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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHARACTER AND SETTING:

A NARRATIVE STRATEGY

IN TONI MORRISON'S SONG OF SOLOMON

---

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

English Composition

---

by

Sally-Anne Josephson

June 1996

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Sally-Anne Josephson

June 1996

Approved by:

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Philip Page, Chair, English

*June 5, 1996*  
Date

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Rong Chen, English

[Redacted]

Rafael Correa, Foreign Languages

## ABSTRACT

Contemporary narrative theory holds that the narrator is the implied intermediary between the author and the reader and hence has considerable rhetorical power. The narrator chooses the setting for each character and decides how much description of the setting to include. Despite this, all narrative theorists keep the two separate, therefore ignoring the relationship between character and setting. Theorists discuss characters as people in fiction with representable human traits, and settings in terms of description and place. Thus, there is a gap in narrative theory which I fill by theorizing that a reciprocity exists between characters and settings and that it is a deliberate narrative ploy.

This thesis documents the development of my theory which builds on existing narrative theories and incorporates Grice's theory of implicature. I then illustrate my theory by exploring the relationship between the character of Pilate and her settings in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon. Through a close examination of the narrative strategy, both at the discourse and structural levels, I demonstrate a character/setting relationship that reveals more than a surface reading of the discourse.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### **Narrative Theory and Character/Setting Reciprocity**

Every character in fiction is placed within a setting by the narrator. Should the narrator omit sufficient description of the setting, we focus on the character and vice versa. If we are satisfied with merely allowing our eyes (and our imagination) to travel along the horizontal plane set out on the page by the lines of discourse, the narrator leads us through a surface reading of the text. We accept that each character must be in a setting, but we never stop to question why a particular setting, or more importantly, whether there exists between the character and setting a relationship, which if examined would cause us to travel down into the text, along what some narrative theorists call a vertical plane. To engage in such activity constitutes reading beneath the surface, which offers us an infinitely more satisfying understanding of the text.

To illustrate the above concern, consider the following excerpt from a setting in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon. The passage marks the beginning of the funeral service for Pilate's granddaughter:

A female quartet from Linden Baptist Church had already sung "Abide with Me"; the wife of the mortician had read the condolence cards and the minister had launched into his "Naked came ye into this life and naked shall ye depart"

sermon, which he had always believed suitable for the death of a young woman; and the winos in the vestibule who came to pay their respects to "Pilate's girl," but who dared not enter, had begun to sob, when the door swung open and Pilate burst in, shouting, "Mercy!" as though it were a command. (320)

The long sentence demonstrates two linguistic principles: the principle of climax and the principle of end-focus. The principle of climax holds that the last is the most important; the service would have been non-descript without Pilate. The principle of end-focus holds that new information is reserved for the end; Pilate arrives. If she had arrived in a different sentence--one that stood alone--her arrival would have stood alone. The effect of her connection to and subsequent command of the service would have been lost. All this is achieved on the syntactical level, and it is what we divine from a horizontal reading. Being a complex/compound sentence, it is not only complicated in structure, which reflects the complex underlying theme of this particular passage, but it is also suggestive of other themes present in the novel.

Such a surface reading is sufficient to discover and follow the development of a theme, but the deep significance of the role of a character in a theme is impossible to discern unless we examine how the narrator places the character in that setting, and study the relationship between the two. Only by visualizing a three dimensional

construction of Pilate within her settings can we fully appreciate what is missed at the sentence level. To do this I draw on narrative theory, from which I propose a theory more useful to analyze the narrative structure of a setting with a character.

Most critics depend on the traits of characters to stimulate analysis, clarify meaning, and invoke empathy, but the rhetorical impact of the relationship between the character and setting is ignored. However, each character at each mention in the discourse must be presented within a setting. What if the reciprocal relationship between character and setting--that which is implied rather than fully explained--demonstrates more than the linear plane of the discourse? No one has addressed this area. There is a gap in the theory, a gap which I propose to fill by theorizing that the relationship between characters and settings is a rhetorical device employed by the narrator to enhance the reader's participation.

My thesis examines the narrative structure of Pilate and her settings in Song of Solomon to demonstrate through the relationship between her and her settings that there exists a level of interpretation not available if we look at character and setting separately. In her discussion of Morrison's use of community and nature, Barbara Christian concludes that "Setting . . . is organic to the characters'

view of themselves. And a change of place drastically alters the traditional values that give their life coherence" (48). Christian refers broadly to the environment in which Morrison places her community of characters. My focus is on the particular settings within that community. An analysis of the discourse demonstrates the narrative structure of the setting, and a mental image constructed of the setting offers implications the linear discourse cannot.

Narrative and its theory are regarded from varying perspectives, according to different interests. As the term narration suggests, it is the communication process in which narrative as a message is transmitted by an addresser to an addressee. The verbal transmission of a message is what Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan points out to be the distinguishing feature between narrative fiction and narratives in film, dance or pantomime (2). In Recent Theories of Narrative, Wallace Martin offers an overall view of narration. Philosophers of history, he points out, use narration to provide an understanding of the past; biologists, anthropologists, and sociologists demonstrate that the study of mimetic behavior is important in explaining animal development and social interaction; and the emerging disciplines such as discourse analysis and artificial intelligence find the "theory of action" important. In

fact, "mimesis and narration have returned from their marginal status as aspects of 'fiction' to inhabit the very center of other disciplines as modes of explanation necessary for an understanding of life" (7).

In Peter Brooks' terms, narrative theory is the study of the organized and coherent analysis of narrative structures and discourse. "The models of analysis proposed by narrative theorists . . . have often been boldly illuminating, showing up basic patterns and systematic relations neglected in the more interpretive Anglo-American critical tradition" (xiii). However, Brooks argues that although narrative theory has been useful in identifying narrative units and structures, it is in itself static, because it has neglected the dynamics of reader participation and anticipation in reading a narration.

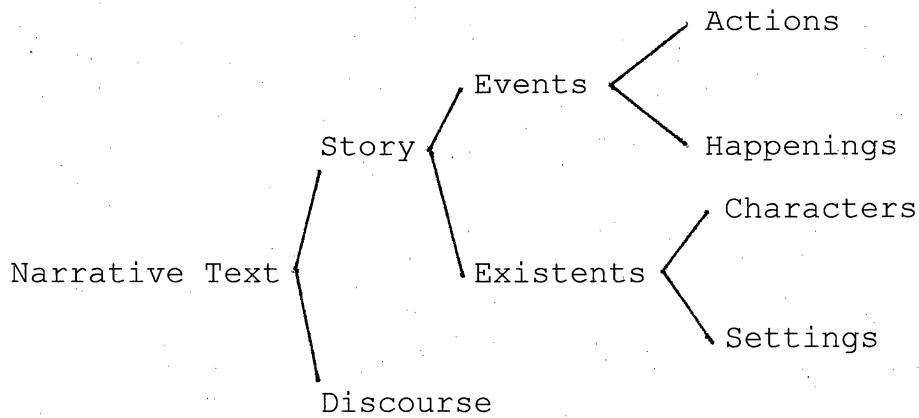
Reader involvement is not merely to read and follow the unfolding story, but, as Roland Barthes demands, also to recognize that narrative is structured in "storeys" and that therefore the horizontal concatenations of the narrative "thread" must be projected onto an implicitly vertical axis (87). To read a narrative is not only to move from one word to the next, but also to move from one level to the next. Barthes argues that "there can be no doubt that narrative is a hierarchy of instances. Meaning is not at the end of a narrative, it runs across it" ("Introduction" 87).

To access the levels of narrative and acknowledge the cross-narrative meaning, it is imperative to isolate the units or elements of narrative. Each theorist suggests methods to analyze the structure of narrative, but each differs in important ways. Helmut Bonheim asserts that even in the shortest of short stories, the anecdote, four staple modes of narrative are used: a description describes the scene; a report tells of an action; a speech depicts action; and a commentary reflects on the narrative content. Hence the modes are description, report, speech and comment (1). For Bonheim narrative structure is best examined by identifying each mode and then looking at the "modes in concert" (37). By doing this Bonheim implies a spatialization of narrative.

In a manner similar to Bonheim, Seymour Chatman spatializes narrative through his identification of its separate units. He does this by further dividing the formalists' and structuralists' theories of narrative. Russian formalists use only two terms: the *fabula* or basic story, and the *sjuzet* or story as actually told by linking events together. Structuralists also argue for two parts: the story which consists of a chain of events plus existents (characters, items of setting), and the discourse which is the means by which the story is told. The story is the what and the discourse is the how (Chatman 19). Chatman suggests



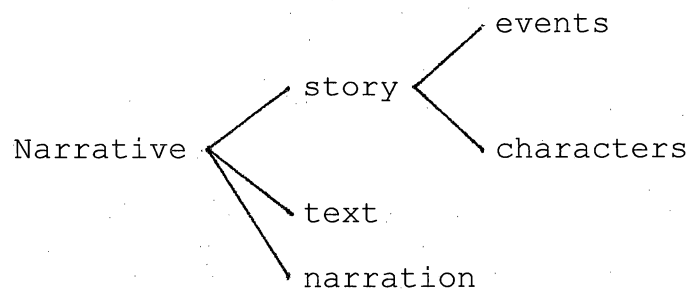
the following diagram to demonstrate his narrative structure:



This diagram is simple and practical. He separates the levels or units of the structure of narrative, which in turn become accessible for studying. It is the existents' division into characters and settings that invites analysis—not the division itself but the implied reciprocity between the two.

Similarly to Chatman, Rimmon-Kenan fashions the text of narrative into units. Rimmon-Kenan is a disciple of Gerard Genette, and they both (like Chatman) emphasize the existence of a relationship between the units of narrative discourse. Genette and Rimmon-Kenan break narrative into units which, although similar, have some differences. Genette's divisions are (1) story, which is signified or narrative content; (2) narrative, which is the signifier or discourse; and (3) narrating, the producing of narrative action (27). Rimmon-Kenan uses the same divisions but

classifies them as (1) events; (2) their verbal representation; and (3) the act of telling and writing. She then labels these story, text, and narration, respectively. As Chatman does, she divides story further, but unlike Chatman, her story separates into events and participants (characters) (3). Rimmon-Kenan does not present her scheme in diagram form, but if one was drawn it would look like so:



Like other theorists, Rimmon-Kenan points out that the text is the only aspect directly available to the reader. It is via the text that the reader acquires knowledge of the story and of the narration. However, the narrative text itself is defined by the two aspects: unless a story is told it is not a narrative, and, without being narrated it is not a text (4). Although it is obvious that the units of narrative exist in symbiotic relationship, Genette and Rimmon-Kenan make apparent that to understand the whole an analysis of each unit or element is necessary.

Genette and Rimmon-Kenan agree in the relationship between certain elements of narrative, but they disagree

that narrative has a spatial structure consisting of different levels. Genette never mentions levels of narrative, whereas Rimmon-Kenan talks of surface and deep structures, thereby implying levels (10). Similarly to Genette, Martin neglects levels of narrative, but does use the term structure. However, he defines structure unsatisfactorily. Martin maintains that the literary term for the structure of narrative is "plot" (81). If plot can be seen as parallel to Chatman's "story," then plot consists of the elements suggested by Chatman in his narrative text diagram. However, Martin develops the concept of plot more along the conventional literary lines than as an element of narrative structure. For him plot is formed from a combination of temporal succession and causality, and it moves from a stable beginning through complications to another equilibrium at the end (81). This is the surface linear form of traditional plot, and it avoids suggestion of a deep structure. Martin's use of the word structure is therefore misleading. The word itself implies levels, but Martin negates this by his explanation. Nevertheless, Martin does concede that narrative consists of the following distinctions: the narrator who tells the story about others; different kinds of discourse--narration, dramatic presentation, and a "catchall category" called commentary; and access to consciousness (131). He is somewhat between

the Russian formalists, who posit story and discourse, and Chatman, who divides up story even further.

The narrative theorists included in this study are only partially represented. I have extracted sections of their existing theories in an attempt to present an overall view of narrative theory. In doing so, we see agreement that analysis of narrative begins with the discourse and that narrative consists of units or elements, which, when studied separately, increase our understanding and appreciation of the whole narrative structure. However, it also becomes apparent how different some approaches are. Chatman, Rimmon-Kenan, and Bonheim see narrative in spatial terms, whereas Martin and Genette imply it exists in a linear form only. Brooks and Barthes identify levels of units but disagree on the dynamics of reader participation. We will find similar discrepancies between theories when we examine the narrator's role from the points of view of different theorists.

The role of the narrator presents a slippery area in narrative theory. No one disputes that the narrator knows more than the reader and is the implied intermediary between author and reader, but how the narrator fulfills that intermediate position is controversial. The narrator is seen as a mediator, a ventriloquist, a translator, and

omniscient or knowledgeable in some instances and not in other instances.

The narrative text consists of the narrator's words. The narrator takes the author's story and tells (writes) it. "Between the story and the reader is the narrator, who controls what will be told and how it will be perceived" (Martin 9). The rhetorical power of the narrator is implied in this remark, as is in the following observation by Rimmon-Kenan: "In narrative fiction it [description] has to be said in language, and the language is that of the narrator" (97). Because the narrator has this responsibility, and because the narrator has the power to include or exclude, to describe or not describe, to use direct or indirect discourse, and to present the events of the story in whatever sequence she or he sees fit as long as the original story is not altered, it is fitting to examine the role of the narrator from the various theoretical viewpoints.

Chatman is the least assertive of the theorists in his opinion of the narrator's role. He asks the following questions: To what extent does the narrator seem to mediate between the fictive world and the reader? Does dialogue really represent "mediated" reality (that is, are the characters' words faithfully reproduced by the narrator), as critics often assume, whereas the report of an action is

"direct" and "unmediated"? Chatman's uncertainty is reflected in his remark: "The bare description of a physical action is felt to be essentially non-mediated" (Bonheim 5). On the other hand, Bonheim asserts that all narrative, including direct speech, is mediated by the narrator (5). For him the domain of description (as mentioned above by Rimmon-Kenan) is thought to be dangerous ground since it draws attention to the narrator's craft and to the fact that the fictional world is being mediated. This is especially true where description reveals the guiding hand of the narrator by means of tell-tale rhetorical touches (Bonheim 39). Bonheim describes the narrator as an artist and says "description which is given the high polish of rhetoric becomes less mimetic: it suggests mediation" (40).

In Bonheim's terms, the narrator is a "ventriloquist-narrator." He argues that for the comments the narrator puts into character's mouths to be called "direct speech" is a paradox of critical terminology, a leftover from the "oratio recta" of Latin grammar (56). If the narrator passes her or his voice through the characters via ventriloquism, it means that the narrator has a huge rhetorical tool at her or his disposal. If narrators put their own words into the characters' mouths, it follows that the narrator chooses how to depict characters.

The central role of the narrator is acknowledged by Barthes. However, he is more concerned with the narrator's ability in mastering a code to translate the story into a narrative. His focus is on the narrator's sense of creativity and linguistic ability. Barthes states that there is a freedom of narrative but that this freedom is limited by the powerful codes of language and narrative. Thus the creativity of narrative is situated between two codes--the linguistic and the translinguistic. Therefore imagination is the mastery of the codes (123). Barthes refers to this idea again in "The Death of the Author" when he says that in ethnographic societies the "performance" of a mediator, shaman, or relator is based on her or his mastery of the narrative code, and that it is not her or his genius that is admired. The author is a modern concept, but the narrator has been around in various forms for a long time (142). An interpretation of Barthes' theory reads that the narrator acts as a mediator, but perhaps not in the radical sense that Bonheim suggests. Barthes' narrator must master the art of narration effectively to capture the reader's attention, which highlights the narrator's performance more than how or when the narrator mediates. Nevertheless, whichever way we look at it, the narrator is responsible for the telling, and the manner in which it is done is the narrator's choice. Plato's distinction between

mimesis and diegesis is in modern terms the difference between showing and telling: "Insofar as there is telling, there must be a teller, a narrating voice" (Chatman 146).

Although all narrators have power, the role of the third-person narrator is traditionally seen as omniscient. Such a narrator does not need to account for any information and is permitted, even expected, to have knowledge of the story's outcome (Susan Lanser 161). Lanser elucidates even further on the narrator's role: "When direct speech is recorded, the narrator has a greater role because he or she is responsible for translating the discourse from spoken to written form: he or she can select punctuation" (190). This suggests that even though the words are those of the character, they undergo some subtle change in meaning through the narrator's choice of presentation. Already one can see that the reader has little or no chance of realizing the true or whole character; at best the realization is via the narrator's perceptions of that character.

Lanser further points out that third-person narrators have the potential to present a character from the vision of the narrator who knows more than the character as well as from the character's own consciousness. When a third-person narrator makes judgements or predictions about a character, her or his comments carry greater authority than those made by another character (203). Lanser therefore



concludes that it is virtually impossible to tell a story without explicitly or implicitly communicating a degree of distance or affinity with the various elements of the discourse--whether they be events, objects, places, people. These relationships are vital to the message the text communicates, crucial to its encoding, reception, and interpretation (202).

Both narrative and literary theory accept two definitions of narrators; the traditional third-person narrator described by Lanser and a traditional first-person narrator. However, I argue that there is only one narrator, and that that narrator chooses, for rhetorical purposes, to present her- or himself as either a first- or a third-person narrator. Bonheim, who sees the narrator as a ventriloquist-mediator, comes closest to my view. The narrator has more power than the author, because the narrator decides how to tell the author's story. Thus one story can be told two or more different ways. The narrator may even choose to present the story in the form of an argument. The order in which the narrator presents the story, what the narrator stresses, the choice of language and rhetorical devices, may all be a deliberate attempt to persuade the reader to accept a certain point of view--that of the narrator. The role of the narrator is similar to that of the historian.

If we accept that the recording of history is the historian's interpretation of by-gone events, then it follows that the description of a specific scene--for example, a battle scene or a parliamentary debate--is the historian's interpretation of it. What the historian leaves out is probably as important as what she or he chooses to include. To a certain extent accuracy is not the critical factor so much as a point of view-- ideological, political, and psychological. In a similar fashion, the narrator records a story. The narrator (who has more information than the historian) knows the sequence of events, the characters, their thoughts and actions, the outcome. How the narrator chooses to depict all of this is the narrator's choice. The narrator may choose what to include, exclude, highlight, say explicitly, and leave implicit, as well as when to allow the characters to speak. When the characters do speak, the narrator acts as a ventriloquist; the words are the narrator's. The words are similar to what the character would have said, but via the narrator they may be slanted. When the character speaks and does not speak is a narrative choice. How the character is depicted in each setting is also a narrative choice.

Although narrative theory has effectively focused on the role of the narrator, it has skimmed over the relationships between characters and their settings. For

the most part characters and settings have been dealt with as separate entities, and the treatment of characters is especially unsatisfactory. Chatman mentions how surprising it is that so little has been said about character in literary history and criticism, and that narrative theory should address this omission. At present "the concept of 'trait' is about all we have for the discussion of character" (108). He warns that theory requires an open mind to possibilities that might better suit the requirements of narrative structure (108). The formalists and some structuralists argue (like Aristotle) that characters are the products of plot and that their status is functional. They are participants rather than people. They are analyzed for what they do, not for what they are (Chatman 111).

As Chatman intimates, theorists do not view character as a functional unit of the narrative structure, despite the fact that character forms one half of the existent unit on the narrative structure diagram. Martin, for instance, says that when a character speaks, "the words are not a substitute for, or representation of, something else. The language of the character is the character, just as the words you and I speak are ourselves, in the eyes of others" (51). Methods like Martin's of describing concepts of character clarify the difference between analytic and

synthetic theories of narrative. For the past century, fiction has been divided into sections--plot, setting, character and point of view--thus implying that they are parts of a whole. In "The Art of Fiction" (1888), Henry James argues against this method. "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustrator of character?" (qtd. in Martin 116).

Rimmon-Kenan states that even the most depersonalized characters deserve a place and function within the narrative network, but she too, like James, sees the convenience in reducing character to action (31). James, in his famous dictum, sees character and action as interdependent. Rimmon-Kenan alters this view slightly by pointing out that when action is the center of attraction character is subordinated to it, and vice versa (36). Nevertheless, it is a relationship, similar in concept to Martin's relationship. Functions and characters cannot be separated, says Martin, because they are always in a reciprocal relationship, one determining the other (116).

If this is true for characters and functions, and (previously) for characters and actions, then why not for characters and settings? Characters and settings are part of Chatman's and Rimmon-Kenan's narrative diagrams. They are accepted as elements of narrative structure yet never

seen as reciprocal. If the two are presented together then there exists, albeit implicitly, a relationship.

Although narrative theory deals with character and setting separately, there is more coherence, if not much agreement, as far as setting and its description are concerned. For some theorists, setting and description are difficult to separate. Martin sees a process of fusion at work in setting and description. He discusses the traditional importance of description in establishing a believable time and place in which an action takes place. He argues that the conventional distinction between narration and description invokes an artificial boundary between them (112). On the other hand, Bonheim, in an attempt to categorize his four narrative modes, makes distinctions, for instance, between description and report. According to his definition the depiction of things at rest is description, and the depiction of things in motion is report (15). For Bonheim description is something that can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, tasted, weighed or measured; or it may be the mere assertion that an object or condition exists; and generally the object is at rest and not moving under its own volition. However, like Martin, he recognizes fusion: description is often "fused" with other modes (24).

If fusion between modes is recognized, why not between characters and settings? There are theories on both but no synthesis between the two. A reciprocity is suggested, but not developed, by Leonard Lutwack who compares place [setting] in fiction, poetry, and drama. He does what others neglect; he gives place its due regard in literary theory. Lutwack's sense of place covers the following: treatment of place as a backdrop for the action in fiction; relationships between characters and their immediate environment; place and plot; and place and character insofar as place is the sign of the type of character (69). The last point is particularly relevant, since it hints at a relationship in the form of symbolism. It raises the question of whether narrators always place their characters within symbolic settings, and if not, why not? In a setting not symbolic of a character, what information do we glean from a close study of the structure of the setting in question?

The theorists describe different aspects and functions of characters and settings in narrative but never see them as a construction of narrative structure. Their locus in the narrative structure diagram is never discussed in terms of a relationship. That is, existents--as a unit in narrative structure--have traditionally been viewed as static. Martin confirms that elements such as characters

and settings are considered static, whereas action, plot, or *fabula* are generally thought to be dynamic (116). Viewing them as static elements stifles a depth of understanding, and much of the richness of the narrative structure is missed. The analysis of character and setting as separate entities limits our understanding and appreciation just as it would if we took a character out of a painting to examine her or him and then looked at the painting *sans* character. The character out of context has less significance than when viewed as part of the painting. Fiction essentially consists of continuous paintings--settings with characters--each in themselves parts of the whole, and yet their importance in narrative has been ignored.

If, according to contemporary narrative theory, the choice of how to tell a story rests with the narrator, who also decides what to include and what to exclude, the narrator is invested with considerable rhetorical power. What then are the effects in fiction of a narrator placing a character within a certain setting? What are the implications of the narrative strategy behind the structure of each setting with character? While most narrative theorists discuss character and settings as separate entities, Chatman invokes, but does not pursue, a relationship. In Story and Discourse in which he classifies the various elements of narrative, he also places the

characters and their settings in a "story-space." Chatman defines story-space as the three dimensional spatial image visualized in the reader's imagination. This concept as a conscious narrative strategy is undeveloped but serves nicely as the place to begin theorizing a reciprocity between character and setting.

Thinking of the story-space as a structure built by a narrator helps us see the relationship more clearly than if we simply read the discourse. Chatman hints at this, albeit obliquely, when he says that character can be seen more fully when one contemplates the character's relationship to the setting. He insists that it is wrong to equate a character with "mere words." He calls to mind mimes, silent movies, and ballets, where we "recall fictional characters vividly" *sans* words (118). The words of the narrator are the basic tools used to construct a visual spatial image, and the character therefore appears to live in space, instead of existing on paper. Again Chatman hints at the relationship I insist on: "Characters exist and move in a space which exists abstractly at the deep narrative level . . . and the setting sets the character off" (138). Each character must have a setting, but a setting does not need a character. In a sense the parameters of the setting set the guidelines for the character's actions. And readers only



have access to the character/setting structure via the narrator.

Therefore I argue that the presentation of this structure is a rhetorical device uncannily akin to a rhetorical trope. Tropes, or figures of speech, are used in all texts to facilitate communication. The power of a trope lies not in what it is but what it does. Seeing the story-space as a rhetorical trope highlights the narrator's skill to communicate information and to persuade the reader to a certain point of view.

If we also see the structure of a story-space as three dimensional, then there are similarities to a stage setting in drama. In narrative fiction details of the setting can be included or excluded at the narrator's discretion, and both the inclusion and exclusion are significant. In the same way, the producer of a play makes decisions over the set and what props to use or not to use. The narrator and the producer are analogous; they choose how to present the author's story or the playwright's play. The readers of fiction visualize the setting in their minds, and the audience of a play sees the setting staged before them.

Visualizing from the text or looking at the stage is related to the telling/showing dichotomy. "Telling" and "showing," or "summary" and "scene" in Anglo-American criticism, comes directly from Plato's terms "diegesis" and

"mimesis." Showing is the direct presentation of events and conversations where the narrator withdraws (like the producer in drama) and the reader is left to draw her or his conclusions from what is "seen" or "heard" (Rimmon-Kenan 107). For this reason the construction of a setting with character has rhetorical power. The reader is drawn in, not only by what is read, but by what is read and "seen" together. This concept emerges most clearly in visual narratives such as films. Each frame we see is a story-space. Without words, that story-space communicates--it informs through our vision. The spatial aspects give depth to the story-space and to our understanding.

Story-space is an abstract, and in verbal narrative it requires a reconstruction in the mind (Chatman 96). Existents and their space are "seen" via the words, through the imagination, by using mental projections. Each reader creates her or his own image--hence the abstract quality (Chatman 101). Extending this concept even further, I suggest that the explicit story-space equals what the narrator describes and that the implicit story-space equals what is implied from visualizing the spatial image and examining the relationship between character and setting. The implications of such an examination are grasped intuitively by the reader but can only be achieved by

allowing the story-space to become three dimensional in the imagination.

I view narrative and its structure not from a planar but from a three-dimensional point of view. It is more intriguing because it demands greater reader participation. Life itself is spatially defined and is after all what fiction attempts to portray. Therefore story-space is a fictional place in space or a vision in the mind. Movement, too, can be depicted through story-space, Chatman says, and the discourse provides the "focus of spatial attention." It is the framed area to which attention is drawn by the discourse--that portion of the total story-space that is closed in upon by the narrator (101-102).

Nevertheless, looking at the story-space and following Barthes' idea that meaning is not at the end of a narrative but runs across it, I will consider the following: how and where does the narrator place the character in the setting; can we see the character's face; do we see all or part of the setting; is the character at ease in the setting or is a tension apparent; what relation has the story-space to other characters in the story; and is the character or setting foregrounded? Particularly, how does the narrator present the character in different settings--are the relationships the same, different? And lastly, is there a difference when

the character/setting is studied holistically; that is, "taken out of context" is the character viewed differently?

Closely connected to the concept of story-space is Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of chronotope, which he translates as literally "time space," the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. According to Bakhtin, "In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole" (84). When Bakhtin says "time becomes visible" and "space becomes charged" (84), he offers useful metaphors for analyzing a character in a setting. What is the meaning of visible time and how or why does space fill with energy? Bakhtin implies that the significance of chronotopes is far reaching: "They are the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel . . . the place [where] the knots of narrative are tied and untied . . . to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative" (250).

Lanser also stresses the importance of analyzing spatial elements within a narrative. She points out that elements such as the spatial and temporal have received attention but that ideological stance has been ignored. The "how" has been dealt with but not the "what" (184). It is the what that I address in Song of Solomon when I examine the structure of Pilate's settings. For instance, where is

the character positioned in the setting, what is the character's distance from others and the center, is the character in the light or the dark, does the character have whole or partial view of the main action, does the reader? These are point of view concerns, and such concerns are crucial because they all beg the final question: What does it all add up to? Lanser notes, "the study of point of view has lost much of its potential relevance to the study of meaning in fictional texts" (184).

The manifestation of point of view is what we read in fiction and what we perceive in the structure of a character in a setting. Point of view itself has two levels to consider. On a concrete level, point of view is the point at which the viewer stands and from which the viewer views a scene--the angle of vision. This point of view relates to the topography of a fictional setting; what the reader sees is what the narrator not only sees but chooses to describe. At the same time, point of view depicts the theoretical location of the narrator in the setting. This point of view is recognized on the phraseological plane, where the narrator's position is fixed along spatial and temporal coordinates. On a more abstract level, point of view presents the beliefs or values of the viewer. This is often termed the ideological plane and is grasped intuitively by the reader. Rhetoric and ideology are symbiotic. Rhetoric

supports ideology; ideology relies on rhetoric. In the same way, the ideology of the narrator is understood by the use of the narrator's rhetoric. Therefore the structure of a setting with character (considered as a rhetorical trope) persuades us to accept (or at least understand) the narrator's ideological point of view. Boris Uspensky terms ideological point of view a "system of ideas" that shapes the work, and he compares the system to a "deep compositional structure, as opposed to the surface compositional structure which may be traced on the psychological, spatio-temporal, or phraseological levels" (8).

In literature and painting we are presented with a special world with its own space and time and ideological system. At first we are spectators of these worlds until we enter them and become familiar with them, at which point we become participants. Our points of view as participants are different from our points of view as spectators. The transition from the real world to the representation involves the crossing of a boundary we call the frame (Uspensky 137). As Uspensky notes, the "frame is the borderline between the internal world of the representation and the world external to the representation (143). In a painting the frame is literal, but in literature the framing is abstract. We can talk of a whole book being framed by

its cover, but we think of a setting within that fiction as being framed by the narrator's descriptive language. The idea of a framed setting is analogous to a three-dimensional story-space. The perspective within the framed setting reflects the narrator's point of view--just as the perspective within a painting reflects the artist's.

Framing is pertinent when examining the story-space. The frame of a painting and the frame of a story-space belong to the space of the external observer. This observer could be the reader or a character within the narrative. Whether the reader and the character observe the same frame or border depends on the point of view of the narrator and where the narrator frames the story-space. When we mentally enter the story-space we leave the frame behind, a process that characters may also undergo if the narrator plans it.

A frame within a frame is a story-space. There is what Uspensky calls "a hierarchical order" of frames within frames (151). The story-space is framed by the discourse which focuses our attention on it--it is specifically a setting with character, structured for us by the narrator. The story-space itself lies within a larger frame, the discourse of the whole narrative. Another way to think of framing and story-space is through Todorov's concept of "embedded" story, which is strikingly similar to my visualization of story-space. Todorov points out that the

appearance of a new character invariably interrupts the preceding story, so that a new story (that of the new character) may be told. A second story is embedded within the first. Whether seen as framed stories, or embedded stories, or story-spaces, the effect is the same; it is a rhetorical device, or as Todorov would have it, an argument (70).

If a story-space (embedded or framed story) is not necessary to the narrative as a whole, and is therefore a device used by the narrator, for what purpose does the narrator employ the device? What argument does the narrator make, or what is the story-space an illustration of? Embedding is, Todorov tells us, emphatic: "Embedding is an articulation of the most essential property of all narrative. For the embedded narrative is the narrative of a narrative. By telling the story of another narrative, the first narrative achieves its fundamental theme and at the same time is reflected in this image of itself" (72). This idea is useful. The embedded story (story-space) is the microcosm of the narrative. It is the "what" in the whole narrative. It is an effective way of solving the "what problem" in narrative theory posed by Lanser. The language of the narrator informs us how the what occurs, and we comprehend the how on the linear plane. Only by examining the what--story-space or embedded story--as a spatial



structure, can we intuit the broader implications of the narrative. Grasping the how and what simultaneously enriches our understanding of the macrocosm.

The examination of an embedded story-space is comparative to a vertical reading of the discourse. One way to read discourse is to look at both the horizontal and vertical axes. The construction of these axes enhances the spatial aspects of narrative structure. The horizontal axis is simply the linearity of the discourse, and the vertical axis is that which is implied. Barthes notes that narrative appears as a succession of interlocking elements and that a horizontal reading, while integrating a vertical reading, constitutes what he calls a structural "limping"--a play of potentials whose varying falls give the narrative dynamism (122).

Susan Stanford Friedman takes spatialization a step further not only by invoking the presence of horizontal and vertical axes as dimensions of spatial narrative structure, but also by insisting on their potential for reading narrative. For her the horizontal axis is the sequence of events, whether external or internal, that happens according to the ordering principals of the plot and narrative point of view. The horizontal narrative follows and is constrained by the linearity of language--the sequence of the sentence that moves horizontally (15). The vertical

axis involves reading "down into" the text as we move across it. It does not exist at the level of the sequential plot but resides within it. The vertical narrative has many superimposed layers. The point of these tropes, says Friedman, is to suggest that every horizontal axis has an embedded vertical axis that must be traced by the reader because it has no narrator of its own (15). The point of spatializing narrative, says Friedman, is to provide a "rational approach that connects text and context, writer and reader" (19). This rational reading produces a "story" not present in either axis by itself (Friedman 20).

Rimmon-Kenan does not use the terminology of Barthes and Friedman, but she implies the same concept when she discusses "surface" versus "deep" structure. Surface structure, she explains, is the formulation of the observable sentence, whereas deep structure lies beneath it and can only be retrieved through a backward retracing of the "transformational process" (10). The surface structure of the story is syntagmatic, while the deep structure is paradigmatic, based on static logical relations among the elements (10). Deep structures, even when abstracted from a story, are not in themselves narrative; they are "designed to account for the initial articulations of meaning within a semantic micro-universe" (Rimmon-Kenan 11). A story-space is a deep structure and is part of a vertical axis of

superimposed layers. It has no narrator, it invites the reader to narrate, and it invites the reader to interpret the significance. A discovery of the relationship between the character and setting demands active participation from the reader--to read down into and beneath the surface of the text.

Even though the story-space itself has no narrator, the construction of it is dependent on the narrator. How the story-space looks in our minds relates to how much information we are given by the narrator. It also depends on the point of view of the narrator. The spatial view of the narrator, if not attached to the character, may be within or outside the setting (Lanser 193). "Outside" is the panoramic view of a large spatial terrain and bird's-eye view of an entire scene from a distance. Spatial orientation from "within" a setting offers a greater sense of the narrator's involvement and of immediacy. When spatial stance follows the orientation of a character (looking with or at a character), the character's presence as perceiver is emphasized (Lanser 192). We learn much about a character by what the narrator tells us, that is, what the character looks at or where the character is positioned. Studying the story-space within which the character is placed to determine the relationship between

character and setting adds a significant dimension to our information about the character.

As such considerations suggest, what the narrator tells the reader and what the narrator leaves out, and why, are essential when examining a story-space. However, the narrator's intention in structuring a story-space is difficult to discern if we employ only the narrative tools consistently used in narrative theory. The analytical tool of implicature is useful if we are to fully examine the relationship between a character and a setting. I borrow implicature from oral discourse for this purpose.

Paul Grice, a philosopher and logician, formulated his theory of implicature to pertain to oral discourse: "Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically . . . cooperative efforts" (26). Grice therefore reasoned that for cooperative conversation to take place the following maxims are observed: the maxim of manner states that one should avoid ambiguity and be brief; the maxim of quality states that one should speak the truth; the maxim of quantity states that one should not give more or less information than is necessary; and the maxim of relation states that one should be relevant. Grice's theory asserts that if in conversation one or more of these maxims is violated, an implicature results (28). Under these

maxims sarcasm, irony, metaphors, and other figures of speech are classified as conversational implicature. The implicature is the understood meaning, not the stated meaning. The conversational maxims and the conversational implicatures connected with them reflect the particular purpose that talk is adapted to serve (28). In the same way as they serve conversation, why should they not also serve narrative theory?

Grice's theory has important implications in studying narrative and especially in the examination of story-space structure. For instance, if the narrator gives insufficient or irrelevant description of either the character or the setting, the maxim of quantity or relation is violated, and some specifiable implicature may result. Just as we imply through figures of speech, so may the narrator use implicature in the structuring of a setting with character to convey (imply) a meaning. For instance, if more description is devoted to the character than to the setting, the setting may be only dimly envisioned by the reader. Because the narrator omits key descriptive words, the maxim of quantity is violated and an implicature results. By the very absence of sufficient description, the parameters of the setting are questioned. The implication could be either that the setting is more important than the character or that the character feels uneasy in such a setting. The

relationship is tense. Such a revelation may be valuable and would certainly add to our knowledge of the character. Alternatively, if all maxims are observed, the relationship between character and setting appears to be relaxed. The implication is that character and setting reflect each other perfectly. We can therefore infer much about the character's state of mind and/or personality.

Implicature is particularly useful when considering explicit versus implicit story-space. From the explicit description of the story-space we visualize it. In addition, if we apply Grice's maxims, we realize the implications of the story-space structure. Should we not do this, the meaning (information) conveyed in the implicit story-space is missed. We need to read beneath the surface of the text, and implicature helps us do this.

In contemplating a relationship between a character and a setting, we need to consider all the narrative skills employed. We must look at the narrator's use of language, that is, description and choice of direct or indirect discourse; the narrator's point of view, both ideologically and topographically; the mental construction of a story-space; the implicature involved in studying the story-space; and lastly, what it all means. A theory is, after all, rhetoric. And rhetoric is valuable not for what it is but for what it does.

Furthermore, a theory is only as good as it is effective in increasing our understanding and therefore appreciation of fictional texts. Its validation lies in the demonstration of its practicality. In the following chapter I illustrate the effectiveness and practicality of my theory through its application to Pilate and her settings in Morrison's Song of Solomon.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Pilate and Her Settings: What the Text Does Not Say**

In this chapter I analyze four of Pilate's settings from Song of Solomon. In two of the settings I analyze the discourse and the structural levels. In the other two settings I look at structure only. At the structural levels I specifically examine the relationships between characters and settings in the three-dimensional story-spaces. My reason for filtering out these four settings from all the possible Pilate-settings is that they illustrate succinctly the narrative theory developed in chapter one. The two pairs that make up the group of four each consist of two related settings, which illustrates a conscious narrative strategy; in each pair one setting foreshadows the other. By contrasting the related pairs, we achieve a deeper understanding, a multiple layered reading, and a more astute sense of the role of Pilate in the novel. For the sake of a balanced analysis, the first setting of each pair is the one studied at the structural level only, and the second at discourse and structural levels.

The first setting in which we meet Pilate is the setting which begins the novel, although not the story. It is also not a Pilate-only setting, but a narrative ploy to suggest the settings of many of the forthcoming events.



That is, its explicit story-space contains many potential implicit story-spaces. Barthes says that narrative is structured in "storeys" and the horizontal narrative "thread" is projected onto an implicit vertical axis (87). By "storeys" Barthes does not mean story-spaces, but the ideas are analogous. Story-spaces are not only mental images of a character within a setting, but they also belong to the implicit vertical axes. This first setting, itself an explicit story-space on the horizontal axis, contains many implicit vertical axes. Within this greater story-space, I focus on only that part which Pilate inhabits, because the narrator's treatment of Pilate's character immediately delineates the importance of Pilate's role. The setting in question, on pages 3-9, describes a scene outside Mercy Hospital. Robert Smith stands on the roof of the hospital wearing homemade wings and prepares to fly off. The crowd gathers to watch, and Pilate joins them.

The narrator introduces Pilate in a manner that demands attention. This is achieved not only because she bursts into song, but because of the structure of the sentence in which it occurs: "Their dilemma was solved when a woman suddenly burst into song" (5). Pilate is a problem solver and an attention-catcher; Pilate sings and people either "sniggered" or "listened" (5). In either case attention is directed towards Pilate. Significantly the narrator does

not name Pilate at all in this scene but refers to her constantly as "the singing woman." Whereas we could infer anonymity from such a strategy, we realize that anonymity is not the narrator's objective because the phrase is used so often. The repetition violates Grice's maxims of quantity and manner, and the resulting implicatures stress the character's importance: singing, and therefore the song, is vital to the whole narrative, and this woman is connected to the song.

The designation by implicature of Pilate's importance is further supported by Todorov's theory of embedding. His theory states that when a character interrupts a sequence of events, that character's story becomes embedded in the greater story and can be viewed as an argument (70). When Pilate bursts into song, she interrupts the preceding events. Her song, and indeed her entrance, become embedded in the setting, and therefore act, in Todorov's terms, as an argument. Implicature and embedding offer congruent arguments; Pilate and the song are important. The words of the song, as we learn near the end of the novel, are not correct, yet the narrator chooses not to inform us of this fact, nor of the significance of the song. What is obvious, however, is the connection between the song and the act of "flying" about to be performed by Robert Smith, and Pilate's reference to a bird when she speaks to Ruth (8).

In this introductory setting the presences of Pilate and others transform the entire story-space into a palimpsest of many stories and future story-spaces. These scattered pieces of information not only constitute parts of the narrative device of foreshadowing but also introduce the metaphor of flying crucial to one of the themes of the book. The idea of flight exists at various levels of meaning: flight to freedom, to change, to mercy, to humanity, and most of all to identity. The tension between physical and psychological flight, which later in the novel touches most of the characters present in this setting, is created by Smith's flight and Pilate's song of flight. Furthermore, the metaphor is introduced on the first page of the book when Smith flies to freedom, and it ends on the last page when Milkman discovers he can fly. Symbol, image, and metaphor of flying all coalesce at the end of the novel when a bird (also mentioned by Pilate in this first setting) flies off with Pilate's name. The metaphor, which has far reaching consequences revealed intermittently throughout the novel, is emphasized by Pilate's presence at the beginning of the novel.

Because the setting is a palimpsest, and because the action--Smith's impending flight and the characters' reaction to it--is paramount, the story-space lacks sufficient description. Hence its mental image is vague.

According to Uspensky, the narrator's description frames a representative world (141), and by implication the framed area also reflects the narrator's point of view. If there is no description of the setting, there is no frame. The narrator does not frame--create a border--around any character in this setting. Therefore the setting is not a representation of an internal world of fiction, but a depiction of the real world on which the narrator bases her fiction. Yes, it is fiction, but because there is no frame this setting is a piece of reality placed into fiction. For instance, Bonheim worries that the domain of description is dangerous ground since it draws attention to the fact that the fictional world is being mediated by the narrator (40). The characters in this setting lived in the nonfictional world of 1931. The narrator lets fictional characters, such as Pilate, portray and act out a life symbolic of any of the people of the time. The Dead family, their trials and triumphs, are representative of many of the people in the setting. The setting is impressionistic (like a huge painting with no frame), and we observe the characters from a distance. In terms of narrative theory, an unframed setting is to a framed setting as general is to specific. It is telling versus showing, or indeed, summary versus mimesis. Or, if we look at it from Bonheim's perspective, description that suggests mediation becomes less mimetic

(40). In a sense the first setting of the novel is a summary forecast of the whole novel. The mimesis, the showing, of how each character's story unfolds is anticipated.

Although the lack of description creates difficulties for the reader's mental construction of the setting around Pilate, her position in relation to others can be visualized and examined. It is also possible to compare the reciprocity between character and setting in this, the first setting in which Pilate appears, to the reciprocities in other Pilate-settings. We do this by comparing mentally created photographs of Pilate's immediate environments.

If we take a photograph of the above setting and look at it, we see the following: a cupola on a building on top of which is Robert Smith; a crowd of people, among whom is Pilate, look expectantly up at Robert Smith. In terms of height or dominance, Pilate does not stand out; Robert Smith does. In terms of embodiment of power, however, Pilate is dominant: Robert Smith looks to her, hears her song, and then "flies on." Pilate instinctively knows what Smith needs to fly off. Her name is symbolic of being the pilot for the flying process. And Smith, although he could not know the significance of the song, waits to hear it again before he flies off. A thread binds Pilate and Smith, a thread woven into the tapestry of the song. This thread is

not related to Barthes' "thread" mentioned earlier, yet without adopting Barthes' idea of horizontal narrative threads being implicit in vertical axes, the thread between Pilate and Smith in this setting would not be obvious.

Pilate's role in the setting is backgrounded because her name is not mentioned, she stands still, and she talks to only one other person. Yet the main action of the setting--Smith's flight--is dependent on her song. At least, that is how the narrator tells it. The narrator's ideological point of view is clear: Pilate has power to move people. Uspensky terms ideological point of view a "system of ideas" (8), and Lanser laments the fact that ideological stance has been ignored and that only the "how" has been dealt with and not the "what" (184). The what in this setting is Pilate's power to move people--in this case physically; in other cases mentally and emotionally. The latter becomes apparent when we look at other Pilate-settings.

The following setting clearly demonstrates peoples' emotional responses to the power of Pilate. The setting, pages 320-323, is that which I analyzed briefly at the sentence level in chapter one. The first sentence of the setting is also the longest:

A female quartet from Linden Baptist Church had already sung "Abide with Me"; the wife of the mortician had read the condolence cards and the

minister had launched into his "Naked came ye into this life and naked shall ye depart" sermon, which he had always believed suitable for the death of a young woman; and the winos in the vestibule who came to pay their respects to "Pilate's girl," but who dared not enter, had begun to sob, when the door swung open and Pilate burst in, shouting, "Mercy!" as though it were a command. (320)

In chapter one I stressed that a sentence level analysis or a horizontal reading is only the first step towards examining a setting. Now I illustrate how infinitely more satisfying it is to examine a story-space at two levels: the discourse level or horizontal axis, and the structural level or vertical axis. Because the structural level depends on the discourse--the language of the narrator--to assume a three-dimensional perspective, I begin at the sentence level and continue what I began in chapter one.

Normally a subordinating conjunction (such as "when" in the quoted sentence) subordinates the clause following it. That is, because it occurs in the dependent clause, Pilate's arrival is grammatically depicted as secondary in importance to the actions preceding it. However, as her arrival is also the end-focus of the entire sentence, our attention is drawn to Pilate's entrance rather than the long description before it, and the subordinate clause becomes the primary point made. The door opening and Pilate shouting denote simultaneous actions so that the word when introduces a

participial phrase of extending circumstances. A syntactical norm is violated because when is foregrounded so that the phrase that follows it functions as an end-focus.

The violation is effective partly due to the sequence of information given (Pilate's arrival is the highlight of the sentence) and partly due to the tense change (to be discussed later). This is achieved on the syntactical level. On a thematic level, the sentence structure demonstrates Pilate's propensity to keep the past in the present to form the continuous cycle of life so vital to her philosophy. In Song of Solomon Pilate's sense of her place in the cycle of life is important. The interpretation and acceptance of Pilate's insistence that the past informs the present, which continuously impacts on the future, is essential to Milkman for the realization of his own story, his own identity, and by implication, his own part to play in the cycle of life. Syntactically Pilate's arrival takes precedence over the funeral proceedings. Her presence, in the present, halts Hagar's absence from vanishing into the past. The syntactic and thematic levels of the sentence are therefore parallel.

This long first sentence and the one-word fragments "Mercy" constitute the extreme range of length in the whole setting. However, the narrator relates these extremes with the common word "Mercy." The word is repeated often enough



to become a motif for the entire setting: "Pilate burst in, shouting, 'Mercy!' as though it were a command" (320); "'I want mercy!' she shouted" (320); "'Mercy,' she said again, but she whispered it now" (321); "'Mercy?' Now she was asking a question. 'Mercy?'" (321); "She simply repeated the word 'Mercy'" (321); and lastly it is a refrain in the song. Mercy is an exclamation in the first sentence, a demand in the fourth, a statement when Pilate whispers it, a question twice, a statement again; and finally it appears eight times in the lyrics of the song. Attention is drawn to both the word mercy and the abstract concept of it. Mercy is ambiguous and repetitive, and therefore violates Grice's maxim of manner. Implicature underlines significance. The setting is a symposium on mercy: Pilate pushes mercy in front of the people's faces; Pilate sees mercy as important; Pilate's experiences in life have shown her that mercy enhances life; and Pilate is herself emblematic of mercy. She is the only character in the novel who does not pass judgement on another character.

Pilate's aim to include the people, to wrap around them the abstract concept of mercy, is illustrated in the brevity of two four-word simple sentences: "It was not enough" (321) emphasizes her need to elaborate on mercy and forecasts that this will be done; and "The people turned around" (321) indicates that Pilate's objective is achieved. The people

are caught between the two singing women--Pilate and Reba. It is the first step to mercy acquiring a frame of recognition: mercy is no longer abstract but real, the two women sing it, and the sound of it fills the chapel.

The narrator uses other methods to emphasize the mercy song. In this periodic sentence, the last two words are foregrounded: "The daughter standing at the back of the chapel, the mother up front, they sang" (321). In addition to the periodicity, emphasis is achieved because the use of the common nouns "daughter" and "mother" ensures that attention remains at the end-focus: "they sang." Since what they sing has been anticipated throughout the passage, this foregrounding is relevant to the underlying message. The choice of common nouns instead of proper nouns (their names) has further significance. On a lexical level, the common noun usage by the narrator causes Pilate and Reba to become impersonal and draws the focus of attention to their actions rather than their personas. Not only do the common nouns stress Pilate's and Reba's familial relationship, but their usage also implies that the concept of Mercy is universal. The idea in the song should be embraced by all mothers and daughters everywhere.

The only tense change in the whole passage occurs within the first sentence. The tense is past perfect up until the subordinate clause beginning with "when." The

past perfect denotes that the events of the service are already over, the deceased has passed into the past, and, because all this information is given in one sentence, the slipping into the past appears to happen fairly quickly. After the "when" the tense changes to the simple past, except for the present participle "shouting." These changes dramatize the effect of Pilate bursting in at the end of the sentence. The language bursts, as she does. Pilate's entrance halts the sequence of events of the funeral service in the same way as it halts the linear sequence of facts in the sentence. Her entrance is the climax of the syntactical sentence, just as she becomes the focus of the funeral scene; "burst" is an explosive verb.

In this short passage each of the narrator's deviations--significant subordination, foregrounding, tense change within a sentence, choice of words and word order--are congruent. They all serve to underscore the important message of the text: the central role of Pilate. Although the funeral is that of Pilate's granddaughter, Hagar, the scene is dominated by Pilate herself. However, the language and syntax of the first sentence of the setting also demonstrate that the narrator's ideology parallels Pilate's. The narrator's aim is not so much to foreground the figure of Pilate as to highlight Pilate's (and the narrator's) philosophy; each life past or present is worthy of mercy;

sans mercy and love nothing matters; and each life past or present is of equal importance in the greater circle of existence.

At Pilate's entry, proceedings of the funeral stop. When Pilate moves around the chapel she creates dimensions of the place, and a visual image, the story-space, is invoked for the reader. The chapel becomes three dimensional once we picture the mother up front and the daughter at the back. The two women sing the "Mercy" song, in the call-and-response style, which, together with the fact that the narrator allows Pilate and Reba to take over as narrators, increases the orality of the narrative. The scene becomes intensely personal, dramatic, and highly charged. At this point the setting demonstrates Bakhtin's "chronotope," or "time-space," which is the artistically expressed intrinsic temporal and spatial relationship. The setting is an example of Bakhtin's idea that space becomes charged in a literary artistic chronotope (84).

Furthermore, Bakhtin implies that to chronotopes "belongs the meaning that shapes narrative" (250). The meaning that shapes Song of Solomon is microcosmic in this story-space. That is, the narrator shows that Pilate first draws attention to herself, then she shares it--in this setting with Reba and Hagar. The word mercy is thrown back and forth in an imaginative arc between the two singers.

Neither the narrator nor Pilate explains who or what the mercy is for. The ambiguity violates the maxim of manner, and the resulting implicature focuses on the importance of mercy. The narrator implicitly threads the concept of mercy throughout the novel. After all, life began inside Mercy (for Milkman), and life ended outside Mercy (for Robert Smith). Mercy is implicitly asked for in the novel's final scene--by Pilate, Milkman, Guitar, and the narrator. And now in the chapel at an occasion marking the end of another life, mercy is called for.

The chapel setting story-space provides an irresistible example of Todorov's theory of embedding. The funeral belongs to the story of Hagar. However, as funerals are rituals important not only to the deceased but to society as a whole, each funeral in a community represents a part of the story not just of each person but of the person in the community. Hence the funeral setting represents both the conclusion of the story of Hagar's life and a link in the chain of the stories of the congregation. Pilate bursts in and interrupts all these stories, so that in Todorov's terms, *her* story may be told. Pilate's story therefore becomes embedded in the stories of the community and especially in Hagar's story. Todorov states that the embedded story is an argument (70). Implicit in this argument is that Pilate's power and her symbolic status are

paramount; the people depend on her, acknowledge her spiritual strength, and stress their need for a guide. By embedding Pilate's story within the others', the narrator comments on Pilate's place in the community. Not only is the story embedded as an argument, but throughout the scene the argument continues. Pilate--from the moment her story interrupts Hagar's--is in control, is foregrounded.

This embedded argument, or rhetorical device, demonstrates the narrator's ideology. Rhetoric supports ideology; the rhetorical device here underlines the narrator's approval of Pilate. The narrator allows Pilate to dominate the funeral service, and by subordinating the people in the setting the narrator illustrates the people's recognition and awe of Pilate's spiritual power. Because of the narrator's treatment of Pilate in this setting, Pilate reaches almost mythical proportions, seeming larger than life and certainly larger than the occasion calls for.

Mythical proportions are partly achieved because at times the narrator and Pilate are indistinguishable. For example, it is difficult to discern whether the following words belong to the narrator or to Pilate when the narrator uses indirect discourse to express Pilate's thoughts. We know the thoughts belong to Pilate because of her actions immediately following them, but the narrator does not introduce the words with a marker or use quotation marks.

She speaks through Pilate and says: "It was not enough. The word needed a bottom, a frame" (321). The ventriloquism, via internal thoughts, is very thinly disguised! Bonheim sees the narrator as a ventriloquist (56), and Lanser notes that with direct speech the narrator has a greater role because the speech is translated from written to spoken form (190). However, my argument is that the narrator chooses when the characters speak and what they say, so that in direct or indirect discourse the narratorial role is similar. In this setting with Pilate, the narrator knows what Pilate thinks and tells us using indirect discourse.

The narrator's belief in and revelation of Pilate's spiritual strength are also apparent when we examine the setting through a frame. Not only does the word mercy need a frame, according to both Pilate and the narrator, but the setting in which the symposium of mercy takes place requires framing. We frame paintings we value, so the narrator frames philosophies she cherishes. Uspensky tells us that a frame borders a representative world; it forms the boundary between realism and idealism (141). When Pilate creates the dimensions of the chapel, she also describes the frame for the setting or story-space. Inside the frame then becomes representative of an idealistic world. The idealistic world, the one Pilate pleads for and longs for, is one filled with mercy, love, and communication between people.

To emphasize this, a smaller frame, that of the coffin, appears within the larger frame of the chapel. Thus we observe here "the formation of frames within frames in a hierarchical order" (Uspensky 151). However, Pilate is only cognizant of the smaller frame, the border of the coffin which frames her beloved Hagar. In this frame within a frame lies the person to whom her energy and emotions are directed. Pilate sees death as part of the cycle of life; therefore in Pilate's view, Hagar's death has significance not only for her, but for everyone there and everywhere. Alive, Hagar symbolized the future, and the continuation of a family. And she was in life, and is now in death, loved. Love is the common denominator. Charles Scruggs points out that in the biblical Song of Songs, Solomon says that "love is strong as death" and has power "to unify, to transcend, [and] itself challenge death (314). As death is a necessary part of the continuous cycle of life, and should be accepted as such, Pilate stresses not Hagar's death but that she was loved. By "conversationally" (322) telling this to everyone, she links everyone to love and to mercy. Her power is such that Hagar becomes the child of all of them and the embodiment of love and mercy for all of them. Again, Pilate shares. She shares her love, her grief, her grandchild, her concern for others, her spiritual powers. Viewing the border of the coffin as a frame within the



greater frame of the chapel, we see gradations of representative philosophies. Inside the smaller frame of the coffin lies the personification of love, mercy, purity; surrounding this frame, in the chapel, lies the possibility of love, mercy, and purity. Over both, presides Pilate.

The outer frame, that of the chapel, is also the border of the whole story-space. Looking at how the narrator constructs this three-dimensional spatial structure, we see that at the beginning of the funeral Pilate is at one end and Reba at the other end of the chapel. As Pilate's story becomes more firmly embedded within everyone else's she is foregrounded in terms of description. We do not see Reba anymore, and there is no description of either the people or the chapel. The people are referred to as "faces"; they are anonymous, representing all faces everywhere. The chapel as a background fades in our imagination as we are given no fixed points to focus on. Therefore both people and chapel are vague. Grice's maxim of quantity is violated--too little description--and the importance of people and chapel are magnified through implicature. Because of the absence of sufficient description, the parameters of the setting are questioned. Hence the implication is not the importance of the present people or location, but that of all people in all locations.

If the chapel and people are vague, Pilate is not. The narrator describes her actions, her face, and her blazing brass earring. Why mention the earring? The maxim of relation is violated--the earring has no relation to the funeral--but its relevance is portrayed through implicature. The earring encases her name written by her father, a link to the past. Pilate wears the past on her, always. At Pilate's own death, her name (in the earring) literally flies into the future in the bird's beak. In this story-space the past, present, and future are evoked, a theme which is vital for the novel as a whole.

Keeping the story-space in mind and examining the positions of the characters, we see that Pilate stands, the people sit, and therefore in the story-space the figure of Pilate dominates. Her persona is taller than the rest. Once again mythic proportions are evident as we focus on the photographic image of the story-space. The figure of Pilate is tall, powerful, the dominating presence. The people are smaller, humble, and reverent. This mythic illusion is supported by Pilate's actions and words directed towards Hagar. Pilate is not Hagar's mother, yet she addresses Hagar as her "baby girl" (322). The words magnify Pilate's role as the mother-figure, the care-giver, the guide and protector.

Mythic proportions are also invoked by the narrator's choice of imagery. The narrator compares Pilate to an elephant: "Pilate trumpeted for the sky itself to hear, 'And she was loved!'" (323). This suggests power, long memory, hugeness, and the cosmic proportions of the universal theme: love. In terms of foregrounding, Pilate becomes larger than the chapel, because she reaches for the expansion of the sky. And she becomes larger than life, mythic, unattainable. Each of these points underscores Barthes' comment: "Meaning is not at the end of a narrative, it runs across it" (87). In a sense, this story-space, like all story-spaces, is a story within a story. It has a beginning, a climax, a denouement. But the end is not the meaning, the meaning is implicitly structured in the complexity of the story, in short, it "runs across it."

What Pilate does, how she moves around the story-space, and how the attention of the people are directed towards her are illustrated when we examine the explicit story-space structure: Pilate is the center. The implications of this particular story-space are its cosmic illusions and therefore its reference to universal themes. The implicit story-space illustrates the "what" of the whole narrative of Song of Solomon: the idea that love, mercy, community, and past, present and future are inextricably interwoven and vitally important for harmony and serenity in the great

cycle of life. Because Pilate is emblematic of love, mercy, and death as a part of life, the chapel setting wherein the narrator places her is symbolic. Lutwack raises the question of the importance of place and character insofar as place is the sign of the type of character (69). In this setting it is not so much that the chapel is a sign of Pilate, but rather that her actions, words, and the manner in which the narrator depicts her, become signs of the chapel. The symbolic relationship between character and setting serves to further emphasize the narrator's point of view: love, mercy and death are related.

Mercy, death, and community are present, albeit in an impressionist fashion, in the first setting of the novel: Robert Smith flies from Mercy to his death in the presence of the community. That impression of mercy, death, and community achieves expression in the chapel setting. In this sense the first setting anticipates the second. Scruggs comments on the first setting: "Within [the] crowd are most of the novel's characters, and like a movie director using a panning shot [the narrator] moves from character to character" (322). Panning, in this usage, is comparative to diegesis. Hence we see diegesis supported by mimesis; the narrator first tells us generally about Pilate's power in the first setting, then she shows us specifically in the second setting.

In terms of narrative structure, these two settings are related in many ways: they are both crowd scenes where attention is directed towards Pilate at her entry; in both cases the narrator uses the same word to introduce Pilate-- she "burst" into song and she "burst" into the chapel; the first setting tells of a preparation for death, the second shows an acceptance of death; in both settings Pilate sings, and each time she elicits responses; in the first setting a person flies from Mercy, in the second a person calls for mercy; and most obviously, in the first setting Pilate's role is hinted at, but in the second it is emphasized. Looking at the story-spaces we see a contrast between the character and the setting in each: in the first setting Pilate remains on the side, in the second she is central and dominates; in the first she looks up, in the second people look up to her; in the first the sky is open, in the second Pilate trumpets for the sky. Most important, and what is only apparent when the story-space is examined as a spatial structure, is the size relationship. In the first setting, Pilate is smaller than the setting; in the second setting, metaphorically Pilate appears larger than the setting. Therefore in progressive terms, throughout these two story-spaces, Pilate's role is magnified.

In neither setting is there a tension between Pilate and her surroundings; in both she appears at ease. This

indicates Pilate's lack of pretensions and her confidence in her identity. Pilate is the only character in the novel who is at ease with her identity and her place in the cycle of existence. She is born without a navel, without a visible physical connection to life, so she forges her own, thereby stressing her mythic connections. She defines herself according to what she wants. Her firm belief in herself enables her to fashion a lifestyle that reflects her closeness to nature, her lack of regard for physical possessions, and her concern for and sensitivity to other people, especially her own family. She cares nothing about what people think of her, but she cares deeply about people. Growing up close to the earth and in harmony with nature increases her understanding of basic human needs: love, fulfillment, warmth, sense of belonging. When Macon fails as a role model for Milkman, Pilate steps in. In the beginning she gives him life, and at the end she saves his life. Her role increases in importance as people's reliance on her grows.

By examining these two story-spaces together, we achieve a deeper understanding of the complexity of the role of Pilate, and more specifically, of the narratorial closeness to the character of Pilate. Lanser argues that spatial orientation from within a setting offers a greater sense of the narrator's immediacy (192). Narratorial

closeness is especially apparent in the second setting, and in both settings the narrator privileges Pilate. In the first setting the narrator depicts Smith as reliant on Pilate to fly off, and in the second setting Pilate is clearly being relied upon by all the other characters.

The above two settings, when examined as spatial story-spaces, demonstrate the relationships between Pilate and her settings and between Pilate and the other characters in the settings. The following two settings show much of the same, except that only two people are involved: Pilate and her brother. And as anticipation is a narrative feature in the first two settings, so is it in the next two, but in a curiously different, albeit equally satisfying, manner.

Ironically, the first setting of the two is itself a fictional mental image: a character's flashback. The reader is invited to visualize the character's already mental image, a remembered past event. That is, the narrator allows us to see it from the point of view of the character. The flashback, on pages 19-21 of the novel, belongs to Macon Dead, Pilate's brother. He remembers the time just after his son was born, when Pilate visits him in his home. The setting is Macon's kitchen where Macon stands and Pilate sits in a chair near the crib and sings to the baby.

The flashback provides hints of Macon's attitude towards the relationship between brother and sister: "Macon

Dead remembered when his son was born, how she [Pilate] seemed to be more interested in this first nephew of hers than she was in her own daughter" (19). Macon's memory, because it is narrated by the narrator who becomes a filter, is necessarily distant from the reader and is possibly ironic. According to J. Hillis Miller, "The juxtaposition in indirect discourse of two minds, that of the narrator and that of the character, is, one might say, irony writ large" (3). With that in mind, is the "seemed to be" in the above quotation Macon's own thoughts or the narrator's translation? Whatever the case, it creates a distance between Macon and Pilate as well. We, like Macon, do not know what Pilate is thinking. The only words spoken by her in this setting are those expressing concern for her brother: "I been worried sick about you too, Macon" (20). Her words suggest that the distance between them is of Macon's making. The contradiction between the direct discourse of Pilate's words and the indirect discourse of Macon's thoughts raises the question of Macon's judgement and the question of why he should feel animosity towards Pilate. The narrator has already privileged Pilate, so anyone who differs from her is dis-privileged. Macon's disapproval of Pilate is evident; he accuses her of acting like an aunt: "Now she [Pilate] was acting like an in-law, like an aunt" (20). Well, why should she not? Although the



narrator does not elaborate on this irony, it appears that Macon is either disturbed by Pilate's presence or may have even disowned her as a sister.

In this setting Pilate stays in the background, but she is the catalyst for revealing emotions from her brother. Pilate comes to see the baby, yet Macon in an overbearing manner addresses what she wears and how she acts. For example, he asks her why she does not dress like a woman, why she wears a sailor's cap, why no stockings, and is she trying to embarrass him (20). In so doing, Macon breaks the maxims of quantity and relation, and implicature results. Macon's ironic discourse and thinly veiled sarcasm (both forms of implicature) display Macon's discomfort, and this magnifies Pilate's importance. If she has no value to him, why does he spend time with her, why does he try to cut her (and therefore her significance) down? In Macon's mind Pilate is important; therefore her importance is raised in our minds too.

The choice of words--Pilate's and Macon's--is the narrator's. Whether to use direct or indirect discourse is also the narrator's choice. As Lanser points out, a third-person narrator conventionally is omniscient and is expected to have knowledge of the story's outcome (161). The narrator here is acting in the traditional third-person form, and therefore she not only knows the story's outcome

but also more about the characters than we do. She chooses when and how to impart this information. In this story-space we get a very clear picture of the attitudes and philosophies of Pilate and Macon, through the narrator's depiction of their speech. Pilate speaks with and of concern; Macon verbally attacks and criticizes her. Pilate's philosophy is to accept and not judge; she does not rise to the bait of Macon's unreasonable attack. Macon's attitude is defensive, and his philosophy is to defend by attack.

Because this setting is represented through Macon's memory and placed in the novel by the narrator as a flashback, it is a framed area. Framed by memory; framed in a flashback. As such it represents an internal world--quite literally here--and is not necessarily representative of reality. Even a painting which depicts a realistic, existing landscape also reflects the artist's biases. A flashback memory illustrates the character's point of view and is inevitably fraught with biases. It is a curious but effective narrative device. The narrator allows Macon to utter critical damning words to Pilate, and this shows Macon himself in a negative light. If we view the flashback as a framed area representative of a desired internal world, then the point of view which Macon frames is not true but is revealing of his desires. We also sense, because of

Pilate's passive reaction, that what Macon says is not relevant to her. What he says tells us more about himself than about Pilate. Macon defines himself (unlike Pilate) through his possessions and how others see him. In his narrow perception of identity, he feels threatened by Pilate, whose lifestyle is the antithesis of his own. Macon's sense of self is shaky; he tries to create one through his words. But by ostracizing Pilate, he cuts himself off from humanity. Pilate understands and voices her concern for him.

Through Macon's verbal attack on Pilate, however, we get the only description of the setting. The narrator offers no description of Macon nor of the kitchen, beyond mentioning a stove. Too little description of the setting compared to too much of Pilate breaks the maxims of quantity and manner, and the implicature is not that the kitchen is important, but what it symbolizes. The kitchen is part of Macon's home. Yet plainly he is not relaxed, nor does he feel at home. If we construct the mental story-space of the kitchen we focus on Macon because he speaks and on Pilate because he speaks about her. If we examine the story-space as a three-dimensional structure, we see Pilate clearly but Macon only vaguely. This reflects the narrator's point of view. In fact two points of view are combined: spatial and ideological (Lanser 184). The theoretical location of the

narrator is next to Macon, and the narrator looks, with Macon, at Pilate. So do we. As we look, we intuitively grasp the ideological plane, as Lanser's theory predicts (252). We look at Pilate who sits next to the crib, from a position next to Macon, who stands, at one point next to the stove. There is no description of him, yet by his words we sense his agitation and movement. He moves, but Pilate does not. He speaks, but she says little. Her only words suggest that she knows Macon better than he himself does.

In terms of description the setting is backgrounded, and Macon, because he does all the talking, is foregrounded. Yet, because the narrator allows Macon's dialogue to be concerned with and directed towards Pilate, her figure is foregrounded. A narrative device: Macon talks to and moves around Pilate, who, because she is the catalyst for the action, assumes the central role. This story-space structure is an example of Friedman's argument that we need to read "down into" the text as we follow the discourse (15). Reading it this way, to gain the full significance of the story-space or vertical axis, suggests that, in her terms, the story-space or axis must be traced by the reader, who necessarily becomes the narrator. As Friedman asserts, the vertical narrative has many superimposed layers (15). Rimmon-Kenan calls vertical axes "deep structures" which are not in themselves narrative but are designed by the narrator

to explain meaning in a "semantic micro-universe" (11). Superimposed layers and semantic meanings are immediately clarified when we examine the story-space or vertical axis of the setting. For instance, we see that Macon's figure is also more prominent than Pilate's; he stands, she sits. We understand that whereas Macon is harried, Pilate is calm. His emotion is directed at her, but because she passively accepts it, and because she is so privileged, we sense there is no ground for Macon's vented feelings. The reader intuits that Macon's contrived psychological state of mind manifests itself in his physical position: he looks down on her.

Conflicting mental and emotional states of mind are even more obvious if we examine the prime reason this story-space occurs in the first place. Pilate comes to see the baby, but the baby is absent from the discourse. In this setting the baby is not important; the narrator uses the figure of the baby to demonstrate Macon's and Pilate's polarized positions around the baby. These positions not only illuminate their opposing philosophies but also suggest that the baby is doomed to struggle between the two. Obvious too is how their sense of space differs.

A character's sense of space is dependent on the narrator. Chatman tells us that "a character can perceive only that which is in the world of the story, through a

perceptual narrative predicate" (102). The narrator depicts Macon's sense of space as narrow, small. His agitation suggests containment--pent-up space. By focusing only on Pilate, Macon's sense of space is delineated. He only focuses on Pilate; he watches her. The story-space enables us to watch him watching her. In contrast, Pilate's sense of space is larger. Pilate's concern is for the baby and Macon: she sits next to and sings to the baby; she tells Macon she's been worried about him. Her concern is for two, and she is not contained or withdrawn. Most telling of all: she is at ease in someone else's space. Pilate does not see space as compartmentalized. Her generous spirit is shown to great advantage compared to Macon's peevishness.

Even though this story-space is a flashback in memory, if we examine the story-space as three dimensional, our sense of space is larger than Pilate's and Macon's. Pilate's vision is broader than Macon's, but we see more than both of them. We realize the implications of the relationships between characters in settings and between characters and settings. Again, at this point, "space becomes charged" (Bakhtin 84), a useful metaphor for analyzing a character in a setting. Macon's space is filled with energy, nervous energy. We sense that Macon suppresses emotions he is unwilling to acknowledge, and we sense that Pilate is aware of it. Hence the power of Pilate is

cunningly exposed by the narrator. In this story-space Macon watches Pilate but is disturbed by her, while Pilate looks at Macon and is concerned for him. Macon is presented in the role of an agitator, but Pilate clearly embodies nurturance. The dominating figure is Macon, but the dominating power belongs to Pilate.

The watching of Pilate by Macon anticipates the setting which occurs a few pages later in the novel when Macon walks home via his sister's house (28-30). Again, in this setting Pilate remains in the background, but her presence, her house, her essence--she smells "like a forest" (27)--are ostensibly responsible for creating the setting. Macon begins to walk past Pilate's house but is lured back by the music which "pulled him" (30) as if he has no control. By telling us that Macon is drawn to Pilate's house despite himself, the narrator implies that subconsciously Macon regrets the loss of something. Obvious too, is that some force other than Macon exerts the power to control--Pilate. The whole setting is an apt illustration of an embedded story, framing, and how the story-space concept works.

Before studying this story-space as a three-dimensional structure, I analyze the discourse at the sentence level, looking specifically at the syntactical and lexical choices of the narrator. Only the sentences that deal with the description of the physical setting are considered, as these

contribute towards building the visual image of the setting. The longest sentence is not surprisingly complex in structure:

He was rapidly approaching a part of the road where the music could not follow, when he saw, like a scene on the back of a postcard, a picture of where he was headed--his own home; his wife's narrow unyielding back; his daughters, boiled dry from years of yearning; his son, to whom he could speak only if his words held some command or criticism. (28)

The sentence reflects the complicated nature of the setting in question, plus the underlying causes of the setting itself. On the syntactical level the sentence actually deals with two settings: one is the physical setting wherein Macon finds himself, and the other is a mental picture of where he is heading. On the thematic level this tension mirrors the conflict inherent in Macon and the dialectic between his and Pilate's home. The sentence is also the pivotal point on which the whole setting relies. That is, had not the mental picture flashed into Macon's mind, he would not have turned back, and the structure of the setting which follows his turning back would have been impossible.

At the other extreme of this long sentence is the short, three-word, simple sentence: "They didn't move" (30). As with the complex sentence, this simple sentence is significant. It comes near the end of the description and



is one of the few sentences that do not include Macon. The focus is on the objects of Macon's attention: Reba, Hagar, and Pilate. The brevity underscores the emphasis. "They" are unaware of his attention or, indeed, of his presence. The phrase, "Reba's soft profile, Hagar's hands moving, moving in her heavy hair, and Pilate" (30), is a fragment, and because it is the only one in the passage, it is a deviation. Like the shortest sentence discussed above, it also excludes Macon. Not only does it exclude Macon, but it stresses Pilate, because she occupies the end-focus position. The fragment too, by its very nature, is emphatic; the three women are important to Macon, and Pilate most of all.

In this setting there are four instances of coordination, but only two are significant. While they obey the coordination rule of affording equal syntactical status on either side of the conjunction, they both deviate by providing an end-focus of important information. "The air was quiet and yet Macon Dead could not leave" (30) implies that Macon, despite himself, is held to the spot. The fact that he cannot leave even though the music has stopped suggests that it was much more than the music that "pulled" him to this spot. The other coordinated sentence, "They simply stopped singing and Reba went on paring her toenails, Hagar threaded and unthreaded her hair, and Pilate swayed

like a willow over her stirring" (30), focuses on Pilate's actions. Significantly, "stirring" is the end-focus of the entire setting and the only movement Pilate makes. Perhaps it is the stirring up of emotions and memories in Macon that causes him to remain.

The whole passage--while building a setting bearing a relationship to Macon, whose movement causes it--begins and ends with Pilate as the topic. In the first sentence the personal pronoun "her" occurs, and in the last sentence her name is the last one mentioned. The setting is built around her, and yet she features only marginally in the description. Her importance is portrayed through implicature. According to Grice's maxim of quantity, because too little description of her is offered, her role is magnified. In the linear text the narrator makes Pilate conspicuous by her absence.

Implicature is present, too, at the sentence level. The maxim of quantity is violated twice. In the first place it occurs in the sentence "Now, nearing her yard, he trusted that the dark would keep anyone in her house from seeing him" (28). Macon does not want to be seen, but we are not given reasons why. The women are members of his family, so if he does not want them to see him, the implicature is that the relationship between them is uneasy. The effect is rhetorical too because it arouses the reader's curiosity.

The second time the maxim of quantity is violated, we are given more information than is necessary. In the already quoted sentence "He was rapidly . . . criticism" (28), it is not necessary to know that the music cannot follow him to picture Macon's progress down the road. The fact that this information is included implies the importance of the music to Macon, not only because in his own life there is no music, but also because this particular music has a pull on him that we are unaware of. He even feels that it "follows him."

Apart from the violation of the maxim of quantity where we are given too much or too little information, we are also offered information that bears no relation to the main idea being expressed. The sentence, "There was no one on the street that he could see . . ." (28), poses the question of why the narrator could not have just said that the street was deserted. Knowing what Macon can or cannot see does not alter our understanding of the setting. Telling us "that he could see" implies that there is much that Macon does not see or does not want to see. The maxim of relation is violated again when we look at the sentence "Surrendering to the sound, Macon moved closer" (29). It suggests that Macon must first surrender before he can move. Even the choice of the word "surrender" raises questions. What is it that he must surrender? What does he fight against and lose?

"Surrender" suggests a battle lost, and it is implied that against his will he loses the battle. If Macon had to move, the women did not have to, and this is the implication in the sentence "They didn't move" (30). They did not have to do anything, only Macon had to. The women have no battle to overcome, they are the magnet that draws Macon, and they are the heart of the setting.

Implications are also evident when we examine the placement of given information versus old information in the sentences. There are only two existential uses: "There was no one on the street that he could see . . ." (28), and "There were no street lights . . . pedestrian" (28). These existential sentences serve to present new information encoded as the subjects, "no one" and "no street lights," thus foregrounding the negativity, the absence of something. In the first place it is no person, in the second place it is no object. The implications are that the person, Macon, in the midst of this setting, is alone, is lonely, and that the setting is a microcosm for his place in the community as a whole. Macon is and feels alienated.

Significantly, the entire setting is told in indirect discourse. If the setting is an argument to persuade us to the narrator's point of view, it makes sense to choose indirect discourse. Even though the narrator may choose which discourse, direct or indirect, to use, readers often

sense, and many theorists maintain, that indirect discourse is the narrator's mediated information, whereas direct discourse reflects the speech of the characters (Bonheim 5; Lanser 161). Therefore, in the traditional sense, indirect discourse carries implicit rhetorical power because the narrator filters facts (mediates) through her own words.

The setting is also not necessary to the chronological events of the narrative, which would not be altered without it. Therefore, Grice's maxim of quantity is violated and we surmise that the setting is included for rhetorical reasons only. However, this fact is also supported by Todorov's theory of embedding. The narrator tells us about Macon first, then Pilate; Macon's story is interrupted by Pilate's. Therefore Pilate's story is embedded within Macon's, and the setting illustrates this fact. The setting is, in Todorov's terms, an argument (70). The narrator includes this argument to imply certain characteristic traits of the participants.

If we now move from the discourse level of the setting to the structural level, and focus on how the narrator uses the discourse to describe the setting, we visualize the three-dimensional spatial structure. The structure reveals an image similar to that of a photograph: dark sky lit by a moon, no street lights, dark house lit inside by flickering candles. As Macon approaches, the image he and the reader

see is the same. When Macon advances to the window, however, his view and our view are dramatically different. What we see is the whole story-space. This is because the spatial view of the narrator is not attached to Macon. It is, in Lanser's view, outside the setting (193). We have, thanks to the narrator, a panoramic view of a large spatial terrain, a view from a distance (Lanser 193). The narrator's topographic point of view is a conscious choice. She constructs this setting so that we look at the whole of it and draw our own conclusions. What Macon sees is framed by the window, which indicates a limited vision. It suggests that Macon considers only one viewpoint, a restricted one, as when Pilate came to his house. The story-space focuses readers' attention on the fact that Macon is an outsider. Macon does not see himself as such; he merely sees the three women inside Pilate's house. But we see the whole picture; we watch him watching the women. Thus the story-space created by the narrator shows more than the words can hope to do.

The structure of the story-space has further implications. All of the description involves the environment surrounding the house. The inside of the house is not mentioned at all, because the inside of the house is not important. What is important is what the house symbolizes--community, serenity, beauty--everything that is

missing in Macon's life. This is stressed in the photographic image of the setting, where we see dark versus light. Outside, where Macon is, it is dark and deserted. In contrast, inside the house it is light and welcoming. The ultimate irony is that Pilate's face is not seen--her back is to the window. Yet it is Pilate who draws Macon there and who keeps him there.

Since Pilate's story is embedded within Macon's, her power is invoked. In this mental image of the setting, the character of Macon is foregrounded, because he features the most in the description. However, if we keep the photograph of the setting in mind, we see that at the center of the setting is the character of Pilate. Had she not been there, Macon would not have peeked into the window to set in place the story-space just discussed. The implication of this particular story-space is that whereas the character of Pilate is backgrounded, her power is foregrounded. As in the other settings Pilate is the magnet at the center.

The frame of Pilate's window through which Macon looks borders his personal representation of what it is he desires subconsciously. If Macon would mentally enter that which he desires, he would leave the frame behind. He does not do this, which suggests that he sees as definitive the dividing line he himself erected. The information is grasped intuitively by the reader as the setting is examined. Just

as a frame surrounds a painting which represents an internal world, the window frames the representation of the world Macon longs for but has rejected. Macon's frame is smaller than ours, it is framed by ours, and therefore theoretically it represents a desired reality. Thus we observe what Uspensky calls "the formation of frames within frames in a hierarchical order" (151).

The setting structured as a framed story-space is a useful narrative strategy. Not only does it reveal multiple layers or a deep structure, it is aesthetically pleasing. It presents, too, a clever contrast between characters in two different settings. In Macon's house, Pilate comes inside, and Macon watches her. At Pilate's house, Macon chooses not to go in but still watches Pilate. He is an onlooker, not a participant. Of importance too, is the consideration of whose sense of space is being depicted (Chatman 101). Macon's sense of space is smaller than the reader's, and the reader's is smaller than the narrator's. Pilate, who is enclosed in a space, focuses on nothing; she has her back to the window and is stirring something in a pot (29). Space is not necessary to Pilate to define herself; she feels no relative sense of it. She is depicted as the pivotal center of space (this story-space), of the greater cosmic space, of the whole cycle of life. In fact, Pilate is cognitive of the largest sense of space of all.



She watches no one; she has no need to. Her mythical propensities are once more underscored.

The narrator's depiction of characters' senses of space in two different story-spaces positions the characters in a hypothetical cosmos, because it reflects a character's sense of identity and feeling of belonging, or not belonging, in a novel in which belonging, community, and family are crucial. In Macon's case tension and a narrow sense of space are equivalent to no firm center of self and alienation from the community. Macon's space does not overlap Pilate's but Pilate's does overlap his. Studying these two story-spaces separately adds to our intuitive understanding of how Macon and Pilate fit into the framework of fictional space, but studying them together allows more conclusions to be drawn. Pilate draws Macon to her space; Pilate is at ease in her and others' space. Pilate's space encompasses theirs, just as her story is embedded within their stories.

Because these two story-spaces so aptly complement each other, the parallels and contrasts between them are resources for evaluating character relationships. Pilate's singing is common to both settings: it annoys Macon in the first setting, but it attracts him in the second. At his house she comes in, at hers he does not, and in both cases Pilate sits and is still while Macon stands and moves. In his house Macon exaggerates his presence by his behavior,

whereas at Pilate's house he keeps his presence a secret. In Macon's house Pilate's face is seen and Macon verbally attacks her, but at Pilate's house her face is not visible and Macon is silent. The latter suggests that when Pilate looks at Macon he is compelled to speak, but when she does not he is content to just look at her. Macon is manipulative and manipulated. Pilate, however, is serene. She herself manipulates no one, but her power inspires awe. Although Macon does not realize it, he responds to her power, either negatively or positively. Pilate's role is greater than a horizontal reading of the discourse suggests.

If we look now at the four settings analyzed, and especially at the spatial structures invoked, it is apparent how much is missed if we merely follow the surface text. Except for the chapel setting Pilate features only marginally in the discourse of each, but in all four settings Pilate is at ease, in harmony with her world. And in each of the settings Pilate sings. Her mother's name was Sing, her father sang like an angel (237), and her songs are lyrical stories--stories to pass on. Singing, songs, stories, and their relevance to self are interwoven in the narrative of Song of Solomon and implied in the title. Only by keeping the songs and stories alive can one attain and maintain an identity. This idea is critical to the novel

and to Milkman's journey to selfhood. Selfhood is achieved through story-telling, songs, singing, Pilate.

Furthermore, at the structural level of the story-spaces, the narrator weaves Pilate's role in such a way that her influence threads the narrative together. Pilate's role is highlighted, her power invoked, her influence on other characters stressed, and the positive effects on others of her essence, and presence, are underlined. Studying the story-spaces we realize her mythical proportions and therefore the cosmic inferences. People like Pilate exist in everyday life, and people like her are necessary, not only to pass on stories but for others to measure themselves by. Pilate is not the explicit protagonist in Song of Solomon, but the narrative implicitly rests on her role. The narrator demonstrates this through her conscious use of character/setting relationships, evident when the story-spaces are examined. In a sense, the narrator and Pilate are one. Without either of them Song of Solomon would not exist. By depicting the story-spaces as she has, the narrator shows how her, and Pilate's, senses of space are cosmic, circular. Both the narrator's and Pilate's power touches all within the fictional cosmic space of Song of Solomon.

At the discourse level readers sense the importance of Pilate's role, but at the structural level the magnitude of her role is apparent. The efficacy of analyzing literature via the narrator's depiction of a character/setting relationship is clear. It has the potential to provide a richer appreciation of any character's role in any fiction, and to reveal the larger implications of the entire work. The story-space shows more than the words tell.

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