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The Nostalgia for Law and Order and the Policing of Knowledge: The Politics of Contemporary Literary Theory. Part 3

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the two terms are reinscribed in the economy of the system, but with a different status. The difference *between* the two terms is now, in a sense, located *in* the two terms. Such a relocation has enormous political consequences in that it focuses on the empirical entities and leaves the system of signification intact. As we shall argue later on, in the stage of reinscription, the Derridean deconstructive project loses its radicalness and literally becomes an agent of “conservation.” Instead of being displaced and transformed, the two terms are merely put under erasure and this “crossing out” has taken place in the existing system of relations.

Among the “concepts” (*différance*, hymen, the pharmakon, for example) Derrida has introduced to enable these contestations, the one called the supplement—developed from his close reading of Rousseau’s texts—especially illuminates the use of his reading strategy in the space of such social and cultural constructs as sexuality.⁸⁵ The particular theater of this investigation is the *Confessions*, where Rousseau confides his deeply ambivalent feelings about “that dangerous supplement,” masturbation, which following established presuppositions—at least, to begin with—is evidently only rendered intelligible by contrast to its normative opposite, copulation. Rousseau’s discussion of the heteroeroticism/autoeroticism hierarchy ties it inextricably to those of nature/culture and reality/fantasy, which provide at least part of the argumentative framework for the debate in his text concerning the practice of masturbation (it is “unnatural,” mere “fantasy”). The practice is physically dangerous, according to Rousseau, in part because it “cheats Nature and saves up for young men of my temperment [*sic*] many forms of excess at the expense of their health, strength, and, sometimes, their life” (p. 150). It is morally dangerous, he believes, because it is highly attractive to “lively imaginations,” which enjoy “being able to dispose of the whole sex as they desire, and to make the beauty which tempts them minister to their pleasures, without being obliged to obtain its consent” (p. 151). In such remarks Rousseau musters up self-damning commonsensical arguments to convince himself to give up the practice; but, as Derrida notices, other (far-from-commonsensical) arguments also circulate in Rousseau’s text. Of his fantasies of “Mamma,” for instance, Rousseau declares: “In a word, between myself and the most passionate lover there was only one, but that an essential, point of distinction, which makes my condition almost unintelligible and inconceivable” (p. 152): though his is a furtive passion not (at least openly) acknowledged by its object, who appears to be unaware of it, it is as strong an attachment as that of “the most passionate [actual] lover.” “Fantasy” thus offers serious competition to “reality.” What’s more, “fantasy” may in the end be safer than “reality”; for although Rousseau has said that masturbation is dangerous, he also asserts that it is in fact not as dangerous as “cohabitation with women”: “Enjoyment! Is such a thing made for man? Ah! If I had ever in my life tasted the delights of love even once in their plenitude, I do not imagine that my frail existence would have been sufficient for them, I would have been dead in the act” (p. 155).

How does Derrida render these contradictions conceivable and comprehensible? What the preceding quotation from Rousseau says, he notes, is that “hetero-eroticism . . . can be lived (effectively, really, as one believes it can be said) only through the ability to reserve within itself its own supplementary protection. In other words, between auto-eroticism and hetero-eroticism, there is not a frontier but an economic distribution” (p. 155); that is, the one is constituted out of the other, each is inextricably dependent upon the other. Hence the relation between the two is a supplementary relation, in the meaning (profoundly unsettling to common sense) that Derrida gives to the term. A supplement “harbors within itself two significations” (p. 144): (1) a supplement is something which adds itself, “it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude” (p. 144), and (2) at the same time, it “adds only to replace,” assuming “the anterior default of a presence” (p. 145). In light of their supplementary relation, what is revealed is the ultimate arbitrariness (in the sense of conventionality) of privileging one form of eroticism over another.

Such an insight contains at least the potential for altering the subject’s understanding of and relation to sexuality. If we began our observations by referring to Rousseau’s “deeply ambivalent feelings” about sexuality, we must conclude by removing the question altogether from the realm of the personal which is implied by such a reference. For sexual practice is no longer simply a matter of personal or individual choice; the notion of “choice” itself is now seen to be a “fiction” produced by a culture under the imperatives of its particular historico-political conditions. Without pursuing its political consequences, Derrida himself points the way towards this conclusion when he observes that “Rousseau neither wishes to think

nor can think that this alteration [the practice of autoeroticism] does not simply happen to the self, that it is the self's very origin. He must consider it a contingent evil coming from without to affect the integrity of the subject. But he cannot give up what immediately restores to him the other desired presence; no more than one can give up language" (p. 153). In this passage the linked chain of related binaries surfaces. In his account of Rousseau's text, Derrida persistently connects the autoeroticism/heteroeroticism binary with the reality/fantasy and speech/writing binaries: if the masturbator is cheating nature by calling forth a mere representation of the love object (an image which is itself a form of inscription or writing), the true lover in the act of copulation has, contrary to common sense, no more direct access to the love object, but—like the masturbator—works also with a representation. It is because there is no direct access to things themselves, but only to representations of them in signification, that supplementarity is always at work. Furthermore, the self cannot be regarded as a haven to which one can simply retreat from the "undesirable" (other) half of the various binaries, but is rather a construct produced by their very operation.

Thus, deconstruction's unweaving of Western philosophical assumptions reaches necessarily into culture's most "private" spaces, where Derrida's disclosures rival those of Freud. If the latter announced that there is more to sexuality than we see on the surface, a "more" captured through psychoanalytic retrospection conceived as a plumbing of the self's depths, he also proposed the possibility of mastering psychosexual conflicts, of suspending those disruptions into consciousness of elements from the depths of the unconscious; that is, Freud proposed the possibility of *a cure* for sexual and other dilemmas, the possibility of controlling alterity, by means of "neatening up" the relationship between "reality" and "fantasy." For his part, Derrida aggressively contests the basis on which such a "neatening up," such a "cure" seems possible, much less desirable, and challenges the very notion of the self's depths. For this reason, among others, deconstruction is of considerable value, even if its insights can be and have been readily depoliticized and tamed.

WE HAVE SO FAR FOCUSED ON DECONSTRUCTION and social texts. De Man's discussion of Rilke's poetry in his *Allegories of Reading* supplies an exemplary deconstructive reading of a literary text, "Am Rande der Nacht," a type of poem familiar, de Man remarks, to the reader "accustomed to Romantic and post-Romantic poetry."⁸⁶ By way of inserting his own discourse on Rilke into existing critical discourses, de Man begins his discussion by noting how the latter "account for" Rilke's international popularity by pointing, for one thing, to the poetry's experiential dimensions, its supposedly direct intersubjective appeal that links the poet's and the reader's experience; for another, to the intellectual/philosophical dimensions of Rilke's themes, especially the ontological one, what is taken to be the poetry's "radical summons to transform our way of being in the world" (p. 24); and, for yet another, to the presumably seamless connection between the poetry's form and content, its language and its ideas. With the latter, understandably, the deconstructionist's reservations come to the fore, as de Man's commentary illustrates.

Am Rande der Nacht

Meine Stube und diese Weite,
wach über nachtdem Land,—
ist Eines. Ich bin eine Saite
über rauschende breite
Resonanzen gespannt.

Die Dinge sind Geigenleiber,
von murrendem Dunkel voll;
drin träumt das Weinen der Weiber,
drin rührt sich im Schlaf der Groll

At the borderline of the night

My room and this wide space
watching over the night of the land—
are one. I am a string
strung over wide, roaring resonances.

Things are hollow violins
full of a groaning dark;
the laments of women
the ire of generations

ganzer Geschlechter. . .	dream and toss within. . .
Ich soll	I must tremble
silbern erzittern: dann wird	and sing like silver: then
Alles unter mir leben,	All will live under me,
und was in den Dingen irrt,	and what errs in things
wird nach dem Lichte streben,	will strive for the light
das von meinem tanzenden Tone,	that, from my dancing song,
um welchen der Himmel wellt,	under the curve of the sky
durch schmale, schmachtende Spalten	through languishing narrow clefts
in die alten	falls
Abgründe ohne	in the ancient depths
Ende fällt	without end. . .

Part of the poem's paradigmatically Romantic quality, as de Man indicates, lies in its focus on the subject/object polarity,⁸⁷ on the relation between the speaker's consciousness and the world: if the union the poem establishes appears at first to be merely that between an inner space (the speaker's room) and an outer space (the world), the word "My" attaches the inner one to the subject and urges the linkage of the room's interiority with that of the subject. Whereas many of the Romantic poems to which de Man only very generally refers conclude with the union of subject and object, this poem declares it at the outset. But, de Man argues, the "initial oneness undergoes a transformation . . . which is experienced as a movement of expansion . . . [as] the metamorphosis of an oppressive and constraining inwardness into a liberating outside world" (p. 34). Thus "Am Rande" would appear to repeat, at the level of theme, a quite familiar pattern; but de Man's deconstructive reading—alert to (or should one say, open to finding?) the possible gaps between idea and language—does not rest with this (rehearsive) view of the poem. The figures deployed by the poem which, so to speak, "describe" the subject/object union undermine this familiar thematic: "The interiority of the speaking subject is not actively engaged; whatever pathos is mentioned refers to the suffering of others: the woes of women, the ire of historical generations. By a curious reversal, this subjectivity is invested from the start . . . in objects and in things. . . The 'I' of the poem contributes nothing of its own experience, sensations, sufferings, or consciousness. The assimilation of the subject to space . . . implies the loss, the disappearance of the subject as subject. . . The unity affirmed at the beginning . . . is a negative unity. . ." (pp. 36–37).

In de Man's reading, "Am Rande" is then not merely a version of a classic paradigm (the poem as resolution of the subject/object polarity), not even a version with a new twist. It is the very positivism of such a thematic reading against which de Man works in his tropological reading: "The notion of objects as containers of a subjectivity which is not that of the self that considers them is incomprehensible as long as one tries to understand it from the perspective of the subject. Instead of conceiving of the poem's rhetoric as the instrument of the subject, of the object, or of the relationship between them, it is preferable to reverse the perspective and to conceive of these categories as standing in the service of the language that has produced them" (p. 37). Thus the smooth seam between form and content, language and idea, is rent, their relation posited as a contestatory one, the tropological in fact being given precedence over the conceptual. This mode of reading is radically different from the "motivating" of the text that informs the humanistic interpretation of literary texts, as we have shown in discussing "Yuppies"'s reading of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.

Deconstruction's interrogation of the ways we make sense of the world is not limited to an examination of the texts of culture in literature, psychoanalysis, philosophy, law, and other social texts, but extends to the very principles of intelligibility through which we undertake such sense-making operations. In all the "disciplines" just mentioned, as well as in science, for example, a fundamental frame of intelligibility is the "law of causality," which holds that for every phenomenon (effect) there is a prior phenomenon (cause) to which it is logically and chronologically related. Deconstruction pressures the "law of causality" and reveals its "truth" to be more the effect of tropes than of natural processes. In *The Will to Power* Nietzsche

undertakes such a deconstruction by pointing out that the cause-and-effect relation is in fact the result of a “chronological inversion” and is produced by a trope (metonymy/metalepsis) and not by the operation of actuality itself.⁸⁸

“Causality,” Nietzsche writes, “eludes us; to suppose a direct link between thoughts as logic does—that is the consequence of the crudest and clumsiest observation” (p. 264). If we feel pain in a part of our right hand and looking around the room come across a pin, we postulate a relationship between the pain and the pin. In an act of “inversion,” we further posit the two in a series of links and conclude: pin . . . pain. “The fragment of the outer world,” Nietzsche continues, “of which we are conscious (pin) is born after an effect from outside has impressed itself upon us, and is subsequently projected as its ‘cause’ ” (p. 265). What, in short, we designate as “cause” and give priority over the “effect” is in fact caused by the effect. Its “cause” is “caused” by the “effect,” the relationship between the two is no longer an unproblematic one, and the security that the “law of causality” endows upon our sense-making process is no longer available to us.

Deconstructive inquiries then are inclusive: in the discourses of deconstruction, philosophy is a form of writing, psychoanalysis establishes its foundational categories by means of textual tropes rather than by the truth of concepts, and law is an indeterminate text whose determinacy is not the representation of the truth of justice, but the processes of signification that are organized according to the economy of social surveillance and control. It is such a radical reunderstanding of all knowledge practices that has made deconstruction a target for attacks like “Yuppies”’s. Either one can say with “Yuppies” that deconstruction is a manifestation of the “inhumanity” of our times, or one can say that deconstruction denies us the traditional security of the categories and devices through which we have customarily naturalized the world and made sense of it. In its readings of various texts of culture, deconstruction has dislodged the assurance of the Actual by demonstrating that what is installed as actual is more an effect of the textual—the differential processes of signification in culture. By virtue of such a dislodging, of course, deconstruction has become an “assault on the authority” (to alter “Yuppies” slightly, p. 18) of the seemingly Actual because it has substituted for a “solid” actuality (the natural given) the fragile textuality of culture (the conventional). It has further exposed these conventions as the mere effects of power relations in culture: the desire to impose closures that enable the continuation of the logocentrism of the dominant metaphysics. In deconstructing the metaphysics of presence, it has put the whole notion of representation in crisis and with it the very enterprise of knowledge itself. If we accept that culture is the ensemble of claims to knowledge, then by interrogating the constitution of knowledges, deconstruction has in a sense placed us in a new relationship with culture itself: a relationship which is different from the familiar one—thus the agony of traditionalists—but not so fundamentally different as to be a radical move—thus the dissatisfaction of those who regard the act of reading as nothing less than a mode of intervention in existing social relations.

IV

HAVING SITUATED (“YUPPIES”’S) HUMANIST READING strategies and discourses in their ideological frames and having demonstrated counterhumanist deconstructive reading operations (in the texts of Freud, Rousseau, Rilke, and Nietzsche), we must now locate deconstruction in postmodern critical theory, that is, go beyond the border “Yuppies” has set for contemporary theory by its historical misrecognition of deconstruction as the “latest” mode of reading. The ideological reason for “Yuppies”’s setting such a limit is, as we have argued, to represent deconstruction as the absolute term of otherness and thus to discourage inquiry into those politically radical and thus more dangerous discourses that are emerging on the far side of that generic alterity. Such a prohibition is itself historical: all bourgeois academic discourses (including “Yuppies”) realize that although they do not occupy the same epistemological space as deconstruction, they are situated with it in the same ideological site. Along with deconstruction, these discourses legitimize, in their different ways, the dominant order of signification. “Yuppies” performs this task by defending the “traditional,” while deconstruction does it by “dehierarchizing” the tradition, inspecting it, and then reinscribing it without any fundamental change. In Derrida’s

own words in his *Margins of Philosophy* (p. 215), to deconstruct is not to “reject and discard,” but to “reinscribe.” Neither the traditional nor the deconstructive discourses radically contests the ruling relations of production.

Although deconstructive reading begins in opposition to humanist reading, it ends up finally in more or less the same cognitive and contemplative space. Even “Yuppies” in its ideological canniness recognizes this sameness, realizes that while it bears the mark of radicalness, deconstruction is nevertheless a conservative form of understanding and that the semantic order is threatened far less by a “rhetorical” (that is, deconstructive) reading than it is by a “political” reading. Thus it is that “Yuppies,” while picking up the radical mark (deconstruction), actually attacks a mode (not of deconstruction but) of neo-Marxism (*Critical Practice*). The transference of “radicality” from “politics” (Marxism) to “rhetoric” (deconstruction) is itself a marker of the postmodern bourgeois academy and has the ideological function of occluding the sites of opposition. In other words, “Yuppies” is ideologically so situated as to (mis)recognize neo-Marxism for deconstruction, Althusser for Derrida, and politics for rhetoric. Of course, in doing so, “Yuppies” performs another ideological function: by blending deconstruction and neo-Marxism and presenting them as the “other” of the norm, it diverts attention from the fact—which it “knows”—that the important contest in the discourses of culture are not between humanism and deconstruction, but between Marxism and deconstruction. The contestations in postmodern discourses over the meaning of meaning is, in other words, not between the “moral” (“Yuppies”) and the “rhetorical” (deconstruction), nor between the “moral” and the “political” (*Critical Practice*), but between the “rhetorical” and the “political.” (This should not be read, conveniently, to mean that “rhetoric” is free from politics or that politics is not entangled in its own textual rhetoric.) “Yuppies”’s deep agitation about the shifts in contemporary discourses is caused by this displacement of the “moral”—an ideological apparatus for indoctrinating the petty-bourgeoisie and for articulating the neoconservatism which that class supports.

The crisis in cultural studies, of which the contestation between deconstruction and the humanist tradition is only one instance, is a crisis of “meaning”: postmodern theory has emptied the world of all inherent “meanings” and recognized the Actual as meaningful only within the coordinates of culture. In other words, “meaning” has lost its inevitability, naturalness, and authority, and has been designated as a construct of culture and thus as an open site of cultural and ideological struggle. Since if, as postmodern theory argues, the Real is a text, then its meaning is not fixed but varies according to the frames of intelligibility the “reader” brings to the act of reading. The result of this view is that urgent questions are raised for cultural studies: What reading strategies should be involved in the process of reading? Through what framework of assumptions and presuppositions should the text of the Real be made intelligible? The battles over determining these assumptions, strategies, and frames of intelligibility reveal finally that the meaning of the Real is the effect of political and social struggles for power/knowledge relations that are, among other things, supportive of the class interests of those involved in them. Since everyone has a stake in the “meaning” of social signs, the “meaning” of the Real, these battles are fought by all social classes in all sites of culture, from the editorials in the local newspaper to the formulations in the physics laboratory of the most abstract scientific “laws.”

In the academy, where the struggles are conducted on behalf of various social classes by scientists, scholars, artists, and intellectuals in institutional settings, however, this struggle is often disguised as the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. The view of knowledge as the outcome of disinterested inquiries is a part of the global ideology of the bourgeois university that aims to depoliticize knowledge in order to conceal the struggle for power which is inscribed in its researches that will continue to produce an understanding of the world that is needed for the reproduction of the dominant relations of production.

“Yuppies” supports the dominant view that knowledge results from disinterested endeavor and derives directly from the actual world through unmediated experience, the evidence for this universal truth of the world being “easily available” to all “living beings” (p. 12). This transpolitical notion of truth is in fact what makes a trivial text like “Yuppies” of significant ideological use-value, since it helps make the political views of the dominant class part of the “obviousness” of culture. It is “obvious,” from “Yuppies”’s point of view, that knowledge is the fruit of disinterested inquiry and that the test of knowledge is the “experience” of the “free” and “sovereign” subject.

If “Yuppies” rehearses in a familiar and fairly explicit manner the views of the dominant regime of truth, it hardly offers the best informed or most powerful of such statements. In fact some of the most sophisticated reinscriptions of the established power/knowledge relations are articulated within discourses seemingly quite opposed to “Yuppies”’s mainstream humanism, a mark of the power and pervasiveness of the dominant ideology. One such set of reinscriptive discourses is contemporary deconstruction itself.⁸⁹ Even if—as we have argued—deconstructive discourses achieve a certain power by enabling readers of cultural texts to detect and reveal the operation of the metaphysics of presence in the signifying practices of the West, those discourses are, in the last instance, basically “regional” undertakings. Although deconstruction dismantles the workings of the metaphysics inside the system of the sign, it leaves intact the “global” conditions in terms of which the “regional” acquires cultural meaning. In her revisionary essay, “Rigorous Unreliability,” Barbara Johnson shows her awareness of deconstruction’s systematically limited interrogation of dominant practices: “[D]econstruction,” she writes, has tended to remain within the established confines because it “has focused on the ways in which the Western, white male, philosophico-literary tradition subverts itself *from within*.”⁹⁰ It is not just that—by focusing on texts which question themselves from within their own discourses—deconstruction has limited the *range* of its critique: its emphasis on the “inside,” is, as Marx said of Hegel’s theoretical enterprise, not “accidental,” but is in fact a part of its very “logic” of reading, a logic which reinstates (in the stage we have called reinscription) the very terms it has previously dismantled (in the stage we have called dehierarchization). Deconstruction’s most radical undertaking at the moment of its appearance on the discursive horizons of the West was its critique of “structuralism.” The critique that (in Derrida’s own text, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourses of the Human Sciences”) displaced the dominant mode of inquiry as metaphysical was, however, itself based on an equally metaphysical assumption, namely that “structure” is the effect of the internal operations of a given system of signification. In Derrida’s text, structure (in “structuralism”) is conceptualized as the outcome of a system which itself is theorized as self-sustaining and independent. Structure, however, is the effect of social relations. It is social relations that confer on an individual entity (that is, a particular system of meaning) the features and characteristics it may be said to have. This desocialization of structure and its exile to the cognitive interior of system is almost paradigmatic of all deconstructive operations.

Because it limits its critique to the “regional” aspects of the economy of the sign, deconstruction cannot unmask the global operation of power in the dominant metaphysics to thus empower those who have suffered most from such domination. It has actually done the contrary: it has rigorously prevented such a global interrogation by projecting a view of critical theory that legitimizes “regionalism” and thus protects the dominant practices of the academy, protects (that is) the kind of “cognitive” academy that the existing global political and economic power needs. To be specific, the “cognitive” academy defines knowing as the product of the rational subject (individual scientist/scholar) and of the internal logic of the (knowledge) disciplines, rather than as the effect of the epistemic behavior of persons allowed to “know the Real” through those frames of intelligibility historically available to them.

De Man’s defense of such cognitivism is among the most powerful in contemporary literary theory. His analysis of the situation in cultural studies, presented in an essay entitled “The Resistance to Theory,” is highly instructive, both for its illuminations (his unusually incisive readings of larger features of the theoretical terrain) and its limitations (his defensive maneuvers to reassert the claim of cognitivism in the guise of rhetoric as the still central element of humanistic study).⁹¹ He insists upon the separation of contemporary literary theory from philosophy (and in particular, from its subdiscourse of aesthetics), arguing that “literary theory is a relatively autonomous version of questions that also surface, in a different context, in philosophy, though not necessarily in a clearer and more rigorous form” (p. 8) and that although literary theory “may now well have become a legitimate concern of philosophy,” it cannot “be assimilated to it” (p. 8). Long regarded as an acceptable adjunct to literary history and criticism, theory has—according to de Man—only become threateningly problematic since the introduction of linguistic terminology into its enterprise: “The assumption that there can be a science of language which is not necessarily a logic leads to the development of a terminology which is not necessarily aesthetic” (p. 8)—which is to say that current theory finds its ground in the study of language, not in the study of (separable) ideas, in the study of signs

and signification rather than in “an established pattern of meaning” (p. 9). Literariness, he argues, is no longer to be approached as a matter of aesthetics, but as a consequence of the “autonomous potential of language” (p. 10). Furthermore, “[l]iterature involves the voiding, rather than the affirmation, of aesthetic categories” (p. 10).

With the intellectual roots of the conflict between contemporary literary theorists and their opponents (philosophers, literary historians, and critics) now exposed, de Man moves to another level to propose that the matter cannot be understood as merely a struggle between professional camps: he now relocates the theoretical problematic precisely in the theoretical enterprise itself, where it is not so much a question of the inevitable recuperations practiced by theorists (although he mentions these) but a feature inherent in language itself. Here de Man’s commitment to rhetoric as an intellectual discipline comes to the fore. According to his interpretation of theoretical developments, the advent of current theory involves not merely the introduction of linguistic terminology to theoretical problems but also a productive, but still troublesome, encroachment of grammar (supported by its affiliate, logic) upon the domain of rhetoric. He argues that perhaps the greatest advance in recent theory has been the effort of semiotics to assimilate rhetorical categories to grammatical ones, that is, to codify what up until then had remained “undecidable.” Whatever its achievements, however, such an effort is bound to fail, according to de Man, not because like Kristeva he posits a revolutionary potential in signification itself (her Semiotic, for instance, constantly assailing the Symbolic), but because texts “contain” rhetorical elements that—as opposed to grammatical ones—are inherently undecidable. As an exemplary instance, de Man offers the unresolvable conflict between two equally acceptable and supportable meanings for the title of Keats’s *The Fall of Hyperion*.

De Man’s complex account of the resistance to theory—no matter how or where it is located, either between professional camps or within theory itself—is then transformed into a defense of rhetoric as the central mode of understanding in humanistic studies, in fact a defense of rhetorical analysis as the primary vehicle of theoretical speculation itself. This message is carried by a series of “poetic” repetitions sweeping the reader towards this conclusion: “The resistance to theory is a resistance to the use of language about language. . . therefore a resistance to language itself” (p. 12); “the resistance to theory is in fact a resistance to reading” (p. 15); “[t]he resistance to theory is a resistance to the rhetorical or tropological dimension of language” (p. 17). Ultimately de Man promotes rhetoric as the very domain of undecidability and crowns the rhetorician as the supreme reader among readers, as the one who can untangle and present (and—though this is not explicit—presumably thereby exhaust), *but not decide between* the available alternative meanings of texts.

For us this is an unsatisfying claim; for it does not and cannot account for the textual features that the rhetorician “chooses” to foreground. If the rhetorician’s function, as de Man everywhere indicates, is not merely the banal task of cataloging a text’s rhetorical features, but the challenging one of *situating* if not *interpreting* the text by emphasizing particular features, is there any way to account for the rhetorician’s selection? To put the matter in de Man’s own terms, it may be the case that grammatical codes cannot be extended to account for all the rhetorical features of a text, but that does not mean that other codes, such as the global codes of intelligibility in a culture, cannot offer such an accounting. Evidence in de Man’s essay and in a recent interview²² indicates that in recent times de Man was self-divided on “politics” and “rhetoric” and even under pressure to attend to their relations; but while regrettably we cannot know what he would have written, we doubt that a rhetoric of ideologemes—especially one produced by means of a denial of its own political situatedness—would have done more than offer a theoretically sophisticated reinscription of the dominant modes of reading with rhetoric (rather than politics) as their legitimizing force. To limit intelligibility to rhetoric is to limit it once again to the “inside” of the system of signification.

De Man is, however, not the only one to place these limits upon reading operations and thus to situate them in a purely cognitive space. We have already analyzed Derrida’s texts as a mode of deconstructive reading which locates binaries, dehierarchizes them, and then reinscribes the dehierarchized terms. Derrida believes that dehierarchization ends the domination of one term by the other (speech over writing, male over female, literal over figurative); but though the dominant term is displaced, the system in which the binaries function is not changed and its relation with the global frames of power is untouched. The rela-

tion of the two terms has changed, but *within* the system as it is. Terms which were opposed now become complementary without the economy of the power between the system and the larger cultural series having changed. It is therefore necessary to undertake new operations of dehierarchization again and again, and by multiplying the regions of interrogation a reunderstanding and dismantling of the dominant global frames is occluded. Deconstruction not only needs to regionalize signification but, like mainstream humanism, uses such a strategy in order to maintain the existing power relations. The ideological function of such a dehierarchization is to establish a form of “equality” between terms and thus reinforce what is essentially a form of pluralism in which the domination of one over the other is not negated (because Derrida refuses the resolution of the binary opposition in a third term) but is merely concealed by resituating the two terms and representing this new arrangement as one based in dispersed regional sites of equal power. Such a “pluralist” view of signification, in the last instance, reproduces the political pluralism that conceals the relation of domination by representing the elements of power as individual and equal, each element operating as its own “truth.” It follows that if each term has its own truth and if (as is the case) there are a variety of terms, then truth is “plural,” as Derrida says. The notion of the plurality of truth not only reifies and reinforces the pluralism of the bourgeois political order and fetishizes the sovereign subject, it also prevents a global interrogation of the space of truth by allowing the unquestioned coexistence of various versions of truth and thus encouraging a mode of eclecticism (pluralism in disguise) that avoids a sustained interrogation of the political assumptions upon which each “truth” is founded. When such inspection is evaded, the political conditions of possibility of each truth (that is, both the “external” factors that determine and the internal standards that certify each truth) are veiled. Ideologically such occultation prevents the exposure of the close relation between the truths sanctified by internal standards of a system and the prevailing political order which needs diverse versions of truth (that is, the imaginary free individual) to reproduce existing social relations and thus perpetuate its dominion. Derridean deconstruction is finally open to the same description that Cornell West has given of postmodern neo-Pragmatism: in concluding his interrogation of Richard Rorty’s work, West designates Rorty’s project as “a self-conscious post-philosophical ideological project to promote the basic practices of bourgeois capitalist societies while discouraging philosophical defenses of them.”⁹³

Derrida achieves his deconstruction of the hierarchy and arrives at such a conclusion through the operation of “close reading” that takes the text as its unit of cognition. In this respect he, like Gadamer and almost all traditional humanist interpreters of texts, conceives of the text as an empirical given (not as a set of material relationships, as we will suggest later) and, like all empiricists, assumes that knowledge derives from this empirical entity. Of course, Derrida’s is not a vulgar empiricism: his is what might be called (using one of his own terms) an empiricism of the “trace,” the weaving of the signifying vestiges of difference into the tissue of a text, which he calls a “fabric of grafts” that configures the cognitive processes of the subject. It is such an empiricism that enables and is enabled by Derrida’s empiricism of the subject, whose consciousness is the space of textual knowledge.

In Derridean deconstruction, as in any empiricist paradigm, knowledge belongs to the object (the text) itself, which is assumed to be the site of a set of determining properties such as “literariness” or “philosophicality.” Although Derridean deconstruction claims that texts do not have a representational meaning and therefore cannot be self-identical (a philosophical text, for instance, is said to be ultimately a fiction and a literary text, to be ultimately nonliterary since it is involved in the inevitable movement of the metaphorical towards the literal), such a claim is based on pre-given empirical categories (the literary, the philosophical, and the like). In deconstructing a philosophical text, Derrida demonstrates how it “behaves” like a literary text, which means that it transgresses its traditional boundaries and enters the forbidden domain of the literary. Without positing the “literary,” the Derridean deconstruction of the “philosophical” cannot take place. The existence of the “literary” as an empirical category with a set of well-defined textual properties is not only assumed in the deconstructive operation, but is fully and clearly articulated in the works of such deconstructors as de Man. It is through his notion of “literariness”/“philosophicality” that the Derridean theory of knowledge actually supports a monodisciplinary practice in the guise of a pluralistic interdisciplinarity—in spite of its expressed desire to transgress the boundaries of texts of different disciplines

and form a multidisciplinary inquiry into textuality and the production of meaning in Western texts. It is through this underlying monodisciplinarity that deconstruction finally accepts the existing power/knowledge relations while representing its monodisciplinarity as an “interdisciplinary” enterprise.

In *Blindness and Insight*, de Man defines the “literary” in a quite traditional and empirical manner: “We are . . . calling the ‘literary’ in the full sense of the term, any text that implicitly or explicitly signifies its own rhetorical mode and prefigures its own misunderstanding as the correlative of its rhetorical nature, that is, of its ‘rhetoricity.’”⁹⁴ “Rhetoricity” becomes here the foundation of a new definition of literature, a new form of literariness through which literature is essentialized.⁹⁵ Such an essentialization is very much in accord with humanist views of literature and in fact is a rather sophisticated reproduction of existing values. A radical theory must not only prevent such an essentialization, but rigorously work to demonstrate that literature is itself an ideological construct, the effect of global frames of intelligibility that designate certain texts as literary in order to preserve in that space a place for the circulation of required values and assumptions about the Real through the operations of the “aesthetic.”

Radical critical theories have problematized the traditional notion that there is a distinct category of texts which can be called “literary” and through such a problematization have moved towards a transgressive transdisciplinarity in which the politics of knowing and the power/knowledge relations of culture are interrogated. The established view of literary texts as by nature different from other modes of writing (such as anthropology, psychoanalysis, biology, history, politics, and popular discourses) is based on two major arguments. The first is that literature is a discourse marked by such inherent formal properties as metaphoric density, narrative technique, and syntax, all governed by unique laws and structures. However, efforts to distinguish literary discourse from other discourses by its use of metaphor, sound, imagery, and narrative devices are dispelled by the fact that there are more metaphors, for example, in one page of *Sports Illustrated* than in a story by Hemingway. The second argument assumes that literary texts, unlike texts by physicists and biologists, for instance, serve no practical purpose. This criterion too fails to separate the literary from the nonliterary, since many texts now read almost exclusively as “literature” once had such “practical” purposes as recording historical events (Gibbon, for instance). Yet texts that are composed as “literary” are often read as “practical,” for example, as anthropological and sociological data (e.g., the texts of Updike are read by some French critics as research “documents” in the archives of U.S. class behavior). Postmodern critical theory brackets these distinctions between such categories to be a mere “effect” of reading practices. In fact some contemporary texts, such as Norman Mailer’s *The Armies of the Night* or Michael Herr’s *Dispatches*, dramatize these theoretical questions: Are they “literary” works or journalistic reportage? The answer seems to lie not in locating some “given” quality in the texts themselves, but in the way they are read. As Terry Eagleton has remarked in summing up contemporary debates over the concept of literature, “literature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared inherent properties, does not exist.”⁹⁶

As radical theories understand it, “literature” is an “arbitrary” discourse, arbitrary in the sense of being historically specific and culturally contingent: any text is “literary” if the historical forces shaping the reading practices of an interpretive circle allow it to be subjected to certain kinds of reading operations. These operations aim at answering not merely the conventional question of what a text means, but at answering the more important question of how it means. Traditionally the “how” is taken as a sign of the nonpragmaticity of literary discourse: it is not the “what” (the “practical”) that matters in reading literature but the “how” (its aesthetic impact). Radical theory takes the “how” to be not so much the signifier of an aesthetic effect, but the sign of the *materiality* of signification: the specific ways in which the “meaning effect” is enabled by the dominant signifying processes and ideology that situate the reader in historically constituted positions of intelligibility (that is, subject-positions) in terms of which the text “makes sense.” This is in fact the interpretive turn that has taken place in the human sciences.

This reunderstanding of literature as the effect of operations that foreground its materiality and constructedness has placed the study of the texts of culture on an entirely new ground. If there are no inherent properties to set literature apart from other modes of cultural writing, then the function of “reading” (“literary studies”) is no longer the effort to guard an established and closed canon of texts (“The Great

Tradition”) by imparting special skills and attitudes, but becomes instead the transformation of the notion of literary studies itself so that it can address the problems of textuality and representation in culture. From the perspective of radical critical theory, the function of literary studies is to inquire into the ways “meaning” is produced and disseminated in all texts of culture. The “literary” is thus not so much the name of a class of texts or qualities, as the materiality of signification itself. All texts of culture, from the scientific to the popular, from the written book to rock video, are open to the meticulous and materialist reading. Such a reunderstanding of the “literary” will not only demystify “literature” but more important, decenter the institutional space from which the presumably very different voices in “Yuppies,” deconstruction, and *Critical Practice* speak, a shared space that reveals their shared assumptions and thus their collaboration with the existing power/knowledge relations. Derrida/de Man, Belsey, and “Yuppies” all speak from inside the “disciplinary” confines of “literature”/“philosophy” and thus consent to the institutional arrangements of knowledge, accept the dominant order of knowing.

Derrida’s rejection of the traditional “decidability” of meaning and his introduction instead of the concept of “dissemination” as the mode of “undecidable” signification in texts can be taken as his attempt to move out of this disciplinary confinement by proposing that meaning issues from diverse sites (from different disciplines of knowledge). However, his dissemination leads not to transgressive transdisciplinarity, but to a harmonious and interactive interdisciplinarity (which is a concealed form of pluralistic monodisciplinarity) in which various versions of truth (of the different institutional disciplines) peacefully live together. His interdisciplinarity/dissemination is, in other words, a mode of empiricism and cognitivism brought together by the force of the ideology of liberal pluralism. “Dissemination” is finally an exemplification of the notion that “Truth is plural” and that meaning is a “coalition” of various truths and not the contestation of different classes in culture.⁹⁷ The disseminatory model of knowing rejects an interpretive model that, like Gadamer’s, is based on a central authority (monodisciplinarity) determining the meaning of a text in favor of scattered sites of signification, each with its own local “law of being” in the processes of semiosis. In rejecting a controlled polysemy in favor of dissemination, Derrida makes an ideological move that dismantles the last remnant of feudalism which had manifested itself by establishing a central authority over the processes of signification in disciplines. Instead of this central authority, dissemination installs a postfeudal, bourgeois (democratic) idea of signification which allows for different disciplines to be equally involved in engendering knowledge. Such a pluralist model of knowing based on the collaboration among various modes of understanding quietly legitimizes the economics of laissez-faire and the competition in the free market among (plural) free agents, thus establishing the singular disciplinary entity—the free individual—as the main locus of intelligibility. In other words, Derrida is not putting disciplinary authority in question. Like “Yuppies” and Belsey, he speaks from within the existing institutions of knowledge and attempts to preserve those institutions.

In light of these considerations, what “Yuppies” represents as a war between humanism (which “Yuppies” champions), deconstruction, and the political stance taken by Belsey appears to be not a war between proponents and opponents of the status quo, but between factions of the dominant order striving to assert their own unique and unchallenged “legitimacy” to (at least part of) it. This is a war over which is the most effective way to reproduce existing practices, not a war to displace them. That this is a war to determine whose voice rightfully speaks in the name of the dominant truth can be shown by attending to the warring forces in “Yuppies.” Three wars appear in the pages of “Yuppies”: the first, the announced war between “Yuppies”’s humanism and deconstruction, the spirit of “inhumanity” (a war that is only announced and is never fought—as we have indicated, “Yuppies” does not even know deconstruction); the second, the war between “Yuppies” and *Critical Practice* (the only war actually fought in “Yuppies”); and the third, the war between “deconstruction” (rhetoric) and *Critical Practice* (politics) (the highly significant war conducted in the unwritten spaces of the “Yuppies” text).

The first (non)war between “Yuppies” and the deconstruction of Derrida and de Man says a good deal about the status of deconstruction as an ideological apparatus through which prevailing academic practices continue. Inside its historical naiveté “Yuppies” “knows” that deconstruction’s double-sided readings of texts will merely change the relations of terms within the existing system of signification. It is not merely in the “reinscription” of terms that deconstruction protects the system: deconstruction essentially reproduces

the present system in its practice of close reading, in its theory of the text (with inherent properties) as the site of knowledge, and in its valuation of the tropological and its conviction (in the U.S. version of deconstruction) that the texts have all already deconstructed themselves and therefore there is no need for the reader's intervention. Deconstruction may have a different view of the text, but like traditional forms of reading, it respects the integrity of the "propertied" text as the space of knowing. In fact deconstruction's revisionism offers a much more sophisticated and powerful defense of dominant practices than anything "Yuppies" can muster: the cause of "Yuppies"'s ostensible battle with deconstruction is just that Derrida offers such a powerful, up-to-date defense of humanism that "Yuppies"'s own efforts in this direction are rendered puny, obsolete, and—as we began by saying—embarrassing. If "Yuppies" is the text of a segment of the academy deposed by history ("outmoded, retrograde," p. 11), Derridean deconstruction is the discourse of the group now rising to institutional power (in which connection it is interesting to note that for "Yuppies" deconstruction is not so much a philosophy or theory as it is a "clan," p. 20).

Equally significant from a historical viewpoint is the fact that although its title promises that "Yuppies" will deal with deconstruction, the person who is actually attacked is not Derrida, or de Man, or Hillis Miller, but Louis Althusser. Again, in its historical naiveté, "Yuppies" has the canny ideological knowledge that the projects of Derrida and Lacan (among others) are ultimately cognitive, not political, projects: hence they pose no real threat to the "moral" academy or to the discourses of the dominant ideology. The real threat comes from neo-Marxist discourses such as those of Althusser, who though hardly a deconstructionist, has produced powerful antihumanist readings of Marx which argue that historicism, empiricism, and humanism are the major philosophical allies of the dominant ideology. "Yuppies" knows that Althusserian "readings" are dangerous since they will enable the powerless to become aware of the operations of power in the discursive practices of culture. It is therefore necessary for "Yuppies"'s ideological project to undermine the interrogative force of Althusserian "readings" by evoking an empirical imperative: Althusser has preoccupied himself with merely "reading" *Capital* and thus has forgotten the workers (p. 17). But what is interesting here is that in the name of empirical action (and the appeal of this category to common sense), "Yuppies" attempts to discourage the development—by symptomatic reading—of a theoretical consciousness that will empower workers not as isolated members of individualized groups working at piecemeal, reformist action but in their global collectivity. It is the Althusserian "symptomatic reading" and not Derridean "deconstructive interpretation" that "Yuppies" fears and struggles against. It knows that Derrida's interpretations as rhetorical inspections are as harmless as the vacuous humanist interpretations with their nonsymptomatic reduplication of texts. The Althusserian critique of humanism is filtered through Belsey, as "Yuppies" vaguely detects; but "Yuppies" chooses only to attack the most obviously dangerous side of Belsey's work (its weak recuperation of Althusserian Marxism) and to protect that part of Belsey's argument which supports the dominant disciplinary organization of knowledges and thus reifies existing power/knowledge relations. Like "Yuppies," Belsey speaks from the site of the institution which is called the "literature" department, which is implicitly based on the notion of "literariness." Like "Yuppies," Belsey employs a textual typology that accords with the established canon by dividing her texts into "major works" (Shakespeare), "minor writings" (Arnold), and "popular works" (Sherlock Holmes). Belsey's theory of the subject, which is based on an Althusserian functionalist notion of ideology and on Lacan's reading of Freud, lends major support to the dominant ideology by refusing to theorize a place for oppositional ideologies and oppositional subjectivities. All these suppressions Belsey shares with "Yuppies."

The battle taking place quietly in the pages of "Yuppies" (a battle far more urgent and significant than either of the ones "Yuppies" is loudly if unproductively waging) is that between Derridean deconstruction (rhetoric) and neo-Marxism (politics, as embodied in Belsey's weak reading in *Critical Practice*): this is a struggle over whose voice should be heard in defense of (cultural) truth. Like "Yuppies," the deconstructionist critic sees Belsey as an impostor who has appropriated elements of rhetoric for illegitimate (political) purposes and in doing so has turned rhetoric (cognition) into a kind of theory of contestation, a transformation which deconstruction vigorously resists. But the deconstructionist critic's defensive narrative is instructive: to postulate a "misappropriation" of rhetoric is to postulate a true or genuine deconstruction, a self-identical spirit of rhetoric/deconstruction to which only the authentic deconstructionist has access.

Such a narrative, which is directed at all those whose appropriation of rhetoric/deconstruction is threatening to deconstruction's own institutional hegemony, unveils the workings of power, showing how the pursuit of power leads to a philosophical revision of deconstruction as an essentialized mode of inquiry: there is a true deconstruction/rhetoric and then there are false appropriations of it. At stake in such fables of power, as we have argued throughout, is the meaning of meaning, the constitution of the meaningful in culture through the disciplinary practices of the humanities. As we have indicated, neither "Yuppies" nor deconstruction nor the Belseyian recuperation actually opposes the dominant order: all in different ways reinscribe and reinstate the old, although Derrida and Belsey do it in "new" forms, put newness to work for reproducing the (old) dominant system of social relations.

V

THE TASK OF RADICAL CRITICAL THEORY is to intervene in the reproduction of the hegemonic cultural meanings that lend support to the continuation of existing social relations. Such a theoretical intervention requires a new understanding of "theory" itself, an understanding which is different from both the traditional notion of theory and the contemporary deconstructive view. Both the humanist and the deconstructive projects oppose theory and "resist" it: humanism's resistance to theory is conducted in the name of the autonomous subject, and deconstruction's "resistance" to theory is based on its own hermeneutic proposal which holds that as a language construct, theory is, in the last analysis, not an instance of "truth" but the site of tropological playfulness. The "argument" of theory, in other words, is always already "resisted" by the "literariness" (the configuration of tropes) of its own discourse. Such a resistance to theory is based on an idealistic view of signification, a view that regards "tropes" to be inherently meaningful regardless of the frames of historical conventions of intelligibility through which they are read. According to this view, a "metaphor," in other words, is always—panhistorically—a "metaphor" and thus is discursively subversive of the argument of the text in which it occurs. But "tropes" acquire their tropicity (their recognition as metaphor and so on) only within a given, historical, and cultural frame of intelligibility: metaphors can cease to be metaphors and literal entities can lose their literalness and acquire metaphorical density. Tropicity, then, is not an inherent attribute of certain linguistic entities, but the historical effect of their *uses*. The question, then, is not whether there are metaphors, but how metaphors mean within a particular historical/social discourse. Sense-fullness (in this case, the sense of a linguistic construct as "metaphor") is the outcome of cultural and historical assumptions and conventions of cognition—a "theory" of intelligibility. Nothing (neither a metaphor nor anything else) is in itself and "by nature" always already anything. Things become "somethings" when they are used in a culturally sensible way, that is to say, when they are situated in a social location and thus become part of social relations. It is the process of such situating that produces (socially) a thing as a "something." The uses of a linguistic construct make it sensible as "metaphor" and endow it with the "subversive power" that it has in contesting the argument of theory. This contestation is therefore itself historically specific, since it is enabled only within the historically determined frames of understanding in which a particular linguistic entity is designated as a trope and thus seen as an antiargument—an antiargument which, by the way, is a mode of "argument" nonetheless. The force of the trope, in short, is part of its historicity: in a given historical moment the trope is endowed with subversive power, which is seen as a forceful "argument" against the *other* argument offered by those linguistic items of a text which are historically specified as nontropic.

The inquiry into these processes of sense-making is an inquiry into the ways things (metaphors and other cultural artifacts) make sense and become comprehensible. An understanding of this comprehension-effect is what we regard to be "theory." Theory, then, is not—as humanists and deconstructive critics alike conceptualize it—an abstract apparatus of mastery, but an inquiry into comprehension-effects of intelligibilities that are produced by the discursive activities of a culture. It is as a result of such an inquiry that readers in a culture become aware of the ways in which signifiers are always so organized that through them the world is produced in that culture in such a manner that its "reality" supports the "reality" of the interests of the dominant classes. Through such a recognition, theory enables readers of a culture to histori-

cize the “reality” of the ruling class that is put forth in cultural texts as the universal reality (of all classes) and thus to engage in an ideological struggle. Theory, in short, in our discourse, is an ally in political struggle: theory AS resistance, not the resistance to theory, is what marks a radical *critical* theory from the dominant contemporary *literary* theory. In this radical critical theory, figurality and tropicity are seen as ideology and not as the ahistorical predicament of human discursive activities and communication: that is to say, we regard textuality to be ideology.

Deconstruction’s problematization of the clarity of cultural meanings merely renders these meanings as “undecidable” textualities and thus leaves them open to a pluralistic recuperation that conceals the power/knowledge contestations that determine the meaning of meanings in cultural discourses. Although a problematization of the dominant meanings through dehierarchizing their underlying assumptions should be the first move in a radical theory of reading, such a reading cannot be identical with it. (It is for the sake of such a political reunderstanding of deconstruction that we argued the difference between the epistemological spaces of the *reader* and the *text* in Part Three.) The Althusserian project, with its unquestioned acceptance of the Lacanian psychoanalytical notion of the formation of the subject and its consequently functionalist theory of ideology as the interpellation of that subject, cannot intervene in the problematized meanings of postmodern discourses. Radical critical theory then must undertake a going “beyond” the humanism of common sense, “beyond” the undecidability of deconstruction, and “beyond” Althusserian interpellation. This going “beyond” will involve, among other things, the reconceptualization of the subject along the axes of class, race, gender, as well as state, and will reunderstand the subject as agent and social *acteur* in an anti-Cartesian and revolutionary mode situated in contradictory positions in the relations of production.

And it is such a going “beyond” that is prohibited in almost all the discourses of contemporary literary theory. The discourse of humanism posits deconstruction as the absolute Other beyond which the reader should not venture. Belsey’s recuperation of Althusser offers interpellation as the boundary of postmodern subjectivities and the readings that they entail. Derridean/de Manian deconstruction, of course, is most critical of such a going “beyond.” For Derrida a going “beyond”—striving for a “post” state—is merely an expression of desire/an illusion of “progress”—a wish to get ever closer to Truth (“presence”). It is, of course, highly instructive that Derrida’s injunction against a going “beyond” has not deterred him from undertaking a rather “violent” move “beyond.” In recent pronouncements about his nonopposition to presence, he has revealed a side of his work that accepts mysticism as a mode of knowing.⁹⁸ In this he has indeed gone “beyond” and in a manner similar to that of Kristeva, Sollers, and other *Tel Quel* intellectuals of his generation, who have embraced mysticism as the region of unbounded knowledge and libidinal freedom: a region free from the torture of the political. (A move, incidentally, that once more reveals the proximity/identity of his readings with those of the dominant humanist interpretations of cultural signs.)

The going “beyond” of radical critical theory is undertaken not to acquire transdiscursive (mystical) knowledge, nor to foster the illusion that cultural meanings are somehow authorized by a panhistorical Truth. The “beyond” or “post” is not so much the site of some proximate to Truth as it is the space of opposition to the reigning truth—a political problematization of that truth. As we have indicated before, the meanings of culture are the effects of social and ideological struggles, and it is to account for and then support these social struggles to inscribe oppositional meanings in the texts of culture that radical critical theory should undertake a going “beyond” the discourses of contemporary theory.

Radical *critical* theory (no longer proposing itself as *literary* theory), as an act of intervening in social relations by disrupting existing meanings, is the effect of a regrounding of postmodern theory as ideology critique. This new ideology critique is an apparatus which, as Marx has explained, does not “dogmatically anticipate the world, but wants to find the new world through a critique of the old.”⁹⁹ Critical theory as postmodern ideology critique will be an analytics of intelligibility: a theory and a practice which by means of a political critique aims at transforming the existing social relations.¹⁰⁰

Notes

1. We refer here to "Masters of the Universe: Deconstruction and the Yuppies," printed in this volume and hereafter cited as "Yuppies." The present reference is to p. 12.
2. For a commentary and a critique of the first book published in the series, *Structuralism and Semiotics* by Terence Hawkes, see M. Zavarzadeh, "Of Mushrooms Dressed in Pink Satin," *Novel* 14, no. 1 (1980): 86–91.
3. In such books as Anderson's *Arguments within English Marxism* (London: NLB, 1980). For a more philosophically rigorous interrogation of Thompson's writings, see Paul Hirst, "The Necessity of Theory," *Economy and Society* 8, no. 4 (November 1979): 417–45. In the same issue K. Nield and J. Seed offer a more general reading of Thompson's *The Poverty of Theory* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978) in "Theoretical Poverty or the Poverty of Theory," 383–416. An overview of Thompson's "theory" of history in a more accessible discourse is the set of texts prepared for *Literature and History* (5, no. 2 [1979]: 139–64). For a broad, post-Althusserian inquiry into the philosophical and political issues involved in contemporary debate on the subject, see Alex Callinicos, *Marxism and Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) and his *Is There a Future for Marxism?* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1982).
4. Thompson, *Poverty of Theory*, 299.
5. *Ibid.*, 86.
6. Anderson, *Arguments*, 51.
7. J. P. Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (London: NLB, 1976), 817.
8. This specular relation is what Lacan calls the "imaginary" and understands as a site of regressive plenitude. See Jacques Lacan, *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Anthony Wilden (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), especially pp. 159–77.
9. Derrida's first sustained challenge (in the United States) to the structuralism of the late 1950s and early 1960s was delivered in October 1966, at the Johns Hopkins University symposium, "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man." His most important book, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit), along with two others, *La voix et le phénomène: Introduction au problème du signe dans le phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), and *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil), were all published in 1967. His first book, *L'Origine de la géométrie de Husserl* (translated and introduced by him, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France) was published in 1962.
10. For an inquiry into the fundamental issues involved, see James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985).
11. See Thomas A. Sebeok, ed., *How Animals Communicate* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977). See also Thomas A. Sebeok and Jean Umiker-Sebeok, eds., *Speaking of Apes* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1980).
12. Legal, political, hermeneutic, as well as pedagogical issues raised by Critical Legal Studies in contestation with liberal legalism are discussed in the following texts: Duncan Kennedy, *Legal Education and the Reproduction of Hierarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Afar, 1983); David Kirby, ed., *The Politics of Law* (New York: Pantheon, 1982); Jonathan Black, ed., *Radical Lawyers* (New York: Avon Books, 1971); Christopher Norris, "Suspended Sentences: Textual Theory and the Law," in his *The Contest of Faculties* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985); and the special issue on "Law and Literature" of the *Texas Law Review* 60, no. 3 (March 1982).
13. "Critical Times at Harvard Law," *Harvard Magazine* 88, no. 4 (March–April 1986): 67.
14. *Ibid.*, 67–68.
15. A "vulgarized" version of this view informs almost all the editorials and many of the essays regularly published in such neoconservative organs as *The Public Interest*, *The New Criterion*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The New Republic*, and *Commentary* and the innumerable books which are dutifully reviewed in their pages.
16. In Hegelian historiography, the "inner essence" of history, of which all outer phenomena are mere "expressions," is absolute Idea—"the logical power of the divine" (*Reason in History*, trans. R. S. Hartman [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974], ix). This Idea develops both in Space (becoming Nature) and in Time (becoming Spirit). Spirit's movement towards self-consciousness (Freedom, for Hegel) is the course of history, whose trajectory is projected by Reason, "the substance of the Universe; viz., that by which and in which all reality has its being and subsistence" (*The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree [New York: Dover, 1956], 9). Reason is the "energizing power" of the "Spiritual Universe"—"The History of the World" (*Philosophy of History*, 9). And since Reason "is the law of the world," therefore "in world history, things have come about rationally" (*Reason in History*, 11). Reason for Hegel works in the adjacency of "religious truth" (*Philosophy of History*, 12).
17. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 12.
18. Althusser, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1970), 180; see also 119–44.
19. Hegel himself rejected the French Revolution as a cruel moment in the progress of history in which logical abstractions ran wild.
20. B. Hodge, G. Kress, and G. Jones, "The Ideology of Middle Management," in *Language and Control*, ed. R. Fowler et al. (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 93.

21. That almost all conservative leaders (e.g., Reagan, Thatcher) come from the petty-bourgeois class is significant but not directly relevant to our analysis here. For a rather interesting account of allegiance to petty-bourgeois ideologies, even when the petty-bourgeois as a person has moved into the upper classes, see the autobiographies of Norman Podhoretz, one of the chief neoconservative ideologues and the editor of *Commentary* (*Making It* [New York: Random House, 1967] and *Breaking Ranks: A Political Memoir* [New York: Harper & Row, 1979]).
22. For a rather superficial (but clear) statement, see William Bennett, *To Reclaim a Legacy* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1984). Many humanists have dissociated themselves from this statement; the dissociation, however, is more a matter of “style” than of “ideology.”
23. The discussion of empiricism here is based on M. Zavarzadeh, “The Politics of Cognition in Postmodern Critical Theory” (forthcoming).
24. J. Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 137. See also Crane Brinton, *Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957).
25. Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 35.
26. This contrasts with the postmodern view which declares, “There is no reality except when it is intelligible” (Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. A. Lavers and C. Smith [New York: Hill and Wang, 1968], 42).
27. The notion of knowledge as production is not unfamiliar in contemporary epistemologies; in fact one could argue that it is already inscribed in the empiricist and cognitivist paradigms themselves. In empiricism, for example, the idea that knowledge is an act of abstraction from the object already acknowledges that there is a difference between knowledge and object, as a totality; that not all of the object is identical with knowledge and as such to know is to submit the object to a process in which the knowledge part of the object (its real essence) is abstracted out.
28. For general discussions about cultural studies, see S. Hall, “Cultural Studies and the Center: Some Problematics and Problems,” in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. S. Hall et al. (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 15–70.
29. T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).
30. The difference of scale between a superstring and an atom is roughly equivalent to that between an atom and the solar system.
31. R. Rorty, “Philosophy as a Kind of Writing,” in his *The Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 90–109.
32. M. Foucault, “Politics and the Study of Discourse,” *Ideology and Consciousness* 3 (Spring 1978): 17–18.
33. For comments on this aspect of Saussure’s work, see John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 54–70.
34. See Roman Jakobson, *Essai de linguistique générale* (Paris: Minuit, 1963), 162.
35. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. W. Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 111–19.
36. *Ibid.*, 118.
37. *Ibid.*, 120.
38. J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 27–73.
39. Derrida, “Sending: On Representation,” *Social Research* 49 (Summer 1982): 294–326.
40. By the “sense” of a word is meant its place in a system of relationships. For Frege’s original distinction between “sense” and “reference,” see “On Sense and Reference,” in *Readings in Semantics*, ed. F. Zabeeh et al. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 118–40.
41. Others consider analytical philosophy to be the “dominant philosophy in capitalist countries today.” See J. Rajchman and C. West, eds., *Post-Analytical Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), x.
42. See Altieri’s collection of essays, *Act and Quality* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981).
43. K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 100.
44. L. Hjelmslev, *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, trans. Francis J. Whitfield (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961).
45. Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, 40.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Lyons, *Theoretical Linguistics*, 56. See also Saussure, *Course*, 111–12.
48. Lyons, *Theoretical Linguistics*, 56–57.
49. H. C. Conklin, “Hanunoo Color Terms,” *Southern Journal of Anthropology* 11 (1955): 339–44.

50. See also Lyons, *Theoretical Linguistics*, 431.
51. L. Prieto, *Pertinence et pratique* (Paris: Minit, 1975).
52. U. Eco, "How Culture Conditions the Colours We See," in *On Signs*, ed. Marshall Blonsky (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 157-75.
53. Eco, "Colours We See," 163.
54. *Ibid.*, 162.
55. J. Derrida, *Positions*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 26.
56. Maureen Howard, "Can Writing Be Taught at Iowa?" *New York Times Magazine*, 25 May 1986.
57. The official publication of Syracuse University, *The Record*, has a special column called "Media Log" in which are cataloged the names of faculty members who have been quoted or otherwise "acknowledged" by the media, the listing constituting something of a weekly "honor roll."
58. B. Andrews and Charles Bernstein, eds., *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book* (Carbondale, IL: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1983), ix. See also the analysis of commodity fetishism in R. Silliman's essay, 121-32, in the same volume.
59. W. Spanos, "Theory in the Undergraduate Curriculum: Towards an Interested Pedagogy," in *Theory/Pedagogy/Politics*, ed. Donald Morton and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh (forthcoming).
60. R. Barthes, *Critical Essays*, trans. R. Howard (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 98.
61. Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. R. Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), 3.
62. Anthony Wilden, "Lacan and the Discourse of the Other," in *The Language of the Self*, J. Lacan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 182.
63. T. Eagleton, "The Subject of Literature," *Cultural Critique*, no. 2 (Winter 1985-86), 96.
64. *Ibid.*, 96-97.
65. For a detailed discussion, see Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (New York: Schocken, 1978). Althusser's text, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in his *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-86, is the *locus classicus* of postmodern inquiry into the problematics of ideology.
66. J. Falwell, *Listen, America!* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 53.
67. *Ibid.*, 159.
68. For an analysis of the "economics" of moral laws in the ideologies of the New Right, see Zillah R. Eisenstein, "The Sexual Politics of the New Right: Understanding the 'Crisis of Liberalism' for the 1980s," in *Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology*, ed. Nannerl O. Keohane et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 77-98.
69. Falwell, *Listen, America!* 45.
70. For the range of this debate on "natural law" and slavery, see Samuel Seabury, *American Slavery Distinguished from the Slavery of English Theorists and Justified by the Law of Nature* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861); *idem*, *The Pro-Slavery Argument* (Charleston: Walker, Richards & Co., 1852); and W. G. Brownlow and A. Prynne, *Ought American Slavery to Be Perpetuated?* (1858; Miami, FL: Mnemosyne Publishing, 1969). For an overall survey, including the role Thomas Carlyle's writings have played in support of slavery in the name of the "laws of nature," see William Sumner Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935; Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1960).
71. Seabury, *American Slavery*, 68-69.
72. One effect of deconstruction on postmodern thought and practice has been to place in question common words and concepts: the sign of ". ." is the sign of reinscription, marking the entity in question as having been interrogated and its "commonsensical" relations with other signifying entities having been problematized.
73. See W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1954).
74. This view of deconstruction is based on our "strong" reading of it and our attempt to "politicize" it for a radical critical theory. American deconstructionists (in particular, Paul de Man and J. Hillis Miller) believe that the reader and the text occupy the same epistemological space, since the reader does no more than merely report the text's (self-)deconstruction, which has already been done by the text itself. The text is therefore defined by them as a self-deconstructing entity. This notion is the first step taken in the academy towards recuperating deconstruction as a mode of "close reading," a move which shows not only that there is no radical difference between "Yuppies" and American deconstructionists, but also that these two positions actually protect each other against radical critical theory (a point to which we will return). On this question see, among other texts, M. Sprinker, "Deconstruction in America," *Modern Language Notes* 101 (1986): 1232-33.
75. For an instance of such distancing, see "A Note on the Title of This Book," in *The Verbal Icon*, x. For a non-Saussurean theory of the sign that deals with "icon," "index," and "symbol" in Anglo-American semantics, see the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 8 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931). A one-volume collection, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, is edited by Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955).

76. Derrida, "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 5.
77. *Ibid.*, 9.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ibid.*, 7.
80. *Ibid.*, 15.
81. For further discussion of the Derridean idea of the sign and its place in contemporary theory, see M. Zavarzadeh, "Radical Semiotics, Conservative Humanities," *New American Review* 6, no. 2 (1984).
82. This reading is not only an instance of what a deconstructor might say about Freud, but also an example of how according to deconstructive theory a "reading" comes about. Our text on Freud (our reading) is an effect of Jonathan Culler's text, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 167–75, which is itself an effect of the texts of Juliet Mitchell, Luce Irigaray, Sarah Kofman, and others, which texts are themselves the effects of. . . (the series is never-ending. . . there is no "origin" to this chain of interpretation, a feature of deconstructive reading that puts in question the humanist's notion of "author"/"authority"/"originality" and, thus, the foundation of all "subjectivity" and "presence").
83. B. Johnson, "Translator's Introduction," in *Dissemination*, Jacques Derrida (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), xiv.
84. J. Hillis Miller, "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure," *Georgia Review* 30 (1976): 341.
85. The quotations from both Derrida and Rousseau in the following discussion are from Derrida, *Of Grammatology*.
86. De Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 20–56. The quotation comes from p. 34. The translation is de Man's.
87. For a sustained treatment of the subject-object problem in English Romantic poets, see Earl R. Wasserman, "The English Romantics: The Grounds of Knowledge," *Studies in Romanticism* 3 (1964): 17–34.
88. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1968), 265–66. See also Culler, *On Deconstruction*, 85–89.
89. In this critique of deconstruction, we are drawing upon Zavarzadeh, "Politics of Cognition."
90. B. Johnson, "Rigorous Unreliability," *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984): 280.
91. De Man's essay, "The Resistance to Theory," originally appeared in *Yale French Studies* 63 (1982); but it is reprinted in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 2–20. Our references are to the reprinted text.
92. Stephano Rosso, "An Interview with Paul de Man," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1986): 788–95, especially pp. 794–95. The reader will also find this text reprinted in *Resistance to Theory*, 115–21.
93. Cornell West, "The Politics of American Neo-Pragmatism," in *Post-Analytical Philosophy*, ed. John Rajchman and Cornell West (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 267.
94. P. de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 136.
95. In the following critique, we have relied on "The De-disciplining of English," by Teresa Ebert and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh (forthcoming).
96. T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 11.
97. Derrida, *Return*, 57.
98. See John Sturrock, "The Linguistics of Writing: A Colloquium," *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 July 1986, 769.
99. Marx, "Letter to Ruge" (September 1843) in *Collected Works*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 3:142.
100. Such a radical reunderstanding of the practices and theories in literary studies is now being resisted in the name of contemporary literary theory, especially under the theoretical aegis of deconstruction and a reformist feminism that keeps intact the power/knowledge relations of the patriarchal academy and simply re-forms the place of an essentialized "woman" inside that regime of truth. For examples of such recuperations by the established and traditional programs through the use of the new languages of contemporary theory, see the new English curriculum at Carnegie-Mellon University (Gary F. Waller, "Working within the Paradigm Shift: Poststructuralism and the College Curriculum," *ADE Bulletin* 81 [Fall 1985]: 6–12). Similar proposals for "change" of the English curriculum have been put forward at various other universities, including Syracuse University. This use of theory is the academic careerist's appropriation of it: it responds to the need for the commodification of ideas in consumer society, to the need to "change," to "update" one's practices so as to be always marketable.