

The Affirmative Fallacy
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When something is affirmed to deny something else ("What a pleasant day," for example, as one's refusal to get into a conversation), a relatively quick transition occurs by which one feeling or idea displaces another to which it serves as its opposite. Freud's denial displacement is accordingly brought into play that produced repression by reversing one's meaning. However, this seldom involves any overt assertion of denial, but depends on emphasizing the contrary to what one is unwilling to admit. More often than not this necessitates a compensatory insistence that the substitute meaning had been one's original intention, for example by insisting that the weather really does matter. As a result, the denial of denial occurs, reinforced by the presumably sincere affirmation that one's thinking has been totally positive. T.S. Eliot's assertion in the words of Prufrock's temptress, "That is not it at all; that is not what I meant at all," accordingly takes on universal significance in its affirmative version: "I just thought we were going to talk," "You're like a brother to me," etc.. Random examples may readily be produced to illustrate the prevalence of this avoidance strategy:

<p>We don't want Lucy to come Clarence is a total idiot This is not an acceptable option You are growing old, my dear</p>	<p>We're limiting the party to six. I admire the way Clarence sticks to his guns. There are essentially two choices here [not three]. You're so beautiful in your golden years. etc.</p>
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Everybody resorts to the Affirmative Fallacy almost on a daily basis. Dishonesty is involved, but it's usually at the level of the white lie, and can be taken in stride. However, it becomes potentially dangerous at times, for example in White House briefings, press conferences, interviews, and newspaper editorials.

In orthodox Hegelian and Marxist dialectics, a different version of the double negative occurs that should be recognized as such. For example, in chapter 13 of *Anti-Dühring*, Frederick Engels uses this concept to show how materialism was rejected by metaphysics, which in turn has been rejected by a more sophisticated version of materialism. This makes sense as a linear and overlapping sequence from ancient materialism to metaphysics and finally modern science. Its first stage extended from Thales to Lucretius, its second stage from Plato to Hegel, and its third and presumably final stage from Bacon to Russell, Wittgenstein, and Popper. On a smaller scale the sequence can be detected from Locke to Berkeley to Hume, or, for that matter, from Russell to Wittgenstein to Popper. Other versions of this dialectic may easily be adduced, even for the most trivial uncertainty in making a choice between options, one of which supplants another, but only to be rejected because of new considerations. Typically, what happens in the operation of this dialectic, as explained by Engels is that each of the two successive stages "sublates" its predecessor by both overcoming and preserving its content. Also important to recognize is that the sequence can extend beyond three stages, potentially becoming endless as a sequence of rejections (Parmenides reacted against Heraclitus, the Sophists against Parmenides, Plato against the

Sophists, Aristotle against Plato, etc.).

In contrast, the double negative proposed here relevant to the Affirmative Fallacy need not involve sublation, and its second and culminating act of denial is terminal--a sort of negative enabling clause that seals and delivers the credibility of the first act of denial in positive terms. Moreover, Freud's concept of "negation" seems relevant in culminating the denial displacement also proposed by Freud. In contrast to denial, negation is limited to the insistence that something said or implied had not been intended, again as illustrated by Eliot's line in "Prufrock." Often, however, the two evasive strategies may be combined when negation is brought into play in order to insist that denial had not been intended ("Believe me, I'm not suggesting you are fat," etc.). Once rendered in positive terms, the terminal enabling clause exemplifies the Affirmative Fallacy, and almost inevitably with an exaggerated flourish. ("It was a wonderful evening," "truly a superb performance," etc.). This seemingly intricate rhetorical strategy bears universal application as an almost habitual feature of human behavior beginning quite early in life. "Think positive," says the worried grandfather, and, lo, the very possibility of unacceptable considerations is denied to keep everything as optimistic as possible. All of us resort to this strategy now and again, and some depend on it on a daily basis. It holds a lot of marriages together and keeps workers on the job. In fact, it is probably the most useful instrument of social cohesion in the history of civilization.

The Affirmative Fallacy can take place in many ways, but its most obvious use in literature occurs whenever plot organizes the rejection of unpleasantness that might bother the reader, for example evil, indecisiveness, confusion, and mediocrity, by imposing an exaggerated sense of accomplishment through the agency of closure--in other words the happy ending. As Aristotle explained regarding tragedy, at least, effective plot somehow imposes reversal (e.g., an imaginary enactment of denial), and, though Aristotle did not discuss the matter, the intense satisfaction felt when reversal completes itself (*catharsis*) manifests the Affirmative Fallacy to the extent that it can be accepted as the truth. In all cases, literary and otherwise, discomfort initiates the desire for preferable alternatives, and after a period of uncertainty--perhaps a moment, perhaps the length of a story, perhaps a good deal longer--this substitution takes place well enough to produce profound gratification. Almost as if by magic unpleasant matters dissolve, replaced by a sense of joy and redemption.

Unavoidably, to ignore what happens as this substitution takes place requires a certain amount of effort. Energy must be committed to guarantee oversight, as evidenced by willful ignorance that imposes itself while the exclusionary effort to deny obstructs the consciousness that this is happening. For, as E. H. Gombrich has explained in *Art and Illusion*, "though we may be intellectually aware of the fact that any given experience must be an illusion, we cannot, strictly speaking, watch ourselves having an illusion."¹ [(italics in the original)] As a result, we must compound illusion with the illusion that we are not experiencing an illusion. In the same vein, we cannot exercise denial while observing ourselves in the act of doing this. As a result we must deny that we're exercising denial exactly when we are. Charles S. Peirce has observed virtually the same dynamics in the shift from doubt to belief:

However the doubt may originate, it stimulates the mind to an activity which may be slight or energetic, calm or turbulent. Images pass rapidly through consciousness, one incessantly melting into another, until at last, when all is over--

it may be in a fraction of a second, in an hour, or after long years--we find ourselves decided as to how we should act under such circumstances as those which occasioned our hesitation. In other words, we have attained belief.²

If belief consists of the suspension of disbelief, denial is involved, but with the caveat that the believer remains unaware of having engaged in this legerdemain. In his novel 1984, George Orwell somewhat complicates the explanation with his description of "doublethink" as an internalization of totalitarian political orthodoxy: "And if it is necessary to rearrange one's memories or to tamper with written records, then it is necessary to forget that one has done so."³ The trick, Orwell says, is--

to use conscious deception while retaining the firmness of purpose that goes with complete honesty. To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies--all this is indispensably necessary.

Reduced to its simplest dynamics, any reversal in thinking must go unobserved while it occurs--either when imposing a direct opposite or some kind of a substitute that might not bear any obvious connection with the experience denied. The rational act of comparison, "This rather than that" is diminished, if not altogether obliterated, by "This (what I want to see) instead of that (what I choose to ignore)." As in the case of metaphor defined by I. A. Richards, a process of signification actually takes place whereby a clear and eidetically satisfactory experience (the vehicle) supplants another, less pleasant experience that might be relatively shapeless and hard to define (the tenor in its fullest implications). The principal difference with Richards' concept of metaphor is that this initial experience is denied and thereby "designified" by its respectable alternative. Signification occurs in the sense that this experience triggers the imposition of a recognizable substitute (whatever one chooses to affirm), but the result, paradoxically, is the erasure of this rejected experience without any concession to its possible value as an alternative. As explained by Peirce, belief designifies doubt; as explained by Gombrich, literary illusion designifies the ongoing recognition that illusion is taking place; as explained by Orwell, politically "correct" thinking designifies one's knowledge of events and relationships that defy orthodox explanation. In all these instances the Affirmative Fallacy is at work.

As I already explain elsewhere ("The Dialectics of Paranoid Form," a heavy dependence on designification characterizes the paranoid syndrome. As explained by Freud and Swanson, paranoid decompensation heavily depends on a transition from self-doubt to compensatory self-vindication. There is advancement from denial to the discovery of compensatory alternatives, but with the normal and relatively harmless purpose of imposing a more appropriate explanation of what is happening. Alternative goals are found in a different area of concern and with apparently different objectives in mind. But if this pattern of reversal is to occur, it too must go unrecognized, i.e., disguised to seem unintended or not to have taken place. This is the only way the denial displacement can function in letting us avoid our problems by exaggerating a positive outlook.

The use of this doubled negative, as maintained by C.S. Peirce, is often sufficiently effective to be described as belief, for without at least a trace of denial an idea is probably not important enough to be described as a belief. "Yes, I believe it is going to rain," is more accurately rendered, "Yes, I expect it is going to rain." When we resort to denial, on the other hand, we actually have a stake in the act of rejection, and sometimes to a considerable extent. One does not bother to deny trivial untruths, but whatever "truths" we consider important, for example belief in God or the virtues of patriotic rectitude, are sufficient for denial to occur relevant to opposite possibilities. Similarly, if to a lesser extent, to "suspend disbelief" regarding a poem or story, as suggested by Coleridge--obliges an additional commitment of psychic energy to energize this compound negative on a temporary basis. More often than not, our resulting enthusiasm tantamount to belief is nothing more than a particularly aggressive utilization of denial. This heightened effort in the service of omission is typical of all belief systems, whether of the popular variety (religion, patriotism, free enterprise, etc.) or of variants more acceptable to the intellectual community. Scientists who automatically put faith in the high probability of evolution and the "big bang" similarly deny alternatives dependent on fundamentalist arguments, in their case because they do not want to waste their time bogged down with what they consider to be false reasoning. As a result, their act of denial may be considered appropriate relative to their knowledge, but this does not diminish its effectiveness as denial. In all instances, disbelief as the suspension of belief (described as *epoche* by ancient skeptics) is itself suspended, and the commitment to make this happen is exaggerated to the level needed to rest satisfied with the choice to do so.

1.

The programmatic effort to avoid recognizing the occurrence of denial is intrinsic both to literary form and the retrospective effort of readers and critics to explain their satisfaction with particular texts. Critics seem especially vulnerable to the tendency, since they devote themselves to the gathering of evidence supportive of the text's conscious intentions, usually with emphasis on themes and prototypes relevant to its final outcome. Unwilling to acknowledge its negative appeal for both authors and their readers, critics grope for the necessary rationalizations to endow its shared evasiveness with interpretive respectability. Their success in imposing this particular version of the Affirmative Fallacy also depends on their skill in ignoring their own motives while making the necessary substitutions. "Why is this text redeeming?" they ask themselves, and the "good" reasons they find are usually restricted to its positive benefits at the expense of repressed feelings. Excluded from consideration are the problems denied despite the likelihood that their denial is usually the most important of these benefits, since they can be both conceded (at least granted a moment of consideration) and rejected at the same time. In effect critics confer upon authors the freedom to bring their feelings under control so they too can share in the task of doing so, but from a more protected vantage. When authors get bogged down on their private battlefields, critics help protect them with supportive volleys from the comparative safety of received high exegetical battlements. For their status and identities are no less at stake, and they are eager to be of help. The more affirmative the value of literary inspiration, the more important the role of critics as official guardians of literary insight that compels, yet defies, explanation--call it genius, inspiration, or whatever one pleases.

As perhaps to be expected, critics usually focus their effort on interpreting texts that pose the greatest threat to their sense of propriety. They seek out fiction at the brink of confessional

extravagance, attracted by the challenge of making its disrespectability respectable, its awkward embarrassment something to be proud of. Here the Affirmative Fallacy plays an essential role, since there is little satisfaction in praising a straightforward conventional novel for its freedom from unacceptability (for example something by Howells or Trollope), so this exercise in the obvious is bypassed for interpreting other novels and poems whose expressiveness tests the limits of decency. Critics are accordingly attracted to the most vulnerable authors and the most problematic of their works in order to submit their felt disorientation to conventional literary analysis.⁴ But what do these critics try to do? Nothing less than to prove that these texts are just as innocent, just as conventional, just as devoid of threat as the stories and poems that can be safely neglected. The bigger the problem, the more skill needed to neutralize its negative appeal. The text's affirmative meaning is exaggerated on whatever grounds seem reasonable, so its tension between embarrassing metaphoric leakage and narrative closure may be reduced to principles supportive of its overt theme and closure dynamics. Countervailing suggestiveness is all but eliminated from consideration, and the work's profundity becomes very ordinary indeed, like beach pebbles that lose their shininess once they have been removed from the surf. A few critics have avoided this tendency, but most have surrendered to it, and with good reason. As a result, evasiveness by means of literary convention is even safer and more comfortable in criticism than in the fiction it describes.

Once a literary text's political subversiveness has been neutralized by history (for example with Zola and Steinbeck's novels), and once its technical subversiveness has been absorbed and justified by literary convention (for example with Joyce's fiction and Pound and e.e. cumming's poetry), the single most important remaining danger consists of its denied unconscious implications. And it is exactly here that critics labor in the service of affirmative denial. The straightforward and relatively normal poetry of Bryant and Longfellow can be passed over, for example, in favor of Blake's hallucinations, Wordsworth's escapist flight to nature from his earlier Jacobin radicalism, and Keats' effort to transcend his fear of death by extolling the permanence of aesthetic form. Similarly, Trollope's novels can be neglected in favor of the neurotic extravagance of Dickens and the Bronte sisters, as can Bennett and Galsworthy's novels in favor of those by Hardy, James, and Conrad, all of whom brought heightened emotional disturbance into the context of literary form. Not surprisingly, the most disorienting creativity in the realm of literature is to be found in Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, yet Shakespearean criticism almost invariably features conventional standards of assessment based on the assumption that his vagrant expressiveness was typically Elizabethan--which it was not, as can be confirmed by reading the plays of his contemporaries. Almost completely ignored have been the bizarre connotations of his metaphors and image clusters as well as his androgynous characterization implied by the extravagant metaleptic sensuousness of his poetry. The homosexuality of his sonnets is ignored as much as possible, and the irrepressible bawdiness of his comedies is politely dismissed as a sop to Elizabethan audiences. His provocative use of transvestitism is disregarded in "As You Like It," as are the double entendres expressive of sex nausea that steal into his tragedies. And of course the skepticism and suicidal obsession in *Hamlet* is harmlessly rendered as thematic profundity befitting the Elizabethan theater at the turn of the seventeenth century. Academic "responsibility" among the teachers and professors of Shakespeare usually consists of their skill in dispensing with such presumably irrelevant matters as quickly as possible and then spending their semesters bowdlerizing interpretive possibilities with the necessary assortment of theoretical distractions for conveying his mysterious and ineluctable appeal.

We have all attended classes taught on this basis, and raw data is easy to come by to demonstrate this preference by academicians for normalizing the abnormal. In the 1985 MLA Bibliography, for example, Shakespeare receives an overwhelming 525 entries, few or none of which betray much concern with Shakespeare's psycho-sexual extravagance. Meanwhile, Dickens receives 87 entries, Conrad 83, James 79, Wordsworth 53, Blake 42, and Keats 34. In contrast, the excellent but "normal" author Trollope receives 7, Longfellow, Disraeli and Galsworthy 2 apiece, and Arnold Bennett 1, while Holmes, Whittier, Landor, and Scott receive no entries whatsoever. In the 1985-86 Books in Print, 87 entries are listed for Edgar Allen Poe, and only 23 for Howells; 87 entries are also listed for D. H. Lawrence, and only 11 for H. G. Wells. Of course differences in creative talent help to explain some of these discrepancies, but the appeal of literature's felt emotional instability also seems to play a major role. As a rule, the more precariously a text brings disorientation into view, the bigger its audience and the more strenuous the effort of critics to confirm its "normal" genius.

Critics themselves have made a virtue of the many avoidances besetting their trade by inventing a number of literary fallacies, but they have failed to recognize how and why these fallacies obscure the full implications of the texts they explicate. Each of their fallacies has been singly invoked to expose critical excesses, but too often the remedy has been to go to the other extreme, again exemplifying the double negative (*Negationsnegierung*)--for example with an excessive concern with biography supplanted by no biography at all, with excessive formal analysis by no formal analysis at all, etc. Fallacies these might be, but their programmatic rejection becomes a "fallacy-fallacy," as proposed by Stanley Fish, whenever one mode of exclusionary analysis is rejected in favor of exactly its opposite.⁵ In both instances useful substitutes are brought into play typical of the Affirmative Fallacy. The Intentional Fallacy, for instance, as explained by Wimsatt, puts undue emphasis on the authors' motivation, while its fallacy-fallacy reverses field by emphasizing textual integrity to prohibit its motivation from being taken into account.⁶ Similarly, the Affective Fallacy, as explained by Wimsatt and Beardsley, emphasizes attention our personal feelings, while its opposite altogether prohibits these from being taken into account, again to protect textual integrity from contamination.⁷ In its affirmative mode both of these fallacies exaggerate the need for an appreciation exclusively focused on the formal adequacy of the text. Similarly, the Fallacy of Imitative Form, as explained by Yvor Winters, exaggerates the importance of mimetic accuracy, while its fallacy-fallacy altogether rejects the value of mimetic resemblances except as the vehicle of poetic form.⁸ In all instances negative compulsion initiates the dynamics of evasiveness, whereupon each of the fallacies provides an affirmative aim elsewhere. And in every instance taken to an extreme, what truly matters is almost inevitably what has been excluded from consideration.

The Affective Fallacy becomes obvious with the exploration of extraneous personal associations in the reader's mind irrelevant to the text itself. Fiction's potentially embarrassing implications are denied by the reader's emphasis on extraneous personal considerations that are both gratifying and harmlessly meaningful. Paradoxically, readers are encouraged to explore the full range of experience suggested by fiction except relevant to their specific needs--perhaps too embarrassing to be acknowledged--which would be satisfied by its successful realization. While reading *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, individuals might admit to being charmed by the precision of Elizabeth Bennet's diction or bothered by Darcy's aristocratic pride as a blemish on

his appeal as the countryside's (perhaps England's) most eligible bachelor. These are issues that admittedly enhance the story's interpretation. However, they serve as nothing more than distractions unless tied in with the reader's collaborative eagerness for Elizabeth to succeed in life through the agency of romance. This unrealistic "payoff" dominates our expectations as we read, but there is discomfort in too closely examining its appeal--so we don't. A wide assortment of personal considerations is emphasized to crowd from consciousness the primitive subjective dynamics of wish fulfillment that disclose our vulnerability. Who can admit out loud, "I really truly want to see the hero win," or "I really truly want to see the two fall in love," or "I really truly want to see the victim vindicated"? Such cannot be acknowledged, so credible interpretive distractions become important in order to rationalize our raw intentions. On the other hand, the stringent avoidance of one's feelings becomes itself a fallacy-fallacy if and when it bans from interpretation the text's affective appeal. To completely ignore what a text does for readers shifts formal explication to other kinds of busy-work, all of which are equally irrelevant to the felt dynamics of literary form.

The Intentional Fallacy proposed by Wimsatt and Beardsley similarly complements and gives aim to the Affirmative Fallacy by emphasizing the author's motivation as the key to interpreting his fiction. In this case it turns out that the author's life situation is stressed rather than his use of literary form to organize his choice of needs and feelings on a shared basis with his readers. The emotional demands he incorporates into his plot are disregarded in favor of biographical information loosely associated with these demands. Yet the avoidance of the Intentional Fallacy becomes just as evasive if the author's specific aim in telling his story, however unclear it might be in his mind, is totally disregarded.

Also stemming from the Affirmative Fallacy is Yvor Winters's Fallacy of Imitative Form, the excessive use of lifelike accuracy regardless of how boring or irrelevant it becomes to the story being told. This time evasiveness occurs through the pursuit of reportorial authenticity: "Not that I am afraid of indulging in purely fictive experience; rather, I want to capture the total experience of the *demi-monde* [with Zola's *Nana*) or of a murderer right up to the moment of his execution (with novels by Dreiser, Capote, and Mailer)." Exaggerated mimetic thoroughness thus buries fiction's narrative organization of experience with a plethora of irrelevant detail. Yet the avoidance of the Fallacy of Imitative Form can be equally fallacious if non-representational virtues are sought for their own sake, for example by emphasizing avant-garde dislocations that totally thwart conventional literary expectation. When anti-mimetic aesthetic freedom becomes unbearably tedious, a dose of mimesis is probably needed, if without going to the opposite extreme represented by the Fallacy of Imitative Form.

A. C. Bradley's Formalist Heresy likewise describes the undue emphasis upon formal considerations--rhyme and rhythm, stanza pattern, imagery, irony, and so on.⁹ Here denial is sublimated in the harmless study of contextual intricacy peripheral to the shared denial strategy which gives a text its appeal. Yet the use of form to organize the reader's response to the text cannot be ignored. Also evasive is Bradley's Paraphrastic Heresy, the dependence on paraphrase and plot outline to grasp a poem's fullest meaning.¹⁰ This simplification of the text usually neutralizes fiction's complex challenge by glossing over its dangerous connotations in favor of a harmless conventional meaning. Yet it is the text's narrative organization that affords its overt appeal, and this is almost always paraphrasable. To deny this appeal once again imposes a

fallacy-fallacy that culminates in the Affirmative Fallacy. Many other literary fallacies have been suggested, including Wimsatt's Pictorial Fallacy, Poe's Didactic Heresy, Arnold's Historic and Personal Fallacies, Allen Tate's Fallacies of Communication and Mere Denotation, and I. A. Richards' Fallacy of Vulgar Packaging. For each of them denial initiates the creative or critical behavior that can be described as fallacious, followed by an affirmative commitment to something presumably better, too often a diversionary aim equally prone to excess.¹¹ All such fallacies may accordingly be rejected in favor of their fallacy-fallacies, but with a comparable negative displacement that can become just as much a problem

Sometimes the Affirmative Fallacy surfaces as a simple and undiluted realization of the denial displacement. With primitive reversal dynamics, for example, it tells the story of an inexperienced soldier who proves he is not a coward (e.g. in *The Red Badge of Courage*), of a father who fails in his effort to prove to himself that he can help his son (e.g. in *Death of a Salesman*), etc. Moreover, just as denial becomes obvious when it leads to an awkward mixture of new displacements, the Affirmative Fallacy becomes obvious when it initiates the pursuit of contradictory virtues--for example beauty and uncompromising mimetic accuracy, or intellectual freedom and profound devotion to a religious or political orthodoxy (including both communism and anti-communism). The purpose of the Affirmative Fallacy should likewise be evident when one fallacy abruptly shifts to another, for example when the Fallacy of Imitative Form is reinforced by a timely use of the Didactic Heresy to wrap things up (e.g. in escapist fiction), or when the Intentional Fallacy is buttressed by the Paraphrastic Fallacy (e.g. in the simplistic use of story to dramatize its author's personal experience). When these superficial uses of evasiveness converge and disperse--begin with one, then convert into others--the fundamental role of the Affirmative Fallacy once again becomes plain, for it remains intrinsic to evasiveness, whatever course it follows. Too often, in fact, these fallacies become interchangeable in channeling affirmative purposefulness into harmless exegetical alternatives. Each culminates and gives focus to the dynamics of avoidance, but their shared impetus begins with denial, and its attainment culminates in the Affirmative Fallacy.

2.

Most schools of literary criticism necessarily feature assumptions based on avoidances dependent on the Affirmative Fallacy. They all emphasize one or more literary virtues, for example emotional growth, social responsibility, improved sensibility, and heightened aesthetic awareness. However, they exclude from consideration the psychological dynamics by which these literary virtues (and virtues they are) are rooted in denial and unrecognized evasiveness. Each approach accordingly glosses over the negative value of literary form by emphasizing its unique range of positive benefits. In all instances, a positive vision of literary achievement is emphasized, but with implicit aversions and hostilities that must be grasped to be understood in its fullest complexity. To illustrate this pattern of oversight, six of these critical perspectives may be examined--respectively the vulgar and sophisticated versions of the Marxist, psychoanalytic, and formalist schools of criticism. Response theory may be included as a sophisticated psychoanalytic approach, and deviationism, deconstructionism, and new historicism can also be assessed as relatively sophisticated formalist approaches.

The "vulgar" Marxist mode. Now discredited except among unreconstructed activists, the vulgar Marxist insistence on the propagandistic value of literature was once effectively promulgated by Sartre in France, by Christopher Caudwell in England, and by Michael Gold and Granville Hicks in the United States. Most of the critics listed in Lee Baxandall's impressive bibliography Marxism and Aesthetics would fit the description as vulgar Marxists, since they emphasize fiction's political "message" supportive of revolutionary change.¹² Literary responsibility is presumably to promote change, in the case of Marxist criticism by exposing the self-destructive contradictions of capitalism and encouraging the pursuit of an improved future under proletarian leadership. Unfortunately, this objective has little relevance to the novels and poems we actually read. In fact, our most revered "classics" usually cling to the status quo, sacrificing revolutionary commitment for the more compelling need for vicarious self-justification here and now, in the world we know. If history makes its inexorable passage into the future, these classics too often resist its impetus, providing an oasis of immediate pleasure during the few hours it takes to read and digest them. For some readers certain illusions might heighten our anger against the status quo, as Sartre, the Zhdanovites (or "Stalinists"), and others have maintained, but for most they encourage political apathy. When readers devour novels and poems, their success in making the unreal come true in this fashion diminishes their interest in imposing social change. They can avoid taking action because the texts they enjoy have taken it for them. By losing themselves in fiction, they actually take inaction, having been afforded full gratification from the dry-run fictive praxis offered by literary form. As argued by I. A. Richards, fiction's "incipient action" which excludes or postpones praxis is its primary benefit to readers.¹³ This is how fiction lets us cope with fears and anxieties we cannot otherwise deal with--for example, our fear of death, our doubts about our competence, our sense that we lack any final meaning in life, and our respective sexual difficulties (Oedipal, androgynous, adulterous, etc.) In each instance literary experience features an enactment of personal adjustment that actually discourages political commitment meriting personal sacrifice. Feeling well becomes more important than making concrete changes, and the arena of conflict shifts to internal consciousness as opposed to political activism.

Of course the pursuit of radical goals may be advocated as one particular mode of personal adjustment, but this seldom happens in fiction, where success is primarily limited to marriage, self-discovery, and moral vindication. How many novels deemphasize these personal achievements in favor of working to gain political victory? Very few. However, fiction's programmatic evasiveness of politics is ignored by Marxists who insist upon harmony between literary form and revolutionary dedication. In their judgment both fiction and social change are desirable, so they necessarily reinforce each other--good fiction presumably ushering in revolution, which in turn presumably gives rise to good fiction. Unfortunately, this is just not the case, and to pretend otherwise illustrates the Affirmative Fallacy.

The forgotten renaissance of American fiction during the late fifties and early sixties effectively illustrates this basic incompatibility between creativity and revolutionary activism. Spurred on by social disillusionment, heightened alienation, and, for some of them, the opportunity for the first time to use sexual explicitness in expressing their sense of malaise, such authors as Barth, Bellow, Brautigan, Burroughs, Heller, Kerouac, Kesey, Mailer, Malamud, Nabokov, Pynchon, Roth, Selby, Updike, and Vonnegut all of these (listed alphabetically) rose to the challenge in a flurry of literary activity that has not been matched since. A similar surge in

creativity occurred in poetry, including such figures as Berryman, Bly, Creeley, Ginsberg, Plath, Sexton, Snodgrass, Snyder, Stafford, and Wright. Poets already published, for example Ammons, Ashbery, Dickey, Duncan, Ferlinghetti, Kinnell, Levertov, Levine, Lowell, Merrill, O'Hara, Olson, and Rich, also seemed to renew themselves on a greater level of expressive achievement, whether through or a growing sense of shared malaise across the nation or the more localized influence of the San Francisco renaissance. In the fifteen years between 1953, when Saul Bellow's The Adventures of Augie March was published, and 1969, when John Barth's Giles Goat-Boy and Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49 were published, there was an amazing resurgence of American literature that helped to mediate the transition from bourgeois quietism of the early Eisenhower years to the equally non-literary activism brought into vogue at the time of the protest movement. For it was the protest movement itself, as much as anything, that brought this literary renaissance to a close. Once protesters took to the streets, the first-person convention of heroes pitted against the power structure and bourgeois morality quickly gave way to the anti-war indignation of Ramparts, The Minority of One, The I.F. Stone Weekly, The National Guardian, and The New York Review of Books, such underground newspapers as The Village Voice and The Berkeley Barb, such bizarre liberationist magazines as The Realist and Avant Garde, and dozens of other anti-establishment publications now almost totally forgotten. It turns out that literary expression had provided a temporary version of adjustment that helped to mediate the transition between two antithetical plateaus, the bourgeois decadence described by Erich Fromm during the Eisenhower decade, followed by the increasingly militant radicalism encouraged by Paul Marcuse during the mid-to-late sixties. Both these intellectual hierophants were incidentally of the Frankfurt School, and both rejected the alienation of American civilization, but with different styles (Fromm lucid, Marcuse not) and with entirely different solutions in mind. Poetry and fiction, on the other hand, teetered in suspension between these polar opposites. They lacked ideological certitude. However, by reveling in their admittedly alienated values, poets and authors had done more than their share in mediating change by their tentative exploration of possibilities, and this was quite enough as far as relatively sophisticated Marxist critics such as Georg Lukacs and Lucien Goldmann were concerned. For literature did in fact have a major transitional role to play, and, for some at least, with a level of excellence that guaranteed their permanent value. This generation of poets and authors accordingly thrived as oddball non-conformists, neither as defenders nor attackers of any particular faith. Their partially examined individualism could be featured as opposed to both the middle-class standards of the fifties and the counter-cultural activism of the late sixties. Their anti-heroes and personae stood alone without a plan, and with no clear idea of the forces they were up against. All they knew was that their integrity gave them a voice and plenty of excitement as they moved from one abortive encounter to the next.

Similar patterns of fictive restlessness can be discovered in earlier periods of social transition, including the transcendental inspiration preceding the Civil War, the spiritual need emphasized by Tolstoy and his contemporaries preceding the Russian Revolution, and the exaggeration of aristocratic values by Shakespeare and his contemporaries preceding the Seventeenth Century Puritan revolution. All three of these literary renaissances lost their momentum when literary denial was followed by turmoil and civil conflict leading toward a new kind of orthodoxy, just as the mood of the sixties almost inexorably degenerated into trends leading to the Reagan eighties. The Gilded Age supplanted the early transcendentalism of Emerson, Hawthorne, and their disciples; Leninism (then Stalinism) supplanted the ethical vision of Tolstoy

and his contemporaries; and the Puritan Commonwealth followed by Whig politics supplanted the Renaissance humanism of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Each of the preliminary periods of upheaval, supposedly at a high plateau in expressive genius, actually played a transitional role by having both anticipated and resisted subsequent developments. As to be expected, the outcome it helped to bring into effect ended its persuasiveness except as art devoid of social context. Georg Lukács, Lucien Goldmann, and “Vulgar” Marxists such as Granville Hicks could appreciate this transitional role, but others could not. They wanted artists, like Brecht and Celine (the latter as a Nazi) to be more involved in politics, and they waxed enthusiastic over authors who met their expectations while denigrating the adequacy of others who took a different and less obviously political approach.

The "sophisticated" Marxist mode. Best articulated by Lukács, Goldmann, and a variety of critics identified with the Frankfurt school, this more sophisticated vision of literary history redressed the imbalance described above in the aesthetic demands imposed by vulgar Marxist. The sophisticated Marxists gladly include in the canon of valid literary expressiveness any work of fiction that partakes of social contradictions without necessarily exposing them or advocating revolutionary change.¹⁴ An accurate documentation of historic circumstances is emphasized, and the premature advocacy of revolutionary commitment is discouraged because it diminished fiction's accuracy as documentation. This is why Lukács preferred Balzac over Zola as a reporter of social distortions caused by economic dislocation. Nevertheless, the Affirmative Fallacy once again takes place if accuracy is emphasized at the expense of escapist value in helping to obscure--in effect to *undescribe*--the stressful conditions that dominate our lives. In real life a text appeals to us not because it documents social contradictions, but because its narrative machinery lets us cope with these contradictions by forgetting ourselves and seeing our problems in a relatively harmless light. Authors emphasize fantasy at the expense of descriptive accuracy in order to make their stories come to life. If descriptive accuracy helps, they gladly put it to work; where it doesn't, they willingly dispense with it. They prize verisimilitude only because it gives credence to fantasy content, thereby subordinating historic validity to the more compelling dynamics of wish fulfillment rooted in denial. This motivation must be granted its primary role before fiction's symptomatic value can be adequately assessed, and Marxist literary criticism usually falls short of the challenge. Of course reportorial accuracy in the depiction of gestures, clothing, speech habits, and non-specific attitudes of characters can be sought. However, this accuracy is only important to the extent that it reinforces fiction's escapist appeal and may be almost entirely neglected without diminishing the cathartic benefit of romance, historical romance, science fiction, horror stories, and jungle adventures.

Obviously illustrating the predominance of escapism at the expense of accuracy was Hollywood's use of extravagant theatrical glitter during the Great Depression in order to capitalize upon the emotional needs of the American public without necessarily subjecting to exposure the social crisis that produced these needs. For the purpose of explaining the depression, treatises on economics and sociology would have been more appropriate, but of course the public did not go to movies to educate themselves about the depression. Their purpose was to feel better about themselves, and this usually meant utilizing Hollywood's limited variety of escapist formulas. They could find enjoyment, for example, by immersing themselves in Busby Berkeley's choreography of wealth and happiness, or in the success story of somebody who starts out poor but makes it to the top through earnestness and hard work. Other such formulas included the discovery

of slumming aristocrats that impoverished eccentrics can be admired too, and the discovery that the real enemy was greed and that all the "real" people could work together to bring about victory. Conflict of the latter category typified socialist realism, but it also cropped up in the most exploitive westerns, Robin Hood thrillers, and pirate adventures, all of which dramatically evoked this pseudo-revolutionary appeal as well. Errol Flynn's swashbuckling victories, as directed by Michael Curtiz (who was also responsible for "Angels with Dirty Faces," "Casablanca," and "Mission to Moscow"), offered a sense of engagement just as compelling as Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*--and just as irrelevant to the palliative successes of Roosevelt's New Deal preceding the economic mobilization of World War II. The vision of John Dos Passos, James T. Farrell, and Jack Conroy was perhaps more accurate than adventure movies in documenting economic and political trends which culminated in an international conflagration which cost tens of millions of lives, but their fiction did not express the mood of the thirties more accurately than the lavish productions of Goldwyn, Selznick, and Louis B. Mayer, the Thorne Smith novels, or the countless formulaic *Colliers* and *Saturday Evening Post* love stories. All was myth, and its cathartic benefits did not depend upon accurate socio-economic diagnosis.

It is also important to understand that when particular myths ceased to interest the public, new myths were found to replace them. The prompt abandonment of the depression's inventory of success stories, for example, was inevitable once our nation entered World War II. New myths were needed, new wish-fulfillment strategies to deal with new problems. Literature could spin out its fantasies before, during, and after this transition, but in the late forties (as opposed to its role in the late fifties), it did not--could not--document how this basic transition took place. Where are the novels that expose American social problems while its power structure, led by Harry Truman, and indeed by our entire culture stumbled upon Cold War ideology as an effective means of thwarting communist expansion abroad while sustaining economic prosperity at home? Not more than a handful of novels may be cited, including Lionel Trilling's *The Middle of the Journey* and Norman Mailer's *Barbary Shore*. In effect, an entirely new variety of lies, distortions, and rewritten history swiftly gained currency in foreign news coverage. Why were these for the most part ignored in fiction? The obvious answer is that fiction primarily addresses itself to personal need, and that its myths are useful only to the extent they do so on a personal basis. Otherwise, they tend to bore or confuse readers. Social documentation may be connected with this subjective purposefulness, but only if affirmative conventions can be addressed to the denial of individual deficiency. Factual information (or misinformation) about the economic circumstances that produce this sense of deficiency is interesting but optional. Does history or economics help to carry the story? If it does, it may be included; if not, it can and ought to be eliminated. This principle applies to Balzac, Zola, Shakespeare, and every other author. Reportorial accuracy might seem important, but primarily to give credibility to plot development in fulfilling the pleasure principle. When any relatively sophisticated Marxist aesthetics ignores this negative purposefulness, it, too, capitulates to the Affirmative Fallacy.

3.

The "vulgar" psychoanalytic mode. At its reductionist extreme psychoanalytic criticism descends to symbol mongering, the pursuit of categories typical of the Freudian, Jungian, and Eriksonian interpretations--phallus and womb, animus and anima, and the standard litany of

regressive fixations from oral to Oedipal. For all of these psychological typologies, the same fundamental assumption holds true, that every text somehow expresses an almost inexhaustible fund of repressed feelings. Fiction is supposedly worthwhile to the extent that it serves this function, and our pleasure as readers supposedly results from letting them appeal to us without necessarily understanding how or why. The role of critics is said to bring fiction's unconscious appeal to the reader's attention on a systematic basis. A crude theory of mimesis can thus be promoted based on the conscious re-creation of themes, images, and symbols supposedly rooted in our unconscious. Representational accuracy shifts from external to internal "truth" based on the assumption that cathartic relief comes from exposing unconscious need to the light of critical inquiry.. Obviously, my own criticism often verges on excess in this particular category, but with one important difference--that I emphasize the pursuit of gratification rather than self-discovery. Introspective insight is certainly important, I am willing to admit, but it plays a secondary role to literary satisfaction, less essential than the sense of pleasure one obtains upon completing an enjoyable work of fiction. The Affirmative Fallacy thus comes into play in criticism whenever relatively abstruse identity issues obscure our primary purpose while reading--to gain a sense of fulfillment by immersing ourselves in an imaginary world in which improvements are possible. True, we are more likely to identify with literary figures whose resemblance with ourselves justifies identification, but it is also important that their difference from ourselves also rewards our identification, for example in their centrality, their assertiveness, and their ability and willingness to get the job done, whatever that might consist of. They succeed; we don't except through our vicarious pleasure in their success. To this extent, at least, avid readers of fiction may be compared to sports fans as once described with laconic disdain by the San Francisco columnist Charles McCabe--losers in search of winners. Symbols and fixations may be useful, but only to the extent that they help us to immerse ourselves in stories that help us to disclaim our inadequacies--our felt impotence, isolation, and sense of meaninglessness. Once this kind of denial becomes a possibility in a particular text, the entire battery of psychoanalytic displacements can be brought into play to give focus to its achievement.

Unfortunately, the psychological fixations featured by Norman Holland in The Dynamics of Literary Response must also be consigned to a subordinate role.¹⁵ Form, for example, is not imposed to defend us from orality, as maintained by Norman Holland. On the contrary, form structures and organizes orality to protect us from adult anxieties. As a regressive defense mechanism (and this is what regression provides), the oral fixation utilizes infantile helplessness to cope with a mature sense of inadequacy. In fact, once deployed by literary form, orality becomes an amazingly useful vehicle of literary expression to deny a host of non-oral anxieties. These anxieties, not orality itself, encourage our immersion in literary experience, while orality organized by form helps to dispose of them--for a while at least. All the rest of the regressive defenses--anality, phallic assertiveness, and Oedipal role modeling--must also be judged in relation to the fears and anxieties against which they are deployed. To emphasize their appeal free of the defensive service they perform necessarily illustrates the Affirmative Fallacy in criticism itself. Holland would of course be glad to concede this difference, but the confusion of these fixations as defenses with their use as gratification in and of itself can too easily happen. This is a mistake. In the simplest possible terms, fixations organized by form provide defenses against the reader's anxiety comparable to their use not organized by form in controlling anxieties in real life.

Response Theory--the "sophisticated" psychoanalytic mode. The convergence of affective criticism and speech act theory has opened up a variety of exciting issues whose investigation is to be wholeheartedly encouraged. Nevertheless, the notion of a reader's "identity theme," as proposed by Norman Holland in *Poems in Persons*, apparently justifies the investigation of the match-up that takes place between the writer and readers' characteristic styles. Once again the Affirmative Fallacy is in evidence, this time because criticism emphasizes how readers seek to confirm their sense of identity in the context of literary pattern. Mimesis is brought to a new level of sophistication with an internalized and necessarily more attenuated set of resemblances, now between the readers' personal traits and those in the text with which they may identify. However, as before, it is important to recognize that these resemblances are featured at the expense of differences brought into play by fiction to suggest an improvement upon real life. Overlooked by response theoretician is the interplay between literary resemblances and differences--that the former are needed to let readers project themselves into fiction, but that differences comprise the active ingredient of fiction, the reason why readers turn to it with any regularity in their lives. At this level, paradoxically, the single most important resemblance or cluster of resemblances in the experience of fiction consists of the mode and style of authors and readers in their pursuit of differences. Only by stressing how our defenses as readers are reinforced in this fashion by comparable defenses at work in a text can we begin to understand fiction's appeal. In his recent book, *Poems in Persons*, Holland himself emphasizes this connection:

Having created his characteristic defensive structures from the work, the reader has warded off anxiety. He can therefore project into it the fantasies that give him pleasure, and he can use his defenses to transform the fantasies into themes that give the work intellectual cohesion and sense.⁸

Here there can be no disagreement, except in the sequence that sets in motion first defensive structures and then the transformation of these structures into fantasies. For the cause-and-effect relationship should be reversed. Pleasure derives from the use of these structures to ward off anxiety preceding their retrospective thematic interpretation. It is the process of reading fiction that redefines and simplifies problems in order to reduce anxiety. Holland limits transformation to the culminating phase in literary experience, but in fact literary experience stretches out the process of transformation in mustering the needed defenses to cope with anxiety. From beginning to end the literary text reinforces the reader's self-respect by its conscious manipulation of fantasy content. As organized by form and theme, the text reduces anxieties through providing an alternative context of experience suitably resolved by a happy ending. As before, a psychological version of mimetic equivalence is featured, but differences are finally what matters, not resemblances. Readers might enjoy recognizing themselves in fiction, but their pleasure derives from an escapist strategy based on self-avoidance--imposing "other" as the essence of "self" in a literary context in which self actually prevails. An initial appreciation of similarities is needed to make this imposition seem appropriate, and with as much honesty as can be mustered in the service of illusion.

One of Holland's most intriguing recent contributions has been a feedback model of literary experience based on William T. Powers' theory of homeostatic behavior.¹⁷ Holland proposes each individual's "identity theme" comprises a complex feedback loop, or hierarchy of loops, dominated by stimulus, perception, and behavior. There is a lower loop or combination of loops

governed by physiology that is in turn dominated by an upper loop, or combination of loops, governed by cortical activity. Central to Powers' model as adopted by Holland is the assumption of ego psychology that higher levels almost inevitably control lower levels, cortical activity taking precedence over somatic activity. The conscious predominates at the expense of the unconscious and higher brain centers at the expense of the lower. One's identity theme derives from the unique interaction among these vertically organized loops for each particular individual. As a general rule, Holland claims, three levels predominate in a hierarchy with obvious Freudian implications: personal identity (as Ego), internalized culture (as Superego), and physiology (as Id). Literary experience engages all three levels in the effort to refine and stabilize the reader's sense of personal identity. The problem with Holland's hypothesis results from his bias in favor of ego psychology. Holland all but eliminates from his analysis the negative dynamics of both homeostasis and the Freudian unconscious. Moreover, his emphasis on the attainment of homeostatic adjustment through a harmonious interaction among overt feedback loops leaves almost no room for negative feedback in producing tension reduction felt as pleasure. According to Holland's model, nothing is denied, so nothing gets excluded to reduce tension levels to a steady state minimum. Holland's concept of homeostasis is for this reason incomplete and falls short of explaining literary gratification. If exclusiveness is left out of his paradigm, his inclusiveness excludes--it's as simple as that. For a dedicated Freudian comfortable with the concept of *Negationsnegierung*, this point seems fundamental.

Negative feedback depends on the message circuit at the root of consciousness that restores homeostatic balance by its reduction of nervous tension. This reduction is rewarded by felt satisfaction if consciousness is included in the loop, as for example, when eating a candy bar, but also when reading fiction. But consciousness does its job in order to produce satisfaction (the somatic reward for a job well done), thus reversing Holland's priorities. That is to say, a suitable use of consciousness brings satisfaction, not the opposite--one does not bask in satisfaction in order to induce consciousness. If any hierarchy is involved, the sequence of Holland's model should accordingly be reversed to explain how physiology at the lowest order bestows pleasure at the highest for disposing of neural tension levels unacceptable to the body itself. As Freud insisted, the Ego is a small but activated zone of conscious sensitivity relative to our bodies (or somata) dominated by the Id. If conscious demands become excessive, literary experience helps by reducing this excess. This is why we read novels--to stop worrying about ourselves by concentrating our attention on gratifying illusions. Our bodies expect and demand relaxation, and our brains respond by engrossing themselves in texts whose false assurances can be believed, thereby relaxing our bodies. The interlinking hierarchy that emerges is finally dominated by these needs, and fiction fulfills them by denying unacceptable feelings--or better yet, by observing their denial in a controlled realm of experience, for example a poem or novel. The literary text experienced by readers might be defined as one of the very highest feedback loops, since it takes control of the entire hierarchy of circuits during the reading experience. However, it receives its energy and final orders from "below," and the changes it brings about, for example by indulging in fantasy, harness cognitive facility to meet somatic ends.

Once psychoanalysis is eliminated from consideration, response theory falls more in line with the epistemology of Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, and their followers. Here, too, speculation can be promising if denial and the negative imperative are incorporated into their formulations, and if the conative (or motivational) dimension of literary experience is not sacrificed to relatively

empty cognitive puzzle-solving. Both Iser and Fish, for example, pay their respects to literary affect, but their emphasis upon conscious meaning tends to diminish affective considerations. Taken to its extreme, this emphasis totally crowds from consideration both conation and primary process thinking. Iser, for example, divides the literary text into determinate (formal) and indeterminate (affective) meanings, with textual indeterminacies providing gaps whose interpretation must be supplied on an individual basis by readers.¹⁸ Iser defines gaps as "negations" which "invoke familiar and determinate elements of knowledge only to cancel them out," but with what is cancelled remaining in view to revise the reader's attitude toward the text. Because of these negated possibilities, Iser claims, "The reader's attention is . . . fixed, not upon what the norms represent, but upon what their representation excludes, and so the aesthetic object--which is the whole spectrum of human nature--begins to arise out of what is adumbrated by the negated possibilities."¹⁹ Here Iser's paradigm is fully in accord with the model of Negative Poetics I am proposing, but without conceding the use of story to impose gaps and without specifying the importance of narrative closure in finally completing this act of exclusion. Unfortunately, he describes narrative homogeneity devoid of closure and thus the organization of a text that finally delivers closure. His model is accordingly limited to a spatialized, anti-linear network of subjectivity-producing "absences" honeycombed by a complementary network of textual "presences." By filling these absences (or gaps), readers supposedly formulate themselves, completing the necessary transaction between the text and their own subjectivity. The spatial constraints of a text thus supposedly stir self-realization by encouraging the reader's active participation in interpreting literary form. Not surprisingly, however, Iser's model also neglects the repressive dynamics at work in a text and restricts indeterminacies to an arbitrary choice among designated zones, or foci, in any particular text. "Here we must be precise," Iser advises, pointing to the text's determinate structure of meaning, "but over here, with 'indeterminate' possibilities, we can acknowledge our individual differences." In other words, we can formulate--or, more appropriately, reformulate--ourselves without fear of embarrassment whenever the text provides intermissions that let us ignore its formal constraints. Once again the Affirmative Fallacy seems at work, a new and more ingenious effort to overlook the subversiveness of literary experience mediated by the text as a whole.

This deficiency is resolved, I think, if Iser's determinacy/indeterminacy dichotomy is merged with the plot/metaphor dichotomy I propose earlier, with form added as an overarching use of structure to provide synthesis. As the agent of denial, plot establishes a "determinate" organization of experience with a no less "determinate" subversiveness felt by both authors and their readers. Some of the dislocations which strike Iser as "indeterminate" might be accidental--in which case they can be ignored--but others express a metaphoric input that resists plot's overt dynamics of closure. The writer's projection of his feelings dislocates structure, and sympathetic readers experience rapport because his structural dislocations let them project their feelings too. When these feelings concede threatening implications (a possibility ignored by Iser), the dialectic very likely intensifies between closure and metaphoric expressiveness. Suddenly gaps combine in a single inclusive void that resists closure except through renewed commitment to determinate structure. With these simple modifications, Iser's theory comes to life. His static and potentially endless plug-in model of literary form becomes a closed dynamic model with exciting possibilities.

In his lively polemic, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser," Stanley Fish turns Iser's theory against itself by describing it as "a piece of literature that satisfies Iser's own criteria for an 'aesthetic object.'" Explains Fish, this is because it is full of gaps and the reader is invited to fill them in his own way."²⁰ Fish makes his case effectively, but his argument can be extended to apply to other approaches as well. My denial/projective model, for example, is similarly vulnerable, and so, too, is Fish's concept of "interpretive communities" based on his classroom analysis of literary texts. What better example of an "interpretive community" can be found, Fish suggests, than a full class of eager explicators?²¹ However, for most readers, who read books in the privacy of their own homes, the literary experience is, if anything, the behavior of an "interpretive non-community," and in at least a few instances an "interpretive anti-community." Granted, all readers belong to a community of one sort or another, but most non-academic readers resort to fiction in the effort to ignore, if not escape, the communities to which they belong. They read to reaffirm themselves, and this subjective quest usually puts them in a temporary pseudo-community established by the text itself. The words they use might be social events, but, unless fiction is read aloud, both the generation and absorption of these words remain private acts. As a result, any evidence pertaining to the private reading habit is usually a better indicator of literary norms than the classroom dialogue emphasized by Professor Fish.²² For both author and reader alike, it is more often than not solitude, paradoxically, that facilitates sharing in fiction's linear momentum toward closure. Even the shared oral experience of poetry probably depends more than recognized on individual judgment rooted in personal consciousness. One might laugh or groan with a crowd of listeners in what seems an obvious group response, but an inner response is also somehow involved, and sometimes with a stark discrepancy between the two versions of experience, one of them shared and the other internally processed while alone.

According to Fish, there is no determinate core of meaning in fiction beyond the structure of assumptions shared by interpretive communities--those groups of individuals whose common beliefs and experiences lead to shared expectations about fiction. Inevitably such groups find what they seek, their interpretation providing a "structure of constraints" which their members can all accept. If evasiveness is at work, it is evasiveness by consensus. If 18 or 18,000 people choose to deny the latent implications of fiction, these latent implications supposedly cease to exist for this particular group, thus providing their negative appeal for this particular group. Fish disposes of the extreme relativism suggested by this principle with the assurance that readers cannot escape their common values and feelings even if they wanted. Since these values and feelings are the product of society, readers will inevitably resonate to them in their judgment of fiction, and in turn fiction will both confirm and refine their understanding in the minds of readers. Fish's qualified relativism seems at least useful, but he minimizes the role of fiction as an agent of group consensus dominated less by common values (primarily a matter of judgment) than by wish fulfillment that also happens to be relevant to the experience of everybody involved. In other words, fiction's true "determinate core" derives from its mode of structuring satisfaction for an interpretive community that often comprises individuals from radically different backgrounds.

There might be a wide variety of feelings among readers to be denied by reading books, but these feelings can be denied by the same books in roughly the same way. The point of departure among readers is necessarily different because of the individual experience they bring to their interpretation of a text, but their felt response to narrative form based on the denial displacement expresses, relatively speaking, a convergence of minds. Community primarily

derives from group expectations of gratification in a text's forward momentum toward acceptable closure. This is very similar, for example, to the excitement of football fans while the ball is taken the length of the field toward a touchdown. Lots of losers have the chance to cheer, as McCabe suggested, and for an identical reason--making a touchdown, as it were--but also with a shared sense of tolerance--indifference, actually--that personal reasons for this shared disposition tend to be more variegated. Everybody can take pleasure in exactly the same results, but the specificity of their motivation can derive from entirely different personal backgrounds. Like sports fans, readers participate in fiction's pseudo-community only so long as they can submerge themselves in the story told. The more effectively this story focusses their attention on matters relevant to its outcome, the bigger its potential audience, and the more likely this audience will experience the same feelings. But readers also have the opportunity withdraw from this arrangement any time they want by prematurely closing the book, just as disappointed sports fans are free to leave the stadium early.

How then does Professor Fish's model exemplify the Affirmative Fallacy? The answer is simple enough: through his neglect of the reader's private feelings rooted in the denial displacement. Rapport among readers is inevitably a temporary sharing that derives from comparable avoidances expressive of more or less comparable needs. What might be described as horizontal agreement among a novel's audience ultimately derives from its vertical pattern of success relevant to the needs of each particular reader. In other words, the sociological relativism of Fish's model certainly seems appropriate to a certain extent, but its emphasis on group dynamics obscures fiction's narrative dynamics relevant to the satisfaction of individual deficiencies. Genuine shared problems (for example poverty caused by the Great Depression, delusional patriotic megalomania caused by wars abroad, etc.) do in fact produce a relatively circumscribed variety of individual responses, whereupon fiction's shared mythology offers shared benefits to address needs produced by these problems. But the crucial segment in this dialectic consists of the text's functional success in helping readers to deny their individual problems, whatever the needs of others. On this admittedly limited basis the individual's response to a text is much more self-indulgent than anybody would admit in the company of others. At this level, when fiction exerts heightened impact, its effect is very predictable--almost as predictable as the somatic dynamics of negative feedback toward homeostasis. When more tears flow in response to an unconscionably melodramatic literary outcome than at the funeral, for example, of one's beloved mother (as I can attest from personal experience), it is obvious that negativity is in full force, as confirmed by the Affirmative Fallacy that rejects any such comparison.

4.

The Vulgar Formalist Mode. Never to be underestimated is the critic's ability to exaggerate formal pattern in literary experience, usually by pointing out repetitions of a binary, tertiary, or quaternary character. These may be found in the sound pattern, in thematic content, in balanced characterization, in contrasting images, and so forth. The more elaborate their integration, the more satisfactory (like fitting pieces in a jigsaw puzzle) but with aesthetic pleasure restricted to the cognitive gratification resulting from the discovery of new and more subtle intrareferential equivalences--additional this's to be compared and contrasted with antipodal that's. Formal integrity accordingly becomes an extravagant example of the Affirmative Fallacy. This kind of formalist reductionism has probably been taken to its extreme in Roman Jakobson's

elaborate binary reconstructions of Shakespeare's Sonnet 129 and Baudelaire's "Les Chats."²³ As to be expected, Jakobson's interpretation reinforces the affirmative content of both works by programmatically ignoring their experiential content, especially their countervailing undercurrent of threatening associations. The most compelling questions about Baudelaire's poetry remain unanswered by Jakobson's otherwise exhaustive exercise in formal analysis. Everywhere in evidence is a more inclusive subversiveness that can be traced to the rest of Baudelaire's poems in *Les Fleurs du mal*. However, this subversiveness is disregarded in favor of an extravagant variety of local and, with all due respect, mostly accidental binarisms. Once again the Affirmative Fallacy emerges, this time resulting from the pursuit of empty correspondences to the neglect of real issues. Jakobson extrapolates pattern from Baudelaire's poetry as if this intricate complexity of relationships, many of them accidental, dominated his intentions. We permit our attention to be diverted, and *voilà*, meaning is free to do as it pleases ignored by criticism. The same outcome results from any formalist approach whose intrareferential complexity obscures fiction's extra-referential value as verbal escapism. Formal equivalences seldom declare a text's basic motivation. Rather, they draw attention to themselves to reinforce a text's overt context of signification at the expense of its rejected implications. At the same time, they open the opportunity for accidental insight (*the lapsus linguae*, or slip of the tongue) whose local impact is absorbed and obscured by the distractive flow of binarisms to consolidate evasiveness by means of aesthetic accomplishment.

Structuralist poetics affords essentially the same escapism. The regressive sequence of antinomies Claude Le'vi-Strauss finds in primitive myth features a dynamic symmetry based on a regressive sequence of contraries displaced to new and more abstract (hence less threatening) levels of contradiction. The presence of this sequence in the Oedipus myth and the more elaborate story of Asdiwal told by the Tsimshian Indians of the Pacific Northwest suggests that its complex narrative organization of mythology served the simple end of escapism via disguise.²⁴ Dangerous contradictions are successively reformulated until the antithetical terms used to describe them become so remote from experience that a harmless resolution becomes possible. The same escapist virtues might have been intended, if with better success, with the elaborate organization of inclusive symmetries found by Cedric Whitman in the narrative construction of Homer's *The Iliad*, apparently inspired by the geometric style of Mycenaean pottery.²⁵ Once again the reader's collaborative eagerness seems obvious, since formal harmony (Nietzsche's Apollonian pole) diverts our attention from threatening alternatives (Nietzsche's antipodal Dionysian alternative) just as it did for our ancient forbears who first stumbled on this escapist strategy. By drawing attention to itself, the text's formal symmetry encourages expressiveness otherwise too threatening to tolerate. Our fascination with pattern lets us vent feelings whose full and direct expression would be offensive if overtly confronted. Hence the relentless violence of Homer's epic is offset and justified by its intricate formal design. To focus on this design without acknowledging its function is to miss the point regarding this remarkable epic of cultural suicide at the origin of western civilization, when mindless slaughter could be ritualized as artistic achievement.

Deviationism--a sophisticated formalist mode. Theories of stylistic deviation invert formalism's emphasis on resemblances by featuring surprise and disorientation instead of realized pattern. Nevertheless, exactly the same purpose is served of affirmative evasiveness. The deviationist approach likewise features cognitive recognition at the expense of literary denial. Deviationists from Victor Shklovsky to Max Eastman, Michael Riffaterre, and Morse Peckham

have restricted feeling and motivation to the relatively simplistic dynamics of surprise. In much the same spirit, Stephen Booth has featured interpretive dislocations in the first scene of Hamlet, and Stanley Fish has found them in Paradise Lost.²⁶ In all instances, textual dislocations (or SDs, short for "stylistic devices") are featured because they draw attention to themselves with enough impact to produce aesthetic value comparable to that of the plastic arts.

As to be expected, deviation theory's emphasis on local effects puts it in the same dilemma as the other "sponge" theories (of density permeated with gaps, enigmas, etc.) that fail to take into account the importance of narrative closure. Deviation becomes a potentially endless literary skill (why not 800 SDs in a poem instead of a mere 350?) with little value except in explaining contrivances that draw attention to themselves at the expense of their context.²⁷ For deviation to be meaningful, I want to argue, it must somehow express the more inclusive denial displacement--any distraction provided by Y to reject the value of X. Deviation becomes important, for example, with irony's contrasting implications, with images which challenge a poem's theme, or with any figurative device whose felt (or unfelt) overdetermination expresses the contradictions at the core of a text. We are asked to believe that these distractions enrich literary experience instead of redirecting our attention without necessarily augmenting it. Moreover, we are asked to investigate stylistic devices in isolation, as if they bear no connection to a text's single most important deviation--its narrative momentum from X to Y as not-X, its closure that denies its initial state of affairs. Herein lies the weakness of orthodox deviation theory, which ignores the dialectic conflict between declared and undeclared intentions, between the asserted and the denied. To obscure this more inclusive deviationist goal by emphasizing a helter-skelter mélange of local disruptions is in itself diversionary, once again a strategy of affirmative evasiveness.

The latest and most complex version of deviationist theory comes under the rubric of deconstructionism, the study of fiction's escape from its central design through a virtually unending labyrinth of tangential distractions. There is supposedly nothing outside a text, since its intersignification extends to all discourse in the history of civilization. As a result, an infinite multiplicity of significations is featured instead of fiction's concentrated machinery to repress a limited number of threatening associations. In effect, endless textuality is pursued to document its victory over the relatively simplistic constraints of literary form. Closure is reduced as much as possible, thus dispensing with its negative dynamics through an incessant motion forward among positive associations, thus epitomizing the Affirmative Fallacy. As explained by Paul de Man, the act of reading affords "an endless process in which truth and falsehood are inextricably combined."²⁸ As to be expected, however, falsehoods are at best told, not enacted, and with an exegetical limitlessness at the expense of the text's two dominant loci of meaning: (a) the consciously intended poem or prose work as a linear organization of experience, and (b) its act of denial in rejecting feelings and anxieties by means of affirmative accomplishment. Unless this focused accomplishment is granted its paramount role, deconstructionism becomes a flagrant display of pedantic ingenuity that generates textual contradictions without much significance to readers. As soon as "and so on" confesses its infinitude, infinitude itself becomes a mode of closure, but of course with almost nothing have been said. For when everything is signified, nothing is signified on a literary basis.

Jacques Derrida, the founder and chief proponent of the deconstructionist movement as it exists today, correctly perceived the artificial limitations that result from trying to impose an

affirmative "center" on literary experience through a finite set of rules, guidelines, and conventions.²⁹ According to Derrida, the effort to trace these constraints to an "origin" reduces fiction to the endless "play" of games according to a limited set of rules which necessarily lies outside its zone of activity, just as the "signified" experience of words necessarily precedes and differs from the spoken words that signify this experience. The displacement from presence to absence, from closure to the free exploration of alternatives, therefore both simplifies and complicates literary expression. More occurs, but less is involved in what really happens by means of narrative organization culminating in denial. Derrida has represented the intertextual dynamics he considers important with a variety of terms: "decentering" as the abandonment of a central organizing principle, "freeplay" as explorations departing from this center, "trace" as the suggestion of an anterior presence (or cause) felt by its absence, "erasure" as the simultaneous presence and absence of signification, "differance" as the dialectic interaction between these two based on deferment, etc. As explained by Derrida, a literary text is at first sight dominated by enclosure, logocentrism, and the longing for a center, but with closer inspection one or more "ruptures" ("catastrophes," or "scandals" in the case of social intercourse) disclose additional levels of signification equally vulnerable to decomposition, upon which explication becomes an expanding pursuit of new and more elusive significations in and among texts. Paradoxically, there is nothing outside the text, but all attempts to stay within it fail, since the open accessibility of signification reveals every text to include our total experience as we know it. The job of criticism is to try to capture and define this paradoxical achievement and the often bewildering maze of relationships it depends upon.

Derrida derives his methodology from an imposing variety of sources, but he is especially indebted to Nietzsche's explanation of our intellectual tradition rooted in lies and self-serving misconstructions. Like Nietzsche, Derrida advocates uncompromising freeplay as the best means of transcending the false consciousness that governs every category, every dualism, every conceptual strategy we utilize. Derrida claims each dichotomy, for example, becomes an act of violence on the part of the preferred term against its opposite, and, like Nietzsche, he rejects this semantic "imperialism" through his arch-nihilist commitment to transcendent intellectual freedom. However, doubling, and thus the Affirmative Fallacy, may likewise be found in Derrida's persistent effort to diminish one sphere of interpretation associated with presence, centering, and logocentrism in favor of another associated with decentering, trace, freeplay, and textuality. These latter terms articulate Derrida's need to escape the constraints imposed by a text's centripetal organization, so once again an interpretive "imperialism" exposes itself in the denial (or negation) of one option in favor of its opposite. As a linear act of denial, the text is denied, but so too, by primary process association (commutation devoid of the negative sign), is the experience denied by the text. Denial is thereby taken to its extreme, for the self-referential integrity of the text itself is violated because it limits (or tries to limit) the necessary freedom of literary criticism in pursuit of additional referentiality. But, alas, this compulsion totally fits the purpose of the Affirmative Fallacy, for to avoid something entirely one must avoid even its avoidance. As with phobias explained by Freud, fiction's denial displacement is thus eliminated from consideration through the generation of new problems elsewhere, permitting a concerted effort to supplant fiction's intra-textual avoidance strategy with a more comprehensive and better disguised inter-textual evasiveness. Derrida's maximally flexible nomenclature explaining this strategy expresses an even more uncompromising commitment to affirmative demands.³⁰ It establishes a new kind of evasiveness whose "center" is so elusive that it can only be defined (or eidetically reduced) by its

rejection of any center imposed by literary form. By denying pattern in favor of explicative liberty, Derrida necessarily imposes his own pattern--coherent in its thematic associations--as his preferred emphasis, in effect his preferred use of evasiveness.

To a certain extent, Derrida's distinction between a centered presence and the "other" as an infinite regression of traces and erasures resembles the negative model I am proposing, since it pits fiction's linear and thematic organization against peripheral truths that tangentially impinge on consciousness. However, Derrida dispenses with literary motivation by emphasizing a text's "failure of intent" without taking into account its very demonstrable success in carrying out the denial displacement. If there are readers who enjoy a text, it succeeds because it engages their imagination, and for them any failure in signification plays a secondary role to the text's more inclusive metonymic designification--its plotted action ($X = \text{not } Y$) that affords its homeostatic appeal. They are more likely than not to be bored and/or offended by Derrida's infinite regression of extraneous significations, which can only disrupt the more compelling virtues of form and literary convention. Basic truths of human consciousness might emerge in the exploration of intertextual subtleties, but readers can only tolerate this range of possibilities if it brings their attention back again to a central meaning friendlier and more generous to their sense of personal worth. In fact, it can be proposed in the spirit of Nietzsche's nihilist "joy" that fiction exceeds the deceptive achievement of philosophy and other modes of discourse because of its pragmatic success in commingling truths and their aesthetic rejection in the context of literary form. Typically, there is a compromise formation between the two, and this may be resolved once literary form organizes truths to converge with the fictions that deny them. Temporary centrifugal freedom may play a role through a multitude of intersignifications, but centripetal demands must ultimately prevail.

Derrida concedes the importance of anxiety in fiction, but he seems unable to recognize its effectiveness in giving focus to those repressed feelings that oblige a countervailing emphasis on centering, enclosure, and other such compensatory affirmative strategies. Here Derrida's theory may be challenged on strictly "economic" grounds. Balanced against the coherence of the text is an undercurrent of rejected experience that is actually clustered and intensified by being ignored. This locus of disavowed subversiveness reified by Freud as the unconscious is also structured into the text, necessitating the use of centering to curtail the total range of textual and intertextual allusions important to the deconstructionist.. As a result, paradoxically, centering occurs at both levels. The tighter a text embraces its acknowledged material, the greater the countervailing importance of the material it denies. These two antipodal zones of activity feed on each other, preventing the infinite expansion of one independent of the other except through the guarantee of ultimate designification imposed by narrative closure, as in the cases of Don Quixote and Tristram Shandy. Like the standoff between cathexis and counterathexis as defined by Freud, they are locked in combat with roughly equal economic commitment. Centering's brute logic eventually prevails over a finer, more attenuated, and thus more pervasive tracework of decentered allusions, since the total expenditure of psychic activity tied in with this tracework cannot exceed the centripetal authority imposed by literary form. The horizon of significations denied by literary form is thus more limited than Derrida recognizes, and these significations are necessarily tied in with anxieties far more threatening than compulsive formlessness. Indeed, formlessness itself serves as a defense once "and so on" is recognized to be endless. To the extent that deconstructionism conceals this dialectic, its remarkable and apparently unlimited ingenuity seems a new and more strenuous commitment to the Affirmative Fallacy.

Also indebted to the principle of decentering, the emergent critical school described as New Historicism (or "cultural poetics," as now described by Stephen Greenblatt, its generally recognized founder) is more subtle in its use of the Affirmative Fallacy. Among those who adhere to its doctrine there is a reluctance to theorize, and Greenblatt himself has gone so far as to insist, "It's no doctrine at all."³¹ Instead, methodology predominates, and, as prescribed by Jerome McGann, its gathering of data has entailed a relatively conservative investigation of relevant published histories and biographies, documentary evidence about the author's motivation, the work's reception among its original audience, and its potential significance for today's reader.³² However, in its use of this data new historicism depends upon theoretical assumptions that may be traced to the usual assortment of post-structuralist sources, including Derrida, Bakhtin, Benjamin, Foucault, both Marx and Nietzsche, the metahistorian Hayden White, the ethnographer Clifford Geertz, and, as the *eminence grise* of the principle of indeterminacy, the neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty. Unlike deconstructionism, New Historicism somewhat retains the distinction between text and context, and its pursuit of signification does not programmatically extend to infinity, as Derrida prefers, since historic milieux must also be taken into account. However, as discourse it entails a cautious and relatively lucid adaptation of Derrida's principle of freeplay as modified by Clifford Geertz's notion of "thick description" for revealing "through the analysis of tiny particulars the behavioral codes, logics, and motive forces controlling a whole society."³³ By means of "thick description" it gives better focus to thematic materials, but without altogether preventing freeplay in their exploration. It encourages maximum creativity in the exploratory pursuit of analogues and potential sources, but with an adequate convergence of representations to convey a sense of historic context. At times it might verge on gratuitous cleverness, but its historic perspective screens out most of the fugitive associations that might otherwise intrude.

Perhaps the most characteristic debt of New Historicism to deconstructionism is its elimination of formal distinctions among texts that have hitherto been characterized as literary. Like deconstructionists, new historicists seek to "destabilize" orthodox boundaries between text and context, but their effort focusses on reducing history to culture, and culture to the interaction among all potentially relevant texts in a system of discourse without a fixed cause-and-effect hierarchy. This permits them to explore fiction's significance as if it were continuous with other discourse in its more inclusive socio-historical setting. New historicism's central concerns, according to Greenblatt, "prevent it from permanently sealing off one type of discourse from another or decisively separating works of art from the minds and lives of their creators and their audiences."³⁴ Greenblatt explains that social action (i.e. history as event) is imbedded in systems of public signification whose explication requires greater hermeneutic sophistication than would be possible within the constraints imposed by orthodox literary history. The explicative skills hitherto emphasized by literary criticism must therefore be extended to embrace intertextual significations within their social context, but also isolated from it in the sense that diachronic explanation is sacrificed to synchronic interreferentiality. An entirely new and more inclusive methodology in literary history accordingly seems justified, with the advantage that research can be limited to the serendipitous (and relatively lazy) pursuit of useful quotations as opposed to the comprehensive effort to document historic trends. If a particular fact or event pertinent to a new historicist's thesis eludes research, it may simply be ignored, since the essay it documents bears no pretensions of inclusiveness. As a result, an abundance of information readily accessible to the new historicist can be featured at the expense of more pertinent information he chooses not devote

the time and energy to excavate it from the archives.

Like deconstructionism, New Historicism also discourages the interpretation of textual self-referentiality as featured, for example, by both orthodox formalism and the model of denial and designification that I myself am proposing. As Jerome McGann declares, "What will not be found in these essays . . . is the assumption . . . that literary works are self-enclosed verbal constructs, or looped intertextual fields of autonomous signifiers and signifieds."³⁵ The vital paradox seems to elude McGann and other new historicists that it is this self-referentiality that gives it an audience and grants it its intra-referential significance. The more effectively a text both signifies and designifies experience in a manner acceptable to its contemporary audience, the more useful it becomes as intersignification with relevance to other texts published by contemporaries. By limiting fiction to its participation in an artificially uncentered context of social discourse, McGann dilutes its interpretation as structured fantasy in which individual readers might participate. The text's impact is denied in favor of its presumed relevance, but it can only be relevant in the final analysis because of its impact.

As Edward Pechter maintains, new historicists also tend to ignore "passages whose affective power seems unusually great" (i.e. those portions of a text with emotional appeal).³⁶ Since the most important of these passages with affective appeal tend to crop up toward the end of narratives, when closure occurs, it should be no surprise that new historicists minimize the importance of dramatic (or narrative) outcome, the *sine qua non* of Aristotelian form. Their academic perspective encourages them to investigate fiction as documentation--often enough as a repository of curious information--but not as felt experience which gives fiction its audience. Instead of exploring the formal organization that appeals to readers, they "valorize" (a favorite verb) coincidences and overlooked paradoxical connections with other texts. Linear sequence is shattered into kaleidoscopic representations; and tropes, ironies, emblems, and symbolisms are "privileged" (another favorite word) at the expense of fiction's intrinsic form. Most of all, the denial mechanism built into fiction excluded from consideration. Literature accordingly becomes a matter of textuality as recommended by deconstructionists, an entirely safe medium for literary critics, who thereby insulate themselves from both vulgar anxieties and the vulgar coping mechanisms for dealing with them, whatever the period or century they represent.

The primary justification for new historicism's essayistic emphasis is that it encourages a non-linear interpretation of texts and inverts the historicity of texts into the more profound "textuality" of history, converting literary history--both text and event--into a shared discourse (or "carnivalistic play") among voices featured by both deconstructionism and Bakhtin's critical methodology. It thus rejects simplistic cause-and-effect thinking, but the extremes it resorts to in its elimination of this thinking make it no less vulnerable to evasiveness. For events do occur independent of their documentation, and cause-and-effect relationships may be at least tentatively explored to clarify how and why they occur. As a general rule, useful history illuminates cause-and-effect relationships; inferior history ignores or excessively distorts them--or, worse yet, restricts itself to thematic considerations, entirely dependent upon a scattering of secondary sources as the basis for its assumptions. Indeed, new historicism's essayistic perusal of unfamiliar themes and topics is potentially useful but their use should not be dictated by a Draconian standards that deprive the historian of linear resources which crop up now and again even in the scholarship of new historicists.³⁷ Useful orthodox histories and biographies ultimately depend on

narrative temporal sequence, an approach to history that does increase the risk of simplification, if not outright deception. However, this risk is worth its benefits in helping to clarify facts and relationships otherwise inaccessible to our understanding. Rather than "deprivileging" narrative possibilities, it would thus seem the better option to compound the task of establishing the relative importance of information, and of the sources dealing with it, some of these necessarily more "privileged" than the rest relative to particular issues. And this requires intensive research into a large variety of authors. All history, both new and old, benefits from the paradox that an abundance of perspectives--some more linear than others--is more likely than anything else to help in transcending one-dimensional narrative limitations. One's knowledge of American history, for example, is better obtained by consulting as many as a dozen general treatments (Beard, Commager, Morison, etc.) augmented by several dozen more specific histories and biographies relevant to the periods and issues of interest to one's research rather than defenselessly throwing oneself on New Historicism's ingenious jumble of irrelevant ephemera. Of course incidental data can be insightful, but only after more basic spadework has been completed.

A second taboo of New Historicism which is vulnerable to the Affirmative Fallacy has been its antipathy to reductionism. It encourages an eclectic cannibalism of theoretical systems--Marxist, Freudian, etc.--but without accepting their theoretical core for explaining the progress of history as well as the dynamics of consciousness. As a general principle, new historicists avoid tying literary history to the systematic investigation of war, diplomacy, religion, ideology, growth and decay, cultural autonomy, or even climate (as in the case of Ellsworth Huntington's Civilization and Climate) or hegemonic overexpansion (as in the case of Paul Kennedy's The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers). And the primary victim of new historicism's neglect turns out to be the Marxist base-superstructure distinction and related assumptions about class, surplus value, exploitation, economic breakdown patterns, and imperialism and fascism.³⁸ Instead, new historicism sanitizes Marxism by substituting a sociological perspective that primarily derives from Althusser and Foucault's benighted emphasis on cultural issues at the expense of economic determinism. Their notion of power, for example, is particularly deceptive since its mixture of Marx and Nietzsche renders both relatively harmless. In the case of Marx, history becomes sociology spiced by Pareto's potentially fascist notion of cyclical elites reorganized and sterilized as Gramsci's fashionably Marxist notion of hegemonic usurpations. A faddish bow to Foucault's version of victimology--virtuous power distinguished from its unvirtuous misuse--takes precedence over the more basic interpretation of economic contradictions and the social conflict they produce leading to qualitative change. Once the abstract concept of power is privileged in this fashion, the useful base-superstructure distinction between economics and culture may be jettisoned in favor of a relatively superficial interplay between culture and literature that old fashioned Marxists (myself included to an extent) would limit to the superstructure alone.

In their rejection of Marxist reductionism, new historians disperse history into what is described by Frank Lentricchia as a "multiplicity of histories," as characterized by "forces of heterogeneity, contradiction, fragmentation, and difference."³⁹ Theme also gets emphasized instead of ideology, diversity instead of class identification, and methodological freedom instead of theoretic sufficiency. Nor is economic contradiction granted its impact upon social contradiction, hence literary contradiction, thereby exiling from respectable literary history such Marxist literary historians such as Christopher Caudwell, George Thomson, Granville Hicks, and Christopher Hill, the latter as a biographer of Milton.⁴⁰ To his credit, Greenblatt conveys in an extended footnote his

ambivalence about Christopher Caudwell's presumably vulgar Marxist explanation in *Illusion and Reality* of Sir Thomas Wyatt's creativity as the outgrowth of his family's social position.⁴¹ As Greenblatt concedes, Caudwell's remarks cannot be rejected out of hand, for they do convey genuine insights the product of reductionism that may be incorporated into a more balanced treatment, for example, in the explication of Wyatt's poetry. So how much of the rest of Caudwell's criticism deserves the same consideration with the understanding that vulgar Marxist generalizations of the thirties (resuscitated during the sixties) were no more vulnerable to criticism than today's no less radical discursive avoidances of postmodernist criticism? Something between would seem useful, and perhaps an attempt should be made toward such a synthesis.

5.

But it is New Historicism's devotion to textual interreferentiality that guarantees its commitment to the Affirmative Fallacy. This is the denial strategy that links it with other post-structuralist theories of indeterminacy that obstruct the plain meaning of a text.⁴² If literary form bears a determinate psychological effect in its organization of literary response, as I have tried to demonstrate, the textual structures that produce it cannot be subsumed to "intrinsic plurality" among a potential infinitude of like structures. Instead, a dialectic must be sought within the text itself between its determinate and indeterminate aspects--one that very likely involves deception as an active avoidance of potential significations too threatening to be acknowledged. The deconstructionist emphasis on a text's shared indeterminacy with other texts inevitably excludes from consideration any awareness of its full content of its meaning inclusive of its evasiveness. Far more happens within a text than between texts, and this important difference cannot be ignored. Every word plays a role, every sentence and paragraph relevant to the text as a whole, and this is not necessarily true relevant to other texts that can be associated with it. And there are important discrepancies to be sorted out limited to the single text relevant to the issue of determinacy. As earlier indicated, plot is almost inevitably more determinate than metaphor, negative feedback more determinate than positive feedback, and, paradoxically, deception more determinate than the truth itself, since every lie (fiction included) declares itself as a "truth." Only lies and distortions are clear, simple, and transparent. As a result the critic is caught between the Scylla and Charybdis of factual dishonesty and deconstructionist elusiveness, with truths everywhere suggested, nowhere to be found except by the dialectic effort to sort out what actually happens in any particular text. This is where critics should focus their attention.

Often liars must stoop to specifics in order to make their necessary substitutions ("I sent the check this morning"), but whenever they respond with the question, "Who can tell?" they invoke indeterminacy to justify themselves, and one must redouble one's effort to probe their intentions. Comparable doubts arise when "Who can tell?" provides the aesthetic standard of an entire critical generation since the seventies, brought to its culmination, appropriately enough, during the Reagan decade. As a rhetorical question, "Who can tell?" is implicit in theories of indeterminacy proposed by deconstructionists, new historicists, response theoreticians, neo-Marxists, and the many other schools and sects of the cultural left that have emerged in recent years, all of whom collaborate in the rejection of explicative thoroughness. Unfortunately, this niggling sense of obligation has been eliminated--in effect, denied--by the unending pursuit of multiplicity obliged by the principles of indeterminacy and intertextuality. And like truth, quality itself--the final and most compelling desideratum of New Criticism up until a half century ago--can be entirely

dispensed with, opening the floodgates to inferior creativity and its inferior analysis. As a result, mediocrity and cryptic hermeneutic arrogance actually converge, the latter the “enabling” rationale to justify the acceptance of the former. Obvious literary junk can be taught and written about instead of the erstwhile classics of western civilization, exactly as vulgar Marxists (the so-called Zhdanovites) had emphasized during the thirties in defense of proletarian fiction now appropriately forgotten. For the misguided principles of indeterminacy and intertextuality totally undermine the old-fashioned pursuit of an acceptable interpretation of a text, or, more inclusively, of a useful combination of theories and explications toward an acceptable synthesis in grasping the fullest possible significance of a text. They also fragmentize scholarship and elevate the status of critics to that of a modern priesthood blessed with its customary accouterments of power and intellectual authority. This should not be the case. For we remain a good deal closer to Samuel Johnson’s self-depiction as a lexicographical drudge than Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot’s versions of the hieratic prophet able and willing to pontificate in all directions, and we should be glad of the difference. Sometimes we forget ourselves (myself included), but at least a modicum of humility seems in order.

As perhaps to be expected, critics who have been the most closely identified with the concept of indeterminacy in one guise or another, have been the most successful in the field of criticism over the past three decades. In their professional affairs their dedication to facts and numbers is often formidable--for example regarding their income, their travel expenses, their citations by others, the budget and agenda of the departments to which they belong, and the conferences in which they participate. But their lucidity and organizational skills obliged by these considerations are matched by their rigid commitment to the principle of indeterminacy necessitated by their theoretical posture. This may be observed when they visit universities to make lectures. After discussing their practical circumstances with remarkable lucidity at dinner before departing to give their lecture, they take the podium to flaunt their joy in obfuscations stretched to such a limit that most of their listeners come away utterly befuddled by their ideas. They actually flaunt their referential peregrinations as a kind of poetry, not as effective analysis, nor as evidence that they had devoted much attention to the texts they discussed. And appropriately so, for if willful obscurity has become literary criticism’s primary desideratum, any exotic divagation may be featured. And obversely, other critical approaches slightly passé or slightly pedestrian may be neglected, whatever their level of insight, and without any sense of loss.

A third dubious benefit that need only be mentioned is that once indeterminacy becomes the primary concern in critical theory, the task of individual critics is reduced to keeping up with a small but expanding output from a relatively distinctive minority of critics supposed to be at the “cutting edge.” An intellectual faddishness, also a product of indeterminacy, produces enough theoretical “turnover” to limit serious consideration to those who can stay on top. Once New Criticism, or archetypal criticism, or structuralist criticism, is over and done with, a Cleanth Brooks or Northrop Frye or Roland Barthes might still be considered relevant, but middling practitioners might as well hang up their cleats. As a result, future teachers can fulfill their professional needs and expectations with slender but expensive paperback libraries not more than a couple feet in length: six titles of Derrida, eight of Foucault, etc. No matter how trivial, disingenuous, or flat wrong (for example the judgment of modern scientific issues as demonstrated by Sokal's Hoax), the insights of prominent indeterminists almost always obtain immediate attention as compared to the relatively pedestrian truisms of less prestigious critics, who are

always more rigorously scrutinized for their shortcomings. As an added bonus, only the most eminent critics at the most prestigious English departments are fully aware of the most important current innovations while new contributions keep cropping up. Others elsewhere find out later and thereby participate belatedly, confirming their lower status in the profession. Since anybody anywhere can be merely thorough or merely thoroughgoing in his explications, "keeping up" predominates with an emphasis on cutting-edge recency rather than adequacy.

This, of course, has been the tacit arrangement for decades in the field of literary criticism, but the trend has accelerated in recent years. New Criticism lasted less than four decades before declining in favor of archetypal theory; then perhaps a half decade followed before the transition to a flurry of Marxist and psychoanalytic thinking in the mid-sixties, succeeded, in quickening and overlapping clusters, by the emergence of French new criticism, structuralism (which was almost dead on arrival), response theory, and speech-act theory, then by the deconstructionist, feminist, radical feminist, black, black feminist, and gay perspectives. Now slouching toward Bethlehem are neo-pragmatists, multiculturalists, New Historians, and the forerunners of what promises to be an ecological school.⁴³ Each year it seems more difficult to keep abreast of new trends, increasing the stakes for those still able and willing to play the game. Understandably, fashionable critics and department chairmen in pursuit of lively junior faculty appointments have benefited from this fashionable trend in metacritical anarchy, but, more inclusively, results seem disappointing outside ambitious college English departments. Authors still say what they say, and a lot of them say it, but what they say no longer particularly matters. And criticism itself seems even more irrelevant to its initial task emphasized by I.A. Richards to help refine the sensibilities of a sophisticated public well enough that it can accept its political responsibilities with relative effectiveness. Instead, American civilization has lurched into its future blessedly ignorant of literature, its interpretation, and any of its benefits relevant to society as a whole. With nothing better to do beyond cryptic self-indulgence in defense of non-western creativity, modern literary criticism, born with T. E. Hulme's *Speculations* published in 1924, may be said to have expired with Alan Sokal's Hoax of 1996, seventy-two years later, when the pretentious ignorance of postmodernists in matters beyond their purview was so devastatingly exposed.⁴⁴ Appropriately, everything has transpired in a single lifetime during which critical theory advanced upon itself from New Criticism's textual obsession to deconstructionism's no less obsessive use of textuality to avoid the text itself. Obviously the cycle is over and done with, but it's been a good life full of joy and inspiration. RIP

Footnotes

1. E. H. Gombrich, Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation (London: Phaidon Press, 1962), pp. 5-6.
2. Charles Saunders Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," in Collected Papers of Charles Saunders Peirce, ed. by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, vol. 5, Pragmatism and Pragmaticism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1934), p. 253.
3. George Orwell, 1984 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1949), pp. 215-216.
4. Our best evidence of this tendency in our criticism is probably our strenuous indignation when confronted with such an explanation. Nothing less than genuine indifference justifies our claims of objectivity.
5. Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism, ed. by Jane Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 82.
6. W. K. Wimsatt, "The Intentional Fallacy," The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (University of Kentucky Press, 1954), pp. 3-18.
7. W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, "The Affective Fallacy," The Verbal Icon, pp. 21-39.
8. Yvor Winger, In Defense of Reason (Denver: The University of Denver, Swallow Press, 1947), pp. 41, 87.
9. A. C. Bradley, "Poetry for Poetry's Sake," Oxford Lectures on Poetry (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 24.
10. Ibid.
11. These fallacies are respectively discussed in the following texts: Wimsatt, The Verbal Icon, p. 33; Edgar Allan Poe, "The Poetic Principle," Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews (New York: The Library of America, 1984), p. 75; Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," Essays in Criticism (New York: A. L. Burt Co., n.d.), pp. 279-307; Allen Tate, Essays of Four Decades (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1968), pp. 63-4, 58; and I. A. Richards, So Much Nearer Essays Toward a World English (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), p. 174. More exotic fallacies and heresies include A. C. Bradley's heresy of the separable substance, Oxford Lectures, p. 17, and four fallacies proposed by Northrop Frye: the fallacy of existential projection and the fallacy of a theory of mythological contract, Anatomy of Melancholy: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 63, 108; and the representational fallacy and the fallacy of premature teleology, Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology (New York: Harcourt Brace, Harbinger, pp. 10, 14. Not to forget John Ruskin's pathetic fallacy, Modern Painters, vol. 3, part 4, chap. 12. All of these fallacies prescribe avoidances, hence denial, the initial displacement in

the Affirmative Fallacy.

12. Lee Baxandall, Marxism and Aesthetics: A Selective Annotated Bibliography (New York, Humanities Press, 1968).

13. I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1955), chap. 15, "Attitudes."

14. My confessedly simplistic distinction between "vulgar" and "sophisticated" Marxist criticism is based on George Steiner's perspective in his excellent if dated article, "Marxism and the Literary Critic," in Language and Silence (New York: Atheneum, 1967).

15. Norman Holland, The Dynamics of Literary Response (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 34-38. Despite my criticism of many of Holland's arguments in this book, I treat it as one of the major works of psychoanalytic criticism.

16. Norman Holland, Poems in Persons (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 83.

17. Four articles explaining Holland's feedback loop model include "Criticism as a Transaction," in What is Criticism, ed. by Paul Hernadi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981) pp. 242-52; "The Brain of Robert Frost," New Literary History 15 (2) (Winter, 1984): 365-85; "Driving in Gainesville," University of Hartford Studies 16 (2-3) (Winter, 1984): 1-15; and "The Miller's Wife and the Professors: Questions about the Transactive Theory of Reading," New Literary History 17 (1986): 423-37. Where I disagree with Holland's model is in his treatment of the feedback loop as a strictly cognitive activity that performs no function beyond its reinforcement of the reader's identity theme. In contrast, the homeostatic feedback loop I am proposing limits behavior to the pursuit of results (or "consequence," in Holland's terminology) by which tension is reduced and pleasure experienced.

18. Wolfgang Iser, "Interaction Between Text and Reader," in The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation, ed. By Susan Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 106-19. Also useful is Iser's essay, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," The Implied Reader (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 274-294.

19. Wolfgang Iser, "Interaction Between Text and Reader," in The Reader in the Text, ed. by Susan Suleiman and Inge Crossman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 117.

20. Stanley Fish, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser," Diacritics 11 (1981): 13.

21. Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum," Critical Inquiry 2, no. 3 (spring, 1976): 483.

22. David Bleich's version of response theory also features the use of students as interpretive communities, but within a more definable psychoanalytic frame of reference. Bleich's approach depends on gathering a large sample of "response statements" from students so the text's "negotiable" affective appeal can be determined based on resemblances among these responses.

Bleich's methodology may be commended for its empirical thoroughness, but one doubts that "response statements" are validly "negotiable" (i.e., useful to other readers) unless shared omissions and misreadings are given at least as much importance as what is said. It seems likely, in fact, that certain kinds of oversight might be the most negotiable of all, for example when embarrassing connotations are overlooked by all respondents. If all protocols from a particular class ignore connotations, the intended sexual connotations of ploughing a field in a seventeenth century *carpe diem* lyric poem, as Bleich has reported, evasiveness seems likely as the dominant motivation. And if the affirmative substitutes which are dredged up (spring planting, digging for the truth, etc.) vary to a significant degree, the cause and dynamics of avoidance should be considered more important as a "negotiable" feature than the specific substitutions that are made.

23. Roman Jakobson and Claude Le'vi-Strauss, "Charles Baudelaire's 'Les Chats,'" in *Structuralism: A Reader*, ed. by Michael Lane (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), pp. 202-21.

24. Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic, 1963), pp. 206-31; "The Story of Asdiwal," *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism*, ed. by Edmund Leach (London: Tavistock, 1967), pp. 1-47. By explaining this strategy Le'vi-Strauss escapes its evasiveness. However, any critical model that features regressive antinomies without taking into account their purpose can likewise be explained according to this purpose.

25. Cedric H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), Chapter 5 ("Homer and Geometric Art").

26. Respectively, the authors listed here are cited for theories of deviationism proposed in the following texts: Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. by Lee T. Lemon and Marion Reis (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 3-24; Max Eastman, *The Enjoyment of Poetry* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936); Michael Riffaterre, "Criteria for Style Analysis" and "Stylistic Content," in *Essays on the Language of Literature*, ed. by Seymour Chatman and Samuel Levin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), pp.412-441; Morse Peckham, *Man's Rage for Chaos: Biology, Behavior, and the Arts* (Philadelphia, New York: Chilton Books, 1965); Stephen Booth, "On the Value of *Hamlet*," in *Reinterpretations of Elizabethan Drama*, ed. by Norman Rabkin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 137-176; and Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

27. How stylistic devices crowd from consciousness other stylistic devices by diverting attention to themselves is both charted and explained in my article, "Psychostylistics: The Possibilities of a Behavioral Science," *Style* 18, no. 1 (Winter, 1984), pp. 83-97.

28. Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. ix. De Man's deconstructionism emphasizes the departure from a text's "center" by exploring an endless web of tangential displacements. Obviously, these displacements also help to deny the existence of a second center, both extra-textual and outside discourse, which is dominated by an individual's inhibitions and repressed memories. Theoretical diffusiveness likewise prevents any kind of focusing and thus erects one more barrier against unpleasant exposure. De Man's

deconstructionist speculation may accordingly be treated as an appeal to maximum freedom of discourse (decentering) to disavow an authoritarianism perhaps best represented by his youthful fascism.

29. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy, ed. by Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), pp. 247-72; and Of Grammatology (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1976).

30. As cryptic and involuted as such figures as Barthes, Lacan, and Le'vi-Strauss might seem at times, Derrida exceeds them in his dazzling eclectic elusiveness. He thoroughly deserves his self-proclaimed status as the Mallarme' of philosophy.

31. Stephen Greenblatt, "Toward a Poetics of Culture," in The New Historicism, ed. by H. Aram Veeseer (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 1.

32. Jerome McGann, The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Imaginations in Historical Method and Theory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 62.

33. H. Aram Veeseer, New Historicism, "Introduction," p. xi. In Chapter 1 of The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), Clifford Geertz himself proposes how "thick description," a notion or methodology first characterized (and named) by Gilbert Ryle, applies interpretation to the most specific acts of observation. What the ethnologist seeks with this approach, Geertz maintains, is "a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures," (7) "many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render" (10).

34. Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning, p. 5.

35. Jerome McGann, Historical Studies and Literary Criticism (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 3.

36. Edward Pechter, "The New Historicism and Its Discontents: Politicizing Renaissance Drama," PMLA 102 (3) (May, 1987): 299.

37. As an example of the difficulties to be encountered in trying to avoid cause-and-effect relationships, the principal episode Geertz uses from his notebooks to illustrate "thick description" is an elaborate story of an incident in Morocco (The Interpretation of Cultures, pp. 7-9). Approximately seven hundred words in length, his account contains, I would estimate, perhaps as many as fifty examples of stated or implied cause-and-effect reasoning. The effort to establish an inductive basis for guaranteeing historic objectivity has been mounted by such twentieth century figures as Carl Hempel, Patrick Gardiner, T. A. Goudge, and W. B. Gallie, only the latter of whom is mentioned, and he only in passing, by Hayden White in his influential book, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

38. One searches in vain among new historians, neo-Marxists, and others now identified with the cultural left for references to such classic explanations of Marxist economic theory as Paul Sweezy's The Theory of Capitalist Development (New York: Monthly Press, 1942); Paul Baran's The Political Economy of Growth (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957), Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy's Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966), or Ernest Mandel's Marxist Economic Theory (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), 2 vols.

39. Frank Lentricchia, After the New Criticism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. xiii-xiv. Cited by Montrose in "Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture," New Historicism, ed. by Veese, p. 20.

40. Christopher Caudwell, Illusion and Reality (New York: International Publishers, 1937), chaps. 4-6, and Romance and Realism: Study in English Bourgeois Literature (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970); George Thomson, Aeschylus and Athens (New York: Haskell House, 1967); Granville Hicks, The Great Tradition: An Interpretation of American Literature since the Civil War (New York: Biblio and Tannen, 1967); and Christopher Hill, Milton and the English Revolution (New York: Viking Press, 1977). The apparent irrelevance of Marxist economic reductionism to the world today deserves careful reexamination on the assumption that the concept of surplus value maximization boils down to greed--utter unadulterated greed--when taken to an extreme.

41. Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning, p. 282.

42. The dominant role of indeterminacy (or aporia) in contemporary criticism was established by a variety of texts, including William Empson's ambiguity, proposed in Seven Types of Ambiguity: A Study of its Effects in English Verse (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), Mikhail Bakhtin's "loopholes," proposed in "Discourse in the Novel," The Dialogic Imagination (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), Jacques Derrida's "ruptures" and "decentering," proposed in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy, ed. by Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), pp. 247-65; Jacques Lacan's "displacement of the signifier," proposed in "Seminar on 'The Purlined Letter,'" Yale French Studies 48 (1972): 59-60; Roland Barthes' "deferment of the signified," proposed in "From Work to Text," Image -- Music -- Text (pub..???, 1977); Wolfgang Iser's "gaps," proposed in "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," in The Implied Reader (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); Frank Kermode's "intrinsic plurality" proposed in The Classic (New York: The Viking Press, 1975, chap. 4); Harold Bloom's "misprision," proposed in A Map of Misreading (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Michel Foucault's "writing as absence," proposed in "What is an Author?" Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 113-138; Hans Robert Jauss's "horizons," proposed in "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," Toward an Aesthetics of Reception (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Barbara Johnson's "cognition as an act of violence," proposed in "Melville's Fist: The Execution of Billy Budd," The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); and Barbara Herrnstein Smith's "radical contingency," proposed in

"Contingencies of Value," Critical Inquiry 10 (1983): 1-35. Also consult Gerald Graff's "Determinacy/Indeterminacy," in Critical Terms for Literary Study, ed. By Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 163-76.

43. Listed by Stanley Fish in his interview, "Learning to Love the PC Canon," Newsweek (Dec. 24, 1990), p. 51.

44. See Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science (Picador, 1998), for a full account of the episode. N.B.: In my website revision of ten articles based on chapters in Negative Poetics, published thirteen years ago, I make an effort not to violate my perspective at that time, for example by excluding reference to materials published since then. However, the reference to Sokal's Hoax is obviously germane to my argument to such an extent that I have abandoned my effort in this single instance.

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