

Reconstructing the Old New Criticism

HARRY BERGER, JR.

This essay is an attempt to chart certain transformations in critical theory and practice that have occurred over the last forty years since the advent of the New Criticism, and in reaction to it, since it represents what has happened to me as a practicing critic during that period, and is in effect the story of my continuing reeducation. But except for a few stray comments it will not be autobiographical in tone or procedure. It will be partly an analysis of and partly a meditation on the changes and their implications for interpretive practice. I shall begin with a critical description of certain features of New Criticism with the aim of abstracting from that diffuse body of work a set of clearly defined principles, or postulates, and showing how they compose into a model whose presuppositions regulate a wide range of practices.

As the use of upper case suggests, the New Criticism has itself become mythologized and essentialized since its emergence during and after the Second World War. It has also been reduced to a better wrought form than in fact it had in order to be comfortably inured. Its *hic iacets* have not always (i. e. seldom) been eulogistic. This poses a certain embarrassment to the present writer, who finds himself still kicking about in the urn, still blowing on the ashes, still trying to emerge phoenixlike into the light of the New Day. I consider myself a Reconstructed Old New Critic, and I therefore feel compelled to defend my calling, though since I remain firmly tied to the illusion that "Reconstructed" is the most important term in the title, my defense is sure to add a few cracks to the already battered urn. There were of course more than one New Criticism in the period of emergence, some of them have not to my knowledge succeeded in expiring as perhaps they ought, and even the ashy mythical integer has been refracted into any number of competing posthumous representations. Yet although, as Frank Lentricchia has observed "*The*

New Criticism was --- no monolith but an inconsistent and sometimes confused movement" traversed by real differences, retrospective analysis has brought out certain common themes and impulses whose continuing influence suggests to Lentricchia that if New Criticism is officially dead "it is dead in the way that an imposing and repressive father-figure is dead."² Since my aim is partly to effect a restoration of the father, I do not have a heavy investment in Lentricchia's image.

I have no interest in sketching yet another official portrait or parody of New Criticism. Instead, I shall describe what New Criticism Means To Me. When I was reading *Understanding Poetry*, *Understanding Drama*, *Practical Criticism*, *The World's Body*; and *The Well-Wrought Urn*, I had already been corrupted by *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, and *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. In the long retrospect of thirty-five years of practice I can see that it was my reading of Empson and Burke, most of all my frustration with their unsystematic and electric brilliance, that most deeply affected me.³

Even as I embraced New Criticism, there was much in it that I found oppressive. At one extreme, I resisted what I thought were overspecific articulations of the interpretive act into such distinct categories as those of tone, imagery, diction, etc., because, although they were presented as heuristic, they ended up in practice as reified parts of a dismembered body one was supposed to reassemble according to instructions. At the other extreme, I was troubled by (what was then) a vague but sharply felt sense that I was being preached to, was being told what to value and dismiss, and that this was in some way being smuggled in under the surface of an earnest, disinterested, benign, indeed often condescending, pedagogy: moral instruction embedded in sugar coated technical instruction.

That impression became less vague when I came to learn more about some of the political and cultural agendas behind apparently diverse examples of critical practice—"agendas" is probably the wrong word, suggests something more conspiratorial than I mean. Before the Mc Carthy era, when I think agendas did come into play, what existed was a moralism born of a diffuse cultural nostalgia that provided the bond of the so-called "fugitives," and penetrated New Critical practice in some odd thematic insistences, such as the interpretation of *King Lear* as a critique of rationalism. But the most salient manifestation of that nostalgia is of course to be found in the central article of

New Critical belief, the isolation, autonomy, self-sufficiency, unity, and completeness of the literary work as a "world."⁴ For this was clearly the product of an attempt to shelter a paradisaical activity of reading which could regreen a sense of value everywhere bleached out by the arid landscape of science and consumer capitalism.

I don't for a moment mean to imply that the garden wall circumscribed some oasis of pure poetry, some golden age of faith and community.⁵ The garden of literature was full of snakes, toads, weeds, and rotten apples. The point is rather that the claims made for literature's inclusiveness and impurity, its tensions, paradoxes, complexities, and all that, tended to estheticize them by immuring them in a garden of *reading*. The moral and political implications of estheticism come out most clearly in moments when its latent didactic impulse is apologetically acknowledged, as it is by Wimsatt and Brooks in the epilogue to their *Literary Criticism: A Short History* :

Of course the reflective and responsible theorist will say that he doesn't call evil itself, or division, or conflict, desirable things. He is sure, however, that facing up to them, facing up to the human predicament, is a desirable and mature state of soul and the right model and source of a mature poetic art. But again, with a certain accent, that may sound somewhat like telling a boy at a baseball game that the *contest* is not really important but only his *noticing* that there *is* a contest.

That is the accent I remember, and its echo is not dimmed by a subsequent comment in which the interpretive elite reflectively and responsibly build the wall higher, and face up to the contest as if it were a game of croquet :

The great works and the fine works of literature seem to need evil—just as much as the cheap ones, the adventure or detective stories. Evil or the tension of strife with evil is welcomed and absorbed into the structure of the story, the rhythm of the song. The literary spirit flourishes in evil and couldn't get along without it.⁶

The canonizing gesture that makes inclusiveness a criterion of exclusion is inseparable from the properly "cognitive" function of criticism, as Wimsatt calls it, and over even the most innocent metapoetic descriptions it throws the shadow of an inward-turning self-manicuring concern :

Poetic symbols—largely through their iconicity various at levels—call attention to themselves as symbols and in themselves invite evaluation. What may seem stranger is that the verbal symbol in calling attention to itself must also call attention to the difference between itself and the reality which it resembles and symbolizes..... Iconicity enforces disparity. The symbol has more substance than a noniconic symbol and hence is more clearly realized as a thing separate from its referents and as one of the productions of our own spirit. Seeing a work of art, says Ortega y Gasset, is seeing the window pane with the garden pasted behind it, or the world inverted into the belvedere of our own concepts..... As a stone sculpture of a human head in a sense *means* a human head but in another sense *is* a carved mass of stone and a metaphor of a head (one would rather have one's head carved in stone than in cheese), so a poem in its various levels and relations of meaning has a kind of rounded being or substance and a metaphoric relation to reality.⁷

Wimsatt's critical dualism draws its energy from the heroic effort to harmonize yet sustain the disparity between the claims of two conflicting cognitive orientations, one hermeneutic and the other protreptic: one focused on the complexity and integrity of the work, its "truth of coherence," its "poetic value"; the other focused on its relation to "moral value"—on the need to "recognize the metaphoric capacities of language and the moral importance of valid linguistic expression without surrendering our conception of truth as a thing beyond language."⁸ His use of the metaphor of metaphor to characterize the tensional relation between poetry and reality which this dualistic perspective constitutes, testifies to a healthy distrust of any reconciling formula, an unwillingness to articulate the relation in more specific or analytic terms. As Christopher Ricks has remarked in a moving eulogy, Wimsatt's "particular forte" is "his ability to argue very strictly on behalf of 'loose' and limber concepts or principles," like the principle that the poem is metaphor.⁹

Yet the dangers of the position adhere to the images by which the argument of the above passage is given its iconic concreteness. For exactly what lies behind the garden pasted behind the window pane? I am perhaps unaccountably reminded of the precarious belvedere of Isabel Archer's mind in *Portrait of a Lady*, and of the green door in Albany beyond which she dares not look. And why the hilarious aside

about stone and cheese? Those symbols, however casually introduced, "invite evaluation"—between, say, "the great . . . and the fine works of literature" carved in stone to endure our contemplation and "the cheap ones" we consume. Isn't cheese one of the productions of our own spirit? Isn't the engendered body another? And would one rather have one's head carved (and why would one?) by itself, apart from the gendered cheese-eating body? The "rounded being" of that contemplative member transfers its metaphoric substance to the text it circumscribes, and vanishes into the objectivity, the paradisaical innocence, of *the work*. Thus the heroic pastoral of New Criticism consigns to extramural invisibility not only the intentions and affections of author and reader but also those that motivate the interpreter's cognitions.

Robert Scholes observes that for the New Critics "the ambiguity of the text is an objective correlative of a purely contemplative state in the reader, who recognizes that the text is not seeking to denote a reality but to connote an elegantly balanced esthetic structure."¹⁰ I think that, given its etymology, "contemplative": catches the implications of the attitude better than "congitive": *contemplatio* is what one does in a *templum*, a space marked off for augury or visionary survey or sanctuary; its Greek forebears are *temnein* (to cut) and *temenos*, not only a chief's stronghold but also "a piece of land cut off from common uses and dedicated to a god" (Liddell & Scott); in this case, the god Hermes.¹¹

The fact that our word *contempt* comes from the same root may suggest the slanderous turn this portrait of New Criticism seems to be taking. For if anything has come to appear obvious, it is that New Criticism democratized literary study, released it from a higher humanism which masters of taste and erudition sought to instill in select cadres of gentleman scholars and oligarchs. New Criticism enabled "even the meanest student who lacked the scholarly information of his betters" to make "valid comments on the language and structure of the text." This statement seems all the more credible in that it is a concession with which Jonathan Culler prefaces his argument that "what is good for literary education is not necessarily good for the study of literature in general," and that the task for literary study is to move beyond the interpretation of "one work after another" toward inquiry into literature as an institution.

It is of course in a different manner that New Critical contemplation cuts off its piece of land from common uses. "In the name of

improved interpretation," Scholes writes, "reading was turned into a mystery and the literature classroom into a chapel where the priestly instructor (who knew the authors, dates, titles, biographies, and general provenance of the texts) astounded the faithful with miracles of interpretation." Instructors who used that parenthetically immured knowledge "officially asserted that such material was irrelevant to the interpretive process," and this was not a question of "conscious fraud" but a consequence of the commitment to "the notion of the bounded, self-sufficient work" (Semiotics, P. 15).

Though their projects differ considerably, Scholes and Culler agree about the need to destroy the hegemony of an interpretive method that invests its power in an aristocracy of canonized works. Where Culler is against the continued focus on interpretation, Scholes is for it. He not only advocates but also demonstrates an interpretive method based on an eclectic semiotic approach the literariness of *texts* considered as acts of communication ("literary" in his lexicon means dominated by "duplicitous" communicative features)¹³ He bases his move beyond New Criticism on the distinction between *work* and *text* :

A text, as opposed to a work, is open, incomplete, insufficient. This is not a quality inherent in any particular piece of writing - - - but only a way of regarding such a piece of writing or any other combination of signs. The same set of words can be regarded as either a work or a text. As a text, however, a piece of writing must be understood as the product of a person or persons, at a given point in human history, in a given form of discourse, taking its meanings from the interpretive gestures of individual readers using the grammatical, semantic, and cultural codes available to them. (pp. 15-16)

From this standpoint, New Criticism is simply a set of closure techniques for blocking textuality and constructing works. These techniques were based on the selection of discriminative criteria (organic unity, tension, ambiguity, etc.) in which the descriptive and the evaluative were strategically confused. Therefore the criteria for producing *the work* were at the same time the criteria for producing *the canon* of works worthy of being Newly Criticized. New Criticism was seminary for oysters, not clams, and its divers not only extracted the pearls from textual shells but also assembled them in strings.¹⁴

Culler's countermove from work to text is similar to Scholes's in its objective, and responds to that double mode of production :

arguing that literary study should deemphasize the production of "interpretations of works," he urges teachers to "think of literature not as a hallowed sequence of works defined by literary history but as a species of writing, a mode of representation, that occupies a very problematic role in the cultures in which our students live." As Scholes proposes to extend the hegemony of literary study by pursuing literariness throughout the entire domain of sign production and communication, so Culler wants us to appreciate "the importance and pervasiveness of structures that we traditionally regard as 'literary,'" to explore "textuality" in non literary as well as literary discourse, and above all to explore the theoretical problems that beset any inquiry into "the relationship between the literary and the non literary" (*Pursuit of Signs*, pp. 213, 217, 221, 218).

The most problematic register in which this relationship is formulated, and one that impinges directly on New Critical practice, is the theme of *fiction*. Meditating on that theme in the middle 1950's Frank Kermode finds it "surprising, given the range and minuteness of modern literary theory, that nobody, so far as I know, has ever tried to relate the theory of literary fictions to the theory of fictions in general."¹⁵ He takes the influence of Vaihinger's philosophy of "As If" on Wallace Stevens as his starting point, and goes on to discuss fictional emplotment in history-writing, in the organization of time and space, in theology, and in modern physics. Culler, referring to Kermode's discussion a decade or more later, still finds that "we ought to understand much more than we do about the effects of *fictional* discourse.. What is the status and what is the role of fictions, or, to pose the same kind of problem in another way, what are the relations (the historical, the psychic, the social relationships) between the real and the fictive?" (*Pursuit of Signs*, p. 6). Our failure to understand these things is "in part due to the preeminent role recorded interpretation" which is "the legacy of the New Criticism" (pp. 6-7).

This kind of historical accounting, appropriate to Culler's polemical purpose, skims over the problem shrewdly if impressionistically formulated by Kermode. But the problem becomes discernible when we superimpose Culler's reference to relations between the fictive and the real on his reference to relations between the literary and the nonliterary. For the New Critical tendency to enclose fictiveness in works defined as literary diverted attention from the fictiveness of the nonliterary and the "real." It diverted attention from precisely the large questions explored

in Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*. For example, the estheticized morality of New Criticism, welcoming evil into the work and proclaiming that the literary spirit can't get along without it, shows poorly when confronted with such events as the Holocaust :

How, in such a situation, can our paradigms of concord, our beginnings and ends, our humanly ordered picture of the world satisfied us, make sense? - - - If *King Lear* is an image of the promised end, so is Buchenwald; and both stand under the accusation of being horrible, rootless fantasies, the one on more true or more false than the other, so that the best you can say is that *King Lear* does less harm.

Of course there are differences, since

anti-Semitism is a fiction of escape which tells you nothing about death but projects it onto others; whereas *King Lear* is a fiction that inescapably involves an encounter with oneself and the image of one's end. This is one difference; and there is another. We have to distinguish between myths and fictions. Fictions can degenerate into myths whenever they are not consciously held to be fictive. In this sense anti-Semitism is a degenerate fiction, a myth; and *Lear* is a fiction. (Kermode, pp. 38-39)

Kermode then itemizes the types of nonliterary fictions discussed by Vaihinger and concludes with "what Vaihinger calls, in words remembered by Stevens, 'the last and greatest fiction,' 'the fiction of an Absolute'" (p. 41). Such explorations of the contrast between literary and nonliterary fictions, and between fiction and "myth," cannot be undertaken from within the premises of New Criticism.

A practice that leaves the Real standing immaculate outside the domain of fiction, and that refers the adequacy of literary representations to some reified and dehistoricized standard of absolute good and evil, cannot avoid being ideological, cannot avoid falling into myth, whether it means to or not. The New Critical *templum* or garden of work is situated like the Terrestrial Paradise in a domain of higher fiction: below the higher actuality of the Real; above the Weberian iron cage of a lower actuality where the degraded fictions of "adventure or detective stories" flourish like parasites hosted by the internal triad of bureaucracy, technology, science.¹⁶ The fictiveness of this paradise, as "one of

the productions of our own spirit," guarantees the priority and independence of the Real. But if iconicity produces this reality effect by enforcing disparity, that disparity nevertheless obtains between an *icon* and a "reality which it resembles and symbolizes." Thus although it is not as pure as Marvell's dewdrop, although it does not exclude the world, the "little Globes Extent" contemplated by New Criticism shares, like its template, some of that "Figure's" coyness: "Dark beneath, but bright above : / Here disdainng, there in Love."

This, then, is the substance of a brief against the New Criticism. It is a brief in which I largely concur, and I have given what I take to be a fairly harsh formulation of the critique which may indeed seem both unjust and facile. But I do so partly because I want to justify the unraveling of the New Critical enterprise, and partly because I want to argue, finally, that two or three decades of unraveling have made possible a way of restoring the most significant features of that enterprise in a new form. For I am convinced that the sum of New critical parts is greater than the whole, and that the insights inscribed in those parts had to be extricated from the blindness of the whole if their power was to be realized. Looking back through those decades, the diversity of American New Criticism does seem to compose into a kind of organic unity that tenuously integrates several interpretive tendencies and delutes their force. Those tendencies subsequently fell, like the fountain that watered Milton's Eden, "united...../Down the steep glade" of Critical Archetypology and Contextualism. There, meeting more than one "nether Flood," they divided into several streams, ran "diverse, wand'ring many famous Realm/And Country whereof" eventually needs some account (*Paradise Lost*, IV. 230-35). These streams remain recognizably New Critical, and my aim will be to show what has happened to them, how some of them may be reconvened, and how that reconvening can open up a new perspective on the way Shakespeare's fictions by their very textuality, represent the problematic at the heart of all discourse which is the object of semiotic and deconstructive inquiry.

Since my account of New Criticism has so far been impressionistic, I shall now articulate the "parts" I mentioned above, prefacing this analysis with two cautionary remarks :

1) The scheme or model that follows is not put forth as an objective or comprehensive description and takes no account of differences among the

always fluctuating number of practitioners admitted into what Cleanth Brooks wryly calls "the guild."¹⁷ It describes no more than my own sense of New Criticism - - what I have both used and struggled against in my own practice - and since it is the product of retrospective reflection it probably represents my present interests more accurately than those I have in previous pages attributed to my New Critical salad days. 2) The model is retrospective in another way. It depicts New Criticism as being held together by a cluster of overlapping postulates. Several of them may seem redundant, and my reason for listing them separately is that they represent different facets or emphases that become more significant when the structure is decomposed. I have in effect constructed the model in terms of later critical developments.

There are six facets - or *postulates*, as I shall call them from now on - and I list them below in three pairs, each of which speaks to a recognizable set of interrelated concerns.

1) The *structural* postulate of organic unity that under-writes the integrity of the work and is challenged by theories of the text and intertextuality:

2) The *esthetic* postulate of self-sufficiency: construing the work as autonomous and autotelic made it the proper object of a "cognitive" and "disinterested" attention, protected it against the intentional and affective orientations of the older criticism, and subsequently, therefore, exposed the construal to the reconstructed forms of those orientations in semiotic theories of text production, reception theory, reader response theory, etc., all of which raised questions about any claims of disinterestedness.¹⁸

3) The *deistic* postulate of the dissociation of the text and its speaker or "point of view" from the author, which encourages the interpretive pursuit of "unbound" or "surplus" meaning (unbound by the author's intention and exceeding that of the speaker or narrator), and which has been not so much challenged as radicalized by expansion into theories of the text and of the subject.

4) The *rhetorical* postulate of the complexity, irony, ambiguity, etc. of the work, subsequently radicalized in the intensification of "duplicity" to undecidability, and in its extension to all discourse, understood as the discourse of one or several kinds of Other.

5) The *cosmological* postulate of the work as "in some sense" (the evasion is useful) a fully meaningful *world*, that is, as embodying a coherent

world view; this adds to the structural and esthetic postulates the implication that the work as microcosm makes some kind of "statement" about the macrocosm, and it is vulnerable to ideological analysis.

6) The *epistemic* postulate of the fictiveness or imaginariness of the work, which is, so to speak, wrapped around the other five postulates; fictive circumscription detaches the second world of the work, and while it elicits "disinterested" interpretation, it also presents itself as a representation, an image of the first world; as such, it offers a kind of play or staging ground for the *serio ludere* rewarded by fuller knowledge of "the human predicament" than is possible in the hustle of the iron cage; this postulate is also vulnerable to ideological analysis, to the charges that there are interests in interpretation and that the fictiveness of the actual world has been neutralised.

I visualize these postulates clustered together in the form of a cube which - like one of those puzzle toys - can be disassembled. The cube consists of three pieces. Its skeleton or armature is a central axis at the ends of which are affixed the faces of the deictic and rhetorical postulates. By itself this piece adumbrates the principles of any kind of "close reading," and New Criticism is not reducible to that. Hooking into the axis a second piece that consists of the adjacent structural and esthetic faces molded at right angles to each other produces a model of formalist interpretation, and New criticism is not reducible to that either.¹⁹ Attaching to this pair a balancing piece that contains the cosmological and epistemic faces completes the cube and *almost* completes the New Critical model. But not quite. For, as I noted above, in a competing visualization, the epistemic mode of fictiveness encloses figure. And I think of *that* figure as a sphere. These incompatible visualizations continually oscillate, and keep the cube from declining into literalness. For the cube or sphere, like a poem, is an icon, a metaphor, which is intended to call attention to the disparity between itself and any New Critical reality it resembles or symbolizes. The cube or sphere represents an analysis that simultaneously *includes* fictiveness as one of its analyzed constituents and *is enclosed* in fictiveness. The cube or sphere is my New Critical model of New Criticism.

The six postulates provide the means of production by which works are manufactured from textual raw material and placed on the interpretive market presided over by Hermes. I noted earlier that New Criticism (or at least the practice I was first familiar with) was held together by this model, but it is better to say that the postulates were held, indeed squeezed, together by the interpretive, academic, and cultural interests of the

practitioners who contributed to its assemblage and often collaborated in its maintenance. From the fact that different if related critical forces press on each postulate, I deduce that even where the postulates seem virtually identical, as 1 and 2 do, and perhaps also 5 and 6, they have divergent theoretical implications; redundancy, mutual reinforcement, may provide the attractive counterforce that binds them together so that their interdependence lends each postulate more theoretical power than it actually has, and thus defers the working of the centrifugal logic discernible in the developments that decomposed the model. There is, for example, a significant contradiction between the requirement of autotelic organicity (1 and 2) and the referential skew of 5 and 6. The first pair of postulates encodes strategies of decontextualization that distinguish "art" from "life," confine the interpretive gaze within the boundaries of the "work," and privilege the self-rewarding acts of attention performed in the presence of so complex a unity. The third pair encodes strategies of contextualization that distinguish but interrelate the work and the world, fiction and "reality," art and morality, the forms of representation and the meaning they induce on the "experience" they represent. These four postulates provide defensive reinforcement against the older criticism and lend moral weight to the new enterprise. The two pairs run in seemingly opposed directions, the first inward and the third outward. This tension is mitigated by foregrounding the operations specified in the second pair, since 3 and 4 are the active kernel of New Criticism and remain its most significant legacy. But the opposition they mediate, when viewed as a sequence, is familiar: the ancient pattern of withdrawal-and-return. The estheticism of the inward flight is justified by the claim that unlike the structures of science, prose, and daily life in capitalism, the structures of art and poetry are deliberately organized to offer the devout interpreter a "redeemed vision" of "experience" in the world dominated by science, prose, and capitalistic reason—a "truer," more adequate, perspicuous, etc., image of itself than the world (from which the work has been subtracted) would proffer of its own accord.

The cubic organization of the postulates thus has ideological implications which, as my language must suggest, I don't find very attractive, and which I shall discuss in a later chapter. And in spite of the surface inconsistency or tension between the tendencies of the first and third pairs, it has arguable theoretical coherence. Since I think this coherence constricts the range of interpretive possibilities latent in the individual postulates,

I welcome critiques of New Criticism even though I find many of them off target. It has been too easy for its critics to single out the ideological issues or harp on apparent logical inconsistencies and then to illustrate these flaws in the work of this or that practitioner. But critiques of this sort tend to be trivial because they do not take into account the structure of the cube and the work it does. For example, the kind of inconsistency Gerald Graff triumphantly exposes in *Poetic Statement and Critical Dogma* is the mere symptom of the ideological pattern that gives the cubic structure its equilibrium. It is by no means peculiar to the practices of New Critics.

My hypothetical abstraction of the cube from New Criticism is in fact intended to exhibit an "objective" structure that has a specific historical provenance which New Critics have themselves obscured, and that gives the cube positive value as an instrument of historical analysis. It remains true, however, that the generative power of the postulates is inhibited both by their cubic association and by the ideological skew of the model. Post-New-Critical theory and practice have shown how to realize this power, and in the next section I shall explore two paths out of the cube that have been, or can be, taken. The first puts pressure on the postulates of organic unity and esthetic autonomy; the second entails a new approach to the deictic and rhetorical postulates.

ii.

Recent developments have led, on the one hand, to the broadening of the scope of textual hermeneutics well beyond the domain of traditional literary criticism, and, on the other hand, to more "politicized" variants of the practice once associated with the New Criticism. Of course, "recent" is misleading, since much of what I shall describe has been going on for a long time, much antedates the heyday of New Criticism, and in many cases the "developments" may have occurred with no awareness of or debt to New Criticism. When I speak of the disassembling of the cube and the subsequent career of its postulates, I am concocting a narrative which is fictional in all respects but one: it corresponds to my own experience and practice over the years, and perhaps to those of others in my generation. Many of us who were inducted into the community of the cube and have followed the different filaments of our practice along paths leading to foreign shores find them rewoven in the volatile and interpenetrating fields of inquiry that produce the texture of the so-called "human science." For me that meander has been almost as problematical as it has been revelatory, and my purpose in this study is to some extent reactionary: it is to

resist the drift away from the cube without sacrificing the increase of interpretive power released by the drift; to inscribe the traces of a reconstructed old New Criticism on the postulates in flight from the cube.

I begin with a summary of the logical trajectory imposed on this flight by my fictional narrative. Its precondition is the breaking down of the barriers erected around the work by the structural and esthetic postulates. This leads to the universalized application of the deictic postulate and problematizes the intentional framework in terms of which the rhetorical postulate guides interpretive practice. The breakdown of the distinction between work and nonwork puts the cosmological and epistemic postulates in question by threatening the distinctions between (1) the esthetic microcosm and the macrocosm it represents, and (2) fiction and non fiction. Interpretive processes and categories which the cube confines to the language and "world of literature or art transgress their boundaries to participate in "the social construction of reality," "ways of worldmaking," "the discourse of the other," and the constitution of the subject by ideology, language, or "power/knowledge."

The material basis of esthetic autonomy is suggested in Catherine Belsey's remarks that the weakness of New Criticism "originates in the attempt to locate meaning in a single place, in the word of the text, 'on the page'" (*Critical Practice*, p. 19). Autonomy is secured by identifying "the words of the text" with their material signifiers "on the page." The New Critics, as Walter Ong puts it, "assimilated the verbal art work to the visual object-world" and "insisted that the poem or other literary work be regarded as an object, a 'verbal icon.'"²¹ It is significant, and hardly surprising, that much talk about organic unity is carried on in terms that subordinate temporal process to spatial form—the verbal artwork as icon, image, world, well-wrought urn. The dynamic implications of organic process are too easily transformed by the concept of organic unity into the static image of the parts and whole of a visualizable *one* protectively enclosed within imaginary outlines. The beginning, middle, and end are those of a finished product, like a page or a book. The structural unity and esthetic autonomy of the work are guaranteed by the reductive identification of the text with the words on the page in the book. Its material position underwrites the work's independent existence. So blatant an example of "the falacy of simple location" (Whitehead) is an obvious target and has often been criticized for screening out those systems of differences, or "discursive formations," within which and against which the work

participates in the logically more tenable kind of uniqueness conferred by its position in the system.

Such systems have been distinguished as *intertextual* and *extratextual*. Critics of New Criticism have exploited their possibilities to show how they can remove the barriers established by the structural and esthetic postulates, and open up two paths out of the cube. In the first, the concept of intertextuality is employed to dissociate the text from the page and the simply-located work. In the second, the intimate relation of text to page is emphasized in all its materiality to produce a very different orientation toward the interplay of work and text with their extratextual environment. I shall now discuss examples of each approach, noting by way of preface that the distinction between intertextual and extratextual is itself relative to specific interpretive projects: it is sometime useful to distinguish them as intersecting coordinates of the discursive field within which the work is located *and* which the work represents; for other purposes the extratextual may itself be subsumed under an expanded concept of intertextuality so that cultural and institutional contexts are approached on the model of the work or the text.

(1) Jonathan Culler's brief account of intertextuality in *The Pursuit of Signs* exemplifies the present state of the lore on the subject:

"Intertextuality"... .. has a double focus. On the one hand, it calls our attention to the importance of prior texts, insisting that the autonomy of texts is a misleading notion and that a work has the meaning it does only because certain things have previously been written. Yet in so far as it focuses on intelligibility, on meaning, "Intertextuality" leads us to consider prior texts as contributions to a code which makes possible the various effects of signification. Intertextuality thus becomes less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture The study of intertextuality is thus not the investigation of sources and influences as traditionally conceived; it casts its net wider to include anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost, that make possible the signifying practices of later texts. (p. 103)

The final sentence indicates how the traditional procedures suppressed by New Criticism have been recuperated on the entirely new basis of a structural or synchronic systematics in which the work is inscribed, which it

presupposes, and which makes its particular "effects of signification" possible.

Culler illustrates "the dangers that beset the notion of intertextuality" (p. 109) with sympathetic critiques of the way Riffaterre, Kristeva, and Bloom conceive and deploy it: on the one hand, its theoretical focus is on a general and anonymous discursive space; on the other hand, their intertextual practice puts the general theory in question by seeking out particular pretexts and precursors. Advocating a flexible and variable procedure with "multiple strategies" and "different focuses" (p. 111.) Culler nevertheless agrees with Kristeva's statement that "every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it" (quoted on p. 105), and it is the implied emphasis on imposition and jurisdiction which I find telling in his insistence that the task of poetics is to relate

a literary work to a whole series of other works, treating them not as sources but as constituents of a genre, for example, whose conventions one attempts to infer. One is interested in *conventions which govern* the production and interpretation of character, of plot structure, of thematic synthesis, of symbolic condensation and displacement. In all these cases there are no moments of authority except those which are retrospectively designated as origins and which, therefore, can be shown to derive from the series for which they are constituted as origin. (p. 117, my italics)

As Culler describes it, the series, the code, the system of conventions, the genre, govern the construction of a particular text. And the passages cited make it clear that he conceives of the "discursive space" of intertextuality in diachronic as well as synchronic terms: earlier and later texts form the series through which the system of conventions, genre, etc., is elaborated and continuously modified. This raises a question about the sources of power and authority. Who or what retrospectively designates moments of authority, and what does it mean to say they "derive from the series"? Toward the end of his discussion, Culler momentarily wavers from his emphasis on the hegemony of "the series" or of general discursive space, and gestures toward an alternative approach, which is to look at the specific presuppositions of a given text, the way in which it produces a pretext, an intertextual space whose occupants may or may not correspond to other actual texts. The goal of this project would be an account of how

texts create presuppositions and hence pre-texts for themselves.....” (p. 118). This implies a different relationship between the given text and its intertextual environment, one in which the lines of force and “moments of authority” derive not from the series but from the text. But Culler does not develop this alternative. He merely states it as the first of two useful if “limited approaches to intertextuality,” and goes no to restore his major emphasis in describing the second : “a poetics which is less interested in the occupants of that intertextual space which makes a work intelligible than in the conventions which underlie that discursive activity or space” (p. 118) I think both the first alternative and the functional relation between the two deserve more attention and articulation than Culler gives them, and I shall briefly illustrate this contention with the genre of epic, in which the creation of generic presuppositions and pre-texts is especially salient.

Any intertextual series may be viewed in the complementary perspectives which Saussure called *prospective* and *retrospective*. When the series of epic poems inaugurated by Homer is viewed prospectively as if from the past forward, it may appear to be the continuous development of a formal paradigm which accommodates variations revisions, and is subject to few revolutionary violations of “paradigm-induced” expectations. From this standpoint, revisions sequentially effected by Virgil, Dante, Ariosto, Spenser, Milton and even Wordsworth, only confirm the durability of normal epic practice, the flexibility with which the paradigm “evolves” by adjusting to changes that “bring it up to date.” But when viewed retrospectively, from the latest work backward, every new epic poet appears to invent his own version of the genre he “inherits” (represents as inherited), and to do so in order to overthrow that paradigm. From this standpoint, every canonical epic is a revolutionary crisis, an anomaly, and a paradigm shift.

In this divided perspective, the “discursive space” of genre as a code or system of conventions assumes two conflicting aspects. On the one hand, it becomes the preexisting code that governs new practice, “impose[s] a universe on it,” and “makes possible the various effects of signification.” On the other hand, it becomes the revisionary representation or perhaps caricature of the first aspect : the new poem chooses the particular set of epic norms and precursors to be represented as its source, tradition, and target. Retrospectively, then the code that makes the new poem’s “effects of signification” possible is itself an effect of the new poem’s signifying strategies. Thus we return, though in qualified measure, to a focus on the

autonomy of the new poem and on the uniqueness not only of its bounded form as a verbal icon but also of the discursive space, the generic universe, it constitutes "outside itself" as the condition of its possibility.

Given this complementarity, it might be thought that the best way to establish both the evolving structure of the generic paradigm and the uniqueness of the new poem's retrospect would be to compare the two perspectives. The reason I don't think this a tenable procedure is that the generic paradigm along with its prospectively determined "evolution" is a fantasy produced either by an academic tradition of interpreters who abstract and reify the genre, or by the new poem's retrospect itself. The existence and character of the genre as an intertextual "space" or system can be established only by close interpretation of the poems that announce their membership in the genre, interpretations that attend to the way they characterize it, and attend also to poems that define themselves over against it in such parasitic anti-genres as mock epic and Alexandrian bucolics. The "epic tradition" then emerges as a series of representations of epic that poems set up as points of departure, and the resultant picture of repetitions and differences provides a profile which, ranging over the series becomes that reader's (or those readers') representation of the genre. Now at least in the case of epic, the new poem's retrospective characterization tends to identify the genre with one or more particular precursors. This confronts the reader with the task of comparing, for example, Homer's practice with his representation of epic conventions, Homer's practice and representation with Virgil's practice and *his* representation of Homer's practice and representation, and so forth. Such an intertextual approach to epic resolves into a series of close readings that situate intertextual space within each poem as a fictitious projection of its "external" generic context, and these readings may well conform to the principles of the cube even as they revise or ignore distinctions that the cube enjoins: distinctions between the autonomous text and its literary-historical context, between literary and nonliterary (in this case, historical) interpretation, between the bounded "interior" of the fictional microcosm and its nonfictional "exterior" in the intertextual macrocosm of the generic code. Thus in the retrospective view to which the cube postulates give primacy, the poem circumscribed by the cube becomes the constitutive source both of itself and of the intertextual universe around it. Later, I shall generalize this proposition, arguing that a reconstructed version of the cube enables us both to extend the interpretive operations of the postulates to any aspect of the

world beyond the work and to introject that aspect into the still circumscribed interior of the work.

Conceived in this manner, what intertextual study opens up is not so much a way out of the New critical cube, a way that reduces the interpretation of texts to an ancilla of poetics (the program advocated by *The Pursuit of Signs*), as a way that takes the cube with it, by turns dilating and contracting the scope of its application: first expanding the reach of its postulates beyond the work into the discursive space of its literary or cultural or institutional contexts, then driving those contexts back into the interior of the work. A first approach to any poem in the Homeric-Virgilian series considers how it presents or displays the traces of its precursors and the conventions of its genre. Further interpretive elaboration transforms those traces and conventions from presented to represented features, and probes for the possibility of an ideological skew to the presentation of epic norms—that is, the possibility that the representation of precursors and norms is ambivalent or critical, and is directed outward toward a similarly toned representation of contemporary culture and institutions. Thus Alasdair MacIntyre's observation that "epic and saga... portray ...a society which already embodies the form of epic or saga"²² contains an implied proposal for expanding the cube to the ambience of heroic poetry in aristocratic society, but "portray" begs an important question, namely, whether the portrayal merely reproduces aristocratic ideology or represents it in the more complex and distanced perspective that Althusser ascribes to "art" and the novel:

What art makes us *see*... is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it *alludes*..... Blazac and Solzhenitsyn give us a "view" of the ideology to which their work alludes and with which it is constantly fed, a view which presupposes a *retreat*, an *internal distancing* from the very ideology from which their novels emerged. They make us "perceive" (but not know) in some sense *from the inside*, by an *internal distance*, the very ideology in which they are held... Neither... gives us any *knowledge* of the world they describe, they only make us "see," "perceive" or "feel" the reality of the ideology of that world.²³

To "see" the reality of the ideology"—as opposed to the conceptual or analytical knowledge that science gives of the same object—is to see that

it is imaginary, that it represents itself as reality, that it is enunciated as such from specific sites of power, and that it is deeply inscribed in the individuals whom it constitutes or "interpellates" as subjects.²⁴

Internal distance or detachment makes the epic poem a commentary on and not merely a reflection of the society and ideology it represents, the *Iliad* on early Hellenic ideology, the *Aeneid* on Augustan ideology, the *Divine Comedy* on the multiple clashing ideologies precariously equilibrated in the super-ideology of *Christianitas* (pagan and Christian, imperial and ecclesiastical and civic, Augustinian and Thomistic). But this commentary on what the poem represents, as its extratextual referent gains added force by being mapped onto its distanced intertextual commentary on precursors: the *Odyssey's* commentary on the *Iliad* brings out contradictions in the heroic/aristocratic code; the *Aeneid* shows how Augustan ideology activates and cloaks its contradictions in an archaic Homeric vestment; the *Divine Comedy* ideologizes putative realities of the present by assimilating them to the literary fictions of the poem's heroic and courtly predecessors. In each case the commentary is produced by distinguishing the extratextual from the intertextual environment and then making them intersect. The interpretive commentary on this commentary is in turn produced by expanding the operation of the cubic postulates into the different "spaces" of the two environments and contracting those interpreted "spaces" into the "space" of the work.

So far I have surveyed an intertextual path out of the cube, and given some very rough indication of the way this approach could be reincorporated in a revised application of the cube. The second or more strictly extratextual path may be anticipated by observing that it is one thing to explore a series of poems connected by intertextual allusion, the latest poem linking itself to precursors in the generic space it represents, and quite another thing to compare poems which are not so linked yet which still display generic similarities—*Beowulf* and the *Aeneid*, for example, or, more generally, any of the northern series of epics or sagas (Icelandic, Teutonic) with each other and with the classical/medieval/renaissance series rooted in Homeric epic. In such cases, poems that are not intertextually connected exhibit the common extratextual norms of structurally analogous social, political, and cultural institutions and their discourses. For example, the instituted discourse of honor has its own logic, dynamic, and contradictions, and these manifest themselves in the conflictive politics of gender, generation,

gift exchange, and competing social groups (family, kingroup, polity, warband, etc.). the fact that the manifestations display marked similarity in such unrelated poems as *Beowulf* and the Homeric epics testifies to the extratextual influence on the epic norms and forms suggested in MacIntyre's comment. What remains to be seen is how those extratextual discourses can be accommodated to intratextual and cubic interpretation. Some clues in Culler's discussion point toward a particular topic of extratextual research which in recent decades has become very important, and I shall begin there.

(II) Culler's proposal for two limited approaches to intertextuality, mentioned above (pp. 27-28), is modeled on a distinction linguists make between two kinds of presuppositions—*logical* and *pragmatic*—“at work in a natural language” (p. 111). A sentence implies or creates a logical presupposition when the proposition it expresses entails prior propositions: “Presuppositions are what must be true in order that a proposition be either true or false. Thus, *It surprised me that John bought a car* presupposes that *John bought a car*, as does *It didn't surprise me that John bought a car*” (Ibid.). This “modest intertextuality in relating sentences of a text to another set of sentences which they presuppose” takes on “considerable importance in literature,” in the form of what Barthes has called the *deja lu*, the intertext of “anonymous, undiscoverable, and nevertheless already read” bits of prior discourse that a text produces as its pre-text (pp. 112, 102, 114). But it is the other kind of presupposition to which I want to draw attention, and I mention the logical kind only to enforce the contrast with pragmatic presuppositions, which “are defined not on the relations between sentences but on the relations between utterance and situation of utterance. . . *Open the door* presupposes, pragmatically, the presence, in a room with a door that is not open, of another person who understands English and is in a relation to the speaker which enables him to interpret this as a request or command” (p. 116). Culler notes that here the “analogies with the case of literature are not very rich” except insofar as “we take the literary utterance as a special kind of speech act, detached from a particular temporal context and placed in a discursive series formed by other members of a literary genre, so that a sentence in a tragedy, for example, is appropriately read according to conventions which are different from those which would apply in comedy” (Ibid.) He goes on to argue that “the investigation of pragmatic presuppositions” in speech act theory “is similar to the task which confronts poetics” because in both cases “one is working on the conventions of a genre” (of speech act or of literature)

in a manner that relates the sentence or work in question to a series of presupposed sentences or works in a generically bounded "discursive or intertextual space" (pp. 116-17).

In this argument Culler shifts ground from the linguist's extratextual focus on "relations between utterance and situation of utterance" to an intertextual focus on the conventional presuppositions to which speech act theory and poetics attend. He thereby swerves away from what I think is a rich and promising field of investigation: the study not of speech acts *per se* but of the "situation of utterance" as a structure of presuppositions that profoundly influences the production, transmission, reception, interpretation, and exchange of messages and their meanings. This belongs to the more general study of the influence exerted on all aspects of life by the structural properties of communications media—speech, writing, print, electronic and cybernetic networks. For poetics and literary interpretation, it seems especially pertinent to explore the following areas of inquiry; (1) the functional interdependence between the structural properties of media and the institutions in which they are embedded; (2) the interdependence between those structures and the parameters of control over the production, dissemination, and appropriation of meaning; (3) the literary or graphic representation of (1) and (2), particularly in texts that present themselves in ironic rather than mimetic relation to the speech acts and contexts of utterance they represent. Of these three topics—communication, signification, and representation—the third is relatively uncharted territory, the first has been pretty well staked out, and while the second has often been partly colonized the area in which its boundaries overlap those of the first has not been much explored. Consequently, in what follows, I shall skim quickly over the first and go more slowly over the second. And since I don't have time to do justice to the third, I shall merely illustrate the bare bones of an interpretive approach to the topic.

(1) "The New Critics have assimilated the verbal art work to the visual object-world of texts rather than to the oral-aural event-world." This statement is significant not only because it recalls the theme of "the words on the page" but also because it was written by Walter Ong, with whom the study of communications media is chiefly associated. Following in the footsteps of Eric Havelock and Marshall McLuhan, Ong has shown how an institutional order founded on oral discourse implicates, by virtue of that foundation—a specific set of interrelated, social, political, ethical, and cultural parameters. Havelock's account of the interplay between oral

and literate institutions in classical antiquity has been generalized by Ong's study of media shifts in terms of the global effects of the progressive overlays of typographic on chirographic culture, and of (what he unfortunately calls) the "secondary orality" of electronic media on print culture.

(2) Ong's explorations organize a historic-diachronic testing ground for such theories of the text as Paul Ricoeur's structural analysis of the differences between direct and indirect, or dialogical and textual discourse. Research into the history of media has increased awareness of the ways the structural constraints and opportunities specific to institutions based on writing/reading differ from those of institutions that feature the direct interaction of "senders" and receivers." Ricoeur's revision of hermeneutic theses borrowed from Heidegger and Gadamer makes it easier to correlate differences in media structure with differences in the relation between the meanings senders intend and those receivers appropriate. Distinguishing between *event* and *meaning* in discourse, and between *utterer's meaning* and *utterance meaning*, he argues that in spoken discourse the latter two coincide because the production and reception of meaning occur in the same speech event. The event is characterized by

immediacy because the speaker belongs to the situation of interlocution. He is there, in the genuine sense of being-there, of *Da-sein*. Consequently the subjective intention of the speaker and the discourse's meaning overlap each other in such a way that it is the same thing to understand what the speaker means and what his discourse means ... With written discourse, however, the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide. This dissociation... gives to the concept of inscription its decisive significance, beyond the mere fixation of previous oral discourse. Inscription becomes synonymous with the semantic autonomy of the text, which results from the disconnection... of what the author meant what the text means. The text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text means now matters more than what the author meant when he wrote it.²⁵

Thus "liberated from the narrowness of the face-to-face situation" and "distaniciated" from its author, the text is

open to an indefinite number of readers, and, therefore, of interpretations. The opportunity for multiple readings is the dialectical counterpart of the semantic autonomy of the text.

It follows that the problem of the appropriation of the meaning of the next becomes as paradoxical as that of the authorship. The right of the reader and the right of the text converge in an important struggle that generates the whole dynamic of interpretation. Hermeneutics begins where dialogue ends, (pp. 31-32)

Whatever its flaws, this simple model provides a working hypothesis for exploring the effects the different media might have on the expression, dissemination, and appropriation of meaning in the institutional settings adjusted to the powers and limits of those media. Thus from Ong's story of the shifts from oral to chirographic to print dominance, one can abstract a diachronic grid with the following polarized pattern: (a) increasingly amplified power of transmission of messages—greater distances, more receivers, more accurate inscription in a more permanent medium—provides more opportunities “for multiple readings,” which leads to (b) increasing loss of senders' control over the received meanings. Superimposing Ricoeur's story on Ong's generates a model that would, for example, provide the structural coordinates of such paired phenomena of early print culture as the intensified attempts to control channels of communication (*e. g.*, by censorship and propaganda) and the multiplying conflicts of interpretation to which growing sectarianism, more organized political and religious dissent, and the beginnings of cultural pluralism all testify. It is obvious that a model of this sort encourages the extension of the esthetic, deictic, and rhetorical postulates well beyond the boundaries of the cube into putatively extratextual domains.

The weak point in Ricoeur's theory is his idealization of spoken discourse. This has been noted by Edward Said: “Ricoeur assumes circumstantial reality to be symmetrically and exclusively the property of speech,” which exists “in a state of presence,” and he treats oral discourse as “a type of conversation between equals,” whereas “the discursive situation is more usually like the unequal relation between colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed.”²⁶ To soften Said's characteristically tendentious way of putting things, it is more usually like the unequal relation between man and woman, parent and child, senior and junior—between positions or “sites of enunciation” (Foucault) that gives their incumbents the right to initiate speech and those that impose the obligation to listen and respond. Thus the word *obedience* derives from a Latin verb, *obedire* (*ob-audire*), whose literal meaning is “to listen from below.”²⁷ That the politics of oral discourse is hierarchic rather than egalitarian has more to do with

asymmetries in the reciprocity and authority relations of gender, genealogy, and generation *within* a speech community than with mere power relations *between* insider and outsider communities.

Ricoeur's model is based on Benveniste's analyses of the linguistic system of deictic relationship, a system organized radially around the cardinal discursive function of the first person. The system is egalitarian and symmetrical in that all actual speakers have theoretically equal access to the first person and in that interlocutors cooperatively alternate between first and second persons. But such a system is abstracted from the institutional role structure of any speech community that uses the system. To revert momentarily to Culler's distinction, the relations of deixis analyzed by Benveniste and other linguists comprise a set of logico-grammatical presuppositions internal to the pure discursive field of speech acts. But this set is intersected and—from an idealist's standpoint—systematically distorted by the pragmatic presuppositions that condition the context of utterance and derive from institutional role structure. Said's comment would have been more telling had he observed that Ricoeur in effect represses the pragmatic presuppositions to produce an idealized situation that Derrida would call *logocentric*.

The Derridean perspective allows a more fundamental criticism. Though Ricoeur does not valorize speech over writing, his view of the former is in other respects logocentric because it premises that since "the speaker and listener are both present to the utterance simultaneously," this immediacy seems to guarantee the notion that in the spoken word we know that we mean, mean what we say, say what we mean, and know what we have said." Against this view, Derrida "attempts to show that the very possibility of opposing the two terms on the basis of presence vs. absence or immediacy vs. representation is an illusion, since speech is *already* structured by difference and distance as much as writing is."²⁸ Speech no less than writing is hollowed out by the "discourse of the other," though the *other* need not be identified with the unconscious; it may be rooted in linguistic, social, political, cultural, etc., conventions and discourses; "this *difference* inhabits the very core of what appears to be immediate and present..... The illusion of the self-presence of meaning or of consciousness is thus produced by the repression of the differential structures from which they spring" (Ibid).

These structures include the asymmetrical positional dyads—man and woman, parent and child, senior and junior—that constitute the discourses

of gender, genealogy, and generation. Each is quite literally a discourse in that it is a dialogical structure of complementary but unequal sites of enunciation, a specific "domain of language use, a particular way of talking ... and thinking..."²⁹ And each is an "ideological configuration" in Althusser's sense in that it transforms individuals into subjects inscribed with positional attributes: dominant male and obedient female, loving parent and grateful child, wise senior and docile junior, etc. But these ideal imaginary complementarities are traversed by contradictions. Each positional dyad is freighted with conflicting interests, ambivalent desires, and ambiguous motivations. What makes its discourse ideological is that the contradictions are either repressed or differentially valorized. In that respect, each discourse is a preferred interpretation that closes down on a more complex set of relational possibilities. Thus a positional discourse is, if not a script, at least a scenario. To change the metaphor, it frames the loom and spins the threads of the speaking subject's discourse even if it doesn't weave its patterns. To change it again, the crosshatching of different positional discourses—gender, generation, family, household, and kin-group—foregrounds the subject as a center of psycholinguistic play against the complex institutional field of "discourses of the other." Reconceiving the basic Ong/Ricoeur model of oral discourse in these "grammatocentric" terms enhances the applicability of Derrida's notion of logocentrism to speech-centered cultures.

Derrida's use of the term entails its opposition to the grammatocentric pole from which he criticizes the logocentric illusion ("presence vs. absence," etc.). In the ensuing discussion, my use of the term reflects and implies his but modifies it so that it may perform a more positive or descriptive service on behalf of the following anthropological hypothesis: The most important source of that illusion is not speech *per se* but the body as a medium of communication and a system of signs—the perceptual signs of human presence and the functional signs of gender, age, and consanguinity that both determine and express the basic positional order. In a pure nonliterate society this order structures all interactions through the medium of embodied human presences. Presence *in* the body is extended through oral/aural and visual channels of communication. The presence *of* the body is inscribed in the positional roles and networks that condition the discursive relations of communication. Thus a pure nonliterate society, organized wholly in terms of the body's perceptual and functional signs, may be postulated as the ur-state of pure logocentrism, a hypothetical

point of origin that can anchor any diachronic model constructed for the analysis of changes in the structural relationship between communication and signification.

In this model the ur-state must be given a Derridean interpretation. That is, it is not sufficient to say, with Ricoeur, that "hermeneutics begins where dialogue ends." Instead, we stipulate that in speech centered culture dialogue tends to repress or inhibit "the opportunity for multiple readings" that provides the material of hermeneutics, i. e., multiple readings are theoretically possible because already embedded in the differential structures, the positional discourses, that constrain and enable speech. But given the structural character of a hypothesis that "explains" logocentrism as the consequence of a particular model of social organization—a body-centered positional order—rather than as "the underlying ideal of Western culture" (Johnson, p. ix), I think it would be well to suspend whatever pejorative implications adhere to Derrida's use of "logocentrism." If indeed we are going to stipulate that multiple meanings are inhibited by speech and encouraged by writing/reading, then it is not helpful to insist in absolute terms that the opposition "of presence vs. absence or immediacy vs. representation is an illusion." For it becomes important to hold fast at least to a relative distinction between them in order to explore the material differences imposed by media on the communication, control, and interpretation of meaning.

Derrida's critical impulse is radically opposed to the theologism latent or residual in the work of Ong and Ricoeur, but I think a revisionary middle way may be charted by imparting a Derridean spin to the combination of Ong's media theory and Ricoeur's text theory. If, as Johnson remarks, Derrida's critique of Western metaphysics focuses on its privileging of the spoken word over the written word" (*Dissemination*, p. viii), then a dialectical articulation of those two theories offers a way to convert the Derridean critique into a program of research: a historical hermeneutics grounded in the interdependence of changing modes of communication with changes in the production, reception, and control of signification. Such a hermeneutics, of whose dialectical profile I shall offer a fuller sketch later, would still rely on an interpretive practice oriented by the cubic postulates. But the postulates would have to be made more sensitive both to the textuality, the interpretability, of extratextual contexts (including media and their institutional parameters) and to the representation of those contexts within literary works. To illustrate this need,

especially as it concerns the deictic and rhetorical postulates, I turn now to the third of the topics mentioned above (p. 37).

(3) Writing that represents oral discourse is legion. But within that multitude we can pick out an important category of texts marked by this distinctive feature: what they represent is not oral discourse but "oral discourse." They do not so arrange conventions that the imitation of speech is mediated through a transparent or translucent screen of writing. They focus on the larger implications of speech-centered performance, on strategies and rituals of face-to-face interaction, and on the effects of oral culture and institutions on the production of meaning. But they do this from "outside" the imitated medium; they achieve distance by calling attention to themselves as writing—as works inscribed in a different medium, the medium of *difference*, that is, of graphic signs rather than bodily or vocal signs. They may even orient the reader's attention toward the dialogue or agon between the speech acts they represent and the complex interplay of textual codes accessible to the act of reading.

This general description needs to be more precisely articulated, a task I shall preface by noting that similar claims have been put forward specifically for Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* by Jonathan Crewe. Calling that work "an informal phenomenology of the page," he discusses Nashe's thematic punning on "page" (the first person protagonist is a page), observes "that Nashe is credited in the *O. E. D.* as the first user of 'page' in its sense of a printed sheet (in the *Menaphon* preface)," and reaffirms the traditional view that the point of Nashe's work

lies in its exploitation of, and bondage to, the emergent technology of printing..... The self-conscious emergence of the page in its own right implies a radical, perhaps irrevocable, alienation of language from its supposedly primordial character as speech (from its ideal character); a "purely technical" phenomenon threatens to make an essential difference..... The moment in which the page is foregrounded is one in which it ceases to be the invisible servant of a higher order of language and meaning, and assumes its own existence in a world in which it is no longer to be denied.³⁰

The historical observation seems reasonable because one can think of so many other examples in the dawn of the print era of works that anatomize the rhetoricity and theatricality of oral performance (and of literary performance that strives to be its ape) by mediating it through the

conspicuous textuality of their writing: Rabelais, Erasmus, Sidney (in the *Defence*), Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Donne, and Marvell, to name only a few.³¹ The same can be said, however, for several writers active in literate cultures before that era. Chaucer comes to mind immediately; and perhaps Petronius, Ovid, and some of the Greek dramatists. I say "perhaps" because although we now distinguish between writing against another represented medium and writing against another represented genre (as did the early bucolic and pastoral poets), this distinction cannot easily be applied to literature that writes against the dominant ancient genres, since their characteristic features identify them with ritualized modes of oral performance.

Writing that conspicuously differentiates its medium and production of meaning from those centered in the oral discourse it represents may be called *heterological*, on the grounds that *logos* denotes patterns not only of meaning or thinking but also of *lexis* and *phone*; *logos* is the equivalent of *sermo* that subsumes *ratio*. Within this general category we can distinguish writing that may be called *counterlogical* because it more pointedly writes against *logos*-centered discourse. And within the later, another distinction can be made. Much counterlogical writing represents and targets *phenomena* of utterance; it explores the socio-political implications of such specific aspects of oral discourse as levels of *sermo*—vernacular, courtly, learned, etc.—and rhetorical or theatrical strategies. But some counterlogical writing also targets the circumambient *context* of utterance, mounting a more systematic critique of the effects of logocentrism on the oral culture the writing represents. Some of the more interesting examples occur in ancient literature when traditions of writing have developed sufficiently to allow the play of reflexive awareness in works that confront pretypographic cultures alien to rather than grounded in the written word. I conclude the present section with a discussion of this theme in order to provide a very rough sketch—hardly more than a rumor—of the way interpretive practice can revise traditional approaches to ancient literature by opening up the cube and sending some of the postulates out to occupy extratextual territory.

Earlier I commented on the symbolic dominance of the body in what I referred to as the ur-state of pure logocentrism, and on its function as the basic organizing symbol social of and political order. To this I now add that—as Mary Douglas and others have argued—the body is not only an *organizing* symbol but also a *naturalizing* symbol. Even as it underlies

the social construction of a corporate institutional order, it assumes a countervailing ideological function: through its status as an *organism*, a natural entity, it legitimizes that order as given rather than socially constructed, transcendent reality rather than human fiction. In modern text-centered societies the politically, economically, and culturally important corporate groups tend to define themselves as products of human art; the concept of *corporation* is itself a legal fiction disembedded or differentiated from that of the natural corpus. But the important corporate groups of speech-centered societies tend continually to reembed themselves in the concept of *corpus* of which they are at least the terminological extensions.

In speech-centered societies there are several respects in which the individual body and person is less clearly self-contained, less sharply isolated, than the subject cut out by the ideological template of modern individualism. First, the body is not only the material, visible, and mortal locus of a personal presence but also the model of the spiritual, invisible, and immortal presence that people its ambient reality. Thus a reverberating and intercommunicating network of presences—including ancestral presences—binds together nature, humanity, cosmos, and *numen* or divinity; presences that speak to each other, represent each other, even permeate and penetrate each other. Second, embodied persons are icons of the institutional order and its roles because the past of a preliterate community—“its memory, its set of instructions, its sacred text—is literally embodied in every domicile, in every person or group marked by a kinship term or by a taboo, in every person or group who exemplifies a ritual or who recalls a myth...the significant distinctions in such a society have to be maintained, reconstructed, represented, and, in essence, *re-invented* in the very flesh of each generation.”³² Third, “oral cultures must conceptualize and verbalize all their knowledge with more or less close reference to the human life-world, assimilating the alien, objective world to the more immediate, familiar interaction of human beings” (Ong, p. 42). Since such cultures tend “to cast up accounts of actuality in terms of contests between individuals,” these interactions replace more abstract models of explanation, and their participants assume allegorical dimensions. Ong questions “the abandon with which early nontechnological societies have tended to polarize in virtue-vice categories not merely moral matters as such but also a great deal of essentially nonmoral actuality, seeing, for example, the operation of what we know today to be economic or social or even purely political forces as essentially naked struggles between moral good and evil.”³³

Exactly the same perception lies behind Erich Auerbach's much earlier critique of the limited realism, the limited historical consciousness, of ancient writing: "it does not see forces, it sees vices and virtues, successes and mistakes."³⁴ Ong's analysis of the way chirographic culture was dominated by categories congenial to oral comprehension provides a material explanation lacking in Auerbach's otherwise brilliant observations:

In the realistic literature of antiquity, the existence of society poses no historical problem; it may at best pose a problem in ethics, but even then the ethical question is more concerned with the individual members of society than with the social whole. No matter how many persons may be branded as given to vice or as ridiculous, criticism of vices and excesses poses the problem as one for the individual; consequently, social criticism never leads to a definition of the motive sources within society...[Yet] it is precisely in the intellectual and economic conditions of everyday life that those forces are revealed which underlie historical movements; these, whether military, diplomatic, or related to the inner constitution of the state, are only the product the final result, of variations in depths of everyday life. (pp. 32-33)

A world view organized in these ethical and agonistic terms is dominated by the category of the visible, audible, embodied person. Its social, institutional, and cosmic orders are iconically condensed in that figure of presence; they share in and extend its reality, they reinforce the *meconnaissance* enabling the subjects inscribed in its ideological discourses to repress or ignore forces whose analysis and representation presuppose instruments other than those available to speech-centered media. Ong's analysis helps explain how these limits and occlusions are functional elements of logocentric cultures. But neither Ong nor Auerbach—nor Havelock, nor, for that matter, Derrida—has appreciated the extent to which such "modern" insights were anticipated by ancient authors themselves; by Thucydides and Plato, for example, whose work I shall now glance at because both focus ironically rather than mimetically on the logocentric dramas of the oral culture they inhibit. They present their representations of oral discourse in an art and medium of writing whose *presence* as such is conspicuous and whose differences from the speech medium often conspicuously featured.

In Thucydides, the very difficulty of syntax and density of style seems calculated to discourage oral recitation and aural comprehension.

Furthermore, he explicitly thematizes the differences at the beginning of his history. When he contrasts traditional modes of transmission to his own superior method of testing evidence and making revisionary paraphrases, the flaws he picks out in the former are all those we associate with narratives based on the techniques and motives for producing oral history: the limits of memory, the unreliability of eye-witnesses, the prevalence of legend mystified by antiquity, the uncritical passivity of auditors, the temptation to seduce audiences with epideictic self display and fanciful tales (I. 20-23).

Thucydides anticipates Plato in his critical analysis of the speech-centered institutions of Athens which he obviously cherishes and much prefers to the laconic *eunomia* of Spartan culture. He and Plato anticipate Walter Ong in portraying aspects of what Ong (after Marcel Jousse) calls "verbomotor lifestyle." Ong notes, for example, that the interaction of oral narrative "with living audiences can actively interfere with verbal stability; audience expectations can help fix themes and formulas" (*Orality and Literary*, p. 67). The Socrates portrayed by Plato is much concerned with the deeper implications of this interaction, which I have elsewhere discussed in Weberian terms as the dynamics of charismatic bondage.³⁵ In the dialogues, Socrates confronts the tangle of social, political, and ethical discourses that respond to the logocentric structure of the dialogues' Athenian setting-the same tangle and the same structure as that depicted in Thucydides' "history." Like Thucydides' series of orators caught in the downward pull, the *lysis*, of the factional discourse of a democracy that gives preeminence to "speech over all other instruments of power,"³⁶ Plato's text represents a Socratic discourse trapped in the contradictions of that setting. Socrates' speech reveals but cannot penetrate the panoply of *logoi* that defend against self-criticism and exposure, preserve self-esteem, and rationalize self interest. His own *logoi* are "stolen" and anamorphically subverted by anti-Socratic speakers who use them to camouflage the politics of reactionary depotism in "disinterested" discourses: when the weird logic/metaphysics/ontology of Parmenides and the Eleatic Stranger, Timaeus' equally weird cosmology and anthropology, and Critias' Egyptian legend are subjected to the pressure of deictic and rhetorical analysis; they are revealed to be complex and devious rhetorical persuasions of the same order as the sophisticated performances of Protagoras and Gorgias. So understood, the Platonic scripture is no longer a direct transmission of the Word of Platonic philosophy. In presenting a representation of Socratic

discourse fettered by its conditions, it presents itself as the deferred *telos* of that discourse, the only medium capable of releasing it to new, fuller, and longer life.

The texts of Thucydides and Plato present themselves as representations of a densely specific historical situation that is at once their extratextual "referent" and their subject. I have been using this awkward formula, "present themselves as representations," advisedly. It would be misleading to say that texts simply *represent* their subject, and this especially true in the case of counterlogical writing, because it presents itself as a form of discourse which differs significantly and radically from the discourses it presents. It does not discreetly vanish into transparency with the modesty that befits a meremedium: prefers itself, commends itself, and stands in the way; it presents itself *over against* the subject it represents. For Thucydides and Plato, that subject consists of the collective or cultural discourses that circulate orally through a structured speech community. These are not merely the utterances of an aggregate of speakers, and they include but are not reducible to a culture's legacy of *logoi* and *topoi*. Rather they are the inherited stock of "language-games" understood in the crude lay-psychological sense of "the games people play." The discourses represented by Plato consist (a) of deep and patterned motivational structures of apprehension, misanthropy, and unappeasable desire, and (b) of the formulaic "moves" by which they may be expressed, or justified, or rationalized, or concealed, or repressed.

Some of Ong's comments on the doctrine of commonplaces illuminate the functions these 'moves' serve, but throw too pale a light on them: The doctrine of the commonplaces picks up and codifies the drives in oral cultures to group knowledge of all sorts around human behavior and particularly around virtue and vice." The *locus communis* or *topos* "was thought of as some kind of 'place'... in which were stored arguments to prove one or another point." Such commonplaces enabled one "to analyze a subject or an accumulated store of readied material.. to which one resorted for 'matter' for thinking and discoursing," and they were used "in true oral fashion not merely as formulas but as themes which were strung together in traditional, and even highly rationalized patterns to provide the oral equivalent of plot." Finally, "the oral performer, poet or orator, needed a stock of material to keep him going. The doctrine of the commonplaces is, from one point of view, the codification of ways of assuring and

managing this stock, a codification devised with the aid of writing in cultures which, despite writing, remained largely oral in outlook and performance patterns.”³⁷

We can make this account less bland and more applicable to the Platonic representation of discourse by giving it a reflexive emphasis. Speakers are represented directly or through Socrates’ mimicry as using these readymade *logoi* and *topoi* to prove a point not only to others but also to themselves. There is, for example, a discourse of piety and holiness that rationalizes impious actions or behaviour motivated by fear (*does*, apprehension, i.e., the fear of being taken which is the obverse of the desire to take). There is a discourse of *aidos*, or reverence, that allows one to reunderstand the *fear of* public opinion as the *respect for* public opinion. There are *logoi*, discourses, traditional stories that keep the oral performer going in the sense that they help him preserve self esteem in the face of motives or behavior he might deem shameful and unjust. Paolo Valesio’s brief synopsis of “the ontology of rhetoric” catches this sense of the discourses Socrates encounters with more pungency than Ong’s account: “The filtering of reality through the sieves of the common places, the conflicts among the functions of discourse (both internally and externally), and the eristic plant present in any discourse, at any level, on any topic—these are its main distinctive features.” Discourse is eristic because its “mechanisms... are simplified representations of reality, inevitably and intrinsically slanted in a partisan direction.”³⁸

In the Platonic text, Socrates’ famous *elenchos* machine, his discourse of refutation, is directed only superficially against individual interlocutors. Its main target is the individual’s essay access and submission to the supply of anonymous discourses circulating throughout the community and legitimized by aura of tradition. The *elenchos* operates on individuals who permit themselves to be the sites and embodiments of socially constructed discourses that fend off self-knowledge and, as a result, occlude the awareness *that* the speakers have permitted themselves to be mere embodiments. In that respect it may be said that what speaks through the speaker is “the discourse of the other.” But this also holds true in another respect: partly through its specifically textual resources and partly through the agency of Socrates’ duplicitous discourse, the text not only represents those discourses but analyzes their relationship to the motivational structures they conceal and, by concealing, enable. Socrates and the text together draw from interlocutors meanings they seem not to intend or want to express,

meanings they seem unaware of or unwilling to acknowledge, but meanings already inscribed in the anonymous discourses they give voice and power to.

This, then, is a glimpse of the complex interpretation of logocentric culture and institutions that the Platonic text performs, and sometimes ascribes to the speaker named Socrates. But it is not an analysis any of his interlocutors are shown to comprehend; it is neither what they want to hear nor what they will let his words mean. It is displaced, repressed, buried in the rhizomes branching silently through the text. Refused by the speech community represented in the dialogues, it abides the harvest of future readerships, commits itself with trusting openness to communities of the text who may or may not glean it, depending on whether or not they practice the hermeneutical or circular method of farming. And this interpretation contains a further range of irony: Socrates is represented as laboring under the same logocentric constraints as the traditional Homeric culture he deconstructs. He, no less than the poets and sophists, is forced to submit to the tyranny of his audience. The Platonic text presents its rhizomatic textuality as an alternative to the logocentrism that foils Socrates by enabling his auditors—and especially those who are his friend and admirers—to alienate his *logoi* and fill his words with their meanings.

In such writing, the very obviousness or conspicuousness of textual complexity is itself a major stylistic feature, whether in the register of syntax, or of lexical and figurative effects, or of intertextual play, or of metaliterary devices. Complexity in any or several of these registers demands the kinds of interpretive responses that characterise the more nonlinear aspects of reading: decelerating the tempo, violating sequence, and dislocating or conflating passages; tracing the threads of various patterns through the textual weave; analyzing form or logico-propositional structures like hypotaxis and parataxis and *epagoge* for their tonal, thematic, and motivational implications. These effects of conspicuous complexity are counterlogical: they defy the temporal and linear constraints of oral performance and audition; they inhibit the form of reading that simulates listening; they solicit a readership of textual or grammatocentric rather than oral or logocentric interpreters. And they are by no means gratuitous; they constitute the message of the medium, or the content of the form. For the kinds of communicative transactions they inhibit are precisely those they represent, and represent with varying degrees

of ambivalence as modes of performance they value or admire on the one hand, but modes whose limits they subject to parodic or ironic critique on the other.

In these remarks on Thucydides and Plato, I have tried to suggest how a Derridean version of the Ong/Ricoeur model might give the deictic and rhetorical postulates a new interpretive purchase on texts that present themselves as critiques of the logocentric dramas they represent. I could have made the same point with other counterlogical writers—Chaucer and Shakespeare, for example. But I chose Thucydides and Plato because the former's text has been classified as "history" and the latter's as "philosophy" whose fictive elements are thereby dismissed as mere heuristic devices. Such classifications are strategies for imposing discursive distance on the relation between text and reader—that is, for discouraging the kind of close interpretation reserved for texts classified as "literature." In the case of Plato, discursive distance produces what is essentially a logocentric relationship because it makes us read the dialogues as if we are listening, weighing, and actively responding to the arguments Plato places in Socrates' mouth: "Whoever the interlocutors and others present may be, we, the readers, are also listeners and must participate, as silent partners, in the discussion; we must weigh and then accept or reject the solutions offered and must comment, as well as we can, on what is at stake."³⁹ Under such an interpretive regime, "what is at stake" too often turns out to consist of essentialized "issues"—either the themes and problems canonized by the history of philosophy or those that remain of interest to contemporary "thinkers" or those that illuminate "the human predicament." The title of Paul Shorey's book is revealing, and still reflects the spirit of much current commentary: *What Plato Said*—about art, logic, justice, the state, the Forms, the soul, the cosmos, etc.—not what he *wrote*, not what he represented Socrates as saying, which often includes Socrates' representation of what his interlocutors want to hear rather than what he wants them to know.

To collapse discursive distance by shifting into the literary register and submitting the text to the play of the postulates is by no means to abandon such thematic analysis, nor is it to impose an estheticizing quarantine on "the words on the page." Rather it is to constitute within the text, and as a fictive representation, the historically specific structure of logocentric institution we associate with fifth-century Athens and, more generally, with the culture of the Hellenic polis. In the very cursory

overview I have given of this approach to the dialogues, my emphasis has been on those features of the text that respond to deictic and rhetorical analysis, and perhaps the overview, however cursory, will suffice to suggest that a refinement of the deictic postulate is necessary to bring it in line with the above sample of interpretive practice. The original New-Critical form of the postulate focuses on "the dissociation of the text and its speaker or 'point of view' from the author, which encourages the interpretive pursuit of 'unbound' or 'surplus' meaning (unbound by the author's intention and exceeding that of the narrator," I now want to place more emphasis on the dissociation of the text from the speaker in order to situate the pursuit of surplus meaning there rather than between text and author. But as we have seen, that intratextual space—the space of representation—is not a void or a neutral ground against which are posed individual speakers. The text presents itself over against the discourse(s) it represents.

Notes and References

1. I shall not discuss the already much-analyzed debate between "historicists" and "formalists." "Formalism" is a broader and simpler phenomenon than the particular picture of New Criticism I develop here. For a trenchant dialectically astute survey of the debate, see Michael MicCanles, *Dialectical Criticism and Renaissance Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 1-13.
2. *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. vii-viii. See also Jonathan Culler's account, in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), of the persistence in post-New-Critical practice of the "insidious legacy of the New Criticism," the "notion that the critic's job is to interpret literary works" (p. 5). For one of the more interesting paternal resurrections-or post-mortems—see Rene Wellek's "The New Criticism: Pro and Contra," *Critical Inquiry*, 4 (1978), 611-24, and the critical interchange in response to this essay between Wellek and Gerald Graff, *Critical Inquiry*, 5 (1979), 569-79.
3. With one exception: W. K. Wimsatt. But I was and remain

Wimsatt's student in spite of (because of ?) the differences of perspective documented in the following pages.

4. Loose talk about worlds abounds in the critical literature. Its provenance is traced by Meyer Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), esp. pp. 3-13, 42-46, 238-40, 272-85. Abrams quotes two exemplary statements on p. 284. From Austin Warren: "The poet's 'final creation' is 'a kind of world or cosmos; a concretely languaged, synoptically felt world; an ikon or image of the "real world."'" From Elder Olson: "In a sense, every poem is a microcosmos, a discreate and independent universe with its laws provided by the poet. . . ."
5. Nor that New Criticism was a historical: see p. 64 below. On the marginalizing effects of New Criticism, see Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 46-51, and William E. Cain, *The Crisis in Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 4-7.
6. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959, pp. 743-44. Elsewhere, Wimsatt admits that "the New Critics, with their repeated major premises of 'interest', 'drama', and 'metaphor' advancing often enough to an emphasis on 'inclusiveness' and 'maturity', have tended at moments unhappily toward the didactic" ("Horses of wrath: Recent Critical Lessons," in *Hateful Contraries: Studies in Criticism and Literature* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), p. 24.
7. Wimsatt, "Verbal Style: Logical and Counterlogical," in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), p. 217.
8. From "Poetry and Morals: A Relation Reargued" and "Poetry and Christian thinking," in *The Verbal Icon*, pp. 98-100 and 279.
9. Review of *Day of the Leopards*, Wimsatt's last book, in *New York Times Book Review*, June 13, 1976, 21.
10. *Semiotics and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 11.
11. In *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980), Catherine Belsey comments on the New-Critical emphasis on contemplation, "performed in isolation," involving "only the individual reader and the text. The poem, self-contained and closed, constitutes a pattern of knowledge which leads to a philosophy of detachment" (p. 20).
12. *The Pursuit of Signs*, pp. 3-4, 16, and *Passim*.
13. See *Semiotics and Interpretation*, pp. 20ff.

14. This is partly why my sense of New Criticism differs from Michael McCannes' sense of formalism. He shows ingeniously how the formalist is a historicist in spite of himself, becoming his dialectical opposite because he "implicitly views literary works as functions of historically conditioned perspectives, namely his own" (*Dialectical Criticism*, p. 5). But the view is hardly implicit. If the New Critics are in part formalists, they are quite explicit in establishing a canonical literary history according to criteria supplied by modern literature and interpretation. The qualities assigned to the work of Joyce, Faulkner, Eliot, etc, provided criteria of inclusion (of Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939]). McCannes remarks that the formalist's a historical standpoint violates itself to the exact degree that he uses methods of analyzing literary structure that are the products of literary developments in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The very notions of 'organic form', 'structure of meaning', 'ambiguity', and the rest derive from conceptions of literary structure for which such writers as Flaubert, James, Conrad; Joyce, and Eliot were primarily responsible" (p. 9). But if there is a violation of logic it is conscious, and consistent with the establishment of criteria for organizing the canon. In any event, as I noted earlier and will note later, New Criticism is not reducible to formalism.
15. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 36.
16. Cf. Wellek, "The New Criticism: Pro and Contra" (note 2 above), pp. 615-16, on the 'historical scheme' of the New Critics, and Gerald Graff's response ("New Criticism Once More," *Critical Inquiry*, 5 [1979], 570-71), The historical and referential aspects of New Criticism are too often ignored. For a representative instance, see Terence Hawkes' summary in *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 151-56. A more perspicuous comment on the ways in which New Criticism is and is not historical may be found in Belsey *Critical Practice*, pp. 18-20.
17. Assuming, of course, the "C. B." responsible for the short entry on New Criticism in the Enlarged Edition of the *Princeton Encyclopedia of poetry and poetics* (ed. A. Preminger, et al. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974], pp. 567-68) is Brooks. The entry is interestingly spare, and notable chiefly for the following remark: "The... charge that the n. c. represents a revival of the doctrine of art for

- art's sake runs into complications when one notices how many of this group have a definite religious position," a position that leads them "to distinguish art from religion and morality rather than to make art a substitute for religion and morality" (p. 568). Here again, one might argue, iconicity enforces disparity.
18. As Wellek ("The New Criticism," p. 616) and others have noted the structural postulate goes back to Aristotle and the esthetic postulate to Kant.
 19. See Wellek's objections to the characterization of New Criticism as formalist in "The New Criticism," p. 618. Wellek also insists that although the "method of close reading became the pedagogical weapon of the New Criticism, it differed from *explication de texte* in offering critical standards, leading to discrimination between good and bad poems" (p. 620). He approves of this, while I consider it one of the serious flaws that made the cube easier to disassemble (the "standards," which informed canonization, were based on latent ideological commitments which have subsequently been criticized).
 20. My doctoral thesis on book II of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, subsequently published as *The Allegorical Temper*, was a first attempt to engage on these two fronts.
 21. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the word* (New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 160.
 22. *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 118.
 23. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 222-23.
 24. See Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes toward an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy*, pp. 170ff.
 25. *Interpretation theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), pp. 29-30.
 26. *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 34, 48.
 27. I am grateful to my colleague, Professor John p. Lynch, for this etymology.
 28. Barbara Johnson, introduction to Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. viii-ix.
 29. Belsey, *Critical Practice*, p. 5.
 30. *Unredeemed Rhetoric; Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 69-70.
 31. See Margaret Ferguson, *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 151-62.

32. Anthony Wilden, *System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange*, second ed. (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1980), p. 407.
33. *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 201.
34. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 38-39.
35. "Facing Sophists: Socrates' Charismatic Bondage in *Protagoras*," *Representations*, 5 (1984), 66-91.
36. Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, translator unnamed (Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 49.
37. *Presence of the Word*, pp. 80, 82, 84.
38. *Novantiqua: Rhetorics as a Contemporary Theory* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 24, 21.
39. Jacob Klein, *Plato's Trilogy: "Theaetetus," the "Sophist," and the "Statesman"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 1.