Introduction: Going Private

> In this our talking America, we are ruined by our good nature and listening on all sides.
>
> --Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience" (1844)

> . . . the vital distinction between what is private and what is public is obliterated, and everything is reduced to a kind of private-public gossip which corresponds more or less to the public of which it forms part. The public is public opinion which interests itself in the most private concerns.
>
> --Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age* (1846)

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Everywhere one turns today in academic journals, it is politics as usual: all texts are subject to political and/or culturally mandated short-arm inspections. Not, as Jerry Seinfeld once might have said, that there's anything wrong with that. Who wants to return to the closet claustrophobia enforced by prejudices of race, gender, class, ethnicity or sexual orientation(s)? Or to discourage those still gripped by oppressive, dominant discourses and their endorsements of ignoble forms of behavior from breaking silence; from joining enclaves to air old and present social grievances; in short, from going public, and thereby introducing a valuable discursive cacophony, whether for strategic or cathartic purposes, into what passes for the prevailing public sphere of today's "humanities" profession? If no consensus exists about its particulars, this politicization--for instance of literary studies--surely stands for one in general. To be sure, I may choose not to regard literary works, however defined as such, for their political emissions or the "cultural work" they purportedly do. Yet in the present academic environment, that choice perforce appears political. The fact that this observation has become a virtual cliché simply proves the point.

So it is no surprise that a familiar type of critical practice opts for more *exposés*, more "outings," when it comes to, among other things, the culturally influential issue of canon-formation. For example, cultural imperatives dictate exposing Edgar Allan Poe for his alleged racist sentiments, not to mention his oft-proclaimed "aesthetic ideology" or art's exemption from political agendas; or Nathaniel Hawthorne for his misogyny or literary politicking regarding *The Scarlet Letter*; or Mark Twain for his use of the word "nigger" in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.[1] Conversely, other critics focus on recovering works and writers excluded for egregious moral-political reasons from the American literary canon, the one also recommended for

students to study, if only to show the no less moral-political reasons why we should now include them. These reasons, too, are subject to further ideological revisions. With respect, say, to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'s positive social effect at the time, how ought one assess Harriet Beecher Stowe's coterminous notion of Liberian colonization for freed slaves? But few expect such facts or canonical designs to go uncontested. Indeed, these contestations help fuel more political conversation,[2] often leaving uncontested only the issue of canonical thinking itself.

Strangely enough, from one perspective this critical *Zeitgeist* or foregrounding of criticism as a social-performative activity exists in the historical mainstream of American social practices, the effect of which has been to dilute "private" considerations of most matters including those of literary texts. At first glance, those practices appear to value the privatization of everything from business enterprises to personal life. Yet the public-private binary in United States culture has usually meant the subsumption of the private within the public life. That was so for American-Puritan colonialists whose households "put no premium on privacy," for example whose town governments "sought to control the people's private lives, forbidding profane language, lavish dress, excessive drinking."[3] Conversely, early Republican leaders felt that public duty superseded inclinations toward the private life, which in any case soon became ripe material for scoring scandalous points against one's political opponents.[4]

More generally, for European-American settlers, geographical and social circumstances lent privacy the negative connotation it had assumed in Western antiquity, specifically the sense of "isolation, deprivation, and separation."[5] According to Hannah Arendt, in ancient Greek culture private life defined the site of social labor and unavoidable natural processes, such as the necessities of quotidian existence associable with the domain of children, women and slaves. In contrast, the public realm referred to the distinctive and privileged site of adult civic life, especially social decision-making, in which (some) males participated for honor and reputation, or for the special status of free citizenship.[6] To a certain extent, earlier, but, with the incursion of nineteenth-century Western-industrial capitalism, privacy, etymologically linked to "privation," appeared gradually to shed its pejorative social connotations. If still negatively framed, privacy, as Jeff Weintraub has argued, nonetheless began to identify a zone of newly valued intimate experiences as "defined in direct opposition to the ethos of the (equally new) 'public' realm of impersonal relations and institutions . . . ."[7]

As I maintain in Chapter Two, nineteenth-century American notions of domestic life affirmed one such zone of privacy. Yet domesticity's

well-documented association with female activities simultaneously framed the private, middle-class household as at best a reactionary or imaginary refuge from the civic and commercial pressures--the patriarchal ethos--that dominated the American public sphere.[8] Moreover, domestic households arguably promulgated certain institutionalized practices of their own, in effect subsidizing the impersonal public sphere with which they were ostensibly at odds.[9] Contesting domesticity's pejorative reductions, certain feminist considerations of it argue that no "separate spheres" ideology existed at all. For one thing, many women actively engaged in many kinds of public affairs. For another, by itself domestic ideology entailed a latent protest against an alienated public realm; in effect, it proffered an alternative model for a more egalitarian one.[10] Revisionist or otherwise, however, these viewpoints of nineteenth-century domestic life self-evidently reconfigure it in terms of its publicly definable orientations.

From the late nineteenth century through the present, American liberal-individualist defenses of privacy also end up underwriting the very public sphere that makes privacy valuable for them in the first place. Most contemporary legal defenses and definitions of privacy take their cue from, even when they attempt to revise, Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis's article "The Right to Privacy," published in the *Harvard Law Review* of 1890. Warren and Brandeis sought to limit the threats to a person's "right to be let alone," posed by technological innovations like photography, new commercial and bureaucratic practices, and especially a rapaciously intrusive, late nineteenth-century press. For Warren and Brandeis, the advances of modern civilization required an officially enforceable defense of privacy. Not only one's physical property but also one's personal "[t]houghts, emotions, and sensations demanded legal recognition," albeit "without the interposition of the legislature." Along with common law recognition of "a man's house as his castle," their article defends personal privacy essentially on the liberal-individualist principle of one's "inviolate personality."[11]

For political critics of liberalism, this defense of course lacks persuasive force. From a leftist viewpoint, defending personal privacy suspiciously serves to defuse egregious, economic versions of private self-interest, not to mention abuse against women and children. Distinguishing between physical and personal forms of private property engages the same ideological myth of its being a quintessentially public matter. Even on its own terms, the Warren-Brandeis defense of privacy hinges on American-institutional mechanisms, in particular a juridical if not legislative "recognition" to secure it. Making one's right to an "intangible," personal privacy synonymous with "the right

to enjoy life" and "the right to liberty," Warren and Brandeis tie privacy-rights to an "exercise of extensive civil privileges" sanctioned by the American public realm. Moreover, linking privacy's status to either a "bad" or "good" public clearly mitigates privacy's putatively "inviolate" ground.[12]

In any case, the Warren-Brandeis article's paradigmatic legal defense of privacy argues only for a qualified and politically unthreatening kind of privacy. Even from a civic-republican viewpoint, the public assumes final authority in determining at what point privacy might afford a refuge for anti-social behavior or anti-egalitarian self-interest. Summarizing the views of certain critics on the issue, Patricia Boling notes that while a juridically defined privacy "protects us from scrutiny and interference," it "sometimes . . . shuts off parts of our lives from public debate and prevents us from taking political action to improve those parts of our lives." To the same end but with obverse emphasis, many liberal arguments maintain that recovering or nurturing private experience is essential for establishing a meaningfully *civil* public sphere.[13]

But as with the Warren and Brandeis article, both rationales inevitably succumb to more defensive views of privacy. Legal and politically oriented arguments for it inevitably respond to the power promoted by runaway commercial and technological expansion. Rochelle Gurstein exemplifies the dilemma in her nostalgic evocation of turn-of-the-century American proponents of social "reticence." For her, they possessed a "far richer appreciation of the public realm" than the ultimately victorious, progressivist reformers who touted media "exposure" of all types of private matters.[14]

In our time, of course, the manifest threats to privacy cited by liberals have become conspicuously exacerbated thanks to the surge of a pervasive, late-capitalist commodity culture and revolutionary technological advances most evident in the area of communications. Whatever the public sphere once meant, it now also means an acceptance of rampant "publicity," one available to everyone and anyone (e.g., as per the venues of Facebook, Twitter and the like), and so in a more pervasive-cum-invasive sense than that envisioned by Warren and Brandeis. Publicity consists of an amplified social space in which hyper-attention becomes trained on persons or events, with its most visible but certainly not sole aspect manifested by the commercial a.k.a. mass-media exploitation of celebrities' private lives--for example, the trials and travails of a President's penis."[15] Moreover, to protect women and some males from heretofore previously secured occurrences of private sexual abuse, legally viable #MeToo accusations or like public "revelations of such abuse have become more and more the social norm, reactionary resistance to such notwithstanding.[16] In short, if

formerly the public took precedence over or threatened the private realm in socially obvious ways, it nevertheless assumed the appearance of an external, impersonal agency in relation to a separate or "other" sphere of existence. Now, however, one is additionally encouraged to regard private occurrences as, if only in likely *in potentia*, always already public.

What can privacy mean in an era of easily accessible, user-friendly, and electronically facilitated reproductions of what people once considered to be self-evidently private events, and not just the camcordings of weddings, funerals, sex, deaths, and births? In effect, we ourselves internalize and regard our experiences in terms of an electronic public sphere and its instantaneous amplification of any such events. The ubiquitous cell-phone makes moot the sense of one's inaccessible places, such as the ease now of taking cell-phone photos of someone--us, too--in a once-upon-a-time "private" moment. Television and other video-textual-technological options turn the illusion-demarcated movie people formerly watched into the "reality show"--such as Donald Trump's--in which they always potentially exist: "Once we sat in movie theaters dreaming of stardom. Now we live in a movie dreaming of celebrity."[17]

These internalized, technological tools of perception forecast "the end of privacy." Moreover, they have manifestly invaded what we previously thought even innocuously private, such AI technological options used by corporations (for purposes of statistically gauging and encouraging consumption of products), by political propagandists (for exposing scandalous materials about opponents as well as fomenting "fake news" about them for social gain), and by prurient voyeurs (to make public other persons'--usually women's--sexually definable and so-called "intimate" moments). Taken together, these options realize with a vengeance Foucault's famous interpretation of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, for they arguably comprise not an overt matter of social control, but a reflexive impulse beyond commercial considerations to witness and objectify--to represent--private affairs as newsworthy "secrets."[18]

As noted, this panoptic invasion manifestly concerns conventional notions of privacy, from physical solitude, domestic life, intimate *relations* and conversations, to control over access to our bodies, work, and data-recordable profiles. These include discernible activities or relations with others. But what about more subjective affairs like thinking or feeling? Here, too, contemporary thought, hardly in any mood to inhibit investigations into mental phenomena and the rapid distribution of its findings, propagates a "tell all" ethos, which in effect duplicates the multiple, technological constructions of the public realm. One can readily cite a host of modern and postmodern

theories that themselves contribute to the wholesale evacuation of privacy. Ludwig Wittgenstein eviscerated the possibility of private languages. Recent philosophers of mind like Thomas Nagel, not to mention "cybernetic" or positivist antagonists like Daniel Dennett, question the possibility of private experience. Psychoanalysts, too, "assume that it is possible to access and examine [persons'] motivations," thus placing "an agent's [subjective] intimacy claims" within "the reach of others." Not least, the academic-cultural criticism practiced today construes privacy as no more than a social-political construction. Even deploying postmodern, guerilla-like strategies against panoptic procedures or hegemonic concepts like oedipal paradigms inversely legitimates the political cachet that such critiques simultaneously court.[19]

In short, phenomenological convictions about privacy can't pass critical muster. On one hand, privacy can denote whatever (including privacy itself) I feel, perceive, think, imagine, or do beyond, but not necessarily excluding, the actual presence of others. On the other hand, a host of mediations--linguistic, cultural, political, gendered, familial, geographical, even architectural--continually qualifies this notion of privacy. Upon reflection, that is, whatever I feel, perceive, think, imagine or do is never, strictly speaking, private at all. In that sense, "privacy" does not exist; instead, it remains deducibly pre-occupied by one or another public that happens to dominate my living and thinking environment at any given moment. The personal is indeed political, and not just as a political credo. So today's critical practitioners of "going public," whatever their different social agendas--egalitarian, anti-hegemonic, or even reactionary--seem right on, for both epistemological reasons and the social good they want to do. Who would want it otherwise?

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Still, and beyond the fact that many of these same critics remain closet liberals regarding *certain* private matters, the public, at least from a literary-critical perspective, depends on the private as much as vice-versa, if only not to implode into a realm of utter, aesthetic disinterest. Henry Sussman, for example, reflects a critical truism when he remarks how, "from a perspective of wish-fulfillment, [the blurring or] confusion between the public and the private accounts in part for the attraction that literature" in general "holds for its readers."[20]

So understood, literature can help defray privacy's anti-social connotations, already implicit in many of its conventional definitions: "1.a. The state or condition of being withdrawn from the

society of others, or from public interest; seclusion. b. The state or condition of being alone, undisturbed, or free from public attention, as a matter of choice or right; freedom from interference or intrusion."[21] In Hannah Arendt's formulation, cited in my Preface, imaginative literature draws public attention to more specific synonyms of privacy: secrets and interpersonal intimacies. Literature lends them a public form, and in that way justifies as well as makes them interesting to others. Yet given our privy relation to fictional characters, literature can also sustain our illusion of private experience. Literary representations of identifiably private topics thus often finesse the otherwise either/or distinction between public and private spheres. Aesthetic interest lies primarily in the human slippage that the public-private topic inherently entails, such as how various registers of social meaning and value can fail to represent personal interests, wishes, and so on.

To a limited extent, I adopt that reasonable critical perspective in the following work. I argue that certain prose works by Edgar Allan Poe and Wallace Stevens' 1923 *Harmonium* poems not only thematize but also rhetorically enact the public-private dichotomy in the above fashion. One can further claim, of course, that the issue of privacy possesses a social charge for both writers, although my thesis ultimately points in a different direction. Poe and Stevens surely pursue modes of literary privacy partly in critical response to certain oppressive, impersonal aspects of their respective social complexes. As I have already suggested, in Poe's mid-nineteenth-century world, the "public," the socially highlighted site of accepted or contested values, was coming into existence as a special, alienated category of social experience, particularly in the guise of the American capitalist marketplace and mass culture. Stevens' early twentieth-century American world both took for granted a now heavily bureaucratized business economy and transformed the public sphere into a virtually hyper-self-conscious issue. Besides commercial enterprises, technological advances enabled and abetted a burgeoning array of disciplinary practices, most notably in relation to governmental, scientific and mass-media affairs. More to the point, their conflation proffered new modes of cultural surveillance and helped instigate a "publicity" ethos on balance supported by because supporting American middle-class values.[22]

The historically different cultural formations of an American public sphere necessarily differentiate Poe and Stevens' sense of the *literary*-public constituencies that their writing at once addresses and arguably resists. Poe writes for a mixed, inchoately variable magazine or journal-oriented public: commercial-minded editors and publishers, a growing middle-class and mass-cultural readership (the

"rabble"), noticeably superseding an older, more honorific Romantic literary world. As a Modernist poet, Stevens writes in terms of a more delimited literary public. At the same time, his writing invokes an American literary past--an internalized canonical public, as it were--from which Poe was comparatively free. In the latter's case, American-Republican literature existed in embryo, or as an issue more or less coming to the fore. His peer public largely consisted of geographically distant British writers, and within an era of delayed, scattered, and tenuously verifiable information.

Given these differences, one might infer that Poe exercised a less vexed American right to literary privacy than Stevens could. Yet forced by economic pressures to write magazine journalism, Poe, whose ambition for honorific, literary recognition lay primarily in writing poetry, emplots and mocks his mass readers in his tales. Poe's fiction, that is, includes the fiction of both his public's reading of it and his simultaneously witnessing--as if from some private or undetected position--the effect his emplotted readings will have on others. In that respect, he resembles Dupin, his fictional "private eye" in "The Purloined Letter." Like Dupin, Poe can unabashedly think to invade the privacy of readers encountering <u>his</u> tale or "letter," the better to annex the private position for himself: "'I confess . . . that I should like very well to know the precise character of [Minister D---'s] thoughts when . . . he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the cardrack'" (*P&T* 697).

Poe here inscribes an aggressive protest against a public complex, and no less so for its being a displaced or fictively framed, i.e., a priva-tized (sic), wish, not directly assignable to himself. Subject to the qualifications I raise in Chapter Four, Stevens' "Modernist" poems in *Harmonium* generally express something similar. His poems not only abjure thematic commonplaces of Romantic and Victorian credos, they also purvey an esoteric style that frames them as "private" in apparent reaction and resistance to utilitarian-, moral- and/or consumerist-oriented reading conventions.

If they forfeit a mass-public audience in the process, Stevens' Modernist gambits nevertheless presuppose and appeal to a more specialized literary public, a surmise that his post-*Harmonium* poems tend to support. Among other things, they often theorize how the very medium of art includes its essentially public status. A poem, he states in "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" (1942)

> refreshes life so that we share,
> For a moment, the first idea . . . .

Or the poet

tries by a peculiar speech to speak
The peculiar potency of the general

in relation to "the gibberish of the vulgate that he seeks . . ." (*CP* 382,397). If nothing else, such postulations suggest that Stevens deploys a less aggressive or more permeable sense of the public-private dichotomy than does Poe. Even in his pre-*Harmonium* years, Stevens occasionally worries about his personal proclivity for not sharing his thoughts with others, instead wishing for more "agreeable" public contexts where he could share at least some of them: "I must think well of people. After all, they are only people.--The conventions are the arts of living. People know. I am not the only wise man.--Or if I cannot think well, let me hide my thoughts.--It is of no consequence to explain or to assert one's self . . . . Life is not important.--At least, let's have it agreeable" (*SP* 176-77; 1907).

Yet Stevens' early and later sentiments in fact might just as easily support an anti-private thesis about his *Harmonium* poems. It requires little interpretive effort, for example, to show how "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," one of his most well-known poems from the collection, may even indicate his siding with Rochelle Gurstein's "party of exposure."[23] Stripped of funereal costume, the poem's dead woman lies wholly subject, "horny feet" and all, to the gaze of everyone, here including anonymous "boys" and "wenches" as well as the imagination of the poem's readers. Its speaker, an ersatz funeral director, himself calls for this wholesale brand of *exposé*. True, he would have others "cover her face," but less to preserve the corpse's vulnerable privacy per se than to violate the public's version of it as propagated by the period's middle-class proprieties in waking the dead. He therefore notably omits any directive to alter the corpse's "facial expression with cosmetics," the social function of which, according to Karen Halttunen, was to make "certain that, even in death, the respectable Victorian remained genteel."[24]

Yet as I maintain in Chapter Six,[25] "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," not to mention other poems in *Harmonium*, also disrupts its flirtation with exposing the shame of conventionally understood private matters like death and love. Similarly, if Stevens acknowledges the inescapably public face of his poetry, he does it with a private twist not unlike the kind I argue Poe exercises in his tales. Before and after his poetic career took hold, Stevens insulated his family life from public intrusions. He also rigorously separated his writing poetry from his work as an insurance company lawyer. He even appears to have consigned the domestic sphere itself to a kind of quasi-public one, thus relegating the "private" entirely to his poetic ruminations. Stuart M. Sperry refers to how one of Stevens' visiting nieces noted

the separation of the Stevens household into private spaces: "'Uncle Wallace said, "This side of the house is mine." He had this Spartan bedroom. On the left side of the house were the women's quarters, [his wife] Aunt Elsie's and Holly's [his daughter's]. It was such a shock. But this was their understanding of life. He needed to have his separateness, his privacy, very much so'."[26]

I agree with Sperry that Stevens' conspicuous demarcation of private and public spheres infiltrates his poetry, and not least in his first collection of poems. Occurring in relation to social and literary values knottily tied to a well-established impersonal and invasive public environment, Stevens' inscribed pursuits of privacy in *Harmonium* differ from Poe's only in their less combative inflections. Stevens imaginatively evades rather than ambivalently resists a public he in any case can entertain no illusion of banishing. Whether or not partially motivated by his early lack of authorial self-confidence, he nonetheless practices a poetic privacy that, however elusively inscribed, one can at minimum take as a kind of symbolic stand of bourgeois privacy in a modern world increasingly opposed to it. Other ways exist to frame Poe and Stevens' respective pursuits of literary privacy in historical and cultural terms, and I attempt to rehearse some of them in subsequent chapters. Mine is, after all, a heuristic critical paradigm, empirically questionable but intended provocatively to *re*-view the Poe/Stevens works I discuss.

Such formulations no doubt also raise a further methodological question. Why not equally apply the American public-private issue to a host of other American writers? Regarding Poe's peers, for example, Emerson, as Richard Poirier remarks, "tries to define . . . literature [] as something prior to publication." Hawthorne sequesters himself in the Old Manse to begin his public literary career; he also writes about and rhetorically exemplifies his authorial reserve in the prefaces to his published romances. Thoreau goes to Walden, a secluded zone immediately proximate to Concord, "to transact some private business." There he not only writes a draft of the work readers are now reading, but attempts to secure a "higher"--in his case, also a private--life next to the site *par excellence* where a promised, American-Revolutionary public sphere historically originated. Abstaining from social protest ("'I would prefer not to'"), Melville's Bartleby doubly withdraws in words, spirit, and act from the public sphere as defined by mid-nineteenth-century American capitalism.

Given the twentieth century's publicity *Zeitgeist,* not a few later American writers besides Stevens also worry the public-private fault-line in their works.[27] So on what critical grounds can I justify examining a restricted set of works by Poe and Stevens, themselves an odd, literary-historical couple to begin with, as paradigmatic models

for discussing the privacy issue within different periods of American cultural history?

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In the present book, I propose to examine how cultural formations of the privacy issue, itself possessing a certain public cachet, only incidentally affect Poe and Stevens' respective pursuits of it. Generally speaking, American writers who engage the issue at all do so indirectly, and then in ways readily reducible to a representative defense of "the right to privacy"--to the perceived sense, as Robert Post's contemporary, legal argument has it, that privacy's violation "is *intrinsically* harmful because it is defined as that which injures social personality."[28] In contrast, Poe and Stevens' works to me manifest a sustained radical "write to privacy." Both writers, that is, ply private codes that exceed the perquisites for any socially representative defense of privacy. Like Poe's narrator in his tale "The Man of the Crowd," they look for, want, perversely seek to produce the unreadable text or, to be more precise, a radically private position in writing it. Because they push the issue to such extremes--one could easily include Emily Dickinson's poems in this discussion--they also set the parameters, and so for me exhibit a "poetics" by which to discuss the private practices of other American literary works.

Thus construed, privacy clearly beggars critical as well as social depictions. To speak critically about privacy is already to endow it with a negotiable or debatable significance within the public realm. As the Warren and Brandeis *locus classicus* illustrates, in United States culture that almost always means subsuming privacy within ideological constructions like self-autonomy, personal freedom or an inviolate individualism. But in relation to the privacy Poe and Stevens pursue within their compositional acts, those constructions, I mean to argue, themselves perforce simulate a "public."

How, then, can criticism at all get at the private? Relentlessly figured as a non-public gestalt, the kind of privacy I attribute to Poe and Stevens' works poses a methodological conundrum even for an arch-individualist critical paradigm like Harold Bloom's. The problem goes beyond his likely rejection of any ephebe-precursor linkage especially between these two particular writers. Bloom, of course, everywhere extols Stevens' canonical merits while relegating Poe's works to "atrocious" status. In principle, however, the general, American aesthetic that Bloom finds Stevens exemplifying, namely that it "always exists as a lonely, idiosyncratic, isolated stance," surely applies to Poe, too. As I read them in the present book, Poe's tales

also appear to exhibit what Bloom claims for Stevens' poems: a visionary "solitude" that resists mass appropriation, and instead requests equivalent, solitary readings.[29] Indeed one feature of Bloom's well-known theory of literary influence resembles the method I use to argue for the two writers' respective disaffections from cultural formations of both the public and the private. That theory not only itself focuses on what might pass for writers' private scenes of writing, it also maintains that texts register them alongside the visions they signify for less theoretically inquisitive readers.

Formulated primarily in anxious, literary-competitive or oedipal terms, Bloom's critical paradigm nonetheless replaces a mass public readership with one composed of the poet's internalized, literary precursors. For him, in essence, Stevens writes to forge his poetic identity in relation to still another literary public. I argue something different in Chapter Six. Far from anxiously repressing their most proximate, American literary precursors, Stevens' *Harmonium* poems construct scenarios in which he consciously invokes them primarily to distinguish his art from the canonical monuments theirs have become *in the literary public's mind at large*. In that respect, Stevens effectively privatizes Bloom's notion of a writer's (quasi-)private scene of writing.

Examining "The Public Square," a 1923 poem written too late for Stevens to include in the first *Harmonium* volume, may help illustrate what I mean:

> A slash of angular blacks
> Like a fractured edifice
> That was buttressed by blue slants
> In a coma of the moon.
>
> A slash and the edifice fell,
> Pylon and pier fell down.
> A mountain-blue cloud arose
> Like a thing in which they fell,
>
> Fell slowly as when at night
> A languid janitor bears
> His lantern through colonnades
> And the architecture swoons.
>
> It turned cold and silent. Then
> The square began to clear.
> The bijou of Atlas, the moon,
> Was last with its porcelain leer. (*CP* 108-9)

To adopt Bloom's paradigm, Stevens' poetic imagination (here figured by the moon) "slants" Emerson's famous, transcendental vision on the "bare common," a public space, as expressed in his essay *Nature*. Crossing the common at twilight, Emerson imagines a scene for the moment bare or absent others. The private scene yet inspires a "transparent" vision of Nature, on principle accessible to any American willing to eschew the conformist pressures of mass-cultural perception. Like Poe's *Eureka* as I discuss it in Chapter Three, Stevens' poem transforms Emerson's visionary use of an empty public space into a monumental "edifice," that is, into a vision having become a renowned and established artifact blocking imaginative efforts by modern American poets like himself.[30] In effect, Stevens right now apprehends his "public square" as an all-too-occupied *literary* public square.

Bloom's theory of literary anxiety can easily enough account for the above scenario's particulars as well. Stevens' "coma" refers to his paralysis of imagination due to the Emersonian precedent. The poem thus enacts his wish to perceive cracks in Emerson's dominating, literary-public stature or "edifice." Stevens conjures up its most monumental ("mountain-blue") appearance, the better to imagine its ensuing self-destructive metamorphosis. He wants to witness the Emersonian monument's transformation into something "Like a thing" fixed outside of him--a cold (another connotation of "blue") or impersonal public art now wholly irrelevant to himself. The poem frames that art as tentatively ("as when") giving way ("architecture swooning") to Stevens' own janitorial "lantern"--to the poetic lights of his apparently less-monumental lyrics in *Harmonium*. Written by a poetic novitiate at the time, his privatized literary fantasy seems motivated to mark his own poetic place in the American literary-public square. From a Bloomian viewpoint, the poem wholly consists of its becoming-a-poem: a wish per se to remove the Emersonian canonical edifice from Stevens' scene of writing.[31] "Emerson," to ironically borrow a Stevens poem, has taken "dominion everywhere" (*CP* 76). His work commands reverential attention from an educated literary public, and above all from his would-be American poet.

But that's the point. Like the internalized, public scenario defining Bloom's own theoretical postulations, Emerson's monument-like American vision exists solely through Stevens' imaginary reading of others reading it.[32] Consequently, he not only stages the older vision's modern breakdown, he also situates it in a nighttime setting or, figuratively speaking, when a sleeping public might no longer perceive the impressive, literary-historical aura marking Emerson's *twilight* or not passing vision. Fantasizing the occlusion of public witnesses (the square "turned cold and silent"), Stevens, as it were,

makes the edifice disappear entirely from sight. His poem would void Emerson's *public* works' readers (here would-be viewers), thus clearing the way ("The square began to clear") for Stevens to write in private the poem he is now writing. Only by that means can he traverse a truly "bare common" of imagination, which otherwise calls up a public scene rife with the pressures endemic to literary performance.

To be sure, this reading has to do with my fantasy of Stevens' desideratum, which itself remains a viable poetic fantasy only if he aborts any wish to construct publicly conspicuous, poetic monuments of his own. Constantly becoming a reader to his own work, how can he not embrace that ever-returning motivation, for surely it marks his poetic act both before and after its occurrence however subliminally registered.[33] Stevens' "private" fantasy therefore hinges on his keeping a public medium (what he construes as "literature") anonymous, an edifice in flux, its notable exemplars, whether Emerson or visionary doubles like Whitman, made unrecognizable to himself and others. Maintaining its private *locus* of composition here matters more than his poem's literary-competitive incitements or canonical ambitions, which "The Public Square" precisely seeks to abjure. That is why, in a move equally licensed by Bloom's paradigm, the poem simultaneously frames Emerson's public and as if oracularly intoned "common" vision by evoking Hawthorne's more reclusive, moonlit "Actual" and "Imaginary" scene of writing (in) *The Scarlet Letter*. Doesn't Hawthorne's novel itself stage pivotal social meetings in a public square, and not least the private, familial one at nighttime with Hester, Dimmesdale, and Pearl?

Yet *The Scarlet Letter*, as Hawthorne inevitably desired, self-evidently possesses its own canonical cachet in the American literary-public domain. And given Dimmesdale's public confession and Hester's resolve to turn private deed into social good, Hawthorne's main characters hint at his parallel concession of reclusive, compositional scenes to public mandates. If at all, then, for such reasons Stevens' "The Public Square" glosses Hawthorne's work only as an *en passant* trope and further opts for an even more private, less canonically respected American literary precedent: the catastrophic implosion at the end of Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." Poe, himself an avowed anti-Emersonian, there empties the most proximate formulations of a public realm of all content:

> Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued; for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon, which now shone vividly through that once barely discernible fissure, of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. (*P&T* 335)

In Stevens' poem, Poe's wild light appears as a lunar "coma"; the house with its shadows and fissure turn into "blacks" melded into a "fractured edifice"; the zigzag fissure gets figured as "slash" and "slants." Just as Stevens' speaker witnesses the public square turning "cold and silent" after the "edifice fell" in a "mountain-blue cloud," so the "Usher" narrator experiences "the deep and dank tarn at my feet clos[ing] sullenly and silently over the fragments of the '*House of Usher*'" (336). Poe's tale, here its very title designated as such in quotation marks but also elided by the narrative's representational momentum, in effect mocks its readers by its sudden withdrawal from further public inspection. Besides its final line suggesting much the same, Stevens' poem refers to its own moon-like status, but in the sense of a small, intricate, jewel-like and paradoxical figure: "The bijou of Atlas." Poe's tale flirts with and aborts "deep and dank" meaning; "The Public Square" analogously regards itself as only *possibly* rife with Atlas-like, i.e., demonstrably authoritative, poetic significance in the public realm.

The entire episode also occurs within an imaginary, nighttime *mise en scène* on more than one level. First, as the poem's own private self-designation, the de-capitalized "bijou" differentiates it from public art by punning on the ubiquitous "Bijou" burlesque houses and movie theaters common during the period.[34] Second, hardly noticeable *as* a self-reference and so bound to be overlooked, "The Public Square" defines itself as an *off-stage*, self-referential event or "bijou" poem. As such, it enacts its own withdrawal from any valorized, public setting, in other words from critical and conventional readings alike. In the poem's terms, publics willy-nilly generate the desire for massive literary monuments, the imagined visibility of which a daylight setting would only accentuate further.

More important, through its barely perceptible yet violent, poetic withdrawal, "The Public Square" ends on a Poe-like note by its own last-minute refusal to justify, even to itself, its fantasy of private writing before its imaginary audience. The poem abruptly registers a reversal from Stevens' former comatose imagination to a simply declared, imaginative *élan*: a lunar vigor "with . . . porcelain *leer*." To be sure, even in meta-literary terms, his self-imaged leer need not express his privately mocking public, literary-canonical standards. For example, in his verse-drama "Three Travelers Watch a Sunrise" (1916), Stevens had written, "There is a seclusion of porcelain"--the artwork--"[t]hat humanity never invades" (*OP* 151). According to James Longenbach, the play arguably goes on to qualify

any full-fledged resistance to invasions of its own hermetic privacy.[35] One can also hold that "The Public Square" resists becoming public art not to instantiate a private *poesis*, but precisely to recover or redeem Emerson's more "self"-promising public common from Stevens' onerously restrictive, modern-American "public square."

These qualifications only testify to what I have stated and reiterate throughout the present work. In pursuing literary privacy, neither Stevens nor Poe, as if gripped by some precipitous, anti-social pathology or literary anxiety, denies the public fate of private writing. Poe ironically frames that pathology in his well-known tale "William Wilson." Similarly, one can read Stevens' "porcelain leer" as imaging how others might apprehend and judge his poem's disaffection from literary-public venues rather than as expressing his wish to assault them per se. Neither writer naïvely presumes to foreclose his text's communicative impulses or residual effects, and not only because each wants to publish his works for others to read and appreciate. Both writers eschew an either-public-or-private binary. As I construe it in the present book, their "write to privacy" *begins* in variously defined literary-public squares. It therefore is irreducible to their fetishizing the solitude one normally associates with writing, let alone the kind of reserve that defines ordinary social interactions and acts of communication.[36] For both writers, the private quite literally but innocuously means always something *more*.

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I have already suggested that that *more* also means more than privacy's usual social formations in American cultural contexts. In my formulation, Poe and Stevens do not pursue any quasi-secure or determinable, social state of privacy (autonomous selfhood, for example), which one might easily assume, hope to arrive at, or, conversely, criticize for its conservative political effects. Instead, both writers continually strive to elicit an "other" privacy--a becoming private--that in principle finesses all such identitarian concerns.

In literary-critical terms, this thesis inevitably runs counter to both formalist and ideological as well as Bloomian modes of artistic surveillance. I make no claim, for instance, that either Poe's tales or Stevens' 1923 *Harmonium* poems ever realize a private aesthetic cache in and through the kind of meta-textual troping traceable in poems like "The Public Square." Such a claim, after all,

traffics in public squares of its own. Among other things, it echoes, if only from the viewpoint of what a dominant paradigm of current American criticism, the political quietism attributable to the old New Criticism. The ideal New Critical work resists social praxis and otherwise figures an isolated, self-referential artifact. It appears in exact counterpoint to the debased, utilitarian discourse of modern, capitalist life, to historically worn-out literary figures, and to stereotypes mass-produced by the "culture industry." "Private" in a social sense, literary art so formulated not only seeks solace in itself, but also requires specialized exegetes to demonstrate its uniqueness. As Frank Lentricchia asks, how "can the rest of us break into it, so that we, too, can cherish its special meanings . . . . which by definition are clearly disconnected from common human experience?"[37]

Lentricchia's brand of ideological critique insists on the inescapable political motivation that permeates what he terms the "aesthetic isolationism" of New Critical desiderata. How might a thesis that valorizes literary privacy fare any different, and all the more so for its illustrative use of two writers whom one might more viably link--if at all--on the basis of their avowed aestheticism or elitist withdrawal from cultural concerns? Who wants "to be let alone" (Warren and Brandeis's axiomatic definition of privacy) but the "haves," always at the expense of the "have nots"? Do not cultural discourses of New Critical ilk propagandize such quasi-ontological, quasi-autonomous, social privilege?

To a certain extent, the New Criticism, at least as now popularly understood, invited political deconstructions of this kind. Even as it promoted an art at odds with the modern commodity, its practitioners both arguably propagated a consumerist methodology for understanding literary texts, and appeared to propose an idealist experience of literature that would leave the alienated marketplace more or less untouched. Nonetheless, New Critical tenets also insinuated a privileged, literary model for a better if theoretically delimited public world.[38] The artwork thus actually entailed a public enterprise from first to last, whatever the specialized if also reproducible methodology required to explain it. What else characterizes "the intentional fallacy" if not an effort to dismiss the writer's private-cum-privileged authority regarding his or her text? In W. K. Wimsatt's words, "[t]he poem is not the critic's own and not the author's . . . . The poem belongs to the public. It is embodied in language, the peculiar possession of the public, and it is about the human being, an object of public knowledge."[39]

Along with its well-known criterion of the literary work's "sacramental," i.e., sacrosanct because publicly sharable, value, the New Critical ethos and aesthetic clearly fall outside my theorizing of the private in the present book. In line with its promotion of the artwork's self-referential autonomy, New Criticism at best promulgates a liberal notion of individualist privacy, which is to say a literary-institutionalized defense of its beleaguered state in the modern public sphere. As I maintain in the following work, Poe and Stevens transgress that notion as much as they do other understandings of their public environments. In the works I discuss, they pursue a privacy--"radical" in this context--predicated on its perpetually insecure, unstable, and especially idiosyncratic status. In pursuing it, both writers produce texts that resist becoming fetishized correlatives of some privacy *accompli*.

For that reason, one might suppose that a poststructuralist conception of Poe and Stevens' works provides a better way to articulate their "private" pursuits. To adopt Murray Krieger's more sophisticated version of New Critical theory, it is not just that these works somehow acknowledge their fictionality and so their "own insufficiency as no more than an aesthetic reduction" of the real. Seeking to elicit their compositional act's radically private ground, the two writers instead fashion their works as pre-textual occurrences--or as if they were *yet* to become public.[40]

Nevertheless, this deferral only superficially resembles commonly understood poststructuralist conceptions of "texts." Having no outside, the poststructuralist text, subject to persistently unstable or iterative signifiers and contexts of reception, functions as a model for all cultural activities. Poststructuralist frameworks, that is, posit an omnitextualism that manifestly expands the public sphere to the point of denying the public-private binary altogether. Since one can never outwit the "always already" reception of one's written composition by others *or* oneself, any "private" disclosed by *différance* inescapably reduces to a logocentric illusion. The "public" conversely comprises a non-locatable, self-perpetuating project, a semiotic process in which human reference-points remain forever unfixed and problematic. At the same time, if Derridean *écriture* undermines the truth-claims of both private and public positions, its primary cachet lies in the public effects it conceptually proposes, which is why it itself can incur charges of ideological irresponsibility. Louis Montrose argues, for example, that poststructuralist thought dissolves lived history "into . . . an antimony of objectivist determinism and subjectivist free-play," thus

disallowing the "possibility for historical agency on the part of individual or collective human subjects."[41]

With respect to the privacy issue, ideological critique, of course, propagates an omnipublic position of its own. The practice of literary-political criticism consistently deploys public alternatives to what it regards as discursive, public hegemonies, and in that sense, as Mark Bauerlein argues, itself allows for no outside. Like its mostly discredited conservative opposition in the academy, such criticism, aggressively suspicious of formalist recidivism,[42] focuses on the cultural effects literary texts (might) have with respect to one or another social polity. Left or right, politically motivated criticism configures all texts as unavoidably public, whether or not it also insists, as do Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, on the public sphere's multiple compositions: "What we are witnessing [today] is a politicization far more radical than any we have known in the past, because it tends to dissolve the distinction between the public and the private, not in terms of the encroachment on the private by a unified public space, but in terms of a proliferation of radically new and different political spaces."[43]

Certain kinds of political critique can no doubt sometimes balk at instead of applaud the co-option of private spheres into mini-public ones enlisted to deny dominance to one or another First World variety. In principle, for instance, neo-historical criticism is not averse to working out the public-private complications within specific literary texts.[44] Yet even when one acknowledges its intra-disciplinary diversity and diverse social agendas, the project of ideological critiques aims to effect an implicit or explicit reformation of the regnant public sphere, regardless of what their notions for "the advancement of freedom" at large means.[45] Accordingly, literature might better heed the example of more notably public-oriented arts like sculpture and movies, which at their best, As W. J. T. Mitchell argues, propagate "a utopian venture," or possess the heft of "a *critical* public art that . . . . dares to awaken a public sphere of resistance, struggle, and dialogue."[46]

That is exactly what a poem like Stevens' "The Public Square" does *not* do. Contrary to staging a scene in which "[n]othing more than a clear space . . . serves as . . . the point at which all privacies converge,"[47] Stevens' poem resists its own tendency to become public art, condenses in poetic shorthand its doing so and instead inscribes the desire for a scene of private monologue. But none of this occurs *in* public. Stevens' art deliberately abjures its public effects without any self-satisfied, aesthetic conviction. His poem therefore

cannot function as some interpellative cultural emissary for bourgeois privacy, say by intentionally corralling reading subjects to adopt positions compatible with its dominant United States formation. The same situation, and not merely a complex of social, economic, and sectionalist pressures, complicates allegations about the racist scenarios that supposedly mark Poe's fiction.[48]

What interpellative affects Poe and Stevens' texts do produce happen incidentally to their respective literary pursuits of privacy. Their private enterprises internally stage their culture's extant reading conventions at once to isolate "the public" and to imagine private counter-moves in relation to it. Strictly speaking, then, their aestheticism lies not in withdrawal from cultural concerns but in engaging culture on private poetic grounds. If for both writers the aesthetic disclosure of privacy is irreducible to the contents of those concerns, it yet allows privacy to speak through cultural readings by holding them off from totalization. So at least indirectly, Poe and Stevens do do cultural work in the ways they pursue literary privacy--provided that one values privacy to begin with.

Needless to say, ideological arguments can always insist that (my depictions of) Poe and Stevens' abstentions from wholly committing to a public art unconsciously manifest a desire recalcitrantly synonymous with bourgeois individualism or autonomous selfhood. But I would ask, to what political end, since the goal is precisely to contracept privacy's public attraction? Besides, no critical position can forfend second-guessing as to its own quasi-private public agendas. Many neo-historicists, for example, acknowledge their antidotal relation to and lurking complicity with bourgeois-cultural scripts. As one critic states it, "every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition, uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes."[49]

At best, ideological critique can provide only provisional, discursive *exposés* of bourgeois values like privacy, were that at all the kind for which I argue Poe and Stevens seek in writing. No matter its particular social agenda, political criticism at bottom stands committed to its own public orientation as well as to a wholly public art, and so ineluctably elides the private as I mean to discuss it in Poe and Stevens' works. I hold that both writers deploy meta-literary tropes--plots and images referring to their reception--to uncover provisionally viable zones of compositional privacy, the effect of which recasts the artwork more as an ongoing memo of that act of disclosure than what it signifies for others in social or aesthetic terms.

Several corollaries follow from my configuration. First, Poe and Stevens' meta-literary efforts to postpone their texts' posterior reception entail a subject-position without content. The privacy both writers pursue occurs only in the act of writing, and so cannot secure a private self beyond it, although it includes a performatively ethical codicil. Second, the desideratum of subjective vacancy necessarily forfeits making public truth-claims, ultimately about privacy itself, whatever its inevitable social imbrications. Third and not least, the two writers' efforts to abort psychic investment in the resulting text neutralize without attempting to negate the by definition public issue of literary evaluation.

From an ideological perspective, to *priv*atize the value of one's work patently falsifies how writers write texts and readers read them. We may think that writing and reading occur *in* private, but in fact we premise them on a set of social-literary protocols, learned generic expectations and the like.[50] Both activities methodologically presuppose an axiom on which historicist and other cultural criticism generally relies: all objects, persons, events and thoughts are constituted by some shared or sharable collective-cum-cultural experience, observation, and subsequent mode of interpretation. Everything not only takes place in specific public-cultural fields, but also becomes nameable and so communicable by means of them in the first place.

Stated bluntly, for any reader, the *public* text always comes first, from which one might only then if at all deduce the private. Indeed, committed to producing knowledge about texts for others, critical readers are less inclined to make any like deduction. The "critical and scholarly world," as James M. Cox puts it, particularly "involves us in helplessly repressing our own secrets in writing" about literary works.[51] Even when I think so-called private thoughts about a text, a self-other communicational paradigm determines their impulse and trajectory whether I publicly record them or keep them to myself. Nor does this situation change if one grants the contingent aspects of the codes governing literary experience. For example, from the reader's vantage point, writers write in relation to what Stanley Fish terms shifting "interpretive communities." Discursive publics generate strategies of reading that inevitably can get "forgotten or supplanted, or complicated or dropped from favor"; in that case, "there is a corresponding change in texts, not because they are being read differently, but because they are being written differently."[52]

Fish's line of reasoning may just exemplify an instance of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Does public effect (a readable, public text)

necessarily cause its only comparatively more private cause (a text's indeterminate process of composition)? Fish's apparently reasonable depiction, I think, rests on a pragmatic fiction that writers address relatively stable, homogeneous, and discrete interpretive publics, whether tradition-bound or newly emergent, within specific acts of writing. But why not press the formulation further? If these communities perforce shift, surely a writer's relation to them can do the same even with respect to his or her particular interpretive environment at a given personal or historical moment. It makes no less sense to argue that nothing ever happens without the possibility of one's idiosyncratic relation to it, so that "the public" (and not exclusively its dominant guise) itself consists of a fiction.[53] As Barbara Herrnstein Smith suggests, we never perceive the same thing or read the same text or agree on its significance in the same way. We come to them in different moods, from different experiences, with different needs and at different stages of our personal histories. Communication thus consists of "a *differentially consequential interaction* . . . in which each party acts in relation to the other . . . in different, asymmetric ways and in accord with different specific motives . . . ."[54]

Smith remains tied to uncovering the problematic of negotiating our evaluations of texts and other events in the public realm. But in theory, her argument recursively pivots around how private experience, at least the kind I want to find Poe and Stevens exemplifying, poses the *other* to all public regimes of literary evaluation and knowledge. From that standpoint, the question finally comes down not to how, given its dependence on social-historical constructions, the private at all exists or appears, but to how the public does, given its constant vulnerability to the idiosyncrasies of private experience.

-5-

To argue for going private with Poe and Stevens' works is to encounter a recurring obstacle that, besides its ideologically motivated spin, shifts interchangeably between the contexts of commonsense critical understanding and epistemological abstraction. Literature self-evidently constitutes a public medium for personal acts of imagining the real. Especially with Poe, writing literary texts noticeably prompts the writer's psychic investments in his work's public reception. An interior if inchoate public unavoidably attaches itself to the work's very process of composition. It makes little sense to deny the general Bakhtinian proposition that "even the

most primitive human utterance produced by the individual organism is, from the point of view of its content, import, and meaning, organized outside the organism, in the extraorganismic conditions of the social milieu. Utterance as such is wholly a product of social interaction . . . ."[55]

Using language, in short, means to want to go public. Privacy here at most comprises the minor marginalia or whatever appears irrelevant or unsuitable to one's making linguistic "common" sense regarding particular, interlocutory situations. What makes sense is public, actual or *de facto*; by default, what doesn't, is marginally public--or residually private--which, if one willfully withholds it, one can call private in the way we normally use the term. To claim differently, say that the private is primary or at least a positive something in the sense/non-sense dyad, is simply to make the private public.

An observation in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* helps illustrate the last point. In proposition #280, he suggests that artists either represent what they imagine or they do not. That is, we have no grounds to believe that a work's imaginative representations include its artist's "private impression" of them, and so mean something different for us than for the artist.[56] To insist further on the radical referentiality of the private--that it refers, say, to an irreducible "other" in human experience--is to indulge the epistemological fantasy Wittgenstein imputes to notions of a "private language," a grammatically correct but semantically nonsensical set of utterances.

Doesn't my thesis, that the Poe and Stevens' works discussed represent a virtually interminable rhetorical process of going private, exemplify the same fantasy? For that matter, insofar as my thesis makes sense, it contradicts any such thing as a radical privacy. Here, it does no good for me to appeal to the radical contingency of cognitive acts, or the inability of others to duplicate theirs or mine with each other. Its means and ends being thoroughly linguistic, criticism, to apply Wittgenstein's proposition, can only consist of a communicable "representation or piece of information" about literary texts.[57] No experience can escape the public language-game. Even "the relatively private extreme of [idiosyncratic] nuances with which we approach language and people," as Henry Sussman remarks, incurs linguistic-cultural limits, dictating that "we can never fully go over [the edge]"--or go utterly private.[58]

Yet there exists at least one phenomenological conundrum for this *post factum* analysis of linguistic experience, namely what Geoffrey

Madell terms “the unanalysability of ‘I’, the fact that ‘I’ cannot be known ‘by description’. If ‘I’ cannot be thus known, it follows that there is no description, the satisfaction of which will entail or imply that what is thus described is mine’.” For example, trained on bodily experience, any descriptive act leaves “a gap between” itself and “what is in fact my body and my situation . . . [or] the assertion that it is *myself* which is thus described.”[59] A *residual* privacy thus haunts verbal representations of so-called private, personal experience. By extension, objections to a criticism pointing toward radical privacy similarly require a decisive adoption of a third-person perspective. One of course might ask whether the same perspective does not also apply to the preceding observation. But much as Poe’s first-person narrators or Stevens’ poetic personae invite a reader’s “ironic” contextualizations, the last epistemological disclosure may only *mimic* third-person accounts of one’s unanalyzably private (here not merely “subjective”) experience, and by that recognition intimate their explanatory inadequacy.

Wittgenstein himself cannot quite dispel the allure of private experience, for why does he, as do many of his subsequent commentators, concern himself at such a great length in *Philosophical Investigations* with imagining others imagining its possibility? Doubtless he wants to dispel the stubborn illusion of any incommunicable human experience. By grammatical law, he would proscribe one important ramification of that illusion: the invasion of the public and its discursive support systems by the private. To be sure, he indulges the possibility at least in one instance: “The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other people also have *this* or something else. The assumption would thus be possible--though unverifiable--that one section of mankind had one sensation of red and another section another.”[60] Using Wittgenstein’s own schema, one might argue that his one qualification itself is not exactly private, for wouldn’t that other sector of mankind still be understanding “red” in concert? As envisioned here, private experience arguably abides captivated within the network of one or another linguistic grammar--that of a card-game, say, to use another of his observations: “The proposition ‘Sensations are private’ is comparable to: One plays [Solitaire] by oneself’.”[61]

In other words, were I to invent my own game-rules for playing, so to speak, a truly solitary Solitaire, they of necessity still permit duplication, i.e., public representation. However, one need not fully equate solitary with private experience, and not simply because

one can feel alone in a crowd and call that private. The disjunction between personal experience and its linguistic depictions transforms conventional and subtler synonyms of privacy (e.g., solitude, reticence, a sense of shame, preference for anonymity, even critical disquisitions on private language--or a poetics of American privacy) into tropes all pointing toward a self-inducible noetic space devoid of specific content. Properly speaking, such a space does not exist. It has no thereness, no representational status. It appears as a contingent and quickly dissipating aftereffect of the inability to represent to oneself one's therefore unanalyzable, impersonal, and private experience. That is so regardless if one disputes the totality of communication. To justify private, phenomenological experience, one may instead resort to tropes of privacy available within one's particular historical-cultural-discursive environment. But as with the present discussion, these tropes, too, fail to signify the private "it" except, if at all, in passing. They themselves at best turn into linguistic figures as such, or into meta-tropes evoking and tracing "its" disappearance.

To me, the tales and poems I discuss pursue radical privacy by enacting just that kind of processual troping, which as if perpetually trumps the lure of long-term, public significations. It follows, I think, that only in poetic terms does it make sense to play a game of private Solitaire. Simply to entertain playing it requires an imaginary and yet real state of mind, which Stevens in fact imagines in the poem from *Harmonium*, "The Place of the Solitaires":

> Let the place of the solitaires
> Be a place of perpetual undulation.
>
> Whether it be in mid-sea
> On the dark, green water-wheel,
> Or on the beaches,
> There must be no cessation
> Of motion, or of the noise of motion,
> The renewal of noise
> And manifold continuation;
>
> And, most, of the motion of thought
> And its restless iteration,
>
> In the place of the solitaires,
> Which is to be a place of perpetual undulation. (*CP* 60)

With its trebled “And” and extended second stanza, Stevens’ poem, not unlike Poe’s “The Bells,” mimics its topical, purely sensory theme, here of “undulation.”[62] More important, “The Place of the Solitaires” evinces his desire to abort communication in “perpetual” or radical fashion. In “mid-sea,” or in the midst of visionary activity--of a mid-*seeing* enabled by the prosodic rhythms of poetry, “the dark, green water-wheel”--communicable, Wittgenstein-like information becomes less important to the poet than “the noise of motion” or language’s sub-informational yield. The poem embodies Stevens’ wish for poetic rumination absent communicational imperatives. “Let” it remain solely a “perpetual undulation” or rhythmic “motion,” in other words a poetic thought going nowhere, addressing nothing, remaining only a “restless iteration” within his own mind--the pre-semantic pull of a linguistic rhythm.

Why wish to suspend the referential direction of language? Does Stevens’ imaginary effort ironically confess, this time in a linguistic-epistemological context, his actual desire to escape the social charge, the communicational use-value, endemic to literary activity especially? The poem no doubt might very well reflect an ideological reaction, whether that of capitulation or resistance to the utilitarian ethos of the American marketplace with which Stevens was all too familiar in his own daily work. Perhaps, too, as in “The Public Square,” he conflates his “public” with a further interior comprised of literary precedents. One way or another, these publics press him to write meaningful verse, to compete in a poetic *agon*, to seek distinction before peers or canonical judges. Maybe the wish to float to no end in poetic waters additionally entails an imaginary, neo-Romantic defense of poetry specifically in reaction to the modern, scientific *epistemé*, such as Wittgenstein exemplifies in his disquisitions on language.

“The Place of the Solitaires,” in short, may only express a longing for what his alienated public sphere, construed in exterior or interior terms, will not permit except *as* a fantasy: an inevitably losing because unrealistic defense of poetic privacy. Yet true to its imagined, vacation-like setting, the poem, I think, would vacate making meaning only if it could. It never pretends to express more than its poet’s wish for a sustained state of poetic self-hypnosis.[63] About itself, the poem means exactly its subjunctive desire, and as such leaves room for--does not resist or itself seek to alienate--the various registers of “public” meanings it no doubt presupposes or may possess for others.

In point of fact, Stevens does not imagine playing poetic Solitaire alone. Anyone can play his game, so that it remains social at least to the extent of allowing for other "solitaires." For the poem expresses the wish that the same wish for suspension of the referential would hold true for those of us "on the beaches." If not fully immersed in poetic activity as the poem's speaker right now, nothing prevents even its vacationing or casual readers from becoming so. Stevens should know this, since through his poem he in effect concurrently proposes to read or internalize other poets apart from their specific, anxious precedents. He, too, would immerse himself in their lyrics, but with their undulating rhythms dominating their meaning, and so, as in "The Public Square," only as if emanating from anonymously authored--private--sources.

Once again, far from engaging a private-public binary where he insists on the former at the expense of the latter, Stevens imagines for his poem a peripheral public interface deriving from multiple private spheres. "The Place of the Solitaires" entertains a kind of poetic *cogito ergo sum* from which, unlike the Cartesian variety, the private just happens, without determinate, willful ego-concerns as well as contents, even as the poem's "meaning" remains accessible to others. Necessary, of course, within the human economy, the public projects underwritten by linguistic meaning risk assuming totalizing proportions. They therefore require a poetic *vacation,* lest they elide not simply the idiosyncratic aspect of private desires, but the desire for privacy itself. In poetry, at least as Stevens construes it in the present poem, meaning gets vacated, becomes a pretext for "The renewal of noise," and the private, else at the mercy of its public constructions, for once comes first. No covert defense of liberal individualism or bourgeois privacy, the private subject of his poem eschews the public individual, most notably as defined by Stevens' American social complex. In its place, he imagines a "manifold continuation" of his I's perpetually unstable, formless, undulating, unanalyzable, irrepressibly private source.

There if anywhere lies the literary "place of the solitaires" that I argue Poe and Stevens continually seek to uncover, although can never definitively realize in the works I discuss. To repeat, pursuing literary privacy for them does not mean repressing social interaction (the prerequisite premise of writing), or regressing to a myth of utter non-sense. Neither does their pursuit reflect some anxious ideological reaction to or complicit support of their respective social environments. It instead consists of both writers' efforts to figure the inevitable congealment and amplification of social

including semiotic interactions into one or another “public,” so as continually to disclose a “private” residuum--a “place” where one becomes other to oneself as public defined, or where others paradoxically serve to make oneself unknown.

Framed that way, privacy need not be anti-ethical in principle, let alone opposed to the social effects literature can produce. Among other things, it frames families, tribes and nations as fictions--valuable for keeping one well among others, but primarily so as to keep pursuing what goes beyond family, tribes and nations. Since that goal is private, related to oneself alone, it hardly mandates this vision as a kind of anti-public moral code, which (again) would make for its “privative” pariah-hood and negative social judgments, or whatever form a threatened “public” sense of social values takes at any given time and place.

The kind of privacy I regard as the trajectory of Poe and Stevens’ pursuits resists public normativity--including those activities deemed private, e.g., sexual preferences and the like, within publicly notable scenes--but only insofar as that serves to repress the process of one’s becoming private. In such cases, one does not need to withdraw wholesale from the public but only from existential investments in its socially defined authoritative *and* anti-authoritative identitarian formations. The latter own our days, and will continue as they will, different changes in and/or allowed by any one “public” to the contrary notwithstanding. The project of becoming private, therefore, is synonymous with one’s pursuing the proverbial rare but always available exception to the rule, which is to say one’s effort to determine an inwardly decisive subtraction from this or that pressure to *become* notably public vis-à-vis a majority or a minority of others, as the desired sensibility that constantly impinges on any one person’s life.

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Endnotes: Introduction

1 . John Carlos Rowe rehearses the case against Poe's alleged racism in his *At Emerson's Tomb* (New York, 1997), 42-62. Terence Whalen, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses* (Princeton, 1999), 111-46, supplies an important corrective to the more egregious aspect of such allegations. Poe's "aesthetic ideology" appears in his critical remarks throughout his career. See, for example, "Letter to B---" (*E&R* 11): "A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its immediate object, pleasure, not truth . . ." (his emphasis). Jane Tompkins discusses Hawthorne's literary politicking in her *Sensational Designs* (New York, 1985), claiming that his literary "canonization was the result of a network of common interests--familial, social, professional, commercial, and national . . ." (32). The political problems attached to Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are well known. Jonathan Arac traces their "hyper"-canonical manifestations in *Huckleberry Finn as Idol and Target* (Madison, 1997).

2 . Seyla Benhabib's provides a representative statement of this position: "All struggles against oppression in the modern world begin by redefining what had previously been considered private, nonpublic, and nonpolitical issues as matters of public concern . . . that need discursive legitimation." "Models of Public Space," *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 84.

3 . David Freeman Hawke, *Everyday Life in Early America* (New York, 1988), 58,19.

4 . See Charles Sykes, *The End of Privacy* (New York, 1999), 99.

5 . Julie C. Inness, *Privacy, Intimacy, and Isolation* (New York, 1992), 6.

6 . Arendt formulates this private-public distinction in relation to the ancient Greek *polis* in *The Human Condition* (Chicago, 1956), esp. 22-37.

7 . Jeff Weintraub, "The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction," *Public and Private in Thought and Practice*, ed. Weintraub and Kumar (Chicago, 1997), 37.

8 . To a certain extent, this situation repeats the older association of "private" with "privative," or "a state of being deprived of something," as noted by Hannah Arendt, *ibid*., 38. Notwithstanding the historical dominance of (dominant) males in defining the what, where, when, of who can participate in matters of public import, feminist studies tend to valorize public over private spheres by framing the latter as always already public in some sense, e.g., "the personal is political." For an overview of feminist work on the issue of domestic privacy, see Kathy Peiss, "Going Public," *ALH* 3 (Winter 1991). Peiss also worries whether "the blurring of boundaries between public and private [might] erase meaningful distinctions between the two terms" (826).

9 . Mary Bercaw argues, for instance, that "[b]y the 1850s the household had become an extrusion of the state, involved in the institutionalization of charity, health, and childcare." "Solid Objects/ Mutable Meanings," *Wintherthur Portfolio* 26 (1991), 238-39. Also see Tamara Hareven, "Rediscovering the Social," *Home: A Place in the World*, ed. Mack (New York, 1993), 238-39. Hannah Arendt observes that in modern societies, "all matters pertaining formerly to the private sphere of the family have become a 'collective' concern" (*ibid*., 33).

10 . See the essays collected in *American Literature*, 70:3 (September 1998) devoted to contesting the "separate spheres" ideology.

11 . Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis, "The Right to Privacy," *Killing the Messenger*, ed. Goldstein (New York, 1989), 8, 21, 13. [2023 note: One can no doubt argue that this defense grounds the various governmentally endorsed attempts to protect one's private finances, data and whatnot from internet hackers as well as one's supposed freedom to deny corporate use of "cookies" and the like. But this

public defense of one's privacy remains constantly tenuous given the leakage endemic to endlessly new technological loopholes.]

12 . "The Right to Privacy," 7. In a strictly legal context, the linkage I speak of has led to what Charles Sykes terms privacy's "decidedly mixed record in the [United States] courts" (80), the history of which he rehearses in Chapter 5 of *The End of Privacy*.

13 . Carl D. Schneider succinctly depicts left-political complaints against privacy's being "a recent historical phenomenon, a luxury available only to bourgeois capitalism. The private is seen as a form of false consciousness in which communal life is sacrificed for personal possession and property claims." *Shame, Exposure, and Privacy* (New York, 1992), 152. Patricia Boling airs her "liberal" suspicion about privacy in *Privacy and the Politics of Intimate Life* (Ithaca, 1996), xi. Jeffrey Rosen argues that the private sphere marks "personal boundaries that the [liberal] state may not overstep, interior regions into which it cannot penetrate"--in other words makes government "express its respect for the inherent dignity, equality, individuality, interiority, and subjectivity of the individuals who compose it." *The Unwanted Gaze* (New York, 2000), 219.

14 . Gurstein points to various media as the culprits, ranging from "mass-circulation newspapers, photographs, and advertising," to "realist" literary fiction. *Repeal of Reticence* (New York, 1996), 47, 32.

15 . Publicity of this kind existed, of course, before the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the Western world, but as an "underground" or illegitimate occurrence directed at political leaders and disseminated among lower-class people. Robert Darnton, for example, provocatively tracks how, among other informal venues in Louis XV's eighteenth-century regime, French folk-ballads, pamphlets and longer libelles, as well as plain oral gossip penetrated "the *secret du roi* itself, even to observe the King (Louis XV) between the sheets." "Paris: The Early Internet," *The New York Review of Books*, XLVII (June 29, 2000), 46.

16 . I have, of course, added this later additional reference (2023) to this complex issue of private versus publicly acceptable social practices. Added to the far-greater technologically available means now available for detecting, surveilling and/or--even for commercial *or* legal reasons--recording personal events, the social expectancy for public exposé or "coming out of the closet" has exponentially increased, no matter what one might term "right wing" efforts to put the public genie back in the private bottle.

17 . Neal Gabler, *Life the Movie* (New York, 1998), 8.

18 . Foucault's "Panopticon" account occurs in *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1977), 195-228. The demise of privacy due to ever more sophisticated computers and advances in surveillance-equipment has become a commonplace topic in legal and popular journalism. Besides Charles Sykes's book of the same title, see, for example, Reg Whitaker, *The End of Privacy* (New York, 1999), and "The End of Privacy" in *The Economist* (May, 1999). Whitaker's second chapter explicitly links the modern "technologies of surveillance" to Foucault's Panopticon thesis. Of course, to define the self in terms of his/her reducibility to "information" already testifies to the panoptic inroads made by such technologies. For example, Shaun MacNeill thinks normative definitions of privacy are too "context-specific," but still proposes that we define privacy as "the condition which obtains to the degree that new information about one's self is not acquired by others." "A Philosophical Definition of Privacy," *The Dalhousie Review*, 78 [3], 438. [Note: the present book was written twenty-plus years before the "exponential" increase in socially invasive intrusions into even more narrow venues for a person's privacy, especially in the United States. See, for example, Sue Halpern's review of two far more recent books related to this invasion. "Private Eyes," how "The surveillance economy has all but eliminated Americans' ability to be 'let alone." Sue Halpern, *The New York Review of Books* (March 9, 2023): https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2023/03/09/private-eyes-the-fight-for-privacy-citron/. Halpern argues, for instance, "What distinguishes the digital age we now inhabit is that anyone with a computer or a cell

phone and access to the Internet can be a "publisher" simply by sharing things on social media and other sites (like Pornhub). And anyone, even children, can be the subject of their posts. The old, if porous, distinction between a prominent person and what Warren and Brandeis called "ordinary" individuals no longer applies."

19 . Nagel supports Wittgenstein's position in *The View from Nowhere* (New York, 1986), 36-37. Nagel also remarks how "[m]ental phenomena . . . . are located, despite their subjectivity, in the objective order" (32). Dennett effectively reduces the phenomenological notion of private experience to "physical effects of the brain" in *Consciousness Explained* (Boston, 1991), 16, passim. Inness, *Privacy*, 89, states the psychoanalytic situation quoted. Postmodern strategies like Jean-François Lyotard's contest the legitimacy of any single public sphere (including Habermas's well-known ideal of a consensual one), but remain negatively entwined with by proposing to deconstruct its discursive practices. See *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis, 1984), esp. 66.

20 . "A Note on the Public and the Private in Literature," *MLN* 104 (April, 1989), 597. Sussman, 599-605, also uses Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" as a primary example of "acting out" the private in public.

21 . *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition. Other *OED* definitions of privacy include "places of retreat," the "[a]bsence or avoidance of publicity or display; a condition approaching to secrecy or concealment . . . reticence," "[a] private matter, a secret," and "[i]ntimacy, confidential relations." Patricia Boling discusses in detail the *OED* etymologies and variable meanings of public and private in *Politics of Intimate Life*, 43-47, passim.

22 . Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer would later assign the twentieth-century "culture industry" with both organizing these disciplinary practices and propagating a commodified public complex from which no cultural activity was exempt, whether artistic, critical, or otherwise. Within that complex, the concept of "culture" itself serves a professionalized, bureaucratic function that helps construct a pervasive public realm. See *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York:, 1972), 131. I am indebted to Michael Denning for bringing my attention to this passage, although he is not responsible for my use of it here.

23 . *Repeal of Reticence*, 88. Gurstein's "party of exposure" consisted of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century progressives opting for "aggressive" <u>exposés</u> of private affairs as facilitated by new modes of public surveillance. In opposition, the late-Victorian "party of reticence" "venerated a set of intense relations in the conjugal family" (32,28).

24 . Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women* (New Haven, 1982), 172. Halttunen also cites "[t]he growing theatricality of middle-class funeral ritual after 1850, with its <u>dramatic</u> focus on the corpse" (170; her emphasis).

25 . Originally this appeared in Chapter Five of the published book.

26 . Stuart Sperry, "Wallace Stevens and Poetic Transformation," *Raritan*, 17 (Winter 1998), 25.

27 . Richard Poirier, *The Renewal of Literature* (New York, 1987), 49. James M. Cox notes how Hawthorne initially construed writing as a "matter of secrecy--or, better, intense privacy," in "Reflections on Hawthorne's Style," *American Letters*, ed. Kennedy (Baton Rouge, 1987), 141. In an unpublished paper (1999), "'The manliest relations to men'," Milette Shamir argues that Thoreau struggles in *Walden* to articulate the relation between writer and reader vis-à-vis the period's social synonyms for privacy, including those of physical distance, literal concealment, silence, and gendered friendship. Allan Silver attaches the privacy issue to Melville's "Bartleby" in "The Lawyer and the Scrivener," *Partisan Review*, 3 (1991), esp. 421. Emily Dickinson and Henry James also come readily to mind in this context. See Nancy Walker, "Public Presence and Private Self in Dickinson, James, and Woolf," *The Private Self, ed.*

Benstock (Chapel Hill, 1988), 272-303, passim; Brook Thomas, *American Literary Realism* (Berkeley, 1997), 55-88; Janna Malamud Smith, *Private Matters* (Reading, Mass., 1997), esp. 145-72; Gurstein, *Repeal of Reticence*, 35, passim; and Barbara Hochman, "Disappearing Authors," *ELH*, 63 (1996). Twentieth-century literary examples abound, and not simply of the notorious sort such as J. D. Salinger and Thomas Pynchon's resistance to becoming public celebrities. For example, in pre-World War II contexts, the issue of privacy inflects Hart Crane's poetic compositions as well as the James Agee and Walker Evans' literary-photo-journalistic work on Depression sharecroppers, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. See Tim Dean, "Hart Crane's Poetics of Privacy," *ALH*, 8 (Spring 1996), and Joseph J. Wydeven, "Photography and Privacy," *Midwest Quarterly*, XXIII (Autumn 1981).

28 . Robert C. Post, "The Social Foundations of Privacy," *California Law Review* (October 1989), 964; his emphasis.

29 . Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon* (New York, 1994), 288, 518-20, and 36. Kent Ljungquist terms Stevens Poe's "twentieth-century cousin," although in different terms from mine. Not unlike Bloom on Stevens, Ljungquist notes that "Poe's sharp focus on individual consciousness suggests that such a battle must be fought . . . alone." *The Grand and the Fair* (Potomac, 1984), 209, 208.

30 . Stevens also revises a different aspect of this Emersonian moment in "The Snow Man," which I discuss in Chapter Four.

31 . Cf. Bloom's view of Stevens' "The Snow Man": ". . . the text he produces is condemned to offer itself for interpretation as being already an interpretation of other interpretations, rather than as what it asserts itself to be, an interpretation of life." *Poetry and Repression* (New Haven, 1976), 270.

32 . W. H. Auden provides indirect support for this surmise: "Occasionally I come across a book which I feel has been written especially for me and for me only. Like a jealous lover, I don't want anybody else to hear of it. To have a million such readers, unaware of each other's existence, to be read with passion and never talked about, is the daydream, surely, of every author." *The Dyer's Hand* (New York, 1962), 12. I am indebted to John William Price for bringing my attention to this passage.

33 . From a Bloomian viewpoint, Stevens' clearing of the square might yet bespeak the literary-oedipal strategy Bloom terms *kenosis*, or the ephebe poet's self-interested leveling of his and major texts to commonplace status. I briefly discuss this revisionary ratio in my essay, "Influence," *Critical Terms*, ed. Lentricchia and McLaughlin (Chicago, 1995), 190.

34 . My thanks to Maurice Rapf, from the Department of Film Studies at Dartmouth College, whose recollections of the period helped confirm this fact.

35 . James Longenbach, *Wallace Stevens: The Plain Sense of Things* (New York: Oxford UP, 1991), 69.

36 . Robert Murphy maintains that even in cross-cultural, social situations, withholding oneself "while communicating" or "communicat[ing] through [physical] removal is not a contradiction in terms but a quality of all social interaction." "Social Distance and the Veil," *Philosophical Dimensions of Prvacy*, ed. Schoeman (New York, 1984), 51.

37 . Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago, 1980), 223-24.

38 . Of course, not all so-called New Critics went this far. In retrospect, for example, Murray Krieger's criticism argues for art's teleological transformation of "real" history. See his *Theory of Criticism* (Baltimore, 1976), 164-65. But as noted by Bruce Henrickson, Krieger's position still implies history's subservience to poetic mandates. "The Question of History," *Murray Krieger and Contemporary Critical Theory*, ed. Henrickson (New York, 1986), 132.

39 . W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Verbal Icon* (Lexington, 1967), 5.

40 . Murray Krieger, *A Reopening of Closure* (New York, 1989), 75. In *Poetry and Pragmatism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), Richard Poirier, citing the textual scholar G. Thomas Tanselle, notes "that 'no text--embodied on paper or film or in memory--of a literary, musical, choreographic, or cinematic work' can in fact be fully synonymous with that work, which, besides, is not itself the same as the 'work' or performative activity or thought that produced it" (16-17).

41 . Louis Montrose, "Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture," *The New Historicism*, ed. Adam Veeser (New York, 1989), 20.

42 . Mark Bauerlein, *Literary Criticism: An Autopsy* (Philadelphia, 1997), 103-9. Bruce Henrickson, for example, exhibits the suspicion I speak of when he "laments the constricted and private scope" of Murray Krieger's close readings of Shakespeare's sonnets. "The Question of History," 132.

43 . Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy* (London, 1985), 181. [From today's more dichotomous "right" versus "left" political positions, Laclau and Mouffe's notion of a multiple public scene now seems out of date, itself idealistic from a "left" viewpoint, although their sense of a public *dictat* remains in place.]

44 . For example, Mark Poster argues that "[t]he vast ability of the established authorities to gather information about individuals or groups places in question or even eliminates the distinction between the public and the private." *Foucault, Marxism, & History* (Cambridge, Eng., Polity Press, 1984), 114. From a neo-historical viewpoint, Brook Thomas allows that critics in bourgeois society can "designate literature as a space in which the imagination has free play," although that too finally "indicates that literature's freedom is defined by social practices and institutions in which the imagination is not free." *The New Historicism* (Princeton, 1991), 169, 170.

45 . Henrickson, *ibid*., 133.

46 . W. J. T. Mitchell, "Violence of Public Art," *Art and the Public Sphere*, ed. Mitchell (Chicago, 1992), 47; his emphasis.

47 . Michael North, *Public Monuments and Modern Poets* (Ithaca, 1985), 221.

48 . Terence Whalen adopts this critical angle in discussing Poe's "average racism" in Poe and the Masses. See n.1 above. Poe was a pronounced anti-abolitionist, but in his tale, "The Thousand-and Second Tale of Scheherazade," he remarks on """the detestable passion of mankind for enslaving other creatures, and confining them in horrid and solitary prisons until the fulfilment of appointed tasks""" (*P&T* 798). Regarding the interpellative ramifications of literary texts, Brook Thomas observes that "[i]nsofar as a text's work is measured by its popularity, a text's complexity might actually limit the amount of [cultural] work that it can do" (*The New Historicism*, 160).

49 . Adam Veeser, "Introduction," *The New Historicism*, ed. Veeser (New York, 1989), xi.

50 . Steven Mailloux maintains that "[w]hen we focus only on the text, an author's intention, or a reader's interpretive conventions . . . there is a strong tendency to view interpretation as a private reading experience involving only an independent text (and author) and an individual reader . . . . [But] interpretation is always a politically-interested act of persuasion. "Interpretation," *Critical Terms*, ed. Lentricchia and McLaughlin (Chicago, 1995), 126-27.

51 . James M. Cox, "Reflections," 142. Cox here refers to writing about Hawthorne's works.

52 . Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), 172.

53 . Cf. Michael Warner's argument in "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject," *Habermas and the Public Sphere*," ed. Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass., 1992): "Public discourse from the beginning offered a utopian self-abstraction, but in ways that left a residue of unrecuperated particularity, both for its privileged subjects and for those it minoritized" (384).

54 . Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 109; her emphasis. With respect to my next point, Smith maintains that when we judge literary texts, we are "(a) articulating an estimate of how that work will serve certain implicitly defined functions (b) for a specific implicitly defined audience, (c) who are conceived of as experiencing the work under certain implicitly defined conditions" (*Contingencies* 13). Henry Simoni-Wastila discusses the philosophical implications of "radical particularity" in "Particularity and Consciousness," *Philosophy Today* 44 (Winter 2000), 415-25. Retrieved April 28, 2001, from the World Wide Web: http://www.dartmouth.edu/perl/dcis/ej-access?UMI-28241

55 . V. N. Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Matejka and Titunik (Cambridge, Mass.,1986), 93.

56 . Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. Anscombe (New York, 1958).

57 . *Philosophical Investigations*, #280.

58 . "*Maxima Moralia*," *MLN* 110 [4] (1995), 868, 869.

59 . Geoffrey Madell, *The Identity of Self* (Edinburgh, 1981), 68, 24 (his emphasis). Also cf. Simoni-Wastila's section, Causation and Particularity" in "Particularity and Consciousness," ibid., and Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York, 1989), 91-92. Simoni-Wastila references Wittgenstein and Nagel (cf. n.18 above) to support the position of phenomenological privacy. For a criticism of Rorty's inability to keep his notion of an "ironic" private realm separate from his desired "liberal" public realm, see Shane O'Neil, "Private Irony and Public Hope," *Public and Private*, ed. d'Entrèves and Vogel (London, 2000), esp. 60-65. American Pragmatism generally accepts the epistemological aporia of the public-private distinction. For example, William James in his "Talk to Teachers" argues that "[e]very Jack sees in his own particular Jill charms and perfections to the enchantment of which we stolid onlookers are stone-cold . . . . For Jack realizes Jill concretely, and we do not." Quoted in Margaret Peterson, *Stevens and the Idealist Tradition* (Ann Arbor, 1983), 140.

60 . *Philosophical Investigations*, #272; Wittgenstein's emphasis.

61 . *Ibid*., #248.

62 . Stevens later remarked that "The Place of the Solitaires" "is a poem in motion: in motion with the activity of thought in solitude" (*L* 504; 1944).

63 . A similar purposeless play defines the tenor of "Homunculus et La Belle Etoile." In the "Good light for drunkards, poets, widows/And ladies soon to be married," one can think

> the salty fishes
> Arch in the sea like tree-branches;
> Going in many directions
> Up and down.
> Trope-play can even momentarily charm philosophers,
> Until they become thoughtlessly willing
> To bathe their hearts in later moonlight,
>
> Knowing that they can bring back thought
> In the night that is still to be silent . . . .
> (*CP* 25, 26)