in modernism. Whereas Dawson (2013) emphasizes how omniscience has made a comeback in Anglo-American literature in recent decades, my point is that omniscience never

⁸⁰ Lanser (1992, 255) continues her discussion by explaining how the narrative turn is associated with changes in character and protagonist roles: "This formal possibility coincides with a period in women's writing in which, according to Rachel Blau DuPlessis, 'individual heroes' and 'sealed couples' are often replaced by 'collective' protagonists and 'groups which have a sense of purpose and identity, and whose growth occurs in mutual collaboration.' "

⁸¹ Thus, Lanser's (1992, 256) own research focuses on texts with a "convergence of representation and narration that occurs when a collective or group protagonist is represented through formal strategies that allow the plurality itself to speak."

vanished and in fact stayed very much alive within the modernist movement in the first half of the century through the works of regional modernists. In fact, out of all my primary literature, Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is the only one that could be categorized according to the conventional understanding of modernist narrative experimentation, and it is also the only one that hosts a true communal voice - in Lanser's terminology, that of a simultaneous we-narrator.

In contrast, in the short story sequences of Anderson, Strout, Porter, and Steinbeck, individualist narrators are not substituted for collective voices, and instead the texts host - to a varying degree - multiple markers that suggest the textual hierarchy of voices. The narrators of these texts not only show and describe, but also comment on, evaluate, and judge events and characters,⁸² thus elevating their own voice over characters in the debates over region, nation, and modernity. This despite the fact that the sequences have collective protagonists and a focus on representations of communities. The most authoritative narrator can be found in *Winesburg, Ohio*, and therefore the text easily comes forth as strikingly anti-modernist when studied in the context of narrative voice. But how exactly does the short story sequence produce such an effect, and what does it mean for our interpretation of it as a part of the American modernist canon?

In the second story of *Winesburg, Ohio*, titled "Paper Pills," the narrator of the sequence describes the twisted little apples left behind in the Winesburg orchards and their uniqueness and sweetness that only a few can understand: "One nibbles at them [--] one runs from tree to tree over the frosted ground picking the gnarled, twisted apples [--] Only the few know the sweetness of the twisted apples" (*WO*, 14). This description can be seen as a metafictional commentary on the narrator's task to value the forgotten and twisted citizens of an old rural area; to run from "tree to tree," character to character, and offer a portrayal of the forgotten ones left behind by modernity. The comment elevates the narrator to a status above others, as he belongs to the "few" who can understand the authenticity of the apples and show their true depth, that which is hidden inside. This framing of *Winesburg, Ohio* - as a text that reaches beyond the surface - continues the sequence's pattern of metafictional comments on the importance of knowing and revealing the private thoughts of people, of going deeper within.

⁸² On the different markers of narrators' visibility and intrusiveness, see Chatman's (1978, 196-252) chapter on covert versus overt narrators.

The text does, in fact, continuously make claims about the importance of reaching towards an authentic and private experience. It is the narrator's (or author's) task here to reveal from his elevated position something hidden and true, something perhaps lost in the wake of modernity. By explicitly addressing his (modern) readers, by establishing himself as a separate "I" in the text, and by giving metafictional commentary on what his stories are about and how they should be read, the narrator establishes his position as a writer and a storyteller through a number of stylistic choices and guides the reader in understanding his stories according to his intentions.⁸³

This elevated position, however, also creates a distance between the narrator and the "twisted apples" (*WO*, 14) he claims to understand and reveal to his readers. This can be seen perhaps most crucially in the text's internal focalization, and more specifically in the lack of free indirect discourse. As discussed in the two previous chapters in the context of classical narratology, what distinguishes free indirect discourse from other forms of consciousness representation is its ability to blur the lines between narrators and characters; it gives the narrator a chance to use a character's own idiom without clearly establishing whether the private thoughts and views expressed are those of the character or the narrator herself (Cohn 1978, 112).

In *Winesburg, Ohio*, the narrator's decision to represent his characters' interiority exclusively in direct and indirect discourse has, therefore, major consequences both in terms of form and content. Firstly, the use of these discourses ensures that even on a formal level there is a clear line drawn between the apples and their picker - between the characters and their narrator. The narrator establishes himself on a higher level and keeps himself linguistically separated from the characters and their language; there is no confusion, so typical in texts that use free indirect discourse, over whether the thoughts the reader encounters are the narrator's or not. Secondly, the use of direct and indirect discourse means that the text does not reveal the unconscious, most private, and perhaps authentic thoughts and emotions that are often conveyed through free indirect discourse. The critical and hidden remain unexpressed,

⁸³ Narrator situates himself and his modern reader as later generations through explaining historical context: "It will perhaps be somewhat difficult for men and women of a later day to understand Jesse Bentley. In the last fifty years a vast change has taken place in the lives of our people" (*WO*, 34).

Narrator establishes himself as a separate "I" and comments on his own narrative speed: "I go too fast. Not everything about Wash was unclean." (*WO*, 64).

Metafictional commentary and addressing the reader: "It is important to get that fixed in *your* mind. The story of Enoch is in fact the story of a room almost more than it is the story of a man" (*WO*, 92).

questioning the narrator's intention and ability to reach the true and the authentic. What happens, in fact, is precisely slight "nibbling" and "running" (*WO*, 14) from one apple and character to another. The authenticity claimed to exist in the rotten apples is left on surface-level; the narrator refuses to get mixed with the sweetness, and instead keeps his distance.

Perhaps it is indeed the narrator's ability to look at the twisted apples from afar that gives him the impression of their sweetness. Winesburg becomes the already-gone world of nostalgia, and the narrator invites his reader to look at the outcasts that modernity has left behind. The characters' isolation and loneliness in *Winesburg, Ohio* have traditionally been analyzed in these terms as a symptom of the modern world. Anderson's text has been understood to paint a picture of how a small town roughly 30 years prior to his own writing time is losing its sense of the authentic and the collective.⁸⁴ But there is something deeply contradictory in the narrator's style and intentions if studied in the context of authenticity and modernity. The narrator claims to show (the ruin of) the authentic individuals left behind in a world that is turning inauthentic, yet refuses to dig deep down into this authenticity and instead stays at the surface-level he so despises in his own contemporary culture. The citizens in Winesburg are unable to evaluate their own interiority or recognize the interiority of others, but this seems to have been a long-existing condition. There is no proof given of a previous, better time of authenticity, collectivity, and understanding.

In fact, I argue that *Winesburg, Ohio* portrays a troubling relationship between modernity and its past that cannot be simply defined as a nostalgic longing. The narrator's contradictory stance towards modernity is further developed in the few instances where he explicitly describes the scenery and effects of the modern, urban world:

They [the apples] have been put in barrels and *shipped to the cities* where they will be eaten in apartments that are *filled with books, magazines, furniture, and people*. (*WO*, 14.)

In our day a farmer standing by the stove in the store in his village has his *mind filled* to overflowing *with the words of other men*. The *newspapers and the*

⁸⁴ Thomas Yingling (1990, 122-123), for example, has used Walter Benjamin's thoughts on the disappearance of storytelling to eloquently show how *Winesburg, Ohio* marks the end of collectivity in our modern world. Yingling focuses on discussing modern threats to private relations and the alienating nature of urban culture through a Marxist analysis of the material conditions and labor relations of modernity. Though my own theoretical approach diverges from Yingling's, I agree with his interpretation of George Willard as the confidant of the town (though not as its new authentic storyteller, as Yingling suggests [125]), and find it a worthwhile move to contextualize *Winesburg, Ohio* with Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller" (1936). I will expand this conversation and return to Benjamin's thoughts later on as a way of understanding regional modernism's narrative choices.

magazines have pumped him *full*. Much of the old brutal ignorance that had in it also a kind of beautiful childlike innocence is gone forever. (*WO*, 34.)

As both quotes emphasize, modernity *fills*; it fills spaces with too many people and things, while minds get "pumped full" (*WO*, 34) with the ideas and words of others. What is significant here is the movement that takes place between the modern city and the rural past. Not only do the majority of people and apples get "shipped to the cities" (*WO*, 14) - while only the very few, twisted, and sweet ones are left in Winesburg - but, in addition, the sweet leftovers are hit by modernity as ideas travel through newspapers and magazines, filling their minds "with the words of other men" (*WO*, 34). It is quite paradoxical that a text that so clearly shows the isolation and loneliness of the sweet, twisted characters left in Winesburg takes such a critical stance against a modern form of *collective* experience and connection. Instead of seeing the traveling thoughts and words as a chance for communication between characters - even if in a more mediated form, through newspapers and magazines - this type of connectivity is portrayed as a threat, not as a possibility.

The narrator of *Winesburg, Ohio* further suggests that there is something beautiful in scarcity; not only of material things, but of people, of information, and of exchanging ideas. Thus, it is not a lost authenticity, nor a lost community that is turning Winesburg into another site of modernity. Instead, the historical transformation taking place is the loss of a simplicity, "ignorance," and "innocence" (*WO*, 34). Yet this longing turns out to be perpetual and not unique to the modern time; in the "Godliness" stories Winesburg's old farmer, Jesse Bentley, long before the time of narration "regretted the fate that had not let him live in a simpler and sweeter time" (*WO*, 38). Longing for a previous, simpler past is a fictional ideal that runs throughout generations, and is simply accelerated in the modern era and highlighted in the modernist short stories. The rural small town of Winesburg is not the last site of community and connection that become lost at the turn of the modern, but in quite a contradictory way, the site where loss and disconnection are already so emphasized that they form a need for the artistic creation of community, and the desire to leave for the city, as, for example, in the cases of George Willard and Elmer Cowley.

The narration becomes, therefore, one characterized by contradictions and anxiety. This can even be seen in the way the narrator on the one hand explicitly romanticizes ignorance as "beautiful childlike innocence" (*WO*, 34) while, on the other hand, through internal focalization implicitly reveals how this ignorance extends all the way to the characters' own

self-recognition, causing severe damage. Thus, perhaps the biggest threat seen in Anderson's text is the possible loss of authentic storytelling and communication, something associated with rural small towns, and something that can be lost in the modern way of life, where immediate contact between individuals is replaced with mediated and foreign ideas of "other men" (*WO*, 34).

This, I suggest, would also explain the narrative style of the text. I have argued that regional modernist works such as *Winesburg, Ohio* put a twist on our understanding of what exactly counts as narrative experimentation and refute traditional ideas of narrative voice in modernism. In the line of diachronic narratology, it is, furthermore, important to consider the specific historical-political context of these texts and to ask what makes the intrusive third person narrator preferable for some of the authors of the time. Third person narration is, after all, typically associated with objectivity, reliability, and stability - qualities that seem to be lost and heavily critiqued during the era of modernist innovations. Such a narrative choice could easily be dismissed as conservative, yet what if it attempts to establish a counter-culture of stability and collectivity at an age that no longer seems to value such things? I would therefore argue that regional modernist texts often purposefully employ an omniscient third person narrative style to emphasize their commentary on the loss of community. For, in a text that longs for a previous, more authentic way of communication, the employment of an authorial narrator can be seen to function as a replacement for an oral storyteller - a strong individual voice to whom everyone listens, and who has the power to propose truths about the world and bring individuals together.

The relationship between oral storytelling and modernity has been discussed most famously by Walter Benjamin in his essay "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov" (1969/1936). According to Benjamin, the art of storytelling is coming to an end because people are no longer able to exchange experiences with one another, and consequently wisdom has been replaced with mere information. Benjamin emphasizes that this process has been going on for a while, with the rise of the novel and its individual author as one of the main symptoms, yet it is a phenomenon that has reached its height in the modern information era.⁸⁵ Benjamin's main critique is employed towards the novel, which to him is a lonely craft in comparison to the fundamentally embodied and collective nature of oral

⁸⁵ Though Benjamin's own context is that of mainland Europe, similar developments, even in accelerated form, took place in the U.S., which became the epitome of modernity in the first decades of the 20th century.

storytelling. But, quite surprisingly, he sees even the short story as a genre too far removed from such traditional storytelling practices. Here, Benjamin quotes Paul Valéry and adds:

"Modern man no longer works at what cannot be abbreviated." In point of fact, he has succeeded in abbreviating even storytelling. We have witnessed the evolution of the "short story," which has removed itself from oral tradition and no longer permits that slow piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers which constitutes the most appropriate picture of the way in which the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings. (Benjamin 1969, 93.)

In literary scholarship, oral storytelling has been seen as integral to the formation and flourishing of the American short story genre, especially within local color tradition (Nagel 2015, 5). Conversely, Benjamin in 1936 suggests that the written short story is rather a sign of modernity's need to abbreviate than a continuation of the oral storytelling tradition. Since the communal and repeated nature of storytelling is lost in the modern era, the written short story cannot produce the same effect of listeners (or readers) retelling a narrative forward, shot through with their own experience. The point is that there are fundamental *differences* in the production of meanings once we move from an embodied oral storyteller to the bodiless narrator of written fiction.⁸⁶

Thus, when I claim that regional modernist texts with their omniscient narrators purposefully comment on or reach for the narrative style of oral storytelling, this is not to suggest that "natural" and fictional storytellers are the same. What the written story lacks in embodied collectivity, it covers up with the formal construction of collective experience. The American short story sequence becomes a particularly interesting genre in this matter, since it not only wavers between oral and textual storytelling, but also between the genres of the novel and the individual short story. Thus, the sequence creates a special formal relationship between the individual and the whole; the individual chapter or story and the whole of the text.⁸⁷ Works such as *Winesburg, Ohio* mimic this formal quality in their discussion of the relationship between a rural community and its individual townspeople - in a way, the textual community of stories replaces the actual one of the oral storyteller.⁸⁸ Thus, it is no wonder that the short

⁸⁶ In this way, Benjamin's thoughts are in opposition to contemporary cognitive and natural narratological claims about the "natural" nature and origin of fictional narrators.

⁸⁷ See also Kennedy's (1995) discussion on the genre's formal qualities as producing a community of its own, with *Winesburg, Ohio* as one of his examples.

⁸⁸ The same can be said of Porter's *The Old Order: Stories from the South*, Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven*, and Strout's *Olive Kitteridge*.

Intriguingly enough, Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" has been analyzed in terms of its oral story-like qualities, even though it hosts a collective we-narrator instead of the type of omniscient third person one I analyze here in

story sequence or cycle became the genre used by so many (regional) modernists who wanted to discuss issues of the possible losses of community, authentic communication, and storytelling.

Turning back to the issue of narrative theory and narrative voice, what remains unclear, however, is the extent to which such stories are able to be *polyphonic*. Though I have briefly, in the previous chapter, referred to the concept "monological" when analyzing *Winesburg, Ohio's* narrative style, it is time to clarify the definition of the term, and explain how it originates from Mikhail Bakhtin's (1989) theory on polyphonic narration in Dostoevsky's novels. As Bakhtin explains:

A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (Bakhtin 1984, 6; italics in the original.)

In Bakhtin's coining of the term, polyphony manifests itself as a multitude of equal voices and consciousnesses in literary fiction.⁸⁹ In opposition to this is the unitary "monological" novel where characters - instead of being subjects - become the objects of authorial discourse as their points of view are subordinated to the voice of the author (Bakhtin 1984, 7–8). Though Walter Benjamin does not discuss the matter of polyphony per se, his idea of the piling of layers through multiple retellings points towards a multitude of voices in the historical process of oral story formation, even if the storyteller herself is an individual. On the other hand, written short story sequences such as *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Olive Kitteridge*, which move their focus from one character to another in each chapter, would on a superficial level suggest that such texts are able to produce a multitude of textual voices in the sense of Bakhtin's polyphony. And yet, what is significant here is Bakhtin's emphasis on the *equality* of such voices; the multitude of points of view in and of itself is not a guarantee of

my other primary texts. For example, John L. Skinner (1985, 43) writes that "the story could almost pass as an example of oral composition with Faulkner himself assuming the more modest role of transcriber and editor," and, similarly, Clay Morton (2005, 8) argues that Faulkner's story is more characteristic of oral performance than print fiction. Morton analyzes the orality-literacy opposition of the story and Miss Emily's refusal to "accept the diminishing importance of orality in an increasingly typographic culture" (2005, 7). Though the distress over a loss of oral culture might be similar in Anderson's and Faulkner's texts, the type of narrator chosen brings out different modes of such a culture: Faulkner's we-narrator rather mimics the oral culture of gossip and gossip's communal, simultaneous tellers and accumulations of different versions, whereas the omniscient narrator in Anderson comes closer to Benjamin's idea of storytelling as individual craftsmanship.

⁸⁹ See also Liisa Steinby's (2013, 37-54) extensive discussion of Bakhtinian polyphony.

polyphony, since such points of view can simultaneously be hierarchically ordered. This is exactly the reason why I have argued that Anderson's sequence, with its authorial narrator that takes center stage and holds himself above his depicted characters, is a deeply monological text.

An interesting contrast to *Winesburg, Ohio* in this matter can be found in Katherine Anne Porter's short story collection *The Old Order: Stories of the South*. Despite the fact that Porter's text has an omniscient narrator who does not remain entirely neutral and at times casts events in an ironic or sympathetic light, the collection can still be characterized as giving more space for characters' voices to be heard. In the chapters regarding a Southern girl Miranda and her extensive family networks, oral stories and memories of not only a number of characters but also of entire generations become entwined. The text allows different characters to take on the role of storyteller and it often blurs their voices into a familial mix, as the narrated time jumps between several pasts and presents. In Benjamin's words, we can see the piling of multiple layers of storytelling take place.

In fact, Miranda's family is defined through its habit of storytelling, starting from the girl's Grandmother and Nannie: "They talked about the past, really - always about the past [--] Who knows why they loved their past?" (*OO*, 13). This continues on to the younger generations, who share a "family feeling and a love of legend" (*OO*, 109) and who are utterly fascinated with the tales their elders tell over and over again:

[The family members] loved to tell stories, romantic and poetic, or comic with a romantic humor; they did not gild the outward circumstance, it was the feeling that mattered. Their hearts and imaginations were captivated by the past, a past in which worldly considerations had played a very minor role. Their stories were almost always love stories against a bright blank heavenly blue sky. (*OO*, 109–110.)

Whereas in *Winesburg* the past is lost or at least about to be lost, here, in Porter's text, the past resurfaces through the acts of remembering, discussing, and retelling. As we have already seen with Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," the past is always present in the Southern context: the old order is not gone but continues to exist simultaneously with the present. In the majority of stories in Porter's work, the past is seen as something sentimental and romanticized - not necessarily as something qualitatively better than the present (as *Winesburg, Ohio* hints at), but rather as something far more fascinating and exciting. The

characters treat themselves and their lives as heroes and stories,⁹⁰ and the narrator even comments on how it took a while for Miranda and her sister to begin to learn the difference between life and story (*OO*, 139). Yet, just as in "A Rose for Emily," the same romanticized past has the ability to turn into something utterly haunted and dead:

Photographs, portraits by inept painters [--] and the festival garments folded away [--] were disappointing when the little girls [Miranda and her sister Maria] tried to fit them to the living beings created in their minds by the breathing words of their elders. (*OO*, 109–110.)

faded merriment [--] the kind of vase and the kind of curtains no one would have anymore. The clothes were not even romantic looking, but merely mostly terribly out of fashion, and the whole affair was associated, in the minds of the little girls, with dead things. (*OO*, 107–108.)

Once the little girls encounter actual historical objects such as photographs, clothes, and furniture in their attic, something gets twisted in their relationship with the past. According to the characters, the past can and should co-exist with the present, but only through stories that make it alive and breathing. Historical objects and portraits, on the other hand, are "dead things" (*OO*, 108) that "have no place in the world" (*OO*, 137). There is a deep chasm between actually *seeing* versions of the past, and *hearing* tales about it. The former seems to ruin the romanticism of the gone world, making it too real and out of date.⁹¹

In terms of collective experience and a community's relationship with the past, there is another significant difference between Anderson's and Porter's texts. In the latter, Midwestern small town affiliations of Winesburg are replaced with a Southern familial affiliation. Indeed, in *The Old Order: Stories of the South*, storytelling and remembering the past become a familial matter - in fact a blood matter - as storytelling keeps the family collective alive and binds together even those relatives that are already dead or live far away. However, the continuing presence of the past leads the children to be brought up "in an out-of-date sentimental way of thinking" which becomes an issue as the narrator describes how "times were changing, the old world was sliding from under their feet, [and] they had not yet laid hold of the new one" (*OO*, 49). This old order that the narrator refers to throughout separate stories is deeply connected with southern customs, from the end of slavery to gendered details

⁹⁰ As, for example, cousin Amy pronounces: "And if I am to be the heroine of this novel, why wouldn't I make the most of it?" (*OO*, 132).

⁹¹ A parallel can be found in the figure of Emily in Faulkner's short story; through her presence, Emily is a haunting historical burden and a visible reminder of previous times.

of proper decorum. The narration shows how storytelling is not only a way to keep the family alive, but through the family, to keep the South alive as its own, isolated world and culture.

The fact that South is seen as exceptional is hinted at through digressive comments on behalf of the characters, for example on what it means to be a "good southerner" (*OO*, 117), or how Edgar Allan Poe is "our", that is, a "Southern" writer (*OO*, 115). Southern exceptionalism has deep roots in U.S. history and has been used both by Southerners and the rest of the nation in debates over regional differences. For example, Leigh Anne Duck (2006) examines how the portrayal of the South as a backward and conservative region in an otherwise liberal and democratic nation has been exploited both by white supremacists in the South as justification to uphold racial oppression, as well as by U.S. historiography and national discourses as a way to explain away racism and segregation both in the Depression era, as well as in the Cold War era, as issues that were culturally separate from the progress of the rest of the country. Thus, in the manner of cultural pluralism and relativism, the South has functioned as an essentialist region and a trope that simply has its own particular culture and tradition (Duck 2006, 21).⁹²

I would like to highlight here that though Porter's stories negotiate the exceptionalist nature of Southern culture and reinforce the idea of the South as having its own history, customs, and past that can be seen to uphold strict roles for example in terms of gender and race, these are not depicted as something essentially true, but rather as something that become reinforced precisely through the stories and discourses repeated in the family.⁹³ Thus, storytelling and keeping the past (South) alive are not only healing processes, but also - towards the end of Porter's short story cycle - possibly damaging acts.

A significant paradigm shift happens in the last part of the collection's concluding story, "Old Mortality," as the text follows Miranda's point of view during her train travel back home to

⁹² Duck's (2006) effort is to show how Southern modernists such as Zora Neale Hurston and William Faulkner (she does not discuss Katherine Anne Porter) challenged the purported division between the national and the regional (246) and how, especially in the 1930s and early 1940s, they represented the South "as a coeval region with strained but undeniable ties to the larger nation" (212), thus making it impossible to view apartheid simply as a Southern anomaly within U.S. governance.

⁹³ Furthermore, I want to emphasize how the text balances between showing the South as its own culture and the South as tied with the rest of the nation. On the one hand, the text does suggest that the South is 'the other' of the new world, the old order that is left behind modernity. On the other hand, as aunt Eva describes to Miranda in the last story, the South was connected not just to the rest of the nation, but to the whole world: "In our part of the country, in my time, we were so provincial [--] The whole world was a little that way [--] but we [the South] were the worst" (*OO*, 164). Provincialism is here seen as backwardness, but it was the whole country that was detrimental - especially to women - in Eva's retelling, with the South judged to be the "worst."

attend the funeral of a relative. The previous stories' romantic views of storytelling become deconstructed as Miranda, completely disillusioned after a discussion with her aunt Eva, comes to realize the multitude - and fictionality - of stories she has based her life on. After listening to Eva's drastically different version of past events, Miranda concludes in her mind that Eva's stories are just as romantic and fictional as all the others she has previously heard.⁹⁴ This leads to a collapse of Miranda's identity and to a hatred towards the older member of the family:

"It is I who have no place," thought Miranda. "Where are my own people and my own time?" (*OO*, 179.)

She knew too many stories like them, she wanted something new of her own. The language was familiar to them, but not to her [--] her blood rebelled against the ties of blood. (*OO*, 180.)

Her mind closed stubbornly against remembering, not the past but the legend of the past, other people's memory of the past, at which she had spent her life peering in wonder like a child [--] I won't have false hopes, I won't be romantic about myself. I can't live in their world any longer. (*OO*, 182.)

Thus, the collection as a whole moves from the positivity of family, oral storytelling, and the romantic past to Miranda absolutely reversing her attitude towards all the above. In the last pages of the story, narrative voice gains exceptionally high importance, as Miranda's own voice pushes forth and the narrator represents her "I" in direct speech, as seen in the above examples. Meanwhile, her relatives become aliens, talking about "their dead, their living, their affairs [--] their common memories" (*OO*, 180) in opposition to the shared "our" of previous stories. Here, oral storytelling, the past, the South, and the family are shown as completely entwined: Miranda's wish to let go of "their" old world and the past is simultaneously a wish to leave the family ("her blood rebelled" [*OO*, 180]) and the old order of the South. Whereas *Winesburg, Ohio* is critical of modernity while showing a small town already deprived of shared local customs, *The Old Order: Stories of the South* ends by presenting such shared customs⁹⁵ and the past - the Southern old order, instead of the modern one - as something

⁹⁴ "Of course it was not like that. This is no more true than what I was told before, it's every bit as romantic" (*OO*, 176).

⁹⁵ Indeed, unlike *Winesburg* that already seems to lack traditions or events that would bring the townspeople together in an old-fashioned and authentic way, the stories in *The Old Order: Stories of the South* host a number of traditions that bring the family members - hundreds of them - together on several occasions. Local tradition plays a much stronger role here and thus shows the strong collective experience that *Winesburg* lacks.

suffocating and backward in Miranda's mind. It is all the more fitting that this transformation takes place during Miranda's travel on a train, a symbol of modernity.⁹⁶

Yet, in a final, ironic turn, the narrator calls into question Miranda's ability to escape the past, the South, and the family in the last sentence of the entire text: "At least I can know the truth about what happens to me, she assured herself silently, making a promise to herself, in her hopefulness, *her ignorance*" (OO, 182). In the very last words, the narrator moves the focus from Miranda's point of view to her own, hierarchically higher voice that authoritatively decides the correct interpretation for Miranda's assertions at the end of the short story cycle. Miranda's critique and rejection of storytelling is not shared by the narrator, who mocks her assumption that one can simply rid one's self of surrounding narratives and discourses. Perhaps it is a warning that Miranda won't, after all, be able to shed her past and her family - or that Miranda, too, will once become an old order of her own, her truths turning into romanticized stories not unlike the ones of her relatives.

A common thesis in narrative scholarship that deals with experimentally polyphonic and communal voices is that these forms have been employed especially in fiction written by and about minorities. For example, Lanser (1992, 22) notes that "unlike authorial and personal voices, the communal mode seems to be primarily a phenomenon of marginal or suppressed communities." Similarly, Brian Richardson (2006, 46), in his unnatural theory of we-narration, suggests that a "substantial number of colonial and postcolonial authors" use the form to express their struggles, while it can also function as a prefiguration of new, more communal societies for groups as diverse as "socialists, feminists, and Third World intellectuals" (2006, 56). This idea is not exclusive to communal voices but reaches also to other forms of narration that can be characterized as polyphonic. Hertha D. Wong (1995, 184) discusses in her analysis of Louise Erdrich's short stories how many twentieth-century writers, and women writers of color in particular, emphasize multiple narrators, recreate oral narratives for the written page, and thus "maintain community through literary discourse."⁹⁷ According to these theories, such narrative practices have ideological potential, for they may

⁹⁶ Miranda could be seen as a Bildungsroman protagonist similar to George Willard in *Winesburg, Ohio*, since they both decide to leave their home regions and families by train at the end of the short story sequences.

⁹⁷ Wong, furthermore, highlights how a single narrative device can be employed for contradictory purposes. As an example, for many Native American writers multiple protagonists do not "reflect fragmentation, alienation, or deterioration of an individual voice, as is often suggested by modernist and postmodernist explanations, but the traditional importance of the communal over the individual" (Wong 1995, 173). Similarly, Kennedy (1995, xiv) suggests that the genre of the short story sequence produces a different formal interpretation depending on who uses it: "Whereas ethnic and minority sequences often affirm an ongoing sense of community, collections portraying mainstream, middle-class life typically emphasize the precariousness of local attachments."

be used to counter various power structures - from the Western novel that has historically been "individualistic and androcentric" (Lanser 1992, 22), to the "extremes of bourgeois egoism and the poverty of an isolated subjectivity" (Richardson 2006, 56), to cite a few.

Perhaps the omniscient and third person narration employed by regional modernists should, additionally, be analyzed against these reflections on communal and polyphonic voice. If communal and polyphonic narration is used especially by marginalized groups, isn't it quite fitting for white and patriarchal small town communities to be described in removed third person, with a single hierarchically higher voice of truth? The realist idea of the scientifically reliable, omniscient point of view of the third person, as well as the concept of individual authorship, are after all highly connected to a white, Western worldview. The strong, oral storyteller-like narrator of *Winesburg, Ohio* attempts to create a sense of nostalgic longing for a traditional community, yet it is a community that turns out to be quite exclusive, hierarchical, and even made-up. In addition to the monological narrative style of the sequence, storytelling takes place without an embodied collective experience even on the mimetic level. After all, George's stories are published in a mediated form through *The Winesburg Eagle* newspaper, rather than through communal gatherings. The narrator of *Winesburg, Ohio* seems to respond to a crisis in the lost art of storytelling and community, but at the same time this crisis is perhaps specific to a masculine and white world - it is the problem of a white and patriarchal rural community that is disintegrating in its own impossibility in the midst of the modern. In Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" and Porter's *The Old Order: Stories of the South*, on the other hand, communal bonds are strengthened through embodied gossiping, remembering, and storytelling that also allow for multiple voices to be heard and several characters to take on the role of storyteller. It is, therefore, perhaps not surprising that the most polyphonic examples in my primary literature - when it comes to questions of narrative voice - are the Southern ones that are aware of and account for the region's past that is defined by its intersectional issues of racism, sexism, and classism. Yet, as we have seen, even in Porter's cycle it is the storyteller-narrator who holds the last word.

Finally, as a way of tying together these thoughts on the poetics of collective experience and omniscient narrative voice, I want to bring in one of the most discussed themes of Anderson's text: namely, the ethics of storytelling and artistic construction. In his book *Narrative Ethics*, Adam Newton (1997, 109) sees *Winesburg, Ohio* as an example of language that "exists in a state of exile;" language, here, does not mediate interiority and falls short of accommodating

experience. While in Newton's view reporting in *Winesburg, Ohio* is implied to become linguistic violence, much earlier scholarship on the text has more positively argued for George Willard's ability, as a future storyteller, to redeem the people of Winesburg through retrospectively telling their tales.⁹⁸ However, my narrative analysis of the short story sequence expands on and somewhat contradicts these interpretations. On the one hand, the retrospective narration of *Winesburg* does *not* host true redemption for its characters; as analyzed before, in each individual chapter the text merely scratches the surface to show how constructed and fabricated the characters' thoughts and understanding of the self are. Instead of being a site of redemption, the narration often becomes a site of anxiety and conflict. Yet, the text as a whole is able to show that the real ethical issue and risk at hand isn't Newton's discussed loss and violence of reporting and turning a character's life into a narrative, but the loss that happens through non-communication.

Over and over again, Anderson's text manifests the risks of non-storytelling, of not being in dialogue with yourself and others, and thus shows the threat of becoming entrapped on surface-level interiority where true self-recognition becomes blocked. This becomes one of the thematic elements that runs throughout the sequence. On the one hand, *Winesburg, Ohio* certainly seems to discuss the possible issues at hand when turning someone's life into a story; the citizens of Winesburg are turned into oral-story-like characters whose quotidian experiences are narrated as adventures,⁹⁹ and the narrator constantly emphasizes their lives as "stories": "The story of Louise Bentley [--] is a story of misunderstanding" (*WO*, 43), "The story of Wing Biddlebaum is a story of hands" (*WO*, 10). However, instead of seeing this reporting as violence, the text shows, most importantly, the violence that the townspeople are performing on themselves through non-communication. One could argue that the narrator leaves the characters in their lonely and isolated position, but at the same time the text

⁹⁸ For instance, Edwin Fussell (1960) argues that the nostalgic longing and emotions of *Winesburg, Ohio* become fulfilled by implication through the future art of George. In a similar manner, Ralph Cinancio (1970, 1004) states that George becomes the savior of the "grotesques" of Winesburg: through George's artistry, the characters' lives "will be redeemed: though they will not be made whole and beautiful, the peculiar value of their twisted state will be recognized." An interesting comparison can be found in Stouck (1969, 146), who counters previous criticism's tendency to view *Winesburg, Ohio* in "as positive a light as possible" and instead interprets the text as revealing the failure of art.

⁹⁹ The narrator has a habit of framing his stories as "adventures," thus turning even the seemingly small and most mundane events (or lack of events) of his characters' lives into something exciting and worth telling: "One day in August Doctor Parcival had an adventure in Winesburg" (*WO*, 26), "George Willard had set forth upon an adventure. All day he had been trying to make up his mind to go through with the adventure and now he was acting" (*WO*, 27), "One evening during her first winter in Winesburg, Louise had an adventure that gave a new impulse [--]" (*WO*, 47), "When David Hardy was a tall boy of fifteen, he, like his mother, had an adventure" (*WO*, 49).

expresses that isolation to the reader, thus giving the characters a chance to be heard, seen, and possibly understood at least through the act of narrating. The narrator allows the townspeople to have "adventures" in lives that often lack any sort of action and communication.

Artistic and ethical value can also be analyzed by returning to the question of collectivity and community. According to Yingling (1990, 122), isolated individuals such as artists and writers "may experience and express the will or experience of the collective by virtue of their isolation"; an artist can express, create, and produce collectivity where it has already been lost through his "solitary access to universal reality." Yingling, as many scholars before him, analyzes George as such a storyteller and a connecting link in the town of Winesburg. However, in this chapter I have moved from the level of the characters to the level of narration and highlighted the narrator's position in the question of collective experience; the narrator is, after all, the isolated storyteller through which the reader has access to Winesburg. The local newspaper that George works for can be seen as the storyworld's equivalent to the text of *Winesburg, Ohio*: "The paper on which George worked had one policy. It strove to mention by name in each issue, as many as possible of the inhabitants of the village" (WO, 72). *Winesburg, Ohio* strives to mention and connect all of the town's isolated characters, similarly to what Yingling suggests, but it is significant to note that this happens precisely through artistic construction and fictionality; *Winesburg, Ohio* thus highlights the *poetics* of collective experience. The characters become linked through their similar destinies and isolation becomes shared, but only when it is fictionally represented through an omniscient, outsider narrator who collects the separate stories into one short story sequence, and the isolated minds into a community of loneliness.

It is quite a well-established idea in post-colonial studies to see storytelling as empowering, because it can create communities within marginalized and suppressed peoples and counter the grand metanarratives of history (e.g. Wong 1995, 184). *Winesburg, Ohio*, though obsessed with the importance of storytelling, does not host such a redemption for its characters or readers, and perhaps rightfully so. Though marginalized geographically by laying on the fringes of modern developments, the community of Winesburg is toxic due to its strictly misogynistic gender and social norms. Thus, the collective experience here, instead of being an empowering and communal force, is the artistic construction of a narrator who can create a sense of connectedness and have the characters' stories - or adventures - be heard by his

readers from his elevated and isolated position. As my analysis of the text's social minds already showed, instead of authenticity, there is a sense of artistic artificiality in Anderson's sequence. Perhaps the type of community portrayed in Winesburg should only be nibbled at, and then left to decay.

4.3 The All-American Community? Region, Nation, Modernity

Despite a lack of recognition in literary history and criticism until recent decades, regional modernism holds a central place in the American modernist literary history. Regional modernist texts were produced simultaneously with urban modernist experimentations, and, thus, they have been a major part in the world-building of the modernist movement in the U.S. More specifically, set in the countryside and small towns of the U.S., regional modernism is able to negotiate what meaning these localities have in the midst of urbanization, industrialization, the rise of mass market and consumer culture, as well as the emergence of the U.S. as a growing world power. So far, I have focused on the poetic ways in which regional texts produce the effect of collective experience, but as has already become evident, these questions of American small town communities are inherently ideological and tied to the theme of what it means to be American in the modern era.

In fact, instead of being merely local, regional modernism takes part in contemporary discussions about American culture and nationalism. The U.S. was, to a large extent, a fragmented group of isolated regions and villages during the 19th century until modern developments, such as mass consumer culture and extensive transit systems, united the vast country. Whether the regional localities were shown as utopian projections of what it means to be an American, or whether they were seen as the other to not only modernity, but to American identity in general during this time, differs significantly when moving from one part of the country to the other. This section moves on from the previous narratological discussion to map some of the ways in which representations of small town communities situated themselves in the debates over American identity, while continuing the conversation on regional differences in the representations of collective experience.

Ryan Poll (2012), who has studied the relationship between small town imagery and American national discourse, argues that instead of capitalist modernity threatening or killing the small town, it rather provided the conditions for the small town to become a dominant and

romanticized ideological force. According to Poll, the United States began to identify with a small town imaginary while its empire was expanding throughout the 19th century and continuing into the 20th, in order to repress a recognition of the country as an empire (2012, 16). Thus, by using Marxist cultural criticism, Poll analyzes literary and political discourses to show that the small town ideologically stages "an authentic and autonomous American space, culture, history and identity [--] in which a small town's community is the nation's community, a small town's history is the nation's history" (2012, 8).

Winesburg, Ohio, on the other hand, represents to Poll a paradigm shift of the early 20th century where the previous literary representations of the American small town as a sacred, self-contained, and innocent space become challenged. Instead, Poll reads Anderson as a part of the modernist "revolt from the village" movement that subverted the nation's ideological identification with the dominant village imaginary (2012, 39).¹⁰⁰ In Poll's analysis, Winesburg is a "suffocating prison" while George Willard is understood to become one of a thousand other city-dwellers, losing his unique identity as he becomes another clog of the capitalist modern society after leaving Winesburg (2012, 44). In fact, Poll claims that capitalism will erase differences between the rural and the urban as it forges "a unified, national market" where both rural and urban citizens consume the same commodified culture and ideas (2012, 60).

A fear of such commodification and mass culture is additionally discussed in Susan Hegeman's *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (1999), where she explores the new concept of "culture" and the emergence of a self-awareness of an "American way of life" from the 1920s onward. However, in Hegeman's analysis, differences between urban and the regional are not erased but in fact heightened by modernization. By looking at how the concept of culture - and more specifically American culture - came to be understood and domesticated in anthropological and modernist¹⁰¹ literary discourses of the time, Hegeman shows how modernization was not an equal and democratic process in the U.S., but instead created regional and class-based differences in the country through which ideas of

¹⁰⁰ Yet, Poll (2012) ends his analysis somewhat paradoxically by claiming that the novel ends in an ideological turn where the small town *does* become something that the individual is encouraged to return to; an idealized, romanticized, and happy place. Thus, Poll builds an argument about the exceptionality of what he defines as the "American Bildungsroman," where the small town is not a place left behind, but rather a space to which Americans are invited and encouraged to return (2012, 47).

¹⁰¹ For Hegeman (1999, 19), who has a strong focus on anthropology, modernism is both a historical period and an ideology; she understands it most importantly as "a periodizing concept, characterized by a nexus of related historical, intellectual, technological, and aesthetic developments, rather than by a set of formal traits or styles."

low, middle, and highbrow culture were established (1999, 129). Thus, Hegeman sees especially the thirties as a particular moment in history where national identity becomes articulated in terms of "culture," while, simultaneously, the same concept becomes deployed to suggest ways in which Americans were different from each other (1999, 129).

In relation to my analysis, what is particularly significant in Hegeman's discussion is the double-sided view of regionalism in this context: while regionalism mobilized a populist antiurbanism and was seen by some as a counterweight to conformity and totalitarianism, its (urban) critics associated the movement with not just the middlebrow, the Midwest, and the middleclass, but furthermore with potential fascism.¹⁰² This reaction against regionalism was fueled by the idea that the Midwestern people "belonged not to an organic 'culture' but to a liminal - middle - space in transition to full modernity, too replete with the goodies of a massified consumer culture" (1999, 137) and thus susceptible to conformity and fascism.

Turning back to my case studies, perhaps *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) anticipates this fear by some decades. The twisted grotesques of the old Winesburg before the turn of the century are sweet and unique, but already lack a communal and local culture, thus possibly turning into something rotten through foreign, modern ideas. After all, the only acceptable mode of contact is the local one: the town's own newspaper, the *Winesburg Eagle*, is highly appreciated, and George Willard draws much admiration and celebration from others because of his role as the reporter of the town. Meanwhile, the narrator condemns nation-wide newspapers and other forms of media in a pronounced manner as disseminating the words of other men. Perhaps the fear portrayed in the sequence is not only of a loss of authentic communication and bonding through oral storytelling, but a fear of what these "grotesques" (*WO*, e.g. 8–10) might become when introduced with the modern capitalist world.

Thus, I have to disagree with the depth of the "revolt" Poll (2012) sees *Winesburg, Ohio* as taking part in. It is not the small town ideology that is seen as a threat or as something to criticize, but, rather, it is modernity that is seen as a threat to the small town. In fact, through its critique of foreign ideas and the romanticization of its grotesque characters, Anderson's text seems to be based on and long for precisely the island community era of isolated villages and regions. There exists a conflicted and anxious longing for a counterculture to the modern

¹⁰² For a full discussion, see Hegeman's (1999, 126-157) chapter "The Culture of the Middle: Class, Taste, and Region in the 1930s Politics of Art."

one, in which Americans across the country can share the same homogenized thoughts, typically produced in the urban areas and then disseminated to the rural regions.

Similar discussions can be found in John Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven*, a short story sequence that was deeply influenced by *Winesburg, Ohio*,¹⁰³ and that depicts the lives of individual characters and families in the fictional Californian valley of Las Pasturas del Cielo (Pastures of Heaven). Despite sharing many characteristics with Anderson's sequence, both in terms of content, theme, and form,¹⁰⁴ the representation of Las Pasturas del Cielo is in significant ways exactly what *Winesburg* only strives to be (in the narrator's wishes). In fact, Steinbeck's region is framed as a happy utopia in the very beginning of the sequence, as seen towards the end of the omniscient narrator's prologue:

After a long time a few families of squatters moved into the Pastures of Heaven and built fences and planted fruit trees. Since no one owned the land, they squabbled a great deal over its possession. After a hundred years there were twenty families on twenty little farms in the Pastures of Heaven. Near the center of the valley stood a general store and post office, and half a mile above, beside the stream, a hacked and much initialed schoolhouse. The families at last lived prosperously and at peace. Their land was rich and easy to work. The fruits of their gardens were the finest produced in central California. (*PH*, 4–5.)

This description of the valley follows immediately after the narrator's short (and somewhat ironic) account of the colonization, forced religious conversion, and slave work that took place in the nearby region on behalf of the Spanish army in the 18th century. As the narrator recounts, "by some regal accident" (*PH*, 4) the valley itself never became owned by a Spanish colonizer, and thus we can read it as a utopian patch of land that was able to remain pure and apart from the burdensome history of the U.S. The description of the valley is, indeed, too good to be true: in this simple, oral-story-like paragraph, we are invited to imagine an alternative account of free land without violence and ethnic conflict. Instead of wars and bloodshed, the fight over land ownership is described as child-like and innocent "squabbling" (*PH*, 4) that eventually led to complete prosperity and peace - presumably for all the inhabitants. In the beginning of *The Pastures of Heaven*, we can see the ideology of the

¹⁰³ As discussed by James Nagel in the "Introduction" to *The Pastures of Heaven* (1995).

¹⁰⁴ For example, similarities between the two texts include the portrayal of "grotesque" characters and tragic destinies, as well as discussions of how communities are formed in American small towns and what function storytelling and gossip have in these formations. In terms of the texts' formal features, in addition to the shared genre, the texts host similar omniscient and authoritative narrators, and, furthermore, Steinbeck's stories are united by a central character, Bert Munroe, much like Anderson's stories focus on the presence of George Willard in the lives of other characters.

American small town - as described by Poll - in full function. Here, the rural small town is envisioned as a sacred and safe place: a home of the nation, where families live in harmony, and where work bears not only fruit, but the best fruit of the entire region. Yet, the framing of the prologue, by immediately moving to this idyllic site after brief remarks on colonization, leaves the reader with an uneasy feeling; for such a utopian vision can only be built on a white fantasy where the exploitation and enslavement of Natives is erased.

This utopian vision becomes even more debatable once the text moves on from the prologue to the individual stories, in which harmonious hopes clash with the life stories of more or less tragic inhabitants of the valley. What makes the sequence troubling is the way in which the conflicts and misfortunes that take place in the valley are usually shown as coming from the outside; from characters who move to the region from other, and often urban, areas. For example, Bert Munroe, the central character and newcomer to Las Pasturas del Cielo, accidentally causes all types of havoc with his family to other citizens: from creating psychological conflicts to partly being responsible for the town's greatest house to burn down. Such a narrative of a small town community's untroubled life being disturbed by "outsiders" idealizes the dream of self-contained communities and fosters an environment where collective experience is produced through an othering of so-called aliens. On the other hand, the origin of Bert's misfortunate fate is told to stem from the ancient curse of the house he settles into when moving into the valley; in this way, the mythical roots of the town's misfortunes are to be found in the valley itself, ready to be activated by an outsider moving in.

Yet, it is important to note that this portrayal happens through the eyes of the narrator and not the characters themselves; it is often only the all-knowing and all-seeing narrator who can make the connection between a newcomer citizen and an accident that takes place in the region. Instead, the citizens themselves often heartily welcome newcomers, at least after some initial suspicion. For, despite the individual tragedies and grotesque life stories that take place in Steinbeck's valley, it is a much happier and more wholesome community than the one depicted for example in *Winesburg, Ohio*. The representations of the Californian valley often focus on local gatherings and customs that bring the townspeople together and show a healthy collective experience within the community - between both old and new residents.¹⁰⁵ Local tradition plays a much stronger role and thus shows the type of old-fashioned collectivity that *Winesburg* lacks. In addition, Steinbeck's sequence continuously comments on the gossip and

¹⁰⁵ As in the case of Raymond Banks' barbeque parties, where "everyone in the Pastures of Heaven" is regularly invited to gather (*PH*, 134).

oral stories the townspeople share, especially on the porch of the town's general store, and how these speech acts bring the valley together into a united group.¹⁰⁶

Despite occasional tragic fates and conflicts in the small town, perhaps the most significant trait of Steinbeck's Californian region is the fact that the valley is able to continue to produce utopian visions in whomever sets eyes upon it. In fact, the short story sequence has a motif of various male characters - throughout generations - gazing at the valley from up and afar, imagining their own future to take place in it. This motif begins in the prologue as the valley's first possible colonizer, a Spanish corporal, decides to set up a life in the valley - yet never manages to do so. The motif is repeated a century later through the character of Richard Whiteside who, in a very similar colonizing manner, decides to "found a dynasty" (*PH*, 171) and raise his family (which he even calls his "race", [*PH*, 179]) in the valley after gazing at it from afar:

In a few minutes he [the Spanish corporal] arrived at the top of the ridge, and there he stopped, stricken with wonder at what he saw— a long valley floored with green pasturage on which a herd of deer browsed. Perfect live oaks grew in the meadow of the lovely place, and the hills hugged it jealously against the fog and the wind. The disciplinarian corporal felt weak in the face of so serene a beauty. He who had whipped brown backs to tatters, he whose rapacious manhood was building a new race for California, this bearded, savage bearer of civilization slipped from his saddle and took off his steel hat. "Holy Mother!" he whispered. (*PH*, 3–4.)

When Richard Whiteside came to the far West in '50 [--] he drove his two bay horses to the top of the little hills which surround the Pastures of Heaven. He pulled up his team and gazed down on the green valley. And Richard knew that he had found his home. In his wandering about the country he had come upon many beautiful places, but none of them had given him this feeling of consummation. He remembered the colonists from Athens and from Lacedaemon looking for new lands described by vague oracles; he thought of the Aztecs plodding forward after their guiding eagle. Richard said to himself, "Now if there could be a sign, it would be perfect. I know this is the place, but if only there could be an omen to remember and to tell the children." (*PH*, 169.)

In both cases, the beauty of the landscape forces the men to stop, wonder, and speak to themselves. Steinbeck paints quite a typical colonial scene here, where the European wondering man can claim ownership over that which his gaze beholds. Ideas of manhood and racial supremacy are brought out explicitly - both in the narrator's ironic commentary on the

¹⁰⁶ As becomes evident already in the beginning of the sequence: "A pleasant shudder went through the people of the Pastures of Heaven when they heard that the old Battle farm was again to be occupied. The rumor was brought in to the General Store by Pat Humbert who had seen automobiles in front of the old house, and T. B. Allen, the store proprietor, widely circulated the story" (*PH*, 12).

Spanish corporal, as well as in Richard's own thinking, as he places himself in a historical line of colonizers, destined by God to take over the valley.

Steinbeck's Californian valley is far removed from the anti-modern drudgery of Anderson's Midwestern small town, and it is precisely the region itself that makes such a difference in the ways in which these places form communities. Thus, location becomes key when analyzing the way in which American regions are represented and fantasized in regional modernism. Steinbeck's sequence takes place on the West Coast, and is therefore associated with ideas of the Western frontier, discovery, and colonization. Consequently, it is not the place of the historical past as in the cases of Anderson's, Porter's and Faulkner's writing, but instead it is the place for projecting *future* American hopes. The myth of the Western frontier is ingrained in the idea of unlimited free land and possibilities, yet it is a myth that is, in practice, only available to a few on the expense of many others.

This is exactly where the strength of the ideology of the idealized, Western small town lies: despite the harsher reality of living in the valley as depicted in the chapters of *The Pastures of Heaven*, the idea of it as a dreamland continues through generations.¹⁰⁷ This thinking is reinforced and placed into ironic scrutiny in the epilogue of the short story sequence, where a modern bus pulls over to let tourists gaze at the area in the same spot where the Spanish corporal and Richard Whiteside had stood generations and centuries earlier:

"It's called Las Pasturas del Cielo," the driver said. "They raise good vegetables there— good berries and fruit earlier here than any place else. The name means Pastures of Heaven." The passengers gazed into the valley. The successful man cleared his throat. His voice had a tone of prophecy. "If I have any vision, I tell you this: Some day there'll be big houses in that valley, stone houses and gardens, golf links and big gates and iron work. Rich men will live there— men that are tired of working away in town, men that have made their pile and want a quiet place to settle down to rest and enjoy themselves. If I had the money, I'd buy the whole thing. I'd hold on to it, and sometime I'd sub-divide it." (*PH*, 200.)

In these last pages of the sequence, the narrator reveals how each tourist imagines the valley differently, projecting their own hearts' desires and naive fantasies on a piece of rural dream. As the bus driver sums up out loud: "I guess it sounds kind of funny to you folks, but I always like to look down there and think how quiet and easy a man could live on a little place" (*PH*, 200). Here, the regional location is associated with petiteness ("little"), "simplicity" and

¹⁰⁷ Although, as in Anderson and Porter, a member of the youngest generation leaves the region, as Richard Whiteside's grandson decides to move to the city in the last story of the sequence.

"quietness" (*PH*, 200) not much different from the ideal way of life the narrator of *Winesburg, Ohio* more or less implicitly promotes.¹⁰⁸ Thus, as Steinbeck's regional valley becomes envisioned in the end as an alternative to the complexities of modern urban dwelling, we have again moved to a nostalgia for a simpler rural life. Yet, *The Pastures of Heaven* takes a step further from *Winesburg, Ohio* in the process of modernization, for here the rural has taken on not the character of the past, but that of a commodified future space. In the Western part of the country, regionalism no longer presents a counter-culture against nationalist and homogenizing discourses, but has instead become a nationalist utopian dream, in fact a tourist site of consumption. Instead of regional localities each having their unique culture and way of living, the successful mans' projection of the site as having "big houses [--] gardens, golf links and big gates" (*PH*, 200) turns the valley into an identical version of any other American suburban dream.

The valley remains an American utopia from beginning to end, but it turns from the Spanish Corporal's and Whiteside's dreams of familial dynasty into a financial one. The motif of a successful man gazing at the valley is by no means new or unique to the time of modernity since the sequence has portrayed men wanting to colonize the valley, each in their own way, ever since the 18th century. In all of the instances, it is a man of capital who has the potential power to set foot in the valley to build something. In the Spanish corporal's case, it is military rank that earns him high prestige, whereas for Richard it is cultural and social capital with his high class and education that turns him into the most highly valued citizen of the valley. What is particular to the modern era, however, is the reign of financial capital. Whereas Richard's dream was that of establishing a familial dynasty, in the end of the sequence these blood-ties have been replaced with wishes to dominate American regions in a capitalist manner. The rural valley has become a generic clean slate, and even the "successful man" himself goes unnamed with no identifiable characteristics.

Thus, at the end of Steinbeck's sequence the countryside region is ready to be employed for the commercial usages of the modern age, where regions and people are turned to look, act, and think in the same, domesticated manner. Eight decades later, this generic and

¹⁰⁸ However, even though the tourists repeat the steps of the Spanish corporal and Richard Whiteside, their gazing remains on the level of projection. Their hopes have to do with escaping the meaningless and hectic modern city life into a small town that becomes associated with a simple and traditional way of being, but, as a young couple on the bus communicates to one another, this dream is implied to never actualize: "The young man raised his eyes from the land and smiled a confession to his new wife, and she smiled firmly and reprovingly back at him. His smile had said: 'I almost let myself think of it. It would be nice— but I can't, of course.' And hers had answered: 'No, of course you can't!' " (*PH*, 200).

commercialized quality has become an established and unnoticed fact in Elizabeth Strout's *Olive Kitteridge*. Whereas *Winesburg, Ohio* nearly a century earlier emphasizes the uniqueness and grotesque nature of its small town inhabitants, the small town in *Olive Kitteridge* seems quite generic. Some of the milieu descriptions of the surrounding nature make it suitable for a New England small town, but it might as well be any (white) American town. In a way, then, *Olive Kitteridge* functions as the future version of all these previous regional modernist sequences: in the 21st century, the small town is again quite idealized, yet with it comes the (even if implicit) romanticizing of homogenized middle-class whiteness where one's biggest concerns can be healed by a trip to a chain brand like Dunkin' Donuts:

"How about we stop at Dunkin' Donuts," she says. They like to sit in the booth by the window, and there's a waitress who knows them; she'll say hi nicely, then leave them alone. (OK, 67.)

Olive's private view is that life depends on what she thinks of as "big bursts" and "little bursts." Big bursts are things like marriage or children, intimacies that keep you afloat, but these big bursts hold dangerous, unseen currents. Which is why you need the little bursts as well: a friendly clerk at Bradlee's, let's say, or the waitress at Dunkin' Donuts who knows how you like your coffee. Tricky business, really. (OK, 69.)

Olive and her husband's trips to chain stores such as Dunkin' Donuts and Bradlee's are painted in a benevolent light; these are the little characteristics that make Olive humane and relatable for the reader. The American small town has reached, without criticism, the commodified mass culture version which Anderson's text warns about. There doesn't seem to exist a conscious understanding of one's milieu's historical-cultural past, nor anything rare or unique to the town of Crosby, other than its individual characters and their everyday conflicts. Instead, there is a sense of all-American small town life one could wish for - as long as that life is quite cozy, quite white, and quite middle-class.

5 Conclusion

Even the most "open" form for the inscription of the communal voice, then, ought not to be idealized; form is only possibility, the necessary but never sufficient means for transforming both fiction and consciousness. (Lanser 1992, 266.)

The point of this study has been to categorize, analyze, and interpret narratological ways in which texts are able to produce a collective experience and a sense of community. Throughout the chapters, my primary literature has highlighted the precarious nature of any given form, since, as Lanser has beautifully pointed out, form is only possibility, never a direct means to a specific end. Now, it is time to sum up what has taken place so far, as well as consider what issues should be further pursued in future scholarship.

I started my inquiry into the poetics of collective experience in chapter two by looking at references to the collective thinking of small towns that have not been studied previously in *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Olive Kitteridge*. I narrowed down the definition of "social mind" and suggested that it is particularly important to ask whose voice we hear when fiction presents social minds - the characters' or the narrator's? Additionally, because of fiction's ability to blur and blend the source of voices - as discussed in earlier narratological scholarship regarding free indirect discourse, and more recently in the context of we-narration - the question of the social mind's source is always an ambiguous and interpretive one.

In my analysis, when the small town of Winesburg is described to, for example, "agree," "feel," or "shake" its head, it is the *narrator* talking and producing a collective cognition. Thus, the town's social mind can be seen to function metaphorically as a narrative trick, instead of as a literal example of intermental thinking. The references to a collective mind not only emphasize the contrast between the apparent unity of the town and the isolation of each individual character, but they can also be interpreted to function as an ideological apparatus. The appearance of the social mind is, in fact, quite normative; it not only describes but simultaneously produces a standard of what a small town member is supposed to, for example, be proud or ashamed of.

Thus, in a way, the appearance of a social mind in fiction tells us less about how thinking works, and more about how social norms and hegemonic discourses work. Producing the illusion of a collective through a social *mind* is even more influential because the act of

feeling (pride, embarrassment, resentment, etcetera) can be understood as something that comes intuitively and instinctively, thus having associations of being natural instead of socially or artistically constructed. Therefore, it makes sense that the social mind shows up in instances where a character is behaving against set norms and ideas, creating a conflict between town and individual.

In contrast to the social mind functioning as a motif that puts characters back into their place, in *Olive Kitteridge* I analyzed it again as a narrative tool, yet this time as a summarizing device of the talking and gossiping of the town that simultaneously heightens the newsworthiness of the story at hand. In Strout's text such instances of collectiveness rather thematize how storytelling functions; how an incident turns into a tellable story, how the act of storytelling/gossiping can unite a group of people, and how that group's collective response to an incident heightens the significance of the story. This interpretation is a much more naturalizing reading of the social mind concept, since it shows how instances that may be categorized as intermental thinking actually turn out to be narratorial summaries of public talking. I concluded these examinations by studying how only in fiction, through a narrator who tells us so and whom the reader can rely on, is it even possible for us to interpret whether any type of social thinking can be said to work at all.

In chapter three, I moved on to analyze singular, individual characters as the basis of collective experience, with a focus on character theories that highlight representations of characters' bodies, embodied experiences, and their connection to voice. Theories of voice turned out particularly relevant because, in the short story sequences I study, the focus on a single character often happens through processes of storytelling and gossiping about female bodies. In order to battle Cartesian distinctions between body and mind, I followed the phenomenological tradition of understanding the body as involving two aspects - the physical, objectified Körper, and the lived sensation of embodiment, Leib. While the previous can be linked to an outsider point of view and such cognitive theories as Theory of Mind and mind reading - which were questioned at length in my analysis - the former allows the reader to get a sense of characters from a more insider perspective.

By analyzing the representations of characters' bodies together with the styles of mind speculation and attribution they are connected with, my primary literature revealed significant differences in the ways in which central female and male characters are described. The lack of Körper descriptions of *Winesburg, Ohio's* connecting male character, George, revealed how

he inhabits the type of body that is naturalized as default value in society. George's white, young, and heterosexual body is point zero that does not need to be explicitly represented, unlike all the deviations of it - female bodies, old bodies, bodies of other ethnicities, and bodies performing other sexualities - that require to be described and commented on. Meanwhile, the central female characters of *Olive Kitteridge* and "A Rose for Emily" are, to a large extent, defined as somewhat deviant from others precisely through their bodies. Whereas George functions as a reporter and storyteller of Winesburg, Olive and Emily connect other townspeople together by being the targets of mind guessing, mental state attribution, and gossip. George, associated with print culture and masculine cohesion, is positively seen as an insider of the town's collective, whereas Emily and Olive, associated with feminine intrusion and oral gossiping, are understood more as outsiders within their communities. The cases of Emily and Olive show, furthermore, that the more singular and different a character is interpreted to be from the rest, the more suitable she is for creating a sense of "us" within everyone else - and descriptions of the physical body of a character can help in creating such distances. Thus, in contradiction with some of the previous scholarship that has understood mind guessing and mental state attribution as benevolent acts, my interpretation highlighted characters' tendency to act in such ways as a means to justify previously held judgments of others and, consequently, keep other people at a distance.

These first two chapters focused on the question of how and through which devices collective experience can be created in narrative fiction. I wanted to see if cognitive narratology and literary interpretation could be bridged together by applying notions from the former to an interpretive study of collectivity in my primary literature. For quite a while it has seemed that cognitive narratology runs counter to the process of interpretation, as it is so focused on readers' basic sense-making of texts. Even though recent enactivist takes on cognitive narratology have entwined analysis and interpretation together and brought out real-world readers' interest in themes, these ideas on literary interpretation are still staggeringly far from the type of textual analysis and close reading produced, for example, here. To point out that readers find broad themes of parenthood or love in a text is not the same as analyzing, for example, the ambiguities in the way modernist literature construct ideas of American communities. Rather than dismissing the angle that enactivism takes on interpretation - which it claims is focused on ordinary readers - my point is to say that the type of interpretation called for and promoted here serves a different function. For I think that interpretation done and taught by literary scholars - experts of textual analysis - is still crucial today since it has

the possibility to examine the ideas, assumptions, and biases of literary texts that not only reflect but significantly produce readers' understandings of the world - whether readers are conscious of these processes or not.

Perhaps, rather than cognitive narratology giving new tools for literary analysis, diachronic literary analysis is able to pose a historical challenge to our 21st century notions of thinking. Moreover, as I highlighted throughout the chapters, many of the results of my analysis were proven by more classical narratological tools used for literary interpretation, rather than by cognitive theories. Thus, at the end of my study, though I am quite ambivalent about what help cognitive narrative theories can offer for literary interpretation, I am eagerly looking forward to future developments in the field.

In the fourth and last chapter of this work I moved away from cognitive narrative theory and returned to more classical notions of narrative voice. Modernist writing has typically been theorized - both in narrative theory and modernist studies - as a movement away from omniscient and reliable narration of the realist tradition towards narration that is marked by subjectivity, fragmentation, and multiple points of view. I challenged this view by arguing that what makes American regional modernism's approach to the issue of modernity so distinct is precisely its common use of omniscient, even authoritative third person narrators who do not fit into the traditional way of understanding narration in modernism. In my view, omniscient narration is part of the reason why regional modernism is so tuned to questions of community, the past, and different modes of storytelling. As a narrative strategy, it links together cultures of oral and textual storytelling. Therefore, voice in my analysis is not only a formal question in the narratological sense of narrator-character relations, but also modernist in an ideological sense: it becomes a device that shows how characters try to deal with the changing social conditions of the modern world.

Though I critiqued the narrow understanding that previous narrative studies have had of modernist voice, my focus in the last chapter shifted from narratological debates towards interpreting textual communities in my primary literature through the lens of regionalism. I analyzed the different ways in which regional modernism has represented and constructed the American small town and countryside: as an authentic and pre-modern national home about to be lost, as the backward other of the modern and progressive national discourse, all the way to the region as a national utopia on the one hand, while posing a possible consumer-conformist and fascist threat on the other. The setting of the region, from the Midwest to the South and

the West, plays a prominent role in the way in which these localities are imagined to function within the national discourses of the U.S.

Moreover, I argued that while regional modernism is able to negotiate the changing relationships between specific localities of the nation and the country as a whole in the midst of modernity, it also holds the potential to critically look at what is at stake in the changes taking place during modernity. With this I do not only mean the consequences of modernity on the traditional countryside (and forms of living associated with it, i.e. things possibly lost), but, in addition, regional modernist texts can also employ a critical look on the regions themselves and what they have been seen to represent, and thus analyze in what ways modernity may be liberating or a helpful paradigm shift to various peripheral characters. This is not to say that all regional modernist texts hold the potential to be critical, as they can, for example, also reinforce exclusive (rather than inclusive) ideas about what it means to be an American. But a study of these texts can help us understand the ways in which ideas about American culture, sub-cultures, and nationality were configured throughout the first decades of the 20th century.

Furthermore, if regional modernist texts are viewed as taking part in the discussions and debates over what it means to be American, as I suggest here, and if, furthermore, the countryside small town is seen as an American product, then the question of what kinds of characters are represented becomes particularly significant. Of whom does the American community consist? If the small town for example in Anderson's or Steinbeck's writing is seen as a symbol of the nation (whether as a lost or an imagined one) and the place of the "authentic" American, then these representations already mark racism and othering as deeply embedded aspects within the American nation. Namely, these small towns are particularly *white* dreams, as highlighted perhaps best in the character of Richard Whiteside in Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven*. Whiteside is an educated white man who automatically becomes "the first citizen" (*PH*, 172) of the Californian valley after building a magnificent white house in which to establish his "dynasty" (*PH*, 173) - despite many families having lived in the valley for generations prior to him. In such a representation, legitimate citizenship is only established through white masculinity, and it is to such characters that the land of the valley belongs. I have attempted to highlight in this manner how categories of race and gender - and more particularly, issues of whiteness and misogyny - have affected the construction of collective experience in my case studies. Such intersectional issues, however, should be

pursued even further in future scholarship, and interpreted from the perspective of minority authors as well. I look forward to continuing to participate in these discussions, as I move on from this thesis towards dissertation writing.

The poetics and politics of collectivity are necessary questions to study because our understanding of community and the sense of where and with whom we belong extends from literary studies to, for example, the realm of politics. How is community portrayed in 21st century American literature and, perhaps more importantly, how do other cultural discourses, such as political campaigns, use strategic storytelling and play on shared ideas of community to appeal to readers, viewers, and voters? While focusing on the particularities of the genres of American regional modernism and the short story sequence, the hope of my inquiry is to bring together ideas on the general poetics and politics of collective experience and provide tools that can be later tested, contested, and expanded for use in texts outside of these particular genres. At the same time, it is an invitation for a comparative look at the poetics of collective experience: how do these ideas and formal devices change when moving to other national literatures besides that of the U.S.?

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