

Frank Coffman  
Seminar: English 677: Twain and Oral Culture  
Dr. David Barrow  
Northern Illinois University  
paper / copy of *StyloMeter* © program submitted 6 December 1993  
© 1993 by Frank Coffman, all rights reserved

### **The Out-Takes of Poker Flat:**

A Descriptive Computer-Assisted Study of Style,  
Superordinate Conventions of Genre and Voice,  
and the Literary Representation of Orality

"Suddenly, armies of non-programmers were developing special-purpose programs for themselves and colleagues—programs so specialized that they would never have been produced by software publishers."

—Danny Goodman, *The Complete AppleScript Handbook*

Certainly the most anthologized and one of the best of Bret Harte's short stories of the pre-Civil War West, "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" is possibly the epitome "Local Color" tale. The present study is a "deep" reading of "The Outcasts" assisted by the use of a custom-designed computer data base. Such data bases make practical the statistical gathering, sorting, and examination of data according to pre-defined parameters—a practice which has come to be called "stylometric analysis." Harte's classic tale will be examined for rhetorical style and use of figures (both tropes and schemes), for its adherence to "superordinate genre conventions" (Steinmann), and for its modes of representation of spoken vernacular in the dialogue between characters in the story.

One of the essential characteristics of the American genre known as "Local Color" is the attempt to represent (to whatever degree successfully) the vernacular dialect of the locality being depicted. While a believable representation of speech in dialogue is always one of the primary challenges confronting the author, the portrayal of dialect is doubly problematical. Our 26-letter alphabet is not ideally suited to phonetic

transcription, nor would readers abide by a phonetically complicated text. To overcome these challenges, authors attempting to represent vernacular dialect have responded in various ways. At least since the literary "pioneering" of J.F. Cooper, orthographic changes [i.e. the apostrophe to signify a missing letter] and variant spellings to imply dialectal differences have been employed. Another device is the achievement of "seeming" dialectal orality by juxtaposition against the use of a more eloquent literary style of the narrative voice. A few have succeeded at the attainment of verisimilitude with such techniques; many more have failed miserably, their bad "ears" for dialectal speech and/or their distracting variant spellings breaking the magic of the tale by forcing the reader to focus on the word as an opaque rather than, ideally, transparent conduit of meaning.

Harte is usually numbered among the successful [along with the master, Samuel Clemens] at achieving this "seeming" of vernacular orality. The present study examines in some detail Harte's techniques of fiction in general and of vernacular dialect as dialogue in particular.

Several theses are contended in this discussion. I will enumerate them before proceeding:

First, as Richard Lanham notes in his important book, *Analyzing Prose*, we—as critics of literature and as readers and writers in general—spend too much time looking "through" language and style rather than "at" it. Our judgments of writing tend to be "evaluative" rather than "descriptive" (1-12). Moreover, it will be argued that we must first understand and come to know "what" is happening in a text before we can know "how" the author has achieved any given happening. And we must understand and come to know "how" a particular textual trope or narrative "move" works before we consider the deeper question of "why" it works.

Second, extrapolating from Michael Heim's assertion in *Electric Language* that "the word processor is the calculator of the humanist," (1) we may view the hypertextual, custom-designed database as the "cloud chamber" of the literary critic, offering us a clearer look at the inner workings of literary technique (auctorial intention/ **pretext**),

literature (the **text** itself), and literary effect (the reader-fulfilled **context** of reception).

Some information on the particular computer hardware and software used for this study and available to the researcher will be included with this section.

Third, that purportedly "real" orality of speech, dialogue in general, and portrayals of pre-literate, illiterate, or "illiterary" language in literature must always be and cannot help but be conventionalized, schematic, and verisimiletic ("truth seeming" [verisimilitudinous?—ouch!]); that it must always be a signification by conventions either tacit or understood between writers and readers and can never be the signifier of real speech. There can only be verisimilitude in literary or "Secondary Creation" (Tolkien), never verity with the "Primary Creation." Some digression on the differences between speech and text will be, appropriately I hope, included with this point.

Fourth, as Martin Steinmann defines the term, "superordinate genre conventions" are at work in any act of presentation and reception of literature. A system of conventionality shared by author and reader, an understood and accepted aggregate of traditions of how literature (text) works in general and of how each respective genre works in particular is always at play. Further, we may adapt a notion from the semioticians and consider such acts to be "text acts."

Fifth, in the case of the literary representation of dialogue in general and of vernacular dialectal speech in particular, we can define several distinct modes of presentation. An enumeration and brief discussion of these modes will be included with this point.

Each of these theses will be brought into play in the discussion of Harte's story.

As noted above, according to Lanham (*Analyzing Prose*), our tendency to look "through" style rather than "at" it forces our judgments of writing to be more "evaluative" than "descriptive." He contends that our "tradition of see-through language has not left us especially good at analyzing prose. We are, in fact, English teachers included, wonderfully inept at describing the 'good writing' we all say we cherish. We don't know what to look for, nor what to call it when it trips us up. And so, mostly, we don't look at all" (vii).

It is in some ways curious that we should have generally lost this aptitude at stylistic description. Text, being a graphic, visually perceived medium, must be looked "at" in one sense for it to be comprehensible in the first place. Text is disembodied but visible; speech is "embodied" but invisible. Still we do, Lanham contends, strive to see "through" the words on the page to the "meanings" behind them. We yearn for an invisible language.

Yet this can never be. Speech and text are both mediations of thought, two of the passageways (others being the gestures, "body language," the various other arts such as dance, music, painting, sculpture, etc.) through which we communicate. The fact that there are plural human languages proves that neither speech nor writing IS thought, but each, rather, must be *a means of signification of mentality*. Each has certain advantages. Many see speech as somehow "closer" to thought since it is certainly primary in the way we both acquire and normally use a language—although Derrida's famous deconstructive move, asserting the primacy of writing, turns this dilemma inside out. We might, nonetheless, posit that, whereas spontaneous and interactive (as opposed to prepared and delivered) speech more often signifies thought and current "stream of consciousness," writing more often signifies reason and reflection. The very immediacy, the direct contact of the speaking situation is an advantage in that it is potent with illocutionary possibilities, but a disadvantage in terms of the drastically shorter time (almost none) for reflection, rethinking, pondering, and polishing—in other words for both organizing and Stylizing.

The disparity between these modes of communication of thought is interestingly at play in any text that presents various degrees of representation of vernacular or dialectal speech. It is this disparity that the present paper will focus upon.

In his book, *Writing Space*, J. David Bolter has noted what he sees as an advantage of "electronic text":

The new medium combines the qualities of the printing press and the

blackboard. It can transmit perfect copies of texts, yet it offers the author and the reader the opportunity to modify the text at any time. In electronic writing the ephemeral is no longer marginal: durability simply provides another dimension by which the text can be measured. A text that changes repeatedly to meet changing circumstances may now be as compelling as one that insists on remaining the same through decades or centuries.

Moreover, such a text reminds us of writing on the "original" writing surface, human memory, where the inscribed text changes so quickly and easily that we are not aware of writing at all (Bolter 56).

George Landow has noted the enthusiasm of Roland Barthes for the sort of potentialities offered by interactive databases and hypertextual analysis:

In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes describes an ideal textuality that precisely matches that which has come to be called computer hypertext—text composed of blocks of words (or images) linked electronically by multiple paths, chains or trails in an open-ended, perpetually unfinished textuality described by the terms link, node, network, web, and path:

In this ideal text, the networks [*reseaux*] are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable . . .; the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language. (Landow 3 [Barthes, *S/Z* 5-6])

### *Stylometrics Applied to Texts*

Stylometric analysis is the use of computer word processors, databases, and statistical analysis methods to find linguistic and grammatical stylistic tendencies or patterns in a text. What is required prior to attempting any such investigation is the "digitization" of text. The computer "text file" is soon to displace the printed text from the center of our reading attention; the CD-ROM disk is already making incursions into the realm of the book. Many texts have already been converted to "electronic books"—the present writer has the complete works of Shakespeare, the complete Conan Doyle Sherlock Holmes canon, and Twain's *Huck Finn*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and various shorter stories published on CD-ROM. But more often than not it is still the case that texts currently must be converted to digital form for study. This is not the labor-intensive and prohibitive retyping of the story that it used to be. Software of the type known as OCR (optical character recognition) converts the graphic plate scanner into a 500 words-per-minute typist so that fairly extensive quantities of text—entire books—can be relatively easy to input.

The stylometric research included herein was done on an Apple Macintosh LCII system with 10 MB of RAM and using the object-oriented programming capabilities of Apple's software, Hypercard®. The text of Harte's "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" was:

- first, scanned in from a book on a Hewlett-Packard ScanJet IIC® plate scanner using Caere's OmniPage® optical character recognition software;
- second, checked by importation into Microsoft Word 5.1® as a word processing program and checked by comparison against the original for correctness of spellings, punctuation, etc. (also during this phase the notations for the first and last sentences of the story—signified by the section mark (§) either before or after— and the first and last sentences of each paragraph—signified by the paragraph mark (¶) either before or after—were added)
- third, imported into a custom-designed Hypercard® stack (which I have

dubbed "StyloMeter ©") where it was divided into single sentences and then placed onto separate "cards" for annotation, sorting, and analysis.

Perhaps the most important value of digital text is the ability to almost instantly "search" a text for any given word or string of text. By doing word searches ["like," "as," "than," and "so" to find use of similes for instance] or even font character searches (search for quotation marks to find all occurrences of dialogue or the question mark to see if there are any rhetorical questions, etc.). Other studies can be done to find relative readability [average syllables per word, average words per sentence, average sentences per paragraph, etc.] or word occurrences or coinages or variant spellings. As per Aristotle's notions in the *Poetica*, of *mimesis* [real time action or dialogue, a mimicking] as opposed to *diegesis* [digest or narrative summary of action] we may do such things as weigh the relative number of sentences devoted to dialogue of characters and scenic/mimetic content as opposed to narrative/diegetic content and thereby arrive at "mimetic density" or "diegetic density" as elements of style. We may even examine the number of times certain letters are used in a text (and their relative proximity on average) to determine if a writer's style is flowing and calliphonous (sibilant and liquids predominating) or relatively harsh and cacophonous (glottal stops, plosives, and dentals predominating) Or we may check on frequencies of rhetorical devices—both schemes and tropes—the use of simile or metonymy or tricolon or personification or zeugma, etc.

One contention of the present essay is that narrative verisimilitude can approach whatever "verity" we perceive only through what we might call "conventions of seeming," a sort of "grammar" of narrative convention. These sometimes genre-distinctive and genre-specific conventions between author and reader, are passed along—as with any language—by common tradition and common usage.

All art is mimetic rather than original creation and must be fictive rather than factual, approximation rather than actuality—we cannot expect it to be more. Therefore, in one sense at least, any discussion of the literary presentation of "orality" is moot. Spoken language and oral culture cannot be frozen in another medium but

only represented by some conventionalized ways of depiction in the other medium.

Coleridge (*Biographia Literaria*) allows for this irreconcilable difference in his famous “willing suspension of disbelief” doctrine. Better, I believe, is J.R.R. Tolkien’s view of artistic creation set forth in his important essay “On Fairy- Stories”—that all Art (including literary art) is “secondary” or “sub-” creation, and that, when it succeeds, it is rather an induced (by the artist) acceptance of belief, more the results of the author’s skill and volition than ours. In short, if art succeeds, we are enthralled and captivated by it, not willful suspenders of disbelief. It captures us; we do not simply “allow” it in.

Furthermore, as suggested above, there must be either identity or imitation, the actual or the seeming actual. Another good question is whether we would even wish it to be possible for writing to “capture” oral speech. For artistic (mimetic) purposes, isn’t the seeming enough? And this “seeming” reality is always (and must be) conventionalized in its presentation in a different medium.

By similar analogy, what we might call “figures of textual orality” are accepted as “conventional” by readers in the same way that we might say “figures of mentality” are accepted as “conventional” by readers of literature—the acceptance of the omniscient narrator in fictional narrative, for example. With all conventions, an agreement is made among subscribers to the convention (in our case, writers and readers, those who share the medium of written language) to abide by certain arbitrary rules and laws to which this convening, this “coming together” of minds has agreed.

For another example, we do not question the Shakespearian character who delivers a soliloquy and assume that he has lost his mind (even if the play is *Hamlet*) if he seemingly speaks his thoughts out loud to himself. We abide by the convention of Elizabethan drama and accept this as a figure of mentality, the only way that a lone character can divulge his thoughts to the audience. Furthermore, we must prefer this to a mimetic approximation of “real” mentality, because we are not an audience of telepaths and because no mime—however accomplished—can convey the entirety and complexity of a thought process by means of mere facial expressions, movements, and gestures. What we have here are “superordinate genre conventions” as Martin

Steinmann defines them in his seminal essay of the same title:

Like any other convention, a superordinate genre convention regulates our behavior, regulates it by prescribing it, and serves human purposes. It regulates our interpretation of, and sometimes our reaction to, fictional worlds; it regulates these by prescribing that we interpret fictional worlds differently from nonfictional and sometimes that we react differently to them as well; and it serves the general purpose of freeing writers from realism—allowing them to create fictional worlds that in some respects are strikingly different from nonfictional, worlds that simplify, distort, warp, exaggerate, or compress reality in the service of such artistic goals as economy of characterization, contrast of foils, dramatic irony, heightened emotional effect, and interesting complications and conflicts. Such a convention is a trade-off between writers and us as readers: for giving up realism, writers reward us with artistry. (252)

Steinmann offers several examples of the superordinate convention. Steinmann's method of defining such a figure/trope/move of writing is illustrated in the following example:

**The Convention of Blank Verse in Elizabethan Plays:**

If X is a character in Elizabethan drama, and if X speaks lines in perfect unrhymed iambic pentameter, we accept that it is possible for people to do so.

These conventions are “superordinate” in the sense and to the degree that they *supervene* in commanding and demanding our credulity in fiction (Tolkien's “Secondary World”) to things that would be incredulous in the real world (“Primary World”).

Certain conventions of the presentation of the oral in literature are clearly distinguishable. They are tacitly understood by writers and readers of narrative. Among these we may note the following as examples:

- **The Convention of The First Person Narrator's Perfect Memory:**

If X is the first-person narrator of a story, we, as receivers of the story, will accept without question that his/her memory is perfect as to details of scenic description, exactness of events, and exact words spoken among characters—even if considerable time has elapsed between the supposed events being recounted and the telling of the tale.

- **The Convention of Ignored (Sublimated) Attribution:**

If supposed lines of dialogue by character(s) X (,Y, etc.) are attributed or “tagged,” we, as receivers of the story, will ignore (sublimate) the attribution to the extent that it will not interfere with our reception of the dialogue as oral discourse.

- **The Convention of Accepted Grammatical and Rhetorical Correctness**

If X is a character in a story and if the speech of a X is grammatically and rhetorically more correct than is normal in oral discourse, we, as receivers of the story, will—except in extreme cases, such as where such formally correct language is completely “out of character”—accept this correctness without question and without a loss of verisimilitude.

- **The Convention of Accepted Grammatical and Rhetorical Complexity**

If X is a character in a story and if the speech of a X is grammatically and rhetorically more complex (hypotactic rather than paratactic sentence structuring, periodic or inverted rather than loose or cumulative sentence types, etc.) than is normal in oral discourse, we, as receivers of the story, will—except in extreme cases—accept this complexity without question and without a loss of verisimilitude.

- **The Convention of the Oral Frame Story in First Person Narrative**

If X is the narrator character in a first-person story and if X relates a story

told to him/her by another character Y, we, as receivers of the story will not question the accuracy of retelling, but accept the account as a verbatim recounting and recollection.

• **The Convention of Dictional Incongruity as a Representation of the Oral.**

If the narrative voice of X (especially third-person narrator X) is markedly more formal, eloquent, stylized, and grammatically correct than the "voices" of the story's characters in their dialogue, we will tend to accept the less formal and less correct as a representation of vernacular and/or dialectal speech.

• **The Convention of Accurate Transcription.**

If aberrant spellings and other orthographic changes in text are meant by the author to "capture" the sound of regional dialect, we as readers will tend to accept these aberrant graphic representations as good and accurate transcriptions of actual dialect.

In any discussion of methodology pertaining to the analysis of the literary representation of speech (of text creating the "seeming" of speech), we ought to include a brief classification of the variety of ways this has been attempted in literature—likely an identical classification with the variety of ways it might possibly be attempted in oral narrative.

Many contemporary critics, especially the structuralists (Genette, Chatman, et. al.) have been interested in these modes as part of their close analysis of narrative structure in the relatively modern literary science of what is generally termed "narratology." It will be useful here to propose a refinement, a clarification, and an extension of these various possible modes of textual orality, if for no other reason than to make what is concluded herein about Harte's short story more intelligible.

The closest possible—because it is the closest conceivable—approximation to speech in text is that mode which I will term "Transcriptional" ["Dramatic" could also work as a descriptive term]. This mode comes into play only rarely and is most often found in modern (late nineteenth and twentieth-century) fiction. In the Transcriptional

mode, the author presents either: 1) extended passage of unattributed "speech" from a single character, or 2) the alternating and unattributed "speech" of two characters, or—rarely—3) the random and unattributed "speech" of three or more characters. Two examples of this type will suffice to illustrate its use:

first, the opening passage from Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro":

"The marvellous thing is that it's painless," he said. "That's how you know when it starts."

"Is it really?"

"Absolutely. I'm awfully sorry about the odor though. That must bother you."

"Don't! Please don't."

After the first line of what we will later call "normal," "simple," "medially-attributed" dialogue, the next three are a brief roll of the transcriptional mode (something that Hemingway experimented with a great deal and found useful).

second, a passage from Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat":

"Look! There's a man on the shore!"

"Where?"

"There! See 'im? See 'im?"

"Yes, sure! He's walking along."

"Now he's stopped. Look! He's facing us!"

"He's waving at us!"

"So he is! By thunder!"

"Ah, now we're all right! Now we're all right! There'll be a boat out here for us in half an hour."

"He's going on. He's running. He's going up to that house there."

There are four characters speaking, but note that there is no attribution to distinguish who is saying what! After a single paragraph of narration which follows the passage above, Crane returns to this pure transcriptional mode for nearly two more pages of intermixed and unattributed dialogue. To my knowledge, this is the longest sustained example of the transcriptional mode in English. But it must be pointed out

here that, to the extent that the mode works in this example, it is only due to the special circumstances of this story—the fact that all four characters are "in the same boat" [forgive me] and are bound by that "subtle brotherhood" [as Crane calls it] of people thrown together in a desperate situation—which is one of the themes of both this classic tale and, of course, his most famous work, *The Red Badge of Courage*.

Still, the reader is left adrift [your pardon again] and has every right to wonder which of the four is speaking any given line in this passage. We could say that Crane masterfully sacrifices characterization and reader comprehension on the altar of theme ("subtle brotherhood") or the equalizing effect of the shared predicament [or of shared mortality itself]).

The important point to note at this time, with our examination of the potentially closest literary approximation of speech, is that it can never hope to truly replicate the oral mode. Many things get in the way—chiefly the visual (graphic) medium of the text itself. Other unavoidable differences may be noted. One area of difference is the poor approximation in text of spoken inflection, tone of voice, or strength of utterance—how to determine a sarcastic tone, for example, or how much more "loudly" are we to receive ("hear") the lines above that end in an exclamation point compared to their fellows that end in the common period?

Another difference between true speech and textually represented orality is the relative inability of the latter to indicate the length of pause between utterances. Suffice it to say that the only artistic mode that can closely approximate speech is the dramatic, which makes use of speech itself. Yet even that differs from what we might call "primary speech" being conventionalized "secondary speech" (of necessity "secondary" because it is mimetic). The imitation can never be the original; the sign can never equate to the signified. With the drama, orality is different in degree; with the literary text, "orality" must be different in both degree and kind.

And it can be further asserted that authors (since they can never hope to accomplish the textual duplication of oral speech) rarely and mistakenly strive to accomplish it, most often being content with—and preferring the difference of—a verisimilitic "seeming" of the oral in their chosen medium.

Having dispensed with any notion of the possibility of duplicating vernacular and/or dialectal orality in the literary text, we can designate several other (and more common) modes of textual orality besides the *transcriptional/dramatic*.

The next mode—likely the most often used representation of orality in text—is what we may call Normal Simple Attributed. This is "Bound" [as opposed to "Free"] Discourse to the extent that the character's utterance is presented with attribution. It is simple because it is not complicated or "mixed" with any other storytelling device. It is normal if it makes use of one of the generic attributive words of the language (in English these would be forms of *to say, to ask, or to think* ).

At this point, I will introduce the distinction of position by noting that all forms of attributed textual orality must be attributed either initially, medially, or terminally. Hence, three sub-types of this and the other following attributed modes exist. It is often a marker of style . As we shall see, for example, Harte favors medial attribution, rarely uses terminal, and never initial—at least not in "The Outcasts"). So we may speak of "medial normal simple attribution"

Close to this, yet further afield from primary speech to the degree that variations of "say," "ask," or "think" are less "transparent" (see Lanham, *Analyzing Prose* , "Introduction") and therefore make the reader more "aware" of the text as text, is the mode we can designate Variant Simple Attribution. If the author uses "exclaimed," or "shouted," or "queried," etc., rather than the generic and normal forms of attribution, but still does not complicate or mix the attribution with narrating, describing, characterizing, or digressing, we have the variant simple mode of attribution. We thus designate this mode by position as well as by kind.

Already alluded to, two other modes of attributed textual orality exist. They share the common feature that both are "complicated" attribution, attribution that is mixed or blended with some content issuing from the narrative voice beyond the mere "tagging" or identifying of the character who is speaking. They differ in the same ways that normal-simple and variant-simple differ by nature of the word choice in the "tag line." Both can be called "Complicated Attribution" in that the narrative voice comes more to the front in the passage being considered, offering the reader some content of: i)

narrative advancement of the plot, or ii) description of either character or setting, or iii) characterization of the speaker, or iv) digression in the form of: a) direct addresses to the reader, or b) philosophical reflection, or c) other narrative comment. Such "moves" of storytelling (narrating, describing, characterizing, digressing) are "bound" to the attribution of the supposed utterance—there are such complications as:

"he-snarled-with-a-dismissive-wave-of-his-hand"

or "she-answered-with-a-frown"

or "he responded to her query, silhouetted against the early morning sun", and so forth.

We can see these two types as Normal Complicated Attributed and Variant Complicated Attributed. Prof. Harold Moshier (Northern Illinois University *Narratology* course) has already noted the great frequency of narration complicated by description ("descriptized narration") and description by narration ("narratized description"), observing that relatively few story sentences are pure, unmixed, or single-purposed entities.

We can add to these the type that Seymour Chatman (*Story and Discourse*) calls "free indirect discourse" in which indirect quotation is used, but without any attributive tagging. A good example of this is found in "The Outcasts" with the arrival of Tom Simpson, "The Innocent of Sandy Bar," and his unfortunate bride-to-never-be, Piney Woods [a good example of the local color use of "What's in a name?!"]. The following is the run of sentences #61 through #68 of the story comprising a single complete paragraph of the text:

(#61) There was a remembrance of this in his boyish and enthusiastic greeting of Mr. Oakhurst. DESCRPTIZED and "CHARACTERIZED" NARRATION?]

(#62) He had started, he said, to go to Poker Flat to seek his fortune. [ATTRIBUTED (BOUND) INDIRECT DISCOURSE]

(#63) 'Alone?' [UNATTRIBUTED (FREE DIRECT DISCOURSE) of Oakhurst]

(#64) No, not exactly alone; in fact (a giggle), he had run away with Piney Woods. [DESCRIPTION / CHARACTERIZATION COMPLICATED INDIRECT DISCOURSE]

(#65) Didn't Mr. Oakhurst remember Piney? [FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE]

(#66) She that used to wait on the table at the Temperance House? [FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE]

(#67) They had been engaged a long time, but old Jake Wood had objected, and so they had run away, and were going to Poker Flat to be married, and here they were. [FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE]

(#68) And the were tired out, and how lucky it was they had found place to camp, and company. [FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE]

This is a most intriguing passage because it well illustrates something of the sophistication of Harte's style and the use of mixed modes of representation of orality in the text. The comments in brackets designate the respective modes used. Sentence #62, a rare example of bound indirect discourse is especially noteworthy.

To this list of modes, it must be added that various of them are often used to portray thought rather than speech in the textual medium, Simple-Attributed Thought being the most common, with such varieties as Unattributed Thought (Chatman's "free direct thought" or "internal monologue") or "free indirect thought" being modern and contemporary preferences.

Just as some things in narrative discourse are, to use Gerard Genette's term, *extradiegetic* [not intrinsically part of the narrative—digressions—tangential remarks or even auctorial interventions expressing opinion, commenting on the story, etc.], so much of the presentation of purported mimesis is actually what we might call "*extramimetic*." Such is the case in Sentence # 17 of "The Outcasts" which is purported speech of a local of Poker Flat, Jim Wheeler, but a flashback (a "prolepsis" to use Genette's term) which is mimesis or "scene" that is technically outside "extramimetic"

the events of the story proper, being background:

'It's agin justice,' said Jim Wheeler, 'to let this yer young man from Roaring Camp—an entire stranger—carry away our money.'

Also seen in this sentence is Harte's decided preference for medially attributed dialogue. His usual mode of dialogue is—as we have defined the terms above—**variant** (a preference for alternatives to “say/said,” “ask/asked,” and “think/thought”) **complicated**, (a tendency to intermingle narrative, descriptive, and characterizational [almost never narratively or auctorially digressive] details with his dialogue, and **medial** (showing a decided stylistic tendency to put attribution within the parts of a “speech”). As noted above, he was an early experimenter with free indirect [and even some bound indirect] discourse. Some other traits noteworthy in Harte's style are his preference for the **tricolon** as a scheme of narrative and descriptive parallelism and his decided preference for writing sentences beginning with a conjunction [what I would term “prosyndeton”—so as to be parallel with the classical Greek figures of “asyndeton” (leaving out conjunctions even before the final item of a series) and “polysyndeton” (putting in conjunctions between all items in a series)]. He chiefly does this with the word “But”—with 25 out of 213 sentences in “The Outcasts of Poker Flat” so beginning. [see attached sheets on these points of analysis], but also with “And” on occasion.

Even though Bret Harte's *Overland Monthly* used the logo of the defiant grizzly roaring back at the East, there was much in his style that was Eastern-influenced, polished, and sophisticated. Only his characters speak in the “seeming” vernacular of the mining camps. He would leave for Mark Twain (especially in *Huckleberry Finn*) the challenge of presenting more successfully the vernacular narrative voice and vernacular-speaking characters.

A golden spike was driven at the joining of East and West by rail. What is needed today is the pioneering spirit of a new breed of literary critics, willing to break new ground with new methods. There are challenging realms of promise waiting if we can link our new technological capabilities with our humanistic inquisitiveness. We ought

to act now to connect these two realms, driving a new “golden spike” to secure the interaction between the computer’s power and critical theory leading us to as-yet-undreamt-of discoveries.

---

NOTE: The following discoveries were made using a proprietary and self-designed HyperCard® Stack dubbed “StyloMeter.” This stack imports a text, divides it into sentences and paragraphs and offers pull-down menus for “tagging” rhetorical figures, sentence types across various principles of classification, with the power of sorting data along various parameters.

## ANALYSIS SHEET # 1

### HARTE'S USE OF THE TRICOLON

THE TRICOLON (3-PART PARALLEL SERIES) IS ONE OF HARTE'S FAVORITE RHETORICAL SCHEMES — [ONE OF LINCOLN'S FAVORITE'S TOO: “WE CANNOT DEDICATE, WE CANNOT CONSECRATE, WE CANNOT HALLOW. . .”, “OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE” — ALSO A FAVORITE OF CAESAR'S “VENI, VIDI, VICI”]

It had lately suffered the loss of several thousand dollars, two valuable horses, and a prominent citizen.

[Sentence #:9]  
COMMENTS:

¶As the escort disappeared, their pent-up feelings found vent in a few hysterical tears from the Duchess, some bad language from Mother Shipton, and a Parthian volley of expletives from Uncle Billy.

[Sentence #:27]  
COMMENTS:

Uncle Billy passed rapidly from a bellicose state into one of stupor, the Duchess became maudlin, and Mother Shipton snored.

[Sentence #:45]  
COMMENTS:

He looked at the gloomy walls that rose a thousand feet sheer above the circling pines around him, at the sky ominously clouded, at the valley below, already deepening into shadow; and, doing so, suddenly he heard his own name called.¶

[Sentence #:53]  
COMMENTS:

¶The pines rocked, the storm eddied and whirled above the miserable group, and the flames of their altar leaped heaven ward, as if in token of the vow.¶

[Sentence #:127]  
COMMENTS:

¶At midnight the storm abated, the rolling clouds parted, and the stars glittered keenly above the sleeping camp.

[Sentence #:128]  
COMMENTS:

## ANALYSIS SHEET # 2

SENTENCES BEGINNING WITH CONJUNCTIONS (ONE OF HARTE'S FAVORITE STYLISTIC TRAITS)  
OF THE 213 SENTENCES OF "THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT," MORE THAN 10% OF THEM BEGIN WITH A  
CONJUNCTION

'And yet it don't somehow sound like whiskey,' said the gambler.

[Sentence #:118]

COMMENTS:

'And you?' asked Tom Simson.¶

[Sentence #:182]

COMMENTS:

But a crude sentiment of equity residing in the breasts of those who had been fortunate enough to win from Mr. Oakhurst overruled this narrower local prejudice.¶

[Sentence #:18]

COMMENTS:

But even this act did not draw the party into any closer sympathy.

[Sentence #:31]

COMMENTS:

But Mr. Oakhurst knew that scarcely half the journey to Sandy Bar was accomplished, and the party were not equipped or provisioned for delay.

[Sentence #:41]

COMMENTS:

¶But they were furnished with liquor, which in this emergency stood them in place of food, fuel, rest, and prescience.

[Sentence #:43]

COMMENTS:

Yet he could not help feeling the want of that excitement which, singularly enough, was most conducive to that calm equanimity for which he was notorious.

[Sentence #:52]

COMMENTS:

And the were tired out, and how lucky it was they had found place to camp, and company.¶

[Sentence #:68]

COMMENTS:

But unluckily, the Innocent met this objection by assuring the party that he was provided with an extra mule loaded with provisions, and by the discovery of a rude attempt at a log house near the trail.

[Sentence #:74]

COMMENTS:

But when he returned to he party, he found them seated by a fire—for the air had grown strangely chill and the sky overcast—in apparently amicable conversation.¶

[Sentence #:79]

COMMENTS:

But turning to where Uncle Billy had been lying, he found him gone.

[Sentence #:94]

COMMENTS:

But when Mr. Oakhurst returned from a weary search for the trail, he heard the sound of happy laughter echoed from the rocks.

[Sentence #:116]

COMMENTS:

¶But the crowning festivity of the evening was reached in a rude camp-meeting hymn, which the lovers, joining hands, sang with great earnestness and vociferation.

[Sentence #:124]

COMMENTS:

And it's finding out when it's going to change that makes you.

[Sentence #:137]

COMMENTS:

For,' added the gambler, with cheerful irrelevance, "' I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord, And I'm bound to die in

His army."¶  
 [Sentence #:140]  
 COMMENTS:

But it revealed drift on drift of snow piled high around the hut—a hope- less, uncharted, trackless sea of white lying below the rocky shores to which the castaways s clung.¶  
 [Sentence #:143]  
 COMMENTS:

But music failed to fill entirely the aching void left by insufficient food, and a new diversion was proposed by Piney— story-telling.  
 [Sentence #:152]  
 COMMENTS:

And so for the rest of that night the Homeric demigods again walled the earth.  
 [Sentence #:156]  
 COMMENTS:

So, with small food and much of Homer and the accordion, a week passed over the heads of the outcasts.  
 [Sentence #:160]  
 COMMENTS:

And yet no one complained.¶  
 [Sentence #:164]  
 COMMENTS:

And so reclining, the younger and purer pillowing the head of her soiled sister upon her virgin breast, they fell asleep.¶  
 [Sentence #:202]  
 COMMENTS:

But all human stain, all trace of earthly travail, was hidden beneath the spotless mantle mercifully flung from above.¶  
 [Sentence #:206]  
 COMMENTS:

And when pitying fingers brushed the snow from their wan faces, you could scarcely have told from the equal peace that dwelt upon them which was she that had sinned.  
 [Sentence #:208]  
 COMMENTS:

¶But at the head of the gulch, on one of the largest pine- trees, they found the deuce of clubs pinned to the bark with a bowie-knife.  
 [Sentence #:210]  
 COMMENTS:

¶And pulseless and cold, with a derringer by his side and a bullet in his heart, though still calm as in life, beneath the snow lay he who was at once the strongest and yet the weakest of the outcasts of Poker Flat.§  
 [Sentence #:213]  
 COMMENTS:

## Works Cited

- Bolter, J. David. *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1991.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978.
- Genette, Gerard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (trans. Jane E. Lewin, foreword by Jonathan Culler). Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980.
- Harte, Bret. *The Best of Bret Harte* (sel. by Harper and Peters). Cambridge: Riverside (Houghton Mifflin), 1947.
- Heim, Michael. *Electric Language: A Philosophical Study of Word Processing*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1987.
- Landow, George P. *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992.
- Lanham, Richard. *Analyzing Prose*. New York: Scribner's, 1982.
- Mosher, Harold. Course in Narratology. Northern Illinois University, Fall Semester, 1992.
- Steinmann, Martin. "Superordinate Genre Conventions." *Poetics* 10 (1981) 243-261.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. "On Fairy-Stories" in *The Tolkien Reader* pp. 33-90. New York: Ballantine (Houghton Mifflin), 1966.