

Edward Bellamy's collection "*The Blindman's World*" and *Other Stories* (1898) is framed by two stories of vexed privacy. In the first, "The Blindman's World," S. Erastus Larrabee, a professor of astronomy, passes out while studying Mars through his telescope and wakes up with the sense that something has happened to him in the interim, something "strange and startling," that he cannot remember.¹ Soon, the "desire to know" his own inaccessible "impressions" and "experiences" becomes an obsession: "It seemed intolerable that I should have secrets from myself, that my soul should withhold its experiences from my intellect" (7). In the second story, the final one in the volume, "To Whom This May Come," the hero is shipwrecked on his way from Calcutta to New York. During the wreck he passes out, only to wake up and find himself stranded on an island of mind readers. His first reaction is "panic" at finding himself "among people who, while inscrutable to me, knew my every thought" (397). And although he quickly discovers that he can exercise the same restraint over thoughts that he exercises with relative ease over speech, he goes on to suggest that such restraint has its limits: "Indeed, among the mind-readers, politeness never can extend to the point of insincerity, as among talking nations, seeing that it is always one another's real and inmost thought that they read" (398).

What is striking about these stories is that they represent individuals who have interiority—"real and inmost thought"—without having privacy. In "The Blindman's World" the individual's own thoughts cannot be considered private because he has no direct access to them; in "To Whom This May Come" the individual's thoughts cannot be considered private because ev-

everyone has access to them. In each story, Bellamy imagines a world in which individuals do not simply experience their own inmost thoughts but rather come into relation with them indirectly, through the production of formal or public traces. Professor Larrabee finally learns about his adventures on Mars when he discovers a strange text that turns out to be his own diary: "I was astounded, on looking more closely, to observe that the handwriting was my own. . . . These written sheets apparently contained the longed-for but despaired-of record of those hours when I was absent from my body" (8). Written when he was asleep and read with suspense (as though it were a story about someone else), the text becomes the "trace" of his own experience; it is "the record of what I had seen and known during those hours of which my waking memory showed no trace" (7). In "To Whom This May Come," the narrator discovers that mind reading gives one access not only to the interiority of other people but also to one's own "character": "I learned that mind-reading is chiefly held desirable, not for the knowledge of others which it gives its possessors, but for the self-knowledge which is its reflex effect. Of all they see in the minds of others, that which concerns them most is the reflection of themselves, the photographs of their own characters" (410). In these stories, Bellamy transforms commonsense accounts of privacy, creating individuals who no longer have the ability either to gain or to police access to their own thoughts. In both cases, being inserted into unfamiliar systems of social organization leads to strange scenarios in which self-knowledge either depends on the mediation of the formal trace or becomes a "reflex effect" of publicity.

However fantastical Bellamy's scenarios may appear, they cannot easily be classed as science fiction, if only because the world they represent—in which the individual begins to be defined in terms of his formal or social effects—was already coming into existence in the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Bellamy's stories might best be understood as thought experiments designed to explore the changing conditions of subjectivity brought about by new technologies of social organization that privileged public effects over private intentions and feelings.² These stories are illuminating, moreover, because the technologies they represent cannot be adequately understood in the Foucauldian terms of surveillance and discipline that have become so familiar in literary and cultural studies. From Bellamy's perspective, individual subjectivity depends on such mediation without necessarily being disciplined by it. By living in a world of surveillance that extends to the

contents of their minds, their “real and inmost thought,” the mind readers in “To Whom This May Come” do not conform their thoughts to some acceptable “norm.” Instead, they seek out this surveillance because it makes their own thoughts newly or uniquely legible: a mind reader’s “mental and moral self” is “made objective to him” by his fellows and thus “can be contemplated by him as impartially as if it were another’s” (411). Surveillance, from this perspective, is not a tool of social discipline but, surprisingly, a kind of heuristic device, a way of placing oneself in relation to the world. Bellamy’s stories, while imagining utopian alternatives to everyday life, emblemize the importance of public effects in nineteenth-century America as well as suggest that technologies designed to account for such effects have no predictable political content.

My central claim in this volume is that such counterintuitive accounts of privacy inform an important strain of the American novel, one that has been both misrecognized and misread. In the chapters that follow I argue that one tradition of the American novel that runs from Nathaniel Hawthorne to Henry James, hitherto viewed as deeply committed to the exploration of interiority, in fact repeatedly articulates subjects that can only be understood—can only understand themselves—through the production of public effects. Like Bellamy’s foreign travelers, characters in novels by Hawthorne, James, Susan Warner, Mark Twain, Charles Chesnutt, and Pauline Hopkins are confronted by the surprising evidence of their own effects on other people, evidence that has the power to transform their self-conceptions. More specifically, what unites the texts under examination here is their sense of the ways in which social categories like race and sexuality along with politico-legal forms like partisanship and negligence made it possible to imagine that an individual’s public effects could eclipse the authority exercised by her private feelings and intentions. My claim is that these and other nineteenth-century texts work to disarticulate privacy and individuality by emphasizing what seems external, even peripheral, to the self—not only the accidents and mistakes that define individuals in Hawthorne, Warner, and Twain, but the public codification of bodies that transforms identity in Chesnutt, Hopkins, and James.

In this book I thus treat a central tradition of the American novel as a series of thought experiments that attempt to define, analyze, and critique a modern world beginning to be characterized as much by its interest in effects as by its interest in intentions. To argue that a central tradition of the Ameri-

can novel subordinates individual feeling and experience to the world of social effects is to challenge familiar and convincing ways of characterizing nineteenth-century American culture. Some of the most influential critics of the past twenty years have insisted that post-Civil War America is dominated by an ideology of privacy that defines subjects in terms of interiority, intimacy, and desire. These scholars have generally understood the nineteenth-century American novel in terms either of the market (which defines individuals in relation to their desires and social life in relation to contract)³ or of the domestic (which defines individuals in relation to their feelings and social life in relation to the home).⁴ The basic premise of both schools of thought is that the United States was (and continues to be) ruled by an ideology that privileges the individual; that imagines the private life as a protected zone of intimacy that is immune from politics; that assumes freedom of movement, contract, and belief; and that grants a shield of abstraction in the public sphere.⁵

One could argue that it is this commitment to the power of liberal individualism that links recent literary scholarship to earlier accounts of the period by such scholars as F. O. Matthiessen, Lionel Trilling, and Richard Chase. But where Trilling, to take one example, reads *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as the tale of a “heroic character” who “discards the moral code” of a corrupt society when he “resolves to help Jim in his escape from slavery,”⁶ recent scholars have been more interested in the inherent contradictions of liberal individualism and the role of literature in perpetuating or demystifying it. Thus, Sacvan Bercovitch, like Trilling, recognizes a commitment to the autonomous individual in the works of “classic writers” like Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Whitman, but understands this commitment as a form of liberal bad faith. No matter how critical these writers were of particular social problems, he argues, they must be seen as complacently protecting more general “cultural norms”: “Their works are characterized by an unmediated relation between the facts of American life and the ideals of liberal free enterprise.” And thus, he concludes, “The works of our classic writers show more clearly than any others I know how American radicalism could be turned into a force against any form of change that would decisively alter the norms, ideals, and structures of American culture.”⁷

Recent work in American history, however, has begun to challenge this picture of a nineteenth century ruled by liberal individualism, arguing that American culture was, in fact, dominated by extensive systems of social

regulation and committed to the primacy of public rather than private interest.⁸ According to William Novak, the notion of a nineteenth-century America defined by limited government, the free market, and the sanctity of individual autonomy is belied by the unprecedented expansion of what was known as “state police power”—the right of the state to promote public welfare by “regulating or even destroying private right, interest, liberty, or property.”⁹ Intrusive regulation was, he claims, absolutely central to an American culture of “positive governance” (9) that was expected to protect “public safety and security, public economy, public property, public morality, and public health” (16). As he explains: “Nineteenth-century America was a *public* society in ways hard to imagine after the invention of twentieth-century privacy. Its governance was predicated on the elemental assumption that public interest was superior to private interest. Government and society were not created to protect preexisting rights, but to further the welfare of the whole people and community” (9). Nowhere is this desire to regulate in the public interest more dramatic than in the response to the “railroad revolution.” As Barbara Young Welke points out, the dramatic rise in accidental injuries to railroad passengers led to myriad local ordinances to protect public safety: “Open platforms gave way to platforms with gates, gates to fully enclosed platforms. Unguarded crossings at grade were replaced by flagmen, and in turn manually operated gates were replaced by automatic gates and electric signals.” These responses to the demand to reduce injury, Welke observes, “were part of a broader pattern of state assumption of responsibility to safeguard individual life and health even where that meant limiting individual freedom of action.”¹⁰

What these histories of regulation make plain is the extent to which an industrializing America confronted a number of problems (like the increase of injuries from railroad accidents) that could not be solved by the market and, indeed, made no sense to think about in terms of contract. Even statistical approaches to chance and accident (increasingly central to the regulatory state) were understood to limit individual freedom. Ian Hacking, for example, argues that the rising importance of statistics in the nineteenth century demonstrates the belief that “technologies for classifying” seemingly random information could work as a form of “social control.”¹¹ In other words, the “avalanche of printed numbers” that gave rise to the modern conception of probability also gave birth to the idea of “normalcy,” an idea that came to have not only a descriptive but a coercive force. Because “most of the law-like

regularities were first perceived in connection with deviancy: suicide, crime, vagrancy, madness, prostitution, disease,” Hacking explains, statistical thinking has always been based on “the notion that one can improve—control—a deviant subpopulation by enumeration and classification” (3). Historians like Novak and Welke, as we have seen, place less importance on the attempt to classify the accidental than on the regulations designed to prevent accidents from happening in the first place. Yet both statistical thinking and governmental regulation have been understood as a limit to or, more forcefully, an assault on the individual’s autonomy.

In this book I argue that the coercion of the individual ascribed to the well-regulated society is only part of the story. I contend that technologies of social organization created to control for the contingencies of individual action in a world increasingly perceived to be chaotic did not necessarily impede action and thus limit the individual’s freedom. Instead, these technologies often worked to explain or ameliorate the effects of such action after the fact. The rise of tort law in the second half of the nineteenth century as a response to the ever-increasing number of accidental injuries is predicated on this retrospective (rather than coercive) account of action. As opposed to safety ordinances, which responded to accidents by attempting to prevent them, tort law responded to accidents by attempting to assign responsibility for what had already happened and to determine compensation for those already injured. The central problem confronted by tort law was how to define obligations between strangers—individuals who had no preexisting contractual or personal relationship—so that it could make determinations of culpability in the absence of any intention to harm (these were, after all, accidental injuries). By insisting that certain persons (or corporations) bear responsibility for the unintended consequences of their own actions, tort law began to define individuals almost strictly in terms of their effects.¹² In its focus on actions that are, by definition, beyond the individual’s control, tort law exemplifies the way in which social technologies might organize or even redefine disparate individual actions without working as a form of “discipline.”

While tort law is perhaps the most dramatic example of the kinds of social technologies addressed here, it is not the only one. The noncorporeal form of discipline so central to midcentury philosophies of child rearing, for example, can be understood less as a set of rules designed to conscript action than as a kind of feedback loop designed to let children know exactly what they

have done. The discourse of addiction that emerged in the late nineteenth century insisted that the compulsion to use drugs was not an exaggerated form of desire but rather an evacuation of desire. The concept of addiction emptied out subjectivity and imagined that it could be replaced by a host of external forces. It thus became a system of medical classification that not only served as a tool of “normalization” but opened up new and unexpected forms of knowledge and identity.

Like Bellamy’s stories, the tradition of the novel that forms the subject of this book responds to such emergent systems of social organization; systems that belie the ubiquity of liberal individualism without working as forms of coercion, that is, as modes of social discipline or social engineering. These novels explore the ways in which such technologies both force and enable individuals to come into relation with what have typically been considered private, and thus obvious and unmediated, forms of knowledge: experience, opinion, intention, and desire. In almost every one of these texts, individuals misrecognize their own effects in the world and depend on other people (or impersonal structures like the law) to make this connection for them. Interiority thus exists in these novels chiefly as a function of these seemingly endless attempts to connect actions with their unexpected consequences. Public effects become primary identity-making structures precisely because they are beyond the individual’s control. But rather than depicting an engineered society from which subjectivity and agency are squeezed out, these novels see in the world of social effects new conditions of subjectivity and agency.

Although I have organized this book chronologically, beginning with Hawthorne and Warner and ending with Hopkins and James, my primary goal is not to trace the progress of this interest in the centrality of social effects from the 1850s through the turn of the century. Instead, I explore three different historical “moments” by examining the ways in which a particular problem is represented and imaginatively resolved by a contemporaneous pair of texts.

Part 1 of this work, which looks at Hawthorne, Warner, and the 1850s, focuses on the problem of self-regulation in relation to the disciplinary structures of the political party and the family. Both Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) and Warner’s *The Wide Wide World* (1850) ask what happens to the individual who inserts himself (or finds himself inserted) into such identity-making structures. Does the group rewrite the

individual, replacing “authentic” interiority with collective intentions and desires? Or does the group nurture the individual, making the expression of true opinion or sentiment possible? In chapter 1 I argue that *The Blithedale Romance* tests the limits of both models in relation to the system of partisanship that dominated American politics in the 1840s and 1850s. In *Blithedale*, Hawthorne imagines that life in a commune sometimes works as a form of indoctrination (so that, for example, opinions become contagious) and sometimes works to liberate individual desires (so that the socialists find that the commune “seemed to authorize any individual, of either sex, to fall in love with any other, regardless of what would elsewhere be judged suitable and prudent”).¹³ In moving back and forth between the first model of group life and the second, Hawthorne begins to suggest that the voluntary group might work in a completely different way. Rather than as an agent of indoctrination or liberation, the group can be understood as a kind of mirror that puts the individual into a new and unexpected relation with his own opinions. Like Bellamy’s mind readers, Hawthorne’s Miles Coverdale begins to experience his fellow socialists as living reflections of his own interior states.

In chapter 2 I argue that Warner’s *The Wide Wide World* works along similar lines to suggest that for the child the family is less a source of discipline than a mechanism that allows her to understand her own actions. While popular child-rearing guides like Lydia Maria Child’s *The Mother’s Book* (1831) and L. H. Sigourney’s *Letters to Mothers* (1838) argued that effective punishment would ultimately produce well-behaved, self-regulating citizens, Warner creates a world in which the child loves punishment rather than learning to act so as to avoid it. Warner’s Ellen Montgomery loves punishment, I argue, because it is only through punishment that she can get people to tell her what her actions mean and thus who she is. As John Humphreys, her “brother” and mentor, tells her after another in an endless series of mistakes: “You are no worse than before;—it has only made you see what you are.”¹⁴ To be self-regulating in *The Wide Wide World* is, Ellen realizes, to be unsure of exactly how one registers in the world.

Part 2 of this volume, on Twain, Chesnut, and the post-Reconstruction era, focuses on racial identity and racism in relation to the legal structures of negligence and segregation. Both *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1855) and *The House behind the Cedars* (1900), I argue, tease out from the logic of existing legal structures phantasmatic solutions to America’s racial crisis. And in both cases this novelistic solution involves privileging what seems

peripheral rather than intrinsic to the self—accidents over intentions in Twain, surface over depth in Chesnutt. Chapter 3 assesses the nature of sentiment in *Huckleberry Finn*, arguing that the novel works both to highlight Huck's change of heart toward Jim and to replace this sentimental model of responsibility with a model drawn from the emergent law of negligence (one powerful element of tort law). Twain, I argue, uses the basic logic of negligence to suggest that Huck's feelings are ultimately irrelevant to understanding how he has harmed Jim and that, by extension, the nation could be held accountable for the harms done to the freedmen. From the standpoint of negligence, the forty-dollar payment that ends the novel becomes a form of compensation, an evocation of the national promise to provide the freedmen with "forty acres and a mule." This chapter reads *Huckleberry Finn* as an implicit indictment of post-Reconstruction racism—not because it offers friendship as a model of reform, but because it imagines accountability for systematic harm even in the absence of malice.

In chapter 4 I argue that Chesnutt imagines the power of segregation law to assign identity based on "color" turned against itself. What would it mean, *The House behind the Cedars* asks, to take on the racial identity announced by one's appearance? The novel insists from beginning to end not on the power of heritage or blood, but on the power of the public image to enforce identity. Drawing on British conversion narratives in which Jews have the power to transform themselves into Christians (some of which, by Walter Scott, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and Grace Aguilar, are cited in the novel), Chesnutt creates characters who deny that they are passing as white by insisting that they actually are as white as they appear to be. In *The House behind the Cedars*, Chesnutt proposes that interior and exterior are not in competition (as does the model of passing) but exist in a kind of symbiosis: the external does not hide but rather dictates interiority.

Part 3, on Hopkins, James, and the turn of the century, focuses on the limits of desire in relation to the construction of relatively new forms of public identity. Here I argue that both Hopkins and James see the medicalization of "perversions" like addiction and homosexuality less as modes of repression than as deeply productive social forms. In Hopkins's *Of One Blood* (1902–1903) and James's *The Sacred Fount* (1901), the discourses of addiction and homosexuality, which appear to understand individuals in terms of their uncontrollable desires, are transformed into ways of understanding individuals in almost purely formal terms. In both the hollow racial subject in

Hopkins and the subject of analogy in James, identity depends on form. I begin chapter 5 by analyzing the rhetoric of addiction at the turn of the century. In contrast to cultural critics who have read addiction on the model of the market (in which consumers feel compelled to buy), I argue that a powerful competing model of addiction was also at work during this period, one that understood the addict less as having uncontrollable desires than as having been evacuated and effectively “replaced” by the drug itself. In Henry Coles’s *Confessions of an American Opium Eater* (1895), for example, the addict takes on the phantasmatic body of the drug: “Though human blood runs in his veins, it is little better than poppy juice; he is no longer really a man, but a malignant essence in forming a cadaverous human shape.”¹⁵ Drawing on this second model of addiction, Hopkins (as well as Frank Norris and Jack London) devises both new social formations and new ways of understanding individual identity. In *Of One Blood*, the “blood” of race is like opium in its ability to replace the subject, producing a peculiar kind of collective memory—for example, Reuel Briggs’s ability to speak an African language he’s never learned and recognize people he’s never met—that unites the racial group. Indeed, Hopkins’s version of modern racial identity takes up and redeploys the logic of addiction.

In chapter 6 I argue that James’s *The Sacred Fount* represents homosexuality as a formal system for producing identity, a system that might be used to think about the construction of identity in general. James’s narrator’s attempt to make sense of desire by arranging the novel’s lovers according to the logic of analogy (*A* is secretly victimizing *B* just as *C* is secretly victimizing *D*) suggests not only that sexual love is a form of vampirism but that hidden desires can be tracked through an algebraic formula. Rather than repressing a specifically homosexual desire, James makes such desires emblematic. *The Sacred Fount* uses the formal symmetry of same-sex desire—unlike the other lovers, the narrator and his companion are represented as mirror images of one another—to literalize or embody the analogies through which characters come to know themselves. Embodying analogy in the form of two male lovers helps James to represent even more dramatically than vampirism the fear of a self made legible by unknown desires.

Each of these chapters reads literary texts in conjunction with important contemporaneous discourses not simply to elucidate historical context, but to suggest that these discourses are themselves the starting point for novelistic analysis. Unlike the New Historicism, however, which refuses to make

distinctions between fictional and nonfictional texts, this study suggests that the novel is self-consciously interested in the formal features of these extraliterary discourses and, in fact, creates formal correlatives in order to analyze their logic and explore their impact. In *Huckleberry Finn*, for instance, the emergence of the law of negligence does not function merely as the novel's relevant legal and historical context but is reflected in its form. The logic of retrospection (enforced by Tom's withholding of information) requires Huck to reconsider, after the fact, what he had been doing at the Phelps farm: not freeing Jim but playing a game. Through enforced retrospection, in other words, Twain dramatizes the disorienting effects of a world in which individual action is continually being redefined by other people.

In addition to reading the novel as it engages contemporaneous discourses, each of the three parts of this volume pairs canonical and non-canonical texts as a way of suggesting connections and correspondences that bridge traditional generic categories (because, for example, over the last thirty years, African American and women's fiction have become distinct genres in the critical canon). In so doing, I follow in the footsteps of important revisionist critics who have seen African American and women's writing not in isolation but in an ongoing dialogue with "classic" American fiction.¹⁶ The implicit argument of each part is that novels depicting very different social issues and addressed to very different audiences can, at the same time, be understood as central to a broader cultural dynamic, the interest of which is not limited by the gender, race, or class of the author or implied audience. If Susan Warner, for example, writes most obviously within the tradition of the domestic novel, her concern with the consequences of group life in *The Wide Wide World* links her project very clearly to Hawthorne's investigation of partisanship in *The Blithedale Romance*. Read together, these novels suggest a concern with the unpredictable effects of identity-making groups that reconceives the family in the same terms as the party and that pertains to women as much as men. Rather than simply "transcending" gender, however, this concern with group life helps to supplement and contextualize the unique situation of women at midcentury. Along the same lines, under the rubric of privacy I bring together in this book a series of social issues (race, sexuality, the market, domesticity, and the law) that Americanists tend to treat singly or in pairs and I argue that they must be treated as integral parts of a larger cultural transformation that the novel helps illuminate. Simply put, this transformation encompasses a range of issues because it marks the

emergence of a new form of sociality in which individuals are understood as social beings not because of their feelings, desires, or intentions but because of the various and inevitable traces they leave on the world.

Privacy has become a vexed issue in some of the most interesting recent criticism of American culture, especially for those critics who see it as a particularly harmful form of liberal ideology. According to Lauren Berlant, an investment in privacy is one manifestation of a broadly sentimental American culture, which privileges individual stories of pain over questions about structural inequality and injustice. When pain masquerades as politics, she claims, politics itself is evacuated of content and robbed of its power to mobilize individuals:

Can we say something general then, about the contradictions deliberately or inevitably animated by politically motivated deployments of sentimental rhetoric? Here is a hypothesis: when sentimentality meets politics, it uses personal stories to tell of structural effects, but in so doing it risks thwarting its very attempt to perform rhetorically a scene of pain that must be soothed politically. Because the ideology of true feeling cannot admit the nonuniversality of pain, its cases become all jumbled together and the ethical imperative toward social transformation is replaced by a civic-minded but passive ideal of empathy. The political as a place of acts oriented toward publicness becomes replaced by a world of private thoughts, leanings, and gestures.¹⁷

From this perspective, liberal individualism, in its sentimental mode, deflates the “imperative toward social transformation” and discourages “acts oriented toward publicness” by convincing people that “empathy” alone counts as viable political action. The commitment to privacy fuels political paralysis.

In its focus on empathy as distraction, Berlant’s work serves as a powerful corrective to much recent scholarship on the politics of sentiment and feeling and on the “right to privacy.”¹⁸ For Berlant, popular culture, even when it attempts political critique, only enforces a kind of impotent sentimental politics (which has its roots in mid-nineteenth-century women’s fiction) by promoting the “universalism” of pain and the “redemptiveness of personal suffering.”¹⁹ More generally, popular culture (as well as “official” discourses like the law) must be read ideologically because they represent the world of private life not only as a world of pain but as a realm of freedom, a space protected from the instabilities and contradictions of politics. Thus, while

“the critique of patriarchal familialism constantly put forth by sentimental forms can be used to argue against the normativity of the family . . . the sacred discourse of family values within this very domain works to preserve the fantasy of the family as the smallest space of sociability in which flow, intimacy, and identification across difference can bridge life across generations.”²⁰ This “sacred discourse,” which sanctifies privacy and intimacy, serves ultimately to disguise or make more palatable the power that is always at work in these supposedly “protected” spaces.

Michael Warner’s recent work on privacy makes absolutely clear the Foucauldian roots of such an analysis. Like Berlant, Warner argues against the politically paralyzing consequences of the liberal commitment to privacy. In elaborating his theory of alternative public spheres (which he calls “counterpublics”), forms of public life that “are teaching us to recognize in newer and deeper ways how privacy is constructed” and “how private life can be made publicly relevant,” Warner draws on and reinterprets Foucault’s account of shifting and decentralized forms of power.²¹ In a theory developed through a series of studies—in particular, *Madness and Civilization*, *Discipline and Punish*, and *The History of Sexuality*—Foucault tracks the workings of power in precisely those private places imagined to be protected or immune from social discipline. According to Warner, “In the domains of reason, justice, and personal life, Foucault’s three major treatises show that the modern order requires relations of power that saturate civil society and the most intimate dimensions of personhood. The very private life thought to be the locus of freedom and rights was instead the laboratory of a regulatory order, one that could by no means be equated with the state or even with a class that ruled indirectly through the state” (157). In other words, the belief in the freedom of private life is simply a testament to the effectiveness of modern forms of social discipline, in which subjects need not be punished because they have been trained to control themselves.

In this book I both draw on these insights—especially the understanding of privacy as a form or structure that has potentially counterintuitive implications—and propose that the “publicness” of privacy was imagined in very different terms in nineteenth-century American literature. This version of privacy is best understood in relation to Foucault’s account of the “problematic,” a form of analysis that takes as its object not disciplinary structures but modes of understanding and judgment. Indeed, Warner’s own thinking about privacy relies on this less familiar Foucauldian paradigm, which he

describes as “not just an intellectual tangle,” but “the practical horizon of intelligibility within which problems come to matter for people” (154). It is a form, in other words, of what Foucault calls “archeology,” the description of an “archive” or “the set of rules which at a given period and for a given society define . . . the limits and forms of the sayable.”²² The novelistic tradition I examine here transforms publicness into this kind of problematic. It is treated, in other words, less as a space of exposure, surveillance, or discipline than as a condition of intelligibility for individual action. To return to the example of *Huckleberry Finn*’s account of negligence, the law from this standpoint represents a way of defining behavior in terms of its consequences, so that Huck comes to understand what he is responsible for—what he has actually done to Jim—only in relation to a series of other people’s revelations. In this dependence on outsiders to explain the meaning of his own actions, Huck resembles the mind readers in Bellamy’s tale, who discover their own characters in the minds of other people. In much the same way, individuals in the novels treated here find themselves inserted into systems of social organization—the party, the family, the law, the “science” of race or sexuality—that cannot simply be understood as normalizing. This is not to suggest that such systems did not perform a disciplinary function; rather, it is to argue that this function does not exhaust their social utility. In the pages that follow, I examine the way in which the American novel treats publicness as a condition of intelligibility and privacy as a limit case for thinking about how individuals confront themselves in and through social systems.