Narrative as Embodied Intensities: The Eloquence of Travel in Nineteenth-Century Rome

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An ancient traveler once remarked to his Athenian audience, “As I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, ‘To the Unknown God.’” Here St. Paul tells of walking through the city and being impressed by the religiosity of its citizens. They were so religious that they not only had altars erected to the whole pantheon of local and national deities; they even erected an altar to some god they might have overlooked. But instead of using this city-walk discovery to chastise the Athenians for their idolatry, Paul strategically exploits it as an opportunity to tell his hearers the Good News: “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you.” He states that he knows the name of their unknown god: He is the “God that made the world and all things therein. . . . [I]n him we live, and move, and have our being.” And now this God, the God, “commandeth all men every where to repent” and follow his risen Son, the embodied Logos.¹

In this essay I discuss another site of city walks, of moving bodies through space, in order to explore the relation of rhetoric to narrative. More specifically, I describe walking rhetorics and narratives of embodied intensities as I travel back and forth between hermeneutic theory and interpretive practice, between generalizing about narrative rhetoric and doing readings of particular examples of such. Once again I am trying to illustrate something I call rhetorical hermeneutics: the use of rhetoric...
to practice theory by doing history. In this case, I use some emploted rhetoric to practice a bit of narrative theory (with Paul Ricoeur and Kenneth Burke) by doing mini-histories of embodied experiences of American travelers in Rome during the mid-nineteenth century.2

Following Ricoeur, I am thinking about narrative as the configuration of the temporal dimension of lived experience and experience as the temporality of living configured as narrative. Ricoeur writes, “Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence” (52). Narrative enables humans to grasp the nature of temporality, while narrative's inseparable connection to temporality is what makes narrative meaningful.3 I want to illustrate concretely these somewhat abstract claims by using the records of American tourists in Rome to think about narrative rhetoric as embodied movement in space over time. I talk about literal bodies wandering through material circumstances as well as figurative bodies used imaginatively to move thought and feeling into new locations. In so doing, I am not attempting to replace Ricoeur's hermeneutic focus on temporality but merely adding to it an emphasis on the spatial dimension of narrative.

For many Americans visiting Rome in the nineteenth century, the city became an imaginative landscape for thoughtful feeling about art, religion, and politics. Often such rhetorical imaginings developed through the narrative placement of real and fictive bodies into Rome's urban space and its historical time. For example, in his 1857 journal Herman Melville describes standing in the Coliseum and “repeopling” it with sculptures from the Vatican to bring stories of ancient gladiatorial spectacle to present life (111). He and other American visitors also repeopled the cityspace with specific historical persons (Caesar, Cicero, Paul) as a way of relating classical and Christian Rome to contemporary US culture.

On February 26, 1857, Melville writes of walking from the Roman Coliseum to the Capitoline gallery. There he gazes at the statue of the Dying Gladiator and notes that it "shows . . . humanity existed [then] amid the barbarousness of the Roman time, as it [does] now among Christian barbarousness" (Journal 106). Almost exactly one year later, Melville's friend Nathaniel Hawthorne was also greatly moved by this famous statue, though his response seems more aesthetic than ethico-cultural: “I was not in a very fit state to see it, for that most miserable sense of satiety—the mind's repletion when too much rich or delicate food has been forced upon it—had got possession of me. . . . Still, I had life enough left to admire this statue, and was more impressed by it than by anything of marble that I ever saw. I do not believe that so much pathos is wrought into any other block of stone” (23 February 1858, Notebooks 102). Here Hawthorne describes his reaction in distinctly corporeal terms, his somewhat numbed human body being enlivened by the marble one.

Moving in and around the city, Melville and Hawthorne frequently experienced such intense somatic thinking and affects, recording their movements through figures of corporeal images, comparisons, and associations. Melville narrates walking along the Appian Way and seeing a “tomb with olive leaves on it,” which inspires his parodic allusion to Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 15:42, replacing the Apostle's affirma-
tion of the body’s eventual resurrection (“sown in corruption . . . raised in incorrup-
tion”) with his own resigned “sown in corruption, raised in olives” (11 March 1857, 
Journal 111). The monuments along the Appian Way left an equally strong impression 
on Hawthorne, and the emotions evoked led to similar ironic thoughts about living 
and dying, in his case emphasizing the contrast between the solid permanence of 
memorial stone and the relative fragility of human life. Hawthorne writes that “these 
old Roman tombs” with “their immense height and mass, their solidity, defying time 
and the elements” had “not availed to keep so much as the name of an individual or 
a family from utter oblivion” (3 March 1858, Notebooks 117–18). Reusing the experi-
ence in his novel The Marble Faun, Hawthorne calls these entombed the “unknown 
dead” whose ambition for “everlasting remembrance” went for naught. Instead of 
such monolithic burial places, their bodies could just as well have been laid to rest 
under a “little green hillock, in a graveyard, without a headstone.” Hawthorne takes a 
certain perverse pleasure in the fact that these egotistical efforts to build such massive 
tombs “have turned out so utterly abortive” (Marble Faun 1203).4

In Melville’s 1857 journal, on the same day as his Appian Way tomb description, 
the Apostle Paul makes another appearance, this time in the name of a church along 
the Ostia road. Viewing St. Paul Outside-the-Walls inspires Melville’s brief medita-
tion on the contrast between bodily sickness and “magnificent” architecture: “Malaria 
among the gilding. Building against Nature.” The next day Melville revisited the Coli-
seum and the journal notes his imaginative repeopling of it, later elaborating: “Coli-
seum, great green hollow—restore it repeople it with all statues in Vatican/Dying and 
Fighting Gladiators” and then commenting “Restoring ruins—/ . . . More imagination 
wanted at Rome than at home to appreciate the place” (Journals 111, 158; emphasis 
original).

At home, in his November lecture on “Statues in Rome,” Melville does indeed 
use his vividly affective imagination to embody his lived experience of the place.5 He 
speaks of standing in the Coliseum and emphasizes the imaginative reconstruction 
that was, then and now, in Rome and at home, constitutive of the embodied inten-
sity of being in a place and of thinking within that affective being: “But the imagina-
tion must rebuild it as it was of old; it must be repeopled with the terrific games of 
the gladiators, with the frantic leaps and dismal howls of the wild, bounding beasts, 
with the shrieks and cries of the excited spectators. Unless this is done, how can we 
appreciate the Gladiator?” Melville comments on the imaginative work required of 
the spectator, explaining that the artist’s feeling must be matched by the visitor in 
viewing: “And so, restoring the shattered arches and terraces, I repeople them with 
all the statues from the Vatican, and in the turfy glen of the arena below I placed the 
Fighting Gladiator from the Louvre, confronting him with the dying one from the 
Capitol. And as in fancy I heard the ruffian huzzas for the first rebounded from the 
pitiless hiss for the last, I felt that more than one in that host I had evoked shared not 
its passions, and looked not coldly on the dying gladiator (“Statues” 404–405). Here 
Melville transforms his earlier journal references to Roman and Christian barbarity 
into a Christian compliment to the Roman sculptor: “None but a gentle heart could 
have conceived the idea of the Dying Gladiator, and he was Christian in all but name”
Thus, Melville makes good on his earlier introductory comment remarking on the human similarities between pagan Romans and modern Christians: “If we image the life that is in the statues and look at their more humane aspects, we shall not find that the old Roman, stern and hard-hearted as we generally imagine him, was entirely destitute of tenderness and compassion, for though the ancients were ignorant of the principles of Christianity there were in them the germs of its spirit” (404).8

Many other American visitors to Rome had experiences not unlike Melville’s, examples of acting, moving, and being that I’d like to conceptualize as one protracted lived experience of rhetorical-hermeneutic embodiment—from the time of walking through Rome to the moment of lecturing or writing at home.7 That is, rather than seeing Melville’s lecture or another tourist’s travel writings as simply the report of an experience in the past, I suggest reading the later speaking and writing as more the temporary end point of one extended rhetorical experience of imaginative interpretation, stretching from a walk in Rome to standing at an American lectern or sitting at a writing desk. Melville’s lecture is helpful in emphasizing this rhetorical-hermeneutic dimension from the beginning to the end of his experience in and then after Rome. Besides commenting on the challenge of imaginatively recreating the statues in words for his later audiences, Melville also notes the initiating rhetorical power of the statues themselves, remarking on the way that the Romans’ pleasure in “these beautiful figures” affectively “persuades us” of our common humanity with these ancients (404).

It is with similar embodied thinking—a combination of self-conscious recollection, intense bodily emotion, and traditional book learning about historical figures—that other visitors experienced Italy throughout the nineteenth century, especially the evocative classical and Christian sites of Rome. These embodied intensities of rhetorical experience did not just involve general feelings and thoughts of universal humanity. They also addressed more topical issues related to art, religion, and politics of the day.8

Another American tourist in Rome was the Unitarian minister Orville Dewey, a lifelong friend of Melville’s in-laws, who presided at the baptism of his children and at his father-in-law’s funeral.9 Long before Dewey’s support for the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act made him a target for political condemnation by Emerson and Frederick Douglass, Dewey as a liberal divine visited Italy in 1833 and wrote of his strong identification with Cicero as representative of republican virtue, wise learning, and perfect eloquence.10 Dewey says, “When in my early youth I studied Cicero’s de Oratore, I thought I was to put myself under the teaching of a mere rhetorician; that he would tell me how to stretch out my hand and how to tone my voice, and things of that sort. But I soon found that the noble old Roman was demanding that the orator should learn everything—know everything—be everything; that, according to his idea, the whole rounded circuit of human perfection, came within the orator’s walk” (“Identity of All Art” 329). Though Dewey’s obvious point is that Cicero’s importance transcends the persuasive tricks of delivery, bodily arts of gesture and voice, he sums up the larger compass of the rhetorician’s art, its combination of eloquence and learning, the “whole rounded circuit of human perfection,” in the metaphor of the “orator’s walk,” the moving of one’s body across space. And this metaphor is literalized when Dewey himself steps over the ground where Cicero stepped. In the Vatican Mu-
seum Dewey came upon an exhibit of the mosaic floor from Cicero’s Tusculan villa: “Though it is railed in, I was resolved to walk across it, and so I did; and doing so, was much more sure that I had trodden on the very spot on which Cicero had stood, than I shall be, if I visit the ruins of Tusculum” (The Old World and the New 106).

Throughout the nineteenth century, classical Rome was thought differently by different tourists at different times, for example, in the lived experience of the relation between pagan and Catholic Rome. Dewey sometimes imagined all Christians in stark contrast to the ancient Romans, as when he visited the Coliseum and watched “a company of friars . . . going around in solemn procession from altar to altar, and performing religious service, on the very spot where their elder brethren by thousands had poured out their blood; the mighty walls seemed to frown at the triumph of the despised and persecuted religion. But whether they frown or not, it is certain that all the remains of antiquity, whether religious or heroic, are made to bear marks of the ascendency of the new religion” (84). At other times Dewey saw the classical Roman republican and the Protestant Christian not in opposition but in alliance against a common enemy: in discussing Roman Catholicism as a system, Dewey described it as “the childhood of Christianity” while Protestantism he considered “to be its manhood.” And though Dewey admitted that this manhood had its “own peculiar exposures,” he advocated “freedom in religious affairs” just as he did “freedom in civil affairs,” asserting quite simply that “the republicanism of Christianity is Protestantism” (166). At still other times Dewey actually experienced a sympathetic attraction to Roman Catholicism: “I confess that I seldom enter these [Catholic] churches [in Rome] without an impulse to go and kneel at some of the altars. . . . My own feeling is . . . that if it were not for the faith, I should like many of the forms very well” (150). While some of Dewey’s fellow American tourists shared his mixed feelings and contradictory thoughts, others experienced in undiluted form an attraction to the city’s ancient heritage and a rejection of its contemporary version.11

Visiting Rome later in the century, Frederick Douglass noted that he “was much more interested in the Rome of the past than in the Rome of the present; . . . in the preaching of Paul eighteen hundred years ago than in the preaching of the priests and popes of to-day.” Douglass felt deeply while “walking on the same Appian Way where [Paul] walked, when, having appealed to Caesar, he was bravely on the way to this same Rome to meet his fate.” This moving bodily identification meant much more to Douglass than the various body parts and relics reportedly found under the dome of St. Peter’s—“the head of St. Luke in a casket, a piece of the true cross, a lock of the Virgin Mary’s hair, and the leg-bone of Lazarus”—as he sarcastically comments on the “wonderful things in that line palmed off on a credulous and superstitious people.” Indexing his own racial embodiment, Douglass continues in the same ironic vein: “I had some curiosity in seeing devout people going up to the black statue of St. Peter—I was glad to find him black; I have no prejudice against his color—and kissing the old fellow’s big toe, one side of which has been nearly worn away by these devout and tender salutes” (Life and Times 1003–1004).

In his diary, Douglass noted the Roman ruins through which he walked—“the landing place of Paul, the tomb of Virgil, the house of Cicero”—but focused on what interested him most: “the fact that I was looking upon the country seen eighteen hun-
dred years ago by the prisoner apostle on his way to Rome to answer for his religion. It somehow gave me a more vivid impression of the heroism of the man as I looked upon the grand ruins of the religion against which Paul dared to preach.” Douglass’s “vivid” Roman experience was of a piece with his memories of Athens, where at the Acropolis he “heard read Paul’s famous address to the Athenians” and “tried to imagine the state of mind incited.” In Rome Douglass also intensely imagined the contemporary parallels to Paul’s movements in the ancient city: “These heathen Temples represent a religion as sincerely believed in as men now believe in the Christian religion, and Paul was an infidel to this heathen religion as much as [the atheist] Robert Ingersol is now to the Christian religion.”12 Like others before him, Douglass tells a tale of corporeal movement through an urban space experienced as a concentrated fusion of perceptions, thoughts, emotions, and spirituality.13

SO FAR in this essay I’ve been describing these American visitors as embodied intensities walking through Rome, who then continue their experiences by writing or speaking in narrative form, sometimes imaginatively repeopling the city with religious and secular figures of the ancient past so as to live, move, and have their being with them in the immediate present. I now want to explore a bit further the relation between narrative rhetoric and embodied experience by turning to the literary theory of Kenneth Burke and relating it to the embodied intensities of the Hawthorne novel of Rome from which I have already quoted, *The Marble Faun*. I will then conclude by using Hawthorne’s passing reference to a Roman Catholic religious order to make a final point about narratives of embodied intensities within the very different genre of spiritual exercises.14

In his 1931 book, *Counter-Statement*, Burke resisted the growing separation of formalist and materialist approaches to literature by presenting a rhetorical theory of form that shifted attention from an author’s text to the audience’s psychology.15 Burke famously argues that narrative form is the psychology of the audience: “form is the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite.” He explains that “if, in a work of art, the poet says something, let us say, about a meeting, writes in such a way that we desire to observe that meeting, and then, if he places that meeting before us—that is form. While obviously, that is also the psychology of the audience, since it involves desires and their appeasements” (31). Reader-response criticism of a later generation mostly ignored Burke’s 1930s work, while it also expanded the range of readerly experiences described, including, for example, the intended frustration of desire as well as its fulfillment.16 But more relevant to my purpose is Burke’s own description and further development of his theory of form as the audience’s psychology, especially two of his points about formal excellence as eloquence and formal rhythm’s alliance with bodily processes.

Burke distinguishes between two kinds of audience psychology: the psychology of information and his preferred psychology of form. In art the psychology of information has as its primary “methods of maintaining interest” the emotions of surprise and suspense in discovering plot facts; but the psychology of form’s most natural method is “formal excellence,” what Burke calls “eloquence” (37). In the psychology of information, “suspense is the concern over the possible outcome of some specific
detail of plot rather than for general qualities” of eloquence: “Will A marry B or C?” is suspense. Whereas “in Macbeth, the turn from the murder scene to the porter scene is a much less literal channel of development. Here the presence of one quality calls forth the demand for another, rather than one tangible incident of plot awaking an interest in some other possible tangible incident of plot” (38–39). Burke seems to be contrasting plot information to something like a narrative dynamics of mood: “if an author managed over a certain number of his pages to produce a feeling of sultliness, or oppression, in the reader, this would unconsciously awaken in the reader the desire for a cold, fresh northwind—and thus some aspect of a northwind would be effective if called forth by some aspect of stuffiness” (39). For Burke, this eloquence, a kind of formal excellence in the narrative sequencing of moods, is “simply the end of art, and is thus its essence” (41). Intensity of eloquence determines the quality of a particular artwork. Burke notes that “intensity in art” is sometimes due to the formal arrangement within the work and sometimes to symbolic associations outside it (163): “That work would be most eloquent in which each line had some image or statement relying strongly upon our experience outside the work of art, and in which each image or statement had a pronounced formal saliency” (165).

Burke goes on to develop his theory of form by linking narrative rhythms with those of the body. Literally, he claims that “the appeal of form as exemplified in rhythm enjoys a special advantage in that rhythm is more closely allied with ‘bodily’ processes,” not only “inhalation and exhalation” but also the “alternation of the feet in walking.” That is, “the rhythm of a page, in setting up a corresponding rhythm in the body, creates marked degrees of expectancy, or acquiescence. A rhythm is a promise which the poet makes to the reader—and in proportion as the reader comes to rely upon this promise, he falls into a state of general surrender which makes him more likely to accept without resistance the rest of the poet's material” (140–41). In such a way, the reader's body can literally become “a generator of belief” (105). Figuratively, too, Burke associates formal rhythm with bodily movement, as he describes how “the varied rhythms of prose also have their ‘motor’ analogies”: “A reader sensitive to prose rhythms is like a man hurrying through a crowd; at one time he must halt, at another time he can leap forward; he darts perilously between saunterers; he guards himself in turning sharp corners” (141). Literally and figuratively, then, Burke works out a theory of form that imbricates reading and bodily movement. He sums up: “We mean that in all rhythmic experiences one’s ‘muscular imagination’ is touched” (141).

A brief return to Hawthorne’s novel of Rome will allow me to gather together the various points I have made about narratives of bodily movement. The Marble Faun is a narrative of embodied intensities as they are represented moving through the Roman cityscape by a narrator who creates an eloquence of traveling moods. It is a romance of “muscular imagination” that again and again repeats the stories of bodies wandering moodily through the streets of Rome. In Michel de Certeau’s terms, Hawthorne’s novel is constructed as a narrative of “pedestrian movements,” multiple examples of walking within Roman scenes constituted as “a space of enunciation” (Practice 97–98). These “walking rhetorics” (100) function as speech acts that signify against the background of a cityscape grammar (a network of streets functioning as a physical set of constraining “rules” for movement) but also an urban pragmatics (a layered context of imaginative resources to experience).
This Roman background pragmatics is not just the material possibilities of the city street map that get actualized by a particular body moving through town going this way instead of that way. Rather, a Roman city-pragmatics also refers to the overlay of artistic, historical, and political associations activated in the lived experience of any walker. In *The Marble Faun* we find chapter after chapter given titles referring to different city pathways—“A Stroll on the Pincian [Hill],” “A Moonlight Ramble,” “Scenes by the Way,” “A Walk on the Campagna”—and filled with descriptions of embodied personalities walking, treading, staggering, directing their steps, “wandering without a purpose,” "strolling about the pleasant precincts,” “carried away by the turbulent stream of wayfarers,” “walking heedfully amid the defilement of earthly ways,” “kneeling from shrine to Cross, and from Cross to shrine,” “straying together through the streets of Rome,” and on and on and on. A priestly body is thrown from a Roman precipice, and this murder motivates the further movement of bodies around, into, and out of the city. Two central characters, Miriam and Donatello, after their shared crime, “trode through the streets of Rome, as if they, too, were among the majestic and guilty shadows, that, from ages long gone by, have haunted the blood-stained city” (999). The Roman scene of ancient history—paths where “Caesar may have trod” (1176)—not only enables the walking rhetorics of characters as they move through the city, walking rhetorics that signify as speech acts themselves and are the space of enunciation for characters’ speeches and dialogues; but also the material cityscape itself is represented as speaking: as one character puts it, “There are sermons in stones . . . and especially in the stones of Rome” (979).

This narrative of embodied intensities moving through the Roman city nicely illustrates Burke’s contrast between a psychology of information and his preferred psychology of eloquence. Hawthorne was interested in the latter and was irritated when he had to add an epilogue because his first readers wanted to know what happened to the main characters, wanted to have plot information rather than simply appreciating the narrative experience of “mood” (a term Hawthorne explicitly uses repeatedly throughout his story). As many critics have noted, Hawthorne, in his preface, emphasizes his choice of Italy as the scene of his romance because its shadows, antiquity, mystery, “picturesque and gloomy wrong” afford just the desired “sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon” as they would in his native America with its “broad and simple daylight” of “common-place prosperity”: “Romance and poetry, like ivy, lichens, and wall-flowers, need Ruin to make them grow” (854–55). In his added postscript, Hawthorne “reluctantly” responds to his first readers’ “demand for further elucidations respecting the mysteries of the story.” He does so reluctantly, he says, “because the necessity makes him sensible that he can have succeeded but imperfectly, at best, in throwing about this Romance the kind of atmosphere essential to the effect at which he aimed” (1239). He had hoped that his readers would have been content with his psychology of eloquence, a formal excellence of alternating moods, instead of asking for the facts required by a psychology of information.

There’s another turn of mood in Hawthorne’s narrative conveyed through another movement of bodies around Rome. One of the novel’s central characters is the painter Hilda, an American expatriate, who witnesses the aforementioned murder and wrestles with what to do with the knowledge: “One afternoon, as Hilda entered
Saint Peter’s, in a sombre mood, its interior beamed upon her with all the effect of a new creation. It seemed an embodiment of whatever the imagination could conceive, or the heart desire, as a magnificent, comprehensive, majestic symbol of religious faith.” This child of the Puritans moves about the Roman Catholic church, feeling and thinking its intense attractions: “Must not the Faith, that built this matchless edifice, and warmed, illuminated, and overflowed from it, include whatever can satisfy human aspirations, at the loftiest, or minister to human necessity at the sorest! If Religion had a material home, was it not here!” Looking upon Guido’s painting of the Archangel Michael “treading on the prostrate fiend,” the defeated Satan, Hilda felt . . . that the artist had done a great thing, not merely for the Church of Rome, but for the cause of Good. The moral of the picture (the immortal youth and loveliness of Virtue, and its irresistible might against ugly Evil) appealed as much to Puritans as Catholics.” Dropping to her knees before the enshrined painting, Hilda “laid her forehead on the marble steps before the altar, and sobbed out a prayer; . . . she hardly knew for what, save only a vague longing, that thus the burden of her spirit might be lightened a little.” Rising, somewhat relieved, she had “a presentiment, or what she fancied such, whispered her, that, before she had finished the circuit of the Cathedral, relief would come” (1143–45).

Earlier the narrator comments that “Had the Jesuits known the situation of this troubled heart, her inheritance of New England puritanism would hardly have protected the poor girl from the pious strategy of those good Fathers. Knowing, as they do, how to work each proper engine, it would have been ultimately impossible for Hilda to resist the attractions of a faith, which so marvellously adapts itself to every human need.” Indeed, Hilda’s visit to St. Peter’s was part of a “dangerous errand . . . to observe how closely and comfortingly the Popish faith applied itself to all human occasions” (1138–39). The Jesuits were famous or infamous for this rhetorical accommodationism of meeting the recipients of their ministries where they were, at whatever stage of religious or intellectual or cultural development, whether during Jesuit sermons in churches, Jesuit teaching in classrooms, or Jesuit missionary work in foreign lands.18 Such adjustments to the needs and capacities of individuals were the hallmark too of Jesuits directing spiritual exercises and administering the sacrament of confession. It was in the space of the confessional that Hilda finally found relief for her conscience even as she remained true to her Puritan faith. But it was also this confession that led to the speculation about the reason for her later sudden disappearance from Rome: “The incident of the confessional—if known, as probably it was, to the eager propagandists who prowl about for souls, as cats to catch a mouse—would surely inspire the most confident expectations of bringing her over to the faith. With so pious an end in view, would Jesuitical morality be shocked at the thought of kidnapping the mortal body, for the sake of the immortal spirit that might otherwise be lost forever?” (1201).

Nineteenth-century Jesuits not only appeared in the writings of other Roman travelers and novelists but also in polemical books by Catholic apologists and Protestant conspiracy theorists; and Jesuits also moved through the streets of Rome itself, as their Founder did four centuries before them.19 Ignatius of Loyola completed the last revisions of his Spiritual Exercises in Rome around 1540 and spent many years there establishing the Society of Jesus.20 During that time he crisscrossed the city giv-
ing the exercises and sometimes recording his experiences of walking. On February 19, 1544, after contemplating at Mass the “processions” of the “Divine Persons”—Father generating the Son and their love generating the Holy Spirit—Ignatius moved through Roman streets interpreting their contents through Trinitarian lenses and writing in his Spiritual Diary, “[W]hen I was walking in the city with great interior joy and when I saw three rational creatures, or three animals, or three other things, and so forth, I saw them as images reminding me of the Holy Trinity” (Ignatius 246). Nineteenth-century retreatants would read and experience similar moving narratives of embodied intensities in responding to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, which early on Loyola describes in this way: “[J]ust as taking a walk, traveling on foot, and running are physical exercises, so is the name of spiritual exercises given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul . . . in seeking and finding God's will in the ordering of our life” (Ignatius 121).

Among the practices promoted in the Exercises, the one most relevant here is called “composition of place.” In this contemplative practice retreatants are instructed to imagine, sometimes through appeals to all five senses, a New Testament narrative into which they will place themselves as participants. Called to remember the story of the Nativity or the Crucifixion, the retreatant is told to “see in imagination the road from Nazareth to Bethlehem” traveled by Mary and Joseph or to consider the movements of Christ around Jerusalem during his last days (Ignatius 150, 167–70). The retreatants should envision themselves as actors in such narrative scenes. In the Nativity story, for example, Ignatius encourages each retreatant to think, “I will make myself a poor, little, and unworthy slave, gazing at [the Holy Family], contemplating them, and serving them in their needs, just as if I were there, with all possible respect and reverence. Then I will reflect upon myself to draw some profit” (150). The profit one draws, the self-lessons one learns, constitute a stage in the retreatant’s journey toward choosing a vocation. The spiritual exercises are like “the garden built for a walker coming from somewhere else” and going toward another desired place, one of self-refashioning, a “giving way to the desire that comes . . . from the Other” (Certeau, “Space of Desire” 96).

The Spiritual Exercises’ direct appeal to narrative imagination combines with a material situating of the retreatant’s body in a receptive position—kneeling, standing, sitting—in order to shape the retreatant’s faithful self in preparation for vocational election. In this way, as Michel Foucault observed in his late lectures, spiritual exercises function as technologies of the self, constituting subjects as believing actors, the body, as Burke says, becoming “a generator of belief.” Or, in the words of Foucault’s teacher, Louis Althusser, the exercises as embodied practices of desire ideologically interpellate subjects within the apparatus of the church. Althusser’s evocative description of the process returns me to the speech with which I began, Paul’s narrative of his walk through Athens. Althusser talks of ideologies as actions inserted into practices governed by rituals inscribed within an ideological state apparatus such as the Roman Catholic Church. He then sums up: “As St. Paul admirably put it, it is in the ‘Logos,’ meaning in ideology, that we ‘live, move, and have our being’” (171). The narrative rhetoric of such moving has been my focus throughout this essay about embodied experience as narrative and narrative as embodied experience.
Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Embodied Intensities

Endnotes


2. For more on rhetorical hermeneutics, see Mailloux, *Reception Histories* and *Disciplinary Identities*.

3. I thank Jim Phelan for this formulation and for other helpful suggestions. I am also grateful for comments I received on earlier versions of this essay from participants at meetings of the Melville Society, the International Society for the Study of Narrative, and the English Department Faculty Colloquium at Loyola Marymount University.

4. Cf. the more positive experience of the Appian Way recorded by Hawthorne’s wife, Sophia Peabody Hawthorne: “What legions have stepped on these very identical stones, with their worn traces, in which I plant my own foot? . . . Horace and all the poets—the superb Zenobia, in her fallen estate, yet in eastern pomp, came this way to her regal villas. What way in all the earth is so rich in memories as this?—and I actually step upon it, without any doubt” (250).

5. Since there appears to be no extant authorial manuscript or published version of Melville’s lecture, I rely upon the Northwestern-Newberry editors’ reconstruction of Melville’s text based on detailed contemporary newspaper reports—see notes on “Statues in Rome” in *The Piazza Tales* 723. On Melville’s relation to Italian culture, see Berthold, *American Risorgimento*; on Melville and the visual arts, see Sten, *Savage Eye*.

6. Hawthorne also noted the imaginative investment required of any appreciative viewer of art: “Like all other works of the highest excellence, however, it makes great demands upon the spectator; he must make a generous gift of his sympathies to the sculptor, and help out his skill with all his heart, or else he will see little more than a skilfully wrought surface. It suggests far more than it shows” (Notebooks 102; also see Fernie, *Hawthorne, Sculpture, and the Question of American Art*). But a larger point might also be made of Melville’s and Hawthorne’s comments: imaginative investments are always part of the embodied intensities that constitute the lived experiences of place and their later interpretations. This same imagination in and of place is required while reading or performing various discursive genres, from novels and travel narratives to tourist guidebooks and spiritual exercises.


9. Parker, *Herman Melville* 469–70, 549. For attacks on Dewey’s 1850s politics, see Emerson, *Journals* 351 (Dewey was the husband of Emerson’s cousin); and Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” 380.

10. Though Athens was eventually to overshadow Rome in the US political imaginary during the nineteenth century, Cicero remained a significant figure with which Americans could think and experience their ethical and political lives at home and abroad—see Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*; Rosner, “Reflections on Cicero in Nineteenth-Century England and America.”

11. For the larger literary-cultural context of anti-Catholicism, see Franchot, *Roads to Rome*; and Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*.

12. Douglass, “Diary,” entries for 2 February and 19 March 1887 (frames 24 and 35). I have discussed these passages in another rhetorical context in “Re-Marking Slave Bodies” 111–13; see also Levine, “Road to Africa.”

14. For other uses of the term *embodied intensities* not unrelated to my own, see Snow, "Performing All Over the Place" 246; Nanopolitics Group, "Nanopolitics"; and cf. notions of bodies as affective intensities in motion (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 260).

15. For a thick cultural description of the rhetorical context in which Burke wrote his first critical book, see Selzer, *Kenneth Burke in Greenwich Village*; also see Hawhee's *Moving Bodies* for a suggestive rhetorical history of Burke's preoccupation with bodies and language.

16. For later reader-oriented theory, see Tompkins, *Reader-Response Criticism*; Mailloux, *Interpretive Conventions*; Rabinowitz, *Before Reading* and "Other Reader-Oriented Theories."


21. For other approaches to the narrative rhetoric of the *Spiritual Exercises*, see Barthes, "Loyola"; Boyle, *Loyola's Acts*; and Conrod, *Loyola's Greater Narrative."


**Works Cited**


