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The Nostalgia for Law and Order and the Policing of Knowledge: The Politics of Contemporary Literary Theory. Part 2

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but of the rigorous writings of theorists like Charles Altieri, who, by a rereading of Wittgenstein, has attempted to offer a new mode of textual interpretation.[42] It should be added that the desire of contemporary philosophy to formulate a calculus of references and to rescue language from "nihilistic" theories like deconstruction has a great deal to do with research in artificial intelligence studies and the research funds that are (through defense contracts) made available for research in these areas. The current interest of philosophers in language and their rejection of deconstruction is related to the form of power/knowledge relations that these funds and grants make available.

The contestation between university philosophy and contemporary literary theory should be understood in the space we have just described. Literary theory is over-up-to-date from philosophy's point of view because it puts in question the basic tenets of academic philosophy; and it is not-quite-up-to-date because it does not pay attention to the revival of referentialism and regards it as merely a last grasp at institutional power in the name of a "genuine" philosophy that has suspended "fashionable" notions about language and reality.

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We have undertaken this excursus on representation because the full implications of "Yuppies"'s reproduction of the dominant ideology in the spaces of language, textuality, and subjectivity can only be comprehended by such a situating of it. "Yuppies"'s desire to anchor language, text, and the subject in the Real through the concept of reference and thus to obtain a coherent and stable world of representation is particularly evident when it reads (as somehow crucially untenable) Belsey's claim that from the Saussurean viewpoint " 'language precedes the existence of independent entities, making the world intelligible by differentiating between concepts' " (p. 12). "Yuppies" claims that Belsey makes a "fanciful addition" to Saussurean theories in order to make them mean that the world is made by language. Such a misrecognition of Belsey derives from "Yuppies"'s ideological imperative to confuse the Actual with the Real and thus to bypass the politics of meaningfulness. Belsey's discussion is about the constitution of the Real and not about the ontological status on the Actual (the nature of "being"), and therefore when she states that language practices in culture produce the Real, she is not saying that language produces the Actual in the sense of creating trees, snakes, tables, and male and female persons in their actual physicality but rather that language is a grid by means of which the undifferentiated continuum of nature is subjected to the differentiating processes of culture, and thus by segmentation the various parts of nature become known as trees, snakes, tables, and males and females. For instance, as long as they are part of the continuum of nature, male and female are not culturally "different" and therefore have no cultural reality since they do not play a role in the organization of social life: they play no part in social and economic arrangements. They have, in other words, no meaning, no reality, since reality is a cultural and not a natural matter. However, as soon as the actual male and female enter the domain of culture (which is, it must be made clear, before they are even born) and are differentiated by its symbolic order, its codes of gender, they acquire meaning as "masculine" or "feminine" persons and become culturally "real" and from that point on participate in cultural negotiations and in the organization of the economy of culture's systems. The transformation of the Actual into the Real takes place through various languages of culture which produce differences from the continuum of nature. Without language (differences) there will be no (cultural) reality: the question in Saussure and in Belsey is that of *the constitution of the Real* and not that of *the existence of the Actual*.

When Marx observes that "the *entire so-called history of the world* is nothing but the creation of man through human labour,"[43] he, like Saussure, is addressing the problematics of the construction of the Real in culture. History (the Real) is produced by human labor (the economic practice which is articulated with political, ideological-significatory, and theoretical practices of the social formation). The site of meaning is not nature, but nature transformed into social product—the Real. To substitute the Actual for the Real and tie language to the Actual is precisely to postulate meaning as natural, given, and thus inevitable—a move that is in fact a strategy of containment. It is a part of the dominant ideology's effort to mystify culture

by representing it as nature and to offer the Real as Actual so that culturally constructed values are put forth as natural givens and as such are placed beyond interrogation and contestation. The assumption here is that we have to adjust to these given values rather than attempt to change them since they are, like the laws of nature, unchangeable, and sacred. They are, in other words, part of the order of things. If meaning (the Real) is produced by applying the codes of culture on to the actuality of nature, it is important to examine this process a little more closely. The conceptual level of the "Yuppies" essay, as we have already indicated, is such that unfortunately our exposition will have to be conducted on a rather simple and thus unproblematized level.

Employing some of the concepts Saussure and Hjelmslev have provided,[44] we can conceptualize the processes through which language transforms the Actual into the Real, the same into a set of differences, a process which makes the world intelligible. Each signifying system is composed of two planes: the plane of the signifier (expression) and the plane of the signified (content). These two planes themselves are constituted by two strata: the stratum of "substance" and that of "form." These two terms are easily misunderstood since, as Roland Barthes warns us, "each of them has a weighty lexical past.[45] "The form," according to Barthes, is "what can be described exhaustively, simply and coherently (epistemological criteria) by linguistics without resorting to any extralinguistic premise." The "substance," to continue Barthes's exposition, "is the whole set of aspects of linguistic phenomena which cannot be described without resorting to extralinguistic premises."[46] Since both "form" and "substance" exist on the plane of expression as well as the plane of content, a four-term analytical scheme emerges:
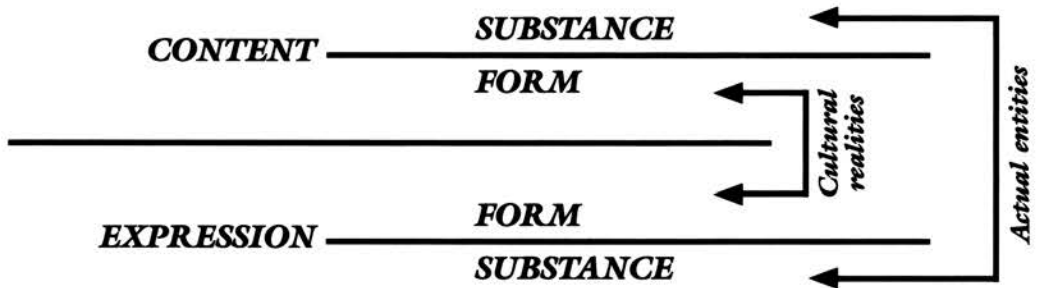
SIGNIFYING SYSTEM

On the plane of expression, substance (in a language) is all the sounds that the human speech organs can produce; using the International Phonetic Alphabet, some are transcribed as

$$\Theta \quad d \quad b \quad \vartheta \quad s \quad t \quad x$$

These "phones" are physical events, and as such nonlinguistic (noncultural) entities that belong to nature, to acoustic actuality. They acquire cultural "reality" if and only after they have been given a form by the phonological system of a language. The "phone" (an actuality of sound) becomes a "phoneme" (a culturally meaningful part of language) and in being en-formed by the phonological laws of a language constitutes a part of the cultural reality. In English [s] [b] [Θ] are "real" sounds (phonemes) in the language, while as far as the English sound system is concerned [x] is nonexistent (mere physical actuality), while it is "real" (a phoneme) in modern Persian.

While the features of substance and form on the plane of expression are fairly easy to determine and demonstrate, their characteristics on the plane of content are much more complex. The substance of the content is described by Saussure as "the whole mass of thoughts and emotions common to mankind independently of the language they speak—a kind of nebulous and undifferentiated conceptual medium out of which meanings are formed in particular languages by the conventional association of a certain complex of sounds with a certain part of the conceptual medium."[47] Such a description of substance, as we have

already mentioned, is psychologically and theoretically conservative. It is, of course, ideologically significant that the only part of Saussure that "Yuppies" *reads* in order to reveal Belsey's "misreading" is the section that seems to postulate an entity that is in the consciousness of the subject and as such prior to the signifying practices of culture.

We can reduce the psychologism of Saussure's idea of the substance of content by theorizing the substance of content as the undifferentiated continuum of all perceptual, conceptual, and physical "events" that the human sensory system is capable of producing and of responding to. Like the substance of expression in language, which is composed of all the sounds that human speech organs can produce, the substance of content is an effect of the materiality of the human sensory system and as such a natural and actual entity. In perceiving a cardinal flying against the sky, in responding to the darkness after sunset, the human nervous system responds to an actual event. This event is then made intelligible by being situated on the historically specific set of cultural grids that differentiate the entity "cardinal" from all other birds and also from the "sky"; and depending on the occasion, the intelligibility of the event can be increased by describing it as "beautiful." "Cardinal," it might be said, has a more or less clear "referent," while "beautiful" derives its "sense" from belonging to the semantic field that in English also includes "lovely," "attractive," "pretty," and so on. The meaning of "beautiful," in other words, is the effect of a sense relationship in this particular semantic field in English. The substance of such terms as "beautiful" then is more a sense-relation among various members of a semantic field in a given language than it is a referable physicality. This, however, does not mean that terms such as "cardinal" (which have a physical "referent") are any more in themselves accessible to us through the "referent" (rather than through the "sense") than is "beautiful," which is more obviously a cultural term. Both terms acquire intelligibility from the cultural grid on which they are placed: both are, in other words, intelligible as cultural terms rather than as actual or natural categories.

To make this last point about entities like "cardinal" a little clearer, it may be helpful to examine color terms in various languages and to investigate their differences. Like "cardinal," color terms seem to have a clear referent: they are assumed commonsensically to be physical phenomena and as such directly accessible to the viewer without cultural mediation. Research in modern linguistics, however, proves otherwise. Color terms in various languages are not merely different labels for the "same thing" (language is not a mere nomenclature), but are signifiers that en-form the color spectrum and thus make it culturally intelligible.

Since colors have physical existence, it is convenient to think that language merely reflects that existence and that what is actually "out there" is present in its plenitude by the mere act of reporting/reflection "in here" (that is, in language). However, this is far from being the case: we understand colors not because we respond to them directly through our sensory organs, but because the responses of our sensory organs are made intelligible for us by the language we speak. Different languages make sense of this physical continuum in startlingly different and dissimilar ways, thus putting in question the commonsensical view that nature is in itself intelligible. The English word *brown*, "has no equivalent in French (it would be translated as *brun, marron,* or even *jaun,* according to the particular shade and the kind of noun it qualifies... there's no equivalent to *blue* in Russian—the words *goluboj* and *sinij* (usually translated as 'light blue' and 'dark blue' respectively), refer to what are in Russian distinct colours, not different shades of the same colour, as their translation into English might suggest."[48] The role of culture in turning the Actual into the Real is made even clearer when we examine the color terms in such languages as Hanunoo having a system of color terms which—unlike those of Western languages—are not based entirely on hue, luminosity, and saturation, which are often considered to be the three-dimensional substances that underlie color terms. In his essay, "Hanunoo Color Terms,"[49] H. C. Conklin has demonstrated that the four main terms of the Hanunoo color system are based on lightness, darkness, wetness, and dryness. That the distinction between "wetness" and "dryness" is not simply a matter of hue (green versus red) is clear from the fact that "a shiny, wet, *brown* section of newly cut bamboo" is described by the term which is often used for light green. According to Conklin, not only is color in its technical sense not a universal, "natural" category, but the very oppositions of terms by which the substance of color is determined depend on culturally important features.[50]

In his book *Pertinence et pratique*[51]—which forms the basis of Umberto Eco's interesting essay, "How Culture Conditions the Colours We See"[52]—Luis Prieto calls these culturally important features "pertinent" points according to which a signifying system makes the world intelligible. These points of pertinence are themselves effects of the daily material practices in culture, not nature. In his exposition of Prieto, Eco provides a simple example of how the practical purposes (daily practices determined by social arrangements and not by the Actual) produce pertinent categories according to which we endow meaning and significance to our world, make sense of it. If, Eco writes,

> *I have on a table before me a large crystal ashtray, a paper cup and a hammer, I can organize these pieces of furniture of my limited world into a twofold system of pertinences. If my practical purpose is to collect some liquid, I then isolate a positive class whose members are the paper cup and the ashtray, and a negative class whose only member is the hammer. If, on the contrary, my purpose is to throw a missile at an enemy, then the heavy ashtray and the hammer will belong to the same class, in opposition to the light and useless paper cup. Practices select pertinences. The practical purpose does not, however, depend on a free decision on my part: material constraints are in play, since I cannot decide that the hammer can act as a container and the paper cup as a missile. Thus practical purposes, decisions about pertinences and material constraints will interact in leading a culture to segment the continuum of its own experience into a given form of the content. To say that a signification system makes communication processes possible means that one can usually communicate only about those cultural units that a given signification system has made pertinent. It is, then, reasonable to suppose now that one can better perceive that which a signification system has isolated and outlined as pertinent.*[53]

The form of content segmentalizes the substance according to the principles of pertinence that are established by material practices, which are tied to the obtaining and maintaining of power in a culture, the power to own and operate the means of production. The content of a language, then, is more an effect of the pertinences that a culture accepts as necessary coordinates for differentiation rather than it is a space in language through which the actuality of nature shines through. "What is content?" asks Eco in response to the problems that are involved in inquiring into the relation between substance and form, actuality and culture. His answer is helpful and should be quoted in full here. Content, according to Eco,

> *is not the external world. Expressions do not **signify** things or states of the world. At most, they are **used** to communicate with somebody about states of the world. If I say that ravens are black and unicorns white, I am undoubtedly uttering a statement about a state of the world. (In the first instance, I am speaking of the world of our experience, in the second I am speaking about a possible world of which unicorns are inhabitants— the fact that they are white is part of the state of affairs of that world.) However, a term like "raven" or "unicorn" does not necessarily refer to a "thing": it refers instead to a cultural unit, to an aspect of our organization of the world.*[54]

Thus—to bring the point round to "Yuppies"—although dogs' "preferences, for people, places, foods," seen through the frames of understanding universalized by common sense, may not seem to be "products of linguistically created differences" (p. 12), the interpretations of these preferences by their owners are always already shaped by the linguistically created differences that make the world intelligible for them. And "interpretation" is all that we can rely on in decoding those preferences since we do not have direct access to dogs' consciousnesses. Whoever "reads" the preferences of a dog is producing a reading that cannot but happen in the differentiated space of intelligibility of her/his culture. Dogs' preferences, then, like those of their owners, are not limitless, but are bounded by the terms set by the differences that are produced by the signifying practices of culture. American dogs' preferences for foods, for instance, are determined by the culinary codes of the U.S. (dog) food industry—that is, by an economic (cultural) practice. There are no transcendental dogs!

"Yuppies"'s notions that meaning is determined by actuality and that language is a mirror of natural processes which bestow "freedom and political rights" (p. 16) have important implications for the naming of certain discourses as knowledge and politics, and thus for the fate of the "meaningful" in culture. By postulating "freedom and political rights" as the outcome of natural processes, rather than of political struggles, "Yuppies" already indicates that language and language constructs have no efficacy as modes of ideological intervention. It is because the Actual and the natural "cause" power—and thus shape the social

relations and economic arrangements in a culture—that language, as a reflector of this cause, is merely a conduit for meanings that are prior to it. From within such a view of language, "Yuppies" nervously brackets as places of "safety" (p. 17) those sites of ideological struggle that use language as an effective vehicle for intervening in existing social arrangements (the classroom and the library, for example). From our viewpoint, however, the Actual is made intelligible and designated as Real through the processes of signification in culture; and these processes, we think, should be interrogated in any class that is worthy of the name. The Real is a fragile entity, always open to constitution and reconstitution. This reconstitution begins with an inquiry into the signifying practices that are involved in the production of the Real. We view the classroom as one of the cultural arenas in which the Real is demystified. Through such demystification, the power arrangements in culture, which are implicated in representations of the Real in its dominant form, are investigated. Far from being a safe place, an interrogative classroom is thus the most dangerous cultural space, since it is here that the concealed ideological struggles over the meaningful of culture are investigated and the existing organization of the Real is offered as only one of its many possible organizations. The insecurity of the Real, in other words, is demonstrated and the student placed in a position of intelligibility from which she can see the un-natural-ness of the Real. Obviously a classroom which is a mere receiver of the Actual (the only kind known to "Yuppies") is indeed a redundant place, the safest of all safe places. In such a classroom (in a literature department, for instance) all that is left for the pedagogue and student to do is to study the great books of major authors; appreciate their "beauty"; and praise the precision with which the language manages to refer to the actuality which lies beyond the reach of language and thus beyond the control of the student. All that the reader can do is adjust, not change, what already exists. This is an appreciative, not an interrogative, class.

Another of "Yuppies"'s safe places, the library, is not merely a depository of texts to be studied (as the "actualists" would have it), but a site for the interrogation of the discursive practices of culture and of the power relations that determine them. It is a space in which nothing less than the constitution of an entire civilization can be put in question: Marx's use of the British Museum is evidence enough of the library's revolutionary potential. There he wrote texts that have endangered the usual organization of the Real of culture. It is in fact because "Yuppies" recognizes the dangerous possibilities of the library and the classroom that it recirculates cultural clichés (the classroom as a place of safety) to undercut pedagogical practices aimed at dismantling existing practices. By designating the classroom as a safe space, and thus marking it as a redundant space, "Yuppies" shows its own ideological usefulness, since it is through such bracketing that the classroom is prevented from being a site for resisting the recirculation of the dominant ideology.

For "Yuppies," a text (like language itself) acquires its meaning because of the entities which are located outside it and which it faithfully "represents." In a sense, as a language construct, the text is the reflection of a reflection, a mimesis of a mimesis. Since it is given its meaning by nature and the Actual, it is always already "full"—it is determined and as such is, fundamentally, a nonnegotiable entity. In its fullness, the text is an instance of presence and plenitude that "Yuppies" designates as the unity of the text and defends such a unity from those reading strategies—such as deconstruction—which reveal the absence (that is in fact the condition of possibility of this presence) by exposing the "lacunae" (the points of referential and representational vulnerability) of the text. A full text is seen as already occupied by the Actual, and thus comes to the reader as a meaningful entity (p. 17). The function of the reader is also predetermined: to recover the meaning that is put in the text by the originary agent, the author. That "Yuppies"'s monological mode of straightforward reading obliterates all markers of the productivity of the text is clear in its "reading" of *The Winter's Tale*. Behind Shakespeare's text, it declares, is a "world where mental sickness is understandable, curable, and forgivable" (p. 16). This "imagined" world is, in other words, a world of plenitude and presence, and when one has access to such plenitude and fullness, "Yuppies" asks, "Who needs lacunae, textual interrogations..." (p. 16)? Thus when Belsey does indeed produce "lacunae" through her textual interrogation of *The Winter's Tale*, "Yuppies"'s only response is to "motivate" the text in a mimetic (and psychological) manner: "The extraordinary intimacy developed during Polixenes' long visit would almost inevitably lead to sexual desire" (p. 15), which, "Yuppies" seems to think, is the primary cause of Leontes' "madness." In other words, the "gaps" and "indeterminacies" in Shakespeare's text are filled in the most

mundanely realistic manner in order to make the text "readable" in the frame of intelligibility most available to a petty-bourgeois reader (pp. 15–16). Who needs "lacunae"? Obviously not the petty-bourgeois literalist.

For "Yuppies," then, reading is merely the process of abstracting an essence (meaning) from the text without violating its aesthetic integrity. A reader such as Belsey who reads transgressively is a "careless and disrespectful reader" (p. 15). Aesthetic integrity is the critical assumption through which the borders of the text are protected, and by means of such protection the text is isolated from the larger series of culture's discourses, cut off from the politics of signification, and thus reduced to a mere cognitive entity. One appreciates the text and does not subvert it: as "Yuppies" says in absolute interpretive innocence, "Who needs lacunae, textual interrogations. . .?" (p. 16).

Deconstruction puts the actualist notion of the full text under erasure by theorizing the text as constituted not by elements that are present to themselves—signs as representations of the actual—but by "traces" of absent signs.[55] The unity of the text is then only a mirage created by the effect of intertextuality. The full text is read by the reader in order to "recover" its meaning, a process which could not be undertaken by methods of reading that end up demonstrating "lacunae" in the text and thus the fragility of its unity, but only by historicist methods of scholarship that will reveal the hidden meaning of the text by reference to the genius of its author and to the empirical circumstances of the period in which it was composed. A reading method that inquires into the "'fictivity' of fiction" (p. 16) is not acceptable to "Yuppies" since such a reading strategy will focus on the processes of the production of the text and therefore will show that which is offered as full is full merely because it is made to seem so by certain representational schemes and textual devices and not because it is in itself so. The interpretive space of "Yuppies" is based on a hierarchy of texts that form the canon of Great Works, and in such a hierarchy, for instance, Arnold's "Scholar Gypsy" is "not in the same class" as Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (p. 16).

Somewhere close to the top of this hierarchy are the works of the great "realist" writers, such as Charles Dickens and George Eliot. Realism offers the exemplary texts of the actualist theories since they (it is believed) represent the Actual in its clarity, simplicity, and powerfulness. It is in the texts of realist writers that "Yuppies" once again argues for the stability of the Real and thus transmits its ideology: "Yuppies" implies that realist texts represent not only what is real, but what reality ought to be.

In the institutional study of literature this theory of writing—realism as THE mode of writing—is the dominant ideology that not only organizes curricula and syllabi, but also puts forth an ideological agenda for organizing such programs as those in "Creative Writing." At this moment in the contestation of knowledge in American universities, "Creative Writing" programs are recruited by conservative humanists as the last defense against what they regard to be a dangerous, monolithic discourse: literary theory. These programs defend the humanities by privileging realism and its philosophical program, namely representationalism, empiricism, and common sense. The recruitment of students, the hiring of teachers, and the offering of a certain kind of workshop are all practices directed by this ideological agenda. The director of the Iowa Workshop, Jack Leggett, articulates this agenda quite clearly when he says: "In judging the poems and stories of applicants, the selection committee avoids extremes, steering clear of *experimental work*" (emphasis added).[56] Why is this? Because "experimental" texts are subversive texts; they put a culture's signifying practices in question and ask whether the Real as constituted in the works of mainstream writers is not an oppressive and ideological organization of the Real that supports the political and economic status quo. However, since realistic writers are essentially catering to the dominant "taste" and "image" of the time, they are "popular"; and their popularity constitutes a power base for them in the university. Thus, the university, which is supposed to be an oppositional force in culture, a space in which dominant values and ideas are subjected to an interrogative inquiry, has become an appendage of the media.[57] Ideas that sell in the marketplace (popular realist fiction) dominate the university and through their domination provide (in this case) the realist writer with a power base from which he/she can attack the new modes of cultural inquiry enabled by postmodern critical theory. This does not mean that the "workshop story" is uncontested: at the moment, to give one example, the writers associated with the "L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetry" movement are struggling against the domination of the "workshop" poem and short story by attempting "an analysis of the capitalist social order as a whole and of the place

that alternative forms of writing might occupy in its transformation.[58] These radical writers, however, have no institutional power base partly because their texts are so deeply involved in the interrogation of the practices of realism.

That the mainstream creative writing program is used as an institutional apparatus for containing literary theory is clearly pointed out in William Spanos's essay, "Theory in the Undergraduate Curriculum: Towards an Interested Pedagogy."[59] Analyzing the reactionary measures taken against a course in "Interpretation, Analysis and Literary Theory" at the State University of New York at Binghamton, he indicates that the course was effectively killed when the department—under the urging of the creative writing program faculty—voted against listing the course among the electives for students in creative writing. Members of central administrations of provincial universities who have lent their support to the conservative humanists in suppressing theory in the humanities, however, are beginning to realize that their public relations efforts to build a "visible" English department by having well-known creative writing programs are becoming more and more projects of the past than of the future. It is becoming increasingly clear that unless English departments are transformed into departments of critical cultural studies, the humanities section of the university will become little more than a mere appendage of the professional schools for whom it teaches "skills." An English department based on the creative writing enterprise is hardly the site of such cultural interrogation since creative writing is, in the last analysis, also teaching trade skills, not engaging in adversarial cultural interrogations (one might instance here the case of the University of Iowa, which has arguably the "best" creative writing program in the country, but hardly has anything like the "best" English department).

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According to "Yuppies"'s view of things, the subject appears sometimes to be a "free" subject and sometimes to be a "determined" one, depending on the needs of its humanist argument. Take, for instance, its view of the situation of the author and the reader. For "Yuppies," the Actual (rather than the Real) engenders the text through the agency of the subject, who is perceived to be, like the text, "full"—an instance of self-presence and plenitude. The subject in the form of the "author" is the "origin" of the text's meaning, in the sense that meaning in its completeness, totality, and selfsameness exists in the author's mind alone. No other single consciousness has direct access to the full meaning: the subject in the form of the reader can only approximate the complete meaning of the text/consciousness of the author. Though different readers are allowed certain variations in their interpretations of the text (are allowed, in other words, to show their individuality), they must nevertheless recover in their readings a coherent and common core of significance, common enough to insure that the meaning, in spite of its variations from reader to reader, is stable. A reader whose reading is not informed by this common core is not a genuine reader, but a rude and "disrespectful" one (p. 15). Though such a reading process is presented as an appreciation of the beauty and humanity of the text, it would seem rather to be an act of ritualized obedience to the text's presumed semantic law and core of truth. Thus "Yuppies"'s understanding of the reading process makes it an exercise in how to adjust to authority, how to respect its limits and to obey its laws. The ideology of "Yuppies"'s understanding of meaning and text, in other words, is the discourse of obedience to authority.

"Yuppies"'s subject is the "originator" of meaning, the person who "intuits" things and above all has an intense emotional and physical response to phenomena. Even the authenticity of the reader's reading of a poem is marked not by what she says about the poem, but by the depths of her unspoken response: the reader must, like Emily Dickinson, feel that "the top of her head" is "coming off" (p. 18). It is not so much cultural forces that produce the subject, but "hidden psychological need" (p. 19) that shapes her. Yet in spite of being the originary, intuiting, and feeling "individual," the subject is nonetheless a static entity: she is, as we mentioned, "full" in that she is always already determined. That determinedness is the effect of an unchangeable human nature that forms all peoples of the world regardless of their culture, their society, or the economic and political coordinates that vary from culture to culture. "Displaced hunter-gatherers, forcibly removed from their tribal lands, relocated in a place where they do not know how to

support themselves, they turn into monsters, just like Goneril and Regan" (p. 22). It is this "essence," this "human nature," that finally determines who we are. The aporia in "Yuppies"'s view of "human nature" is that although here it postulates an essence which is marked by darkness and has the force of an ahistorical "original sin," "Yuppies" at the same time praises Shakespeare for providing a "true break with Renaissance conceptions of man's sinful nature" (p. 16). Since "Yuppies"'s theory about the basically sinful nature of "man" as manifested in the Ik is founded on "scientific" and anthropological researches (p. 22) and since science (again in "Yuppies"'s view) is the teller of truth, then Shakespeare's supposed break with the theory of "original sin" must be an instance of untruth, and thus an effect of ideology.

If the world comprises subjects all made of the same "human nature" (p. 21) and essence, they must also be different from one another; for it is only finally in their uniqueness that their status as persons lies. One mark of this uniqueness is the style with which they write: Dickens and George Eliot, Northrop Frye and Wayne Booth are exemplary figures for "Yuppies": they reveal their individuality and difference from one another by writing differently. In other words, style is a mark of "originality." Deconstructionists, by contrast, all write alike: "Same stilted sentence structure, same code words, same authorities" (p. 15). The claim that style is a marker of separateness is, of course, an ideological characteristic of humanism: the function of this praise of stylistic variation and elegance is in fact to conceal the sameness inscribed within humanist texts. Dickens and Eliot, Booth and Frye occupy the same ideological space in culture: the only thing that hides that sameness is their styles. The "regional" (style) in its heterogeneity occludes the "global" (ideological) homogeneity: style creates an aesthetic separation in order to conceal an ideological sameness. "Yuppies"'s discussion of the "sameness" of the writing styles of presumed deconstructionists is highly instructive, for it further reveals the role style plays in the circulation of humanist ideology. From the passages "Yuppies" quotes (p. 14), only two really show, with any energy, what "Yuppies" designates as a deconstructionist style. We choose one for further examination: "'The course is a postmodern transdisciplinary inquiry into narration as a mode of intelligibility'" (p. 14).

The quoted text is indeed a highly crafted piece of prose, one that can serve us as an exemplary text for addressing the question of "cloning," "sameness," and "stilted" style. The passage is an overcoded text that, like a metafictional text, draws attention to its own codedness and verbal constructedness; it is, in Roland Barthes's words, "a mask which points to itself."[60] In the asymptotic zone where it is located, this passage interrogates itself from inside by indicating its own institutional situationality as a pedagogical text. It marks the pedagogical situation as a highly constructed cultural moment in which what are thought to be the "natural" processes of signification are denaturalized. In order to dramatize that denaturalization, the text undertakes a self-denaturalization: it points out that it is a text, an example of writing (being a site of absence and a bearer of traces), not a moment of presence and transparency. Its highly coded language refers to all other languages to which it is linked, all intertextualities in which it participates and in which it intends to situate the student who might "take" the course. This text is "different," not in having a "style" unlike that of other texts: it is different in a much more radical sense. The text does not differ from other texts, but from itself: it is a reversible text and in its reversibility it is an open text, a text whose signifying processes are part of its meaning. Had "Yuppies" not relied so much on book reviews, had it in fact read some of the texts of poststructural problematics, it would have been taught by the first page of one of the most clear (and, by the way, widely read) texts of what *it* calls "deconstructionist" theory. On the opening page of *S/Z*, "Yuppies" would have found a concept of "difference" which would have accounted for the difference in difference. "This difference," Barthes patiently explains, "is not, obviously, some complete, irreducible quality (according to a mythic view of literature). . . . it is not what designates the individuality of each text, what names, signs, finishes off each work with a flourish; on the contrary, it is a difference which does not stop and which is articulated upon the infinity of texts, of languages, of systems; a difference of which each text is the return."[61] The difference that marks the text/the subject then is not some humanistic bourgeois essence, but the difference in the process of signification that announces its constructedness, its plurality in the sense of its reversibility. It is in reversibility that closure is disclosed and the conditions of possibility of meaningfulness are interrogated. Unlike the humanist style, this style does not conceal itself through the effects of obviousness, but marks those obviousnesses as products of the opacity of ideology.

The notion of the full, unitary, and rational subject that is privileged in "Yuppies" is contested and demystified in postmodern theories. In the discourses of postmodern theory, the subject is regarded to be an effect of ideology, since, as Lacan put it, the subject is "empty" and this emptiness is filled by means of a set of relationships and (Lacan again) "other voices"[62] through what Althusser has named Ideological State Apparatuses. These apparatuses (institutions of modern capitalism) constitute the subject through the discourses that are needed for the reproduction of the existing relations of production: family, church, trade unions, media, literature, and especially schools form the individual in a manner which is necessary for the reproduction of prevailing social arrangements. Workers (at all levels) must not only be physically available and technically skillful, but also—and more important—willing to accept their own position in existing social relations: they will have to see dominant class relations not only as the way things are but also as the way they ought to be. This acceptance of and consent to prevailing class relations is actively produced in them through the cultural obviousnesses that various discourses of ideology form. These discourses offer a philosophical-theological accounting of the world that justifies, explains, and clarifies the world in which the dominant class relations (with their consequent distribution of wealth) are offered as natural and universally given. For the worker, teacher, lawyer, army officer, and doctor to be able to function in society, it is—in other words—not enough to be professionally trained in the technical aspects of a job. Each must also acquire a set of assumptions, attitudes, modes of understanding (subjectivities) that lead to the practices needed for the continuation of the existing social order. The discourses of ideology produce obviousnesses that in their totality propose a theory of life for members of a culture: this theory of life postulates what should be regarded as "the good life," "happiness," "intimacy," "success," and so forth. Different social formations produce different "obviousnesses": that which is obvious in a feudal society is not so obvious in a highly competitive capitalist society.

In his essay, "The Subject of Literature," Terry Eagleton states that one of the central modes of production in any social formation is the production of the human subject: "Different human societies," he writes, "will of course require greatly different forms of subjectivity to fulfill their ends, and in this sense the production of the subject/subjectivities is just as historically relative and changing as the production of economic goods."[63] The construction of the subject is the effect of various apparatuses and institutions in a society such as family, schooling, and so on, which Eagleton calls, in their entirety, the ensemble of "moral technologies." A moral technology, according to him, "consists of a particular set of techniques and practices for the instilling of specific kinds of value, discipline, behavior, and response in human subjects."[64]

The effectivity of ideology in producing cultural obviousnesses that suppress the contradictions in the social order depends, of course, on its success in getting the majority of people to recognize them immediately as obvious. Furthermore, these obviousnesses must be so secure and uncontested that the recognizers not only do not inquire into their constitution but use them as the enabling frames for understanding reality, themselves, and the dominant practices. Cultural obviousnesses, in other words, should work as the grounds upon which a society bases its self-justifications and constructs representations and images of itself that enable it to carry on its life as a community.[65] "Ideology," as Althusser defines it, "is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (p. 162). In other words, ideology is a set of discourses, images, myths, that establishes an imaginary (imaged) relationship between the individual and the world. "Imaginary," it should be stressed, does not mean that this relationship is nonexistent (false) since people do indeed live their lives according to these "imaginary" relationships with the world. Althusser adopts this term from Lacan's theories on the formation of the subject. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the "imaginary" is a mode of relating to the world which is marked by its plenitude and presence. Althusser's view is that ideology is a mode of imaginary relating to the world in this sense: one is situated in a subject-position from which a relationship of presence and fullness is assumed. Thus wifehood and motherhood are subject-positions from which a woman relates to the real conditions of her life in an imaginary manner: in an assumed presence, fullness, and plenitude. The plenitude, in other words, is made possible only if the woman occupies the required subject-positions. It is part of the "imaged/imaginary" mode of relating that it does not allow a full inquiry into the relationships. Ideology attempts to overcome the contradictions of social life under capitalism by privileging certain representations and by suppressing others that threaten its legitimacy.

The mark of the subject's successful inscription in and incorporation into the existing social relations and the ultimate sign that it has obtained unique identity and freedom as a person, is that the recognizer of the cultural obviousnesses responds to the "call" from the Other who addresses her/him in her/his subject-position in the dominant social arrangements. He responds to the Other who "calls" him: teacher, husband, son, wife. Althusser designates this process of calling, which is the sign of the transformation of the individual into a subject (his/her incorporation and insertion into existing social relations), "interpellation." To be constituted as a subject is to be given a consciousness by virtue of which one becomes a free agent and a unique and irreplaceable person (because there is only one "you" that can respond to the call of the Other). The subjectivity and the freedom which goes with it, however, as we have implied, are effects of the person's complicity with the dominant relations of production. In responding to the "call" from the Other (Althusser names this Other as the Subject—with a capital—and exemplifies it in the figure of God, Boss, and other symbolic entities which stand for the existing social order), one recognizes in the process the existence of the Caller, who is articulating the social arrangements, and the Caller, in turn, recognizes the Called. This double recognition which produces subjectivity is what Althusser calls the "speculary" structure of ideology (p. 180). By means of its speculary composition, ideology, through the Caller (the Subject) turns the subject into a mirror, a reflection of the Subject, and thus ensures the subjection of the subject to the Subject, secures the consent of the individual to the dominant obviousnesses of culture. The individual recognizes himself in the mirror (mediation) of the Other; but since the speculary (mediated) nature of this self-recognition is suppressed by ideology, one is given to believe that one is self-constituted: one is a sovereign subject—the notion that informs "Yuppies"'s view of the individual.

With its essentialist theory of history, its privileging of empiricism as a mode of knowing, and its views of language and text as reflections of the Actual, the "Yuppies" text, like all texts of ideology, participates in the production of the (consenting) subject. The subject produced in "Yuppies" is given a position of intelligibility from which the world is seen—as we have argued before—as a battleground between moral forces (good and evil), a picture which is basically the condition of possibility of subjectivities produced in the petty-bourgeoisie, a condition required for their compliance with the existing order.

One of "Yuppies"'s strategies for depoliticizing the world of social practices and subjectivities while maintaining some degree of political credibility is to criticize the dominant order in remarks on the educational system (p. 17) and on Ronald Reagan. From the point of view of the ideological uses of the "Yuppies" text, it is highly significant that Reagan is not criticized on political or economic grounds: he is, for example, not questioned for his foreign policy in Central America (Nicaragua), for his approach to the Third World (the bombing of Libya), for his attitude towards a Palestinian homeland or towards South Africa (support of the racist regime), or for his domestic policies (cutting social services to the poor), but for his views on "trees" (p. 17). It is the stupidity of the person (subject) that "Yuppies" criticizes, not the uses of power. In fact, both in criticizing the vocabulary of poststructuralism and in discussing imperialism, "Yuppies" tries hard to bracket the whole question of power. For "Yuppies," imperialism is not an effect of economic and geopolitical power relations, but of personal, subjective taste: "Most mid-nineteenth-century Englishmen *wanted* to be imperialists" (emphasis added) (p. 17). And why? Because as free "subjects" these Englishmen "despised people weak enough to be conquered" (p. 17). This trivial analysis of colonialism is exactly what enables the petty-bourgeois to feel at home in times of change and "confusion." The problem is the colonized: they are too distastefully weak. It is not that the English economy, in order to reproduce the relations of production of capitalism, needed to exercise power, colonize, find markets, and subjugate: instead they colonized out of a sense of moral obligation, out of a desire to eradicate weakness. This hiding of power relations as the site of contestation leads "Yuppies" to appeal even to the "theories" of Jeane Kirkpatrick. (If a certain embarrassment is clear from the qualifier in the borrowed phrase, "deceptive terminology" [p. 19], the terminology is used nonetheless, which reveals that beneath "Yuppies"'s critical attitude towards Reagan lies an admiration of his politics and philosophy.) This seeming criticism of the establishment (which actually supports its basic philosophy and policies) is the effect of the political transformation of the radicalism of the sixties that is at the base of a new form of populism in the United States. Issues which were put forth as a radical agenda in that decade are now being used

in order to support what is basically the agenda of the New Right. The case is perhaps nowhere more clearly dramatized than in the controversial election campaign of Bernie Sanders, who is running on what he calls a "socialist" program for governor of Vermont, but he is using socialism to lend support to a Reaganite program against "big" government. Sanders' main appeal so far has been to farmers and urban "small business-men," the traditional petty-bourgeoisie. "Yuppies"'s supposed criticism of Reagan is located in this space of petty-bourgeois populism. In the discourse of postmodern theory, military images/words/phrases such as "power," "interrogation," and "avant-garde" are used *precisely* to foreground, not to hide, the fact that knowing is the effect of power/knowledge relationships. Such a vocabulary announces that there will be no more camouflaging of power by concealing it in "moral" language, and that is one reason why "Yuppies" is so unhappy about these "code" words. This is also the reason why "Yuppies" has a difficult time understanding why, for example, empiricist Galileo and his "religious persecutors" can indeed be considered "coconspirators" (p. 13), although this is not Belsey's assumption. Galileo, "Yuppies"'s hero, is the embodiment of the empirical science that the bourgeoisie of his time used as a weapon against the (residual) feudal powers. In contesting those powers, he was not using empirical data, but an *interpretation* of these data which was "dangerous" to the existence of those powers. The battle between Galileo and his religious opponents was not on empirical data as such, but on the modes of making those data intelligible—on codes of understanding, which is to say on the constitution of the Real in culture. The very same people who opposed Galileo's reading of empirical data when that reading was used to dismantle the power of the feudal regime became his allies ("coconspirators") when it came to forming a united force of the ruling class and the rising bourgeoisie against the proletariat in general. For ideological reasons, "Yuppies" has to "moralize" politics and power away so that it can build its case upon Manichaean binaries which otherwise collapse upon themselves.

It is another aporia of the "Yuppies" text that while it attempts very hard to put aside any discourse that inquires into the operations of power in order to interrogate it and thus empower the powerless, it bemoans "the assault on the 'authorities' " (p. 18) and loss of "discipline" (p. 17) in all aspects of life in the United States, and asserts that "authority" (in the form of various laws) is an essential and inevitable part of life. The laws "Yuppies" privileges are mostly "natural" laws (p. 22); and it is significant that the essay ends with the apocalyptic tone of coming disaster because of "the absence of all law" (p. 22). The appeal to "natural laws" is quite interesting in that it reveals—once again—the ideological space that "Yuppies" shares with some contemporary right-wing theorists, such as Jerry Falwell, who likewise appeals to "immutable laws"[66] to condemn a whole array of antipatriarchal practices, from new forms of family arrangements[67] to homosexuality and high taxes.[68] "Our founding fathers," Falwell writes, "had profound respect for the law and knew that true liberty is found only in obedience to law because they recognized the fallen nature of man as recorded in the Bible. They understood that they needed law as a guide."[69]

Similar appeals to the "laws of nature" were once used to justify slavery in the United States,[70] but few texts show as clearly as the following one not only the relationship between the argument from nature and the subjugation of women and slaves but also the ideological and political assumptions involved:

The right of suffrage is then truly universal when it is extended to all the adult males of the State, without regard to distinctions of property; it can not go beyond this limit and be extended to women, without violating the main principle on which the very being of the State rests for support, which is the subordination of wives to their husbands, of children to their fathers, and of slaves (in every community which has them) to their masters. Women are cared for and protected in their natural rights by the State, and so are children, and so are slaves in those countries in which they chance to form one of the classes of society; but women, children, and slaves are not the State, are not the protectors of society. Their position is one of subordination and dependence; and men—freemen—whether they be "the lords of creation" or not, are in fact the lords and rulers of the political community to which they belong.

And not only in fact, but of right; for a little reflection will convince us that Nature and right reason point to men as the proper depositories of political power, and restrain two, at least, of the classes above indicated to that mediate relation to the State which, in fact, they hold.[71]

Although frequently not observing them, the dominant class always appeals to laws, since it is its interests that are in any case codified in them. Of couse the law of nature carries that process one step further: it removes the slightest hint that these laws are "constructed." Here, in its advocacy of the laws of nature, "Yuppies" follows the same trajectory of ideas that, as we have already argued, leads to its defense of the commonsensical understanding of textuality, subjectivity, and language, as well as of history and empiricism. For "Yuppies," thinking empirically is as much a "natural" practice as writing realistic fiction, enforcing the law, and disciplinary knowledge.

The theoretical inquiry that has placed such "natural" practices in question and pointed up their constructedness—marked by the fact that they are not instances of natural givens but sites of the social production of power—is banished by "Yuppies" under the name of deconstruction. Although what "Yuppies" designates as deconstruction is more of a generic term for alterity and otherness, it is necessary that in engaging the "Yuppies" text we turn to the question it never answers: What is deconstruction? And, furthermore, why is "Yuppies" so disturbed by it?

III

ECONSTRUCTION (TO DE-CONSTRUCT IS to take an entity apart in order to subject it to rigorous analysis) is a mode of careful and slow "reading"[72] ("reading" is the act through which the constitution of the "meaning effect"—the constitution of an entity as "meaningful"—is investigated). This mode of reading however, is radically different—both in its "aims" and in the interpretive operation it undertakes—from the traditional, institutionalized forms of reading known as *explication de texte*, *lecture de textes*, and "close reading." In the French and the Anglo-American techniques, the reader occupies the same "epistemological" (to be more explicit, "political") space as the text, and thus his reading more or less reproduces the text: it "clarifies" the text by showing how all its diverse components work together to produce a coherent, unified, and "full" text. *Explication de texte* draws upon philology, history, sociology, the author's biography, and formal properties of the text to reveal the text's "truth," and is an avowedly empiricist and positivist enterprise. *Lecture de textes* is an immanent form of reading which is more hermeneutical and is deeply influenced by phenomenology and psychoanalysis. "Close reading" is a more aesthetic undertaking than the others. "Close reading," which has become the pedagogical mainstay of literary studies in anglophone universities, aims at illuminating the working of the text through its various elements (words, connotations, images, and so on) and its different strands and layers so as to demonstrate that the text is a unitary, coherent, but ambiguous, "meaningful" whole in itself. The "text in itself" is in fact the sole concern of the (New Critical) close reader, so much so as to be regarded often as a "verbal icon."[73] Derridean deconstruction puts the theory of the sign behind traditional close reading in question. To read deconstructively is to occupy an epistemological space quite different from the one the text occupies: to read deconstructively is to read against the grain of the text.[74] Even when the New Critical close reader does not adhere to such an extreme view of meaning as implied by the term "icon," even when she distances herself from some of the implications of the iconic notion of meaning, or even when she employs such other notions of the sign (such as the sign as "symbolic" rather than as "iconic" or "indexical"),[75] she nevertheless adheres to a referential theory of representation that postulates a relationship of equivalence between the signifier and the signified, the "sign" and the "thing"/"idea." Deconstruction, on the contrary, proposes that instead of having a relation of reference and equivalence, the relationship of signifier and signified is marked by excess and difference: the signifier always exceeds the limits of meaning set by the signified and enters a chain of "difference" in signification which is unmasterable. According to Derrida, the "mastery" of meaning is an illusion which is the condition of possibility of Western metaphysics as reflected in its logocentrism. Before discussing his proposal, however, it is necessary to expand on Derrida's notion of the sign.

The humanist theory of language and meaning (as we have argued) is rooted in the idea of the referentiality of language, which leads to the belief in the determinacy of meaning and its unmediated availability

to human consciousness. In a series of readings of various literary, philosophical, and discursive texts, Derrida demonstrates that, rather than being self-present and determinable, meaning is a constant drift of *"differance,"* a semantic chase, an unresting referral of one sign to other signs in everlasting deferment. Language is therefore seen as a system of signs acquiring its signification not by the authority of its reference to a preordained meaning resulting from the positivity of its terms, but by virtue of its differential properties: the features distinguishing one sign from other signs and thus generating semiotic "values" that in turn produce meanings that are "differential" and not "referential." Such a view of meaning inscribes silence, absence, and alterity into the process of semiosis. Signification and meaning are revealed to be founded on silence ("Inaudible is the difference between two phonemes which alone permits them to be and to operate as such")[76] and are implicated in absence. The functioning of a sign not only requires the absence of all other signs from which it is discernible, but more importantly points up the absence of its own signified. A sign, Derrida argues, is ordinarily "put in the place of the thing itself"[77] and therefore, through its alterity, marks the absence of that which it signifies: "The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present."[78] In other words, the sign is *different* (nonidentical) from its signified and in replacing the "thing" *defers* its presence. This process of difference and deferment is what Derrida calls *"differance."* *"Differance,"* which is "neither a word nor a concept,"[79] is one of the constructs (like the supplement and the pharmakon) through which Derrida deconstructs (without a simple substitution of absence/lack for presence/plenitude) the metaphysical closure of the logocentric, humanistic, and structuralist semiotics, which treat the sign as secondary and provisional in reference to an originary and permanent presence, and unveils the instability of meaning.

Derrida's deconstruction of the sign also leads to the revision of the meaning and status of writing. In Derridean discourse, writing emerges not as the representation of something that exists outside it ("speech," for example), but as unending and limitless "play," a "play" set in motion by the "absence of the transcendental signified," by the lack of a grounding authority. Another related outcome is that the traditional notion of the text as a full object, as the site of presence and plenitude, is stripped of its covering and disclosed as a tissue of grafts whose operation is a form of dissemination and not of centered signification. Consequently, the reality outside language and other semiotic systems loses its assigned ontological privilege, as do many art forms legitimized by the referential view of the relationship between language and reality. Representation in art and realistic fiction, for instance, are unmasked and their "naturalness" is deconstructed as an effect of signifying systems. Furthermore, in his interrogation of the humanist theory of selfhood, Derrida allows us to see how the idea of character (one of the most "obviously" "natural" elements of realistic fiction, which is the apotheosis of the bourgeois imagination) is a function of a logocentric metaphysics and also how it, like its underlying model of subject(ivity) (the cornerstone of liberal humanism as well as of representational aesthetics), is ultimately a discursive construct:

> Now if we refer, once again, to the semiological difference, of what does Saussure, in particular, remind us? That "language [which only consists of differences] is not a function of the speaking subject." This implies that the subject (in its identity with itself, or eventually in its consciousness of its identity with itself, its self-consciousness) is inscribed in language, is a "function" of language, becomes a **speaking** subject only by making its speech conform—even in so-called "creation," or in so-called "transgression"—to the system of the rules of language as a system of differences, or at the very least by conforming to the general law of **differance**. . . .[80]

Since Derrida proposes that THERE IS NO OUTSIDE TEXT (*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*), in the sense that all modes of signification are subject to excess and difference, then "meaning" (in all sites of culture) is produced by difference.

In its criticism of deconstruction, "Yuppies" (following commonplace humanist criticism) declares that, after all, deconstruction is a rather "safe" mode of understanding reality since it only deals with it as "text." However, the Derridean notion that there is nothing outside the text should not be read to mean that the world is reducible to text, but rather that the world is not understandable as a simple instance of self-sameness, self-identity, and plenitude. The Real is not "substantial" and thus unalterable, but—like a text— "differential" and thus open to radical change: changing the system of differences changes the meaning of the Real. This mode of reading has enormous implications not merely for philosophers, literary critics,

and theorists, but for all readers, indeed for anyone who is implicated in the production and dissemination of meaningful utterances in culture.[81] To demonstrate the radical implications of Derrida's theory of meaning and also to provide an instance for elaborating on other aspects of deconstruction, we now turn to a specific deconstructive reading.[82]

Deconstructive readings reach not only into those "philosophical" spaces open to relatively unimpassioned debate (the spaces, for instance, of the presence/absence, speech/writing hierarchies) but also into spaces where controversies rage today (the spaces, for instance, of the man/woman, white race/Other races, heterosexuality/Other-sexuality hierarchies). To be sure, the separation is artificial: there is at every point a linkage—constantly remarked by Derrida—between the binaries that can be calmly viewed and those that seemingly cannot. By urging such linkages, Derrida presses continually for the application of speculative thinking to the entire range of human concerns, leaving no domain of common sense uncontested.

As our exemplary deconstructive reading, then, we choose Freud and his controversial theories of feminine sexuality. A deconstructive reading of Freud focuses not only on logocentrism, the privileging of speech (in all its "immediacy" and "naturalness") over writing, but also on phallocentrism, the privileging of man as bearer of the dominant sign (in all its evident potency) over woman (regarded by contrast as "incomplete" in lacking the sign of maleness). Freudian theory both establishes and maintains—through the commonsensical reading—prevailing normative gender roles and sexual practices. The classical deconstructive reader, however, rejects the mere review of the ways in which Freud (as if he were master of his texts) constructs the man/woman hierarchy and instead reunderstands the (composite) Freudian text on gender and sexuality by revealing how it deconstructs itself, that is to say, how it is founded upon logical reversals which undermine its own manifest "intentions." The goal of Freudian theory is to install as a "scientific" account of the production of gender in culture these twin narratives: the castration complex and penis envy, according to which children of both sexes, observing male and female bodies, conclude from physical first impressions that the male child, who has a penis ("presence"), is not only different from, but also superior to, the female child, who lacks such an organ ("absence"). When further anatomical knowledge provides the "evidence" that the female actually possesses her own organ of pleasure (clitoris), that organ is regarded as a residual, vestigial, and much-diminished penis. Thus, in the dominant view, female anatomy is read at every turn against "normative" male anatomy, and the logic of these narratives reinforces the privileging of man. "Empirical" data is used to reinforce the pride of possession of the male and the "envy" of the female. The deconstructor, however, pressuring the Freudian text, notices that Freud's own argument recognizes something like a greater complexity in female sexuality, for woman—it turns out—has two principal (interpreted as male and female) sex organs (clitoris and vagina), not just one like the male, a "fact" which Freud interpreted as suggesting the original "bisexuality" of woman, a condition to be overcome as she "matures" to fit the imperatives of heterosexual life. Thus it is that deconstruction reveals that Freudian theory—in spite of itself—produces a reversal quite inconvenient to prevailing views: what starts as an argument for the "completeness" of the male as possessor of the penis (this supposed completeness guaranteeing his privileged position in the man/woman binary) gives way—it can be argued—to the evidently richer "completeness" of woman, as protowoman. From this reading, man emerges as merely a special case of woman, whose sexuality is much more complex and encompassing.

Such a deconstructive reading involves several interpretive operations that are all contrary to the traditional interpretive practices which take as their aim the discovery of a unified meaning in a self-identical and coherent text. However, from this example and others we will provide, it should be understood that, contrary to the view implied by "Yuppies," deconstruction is not, in Barbara Johnson's words, a "form of textual vandalism"; it does not attempt to get rid of the text or destroy meaning. "If," to continue with Johnson, "anything is destroyed, in a deconstructive reading, it is not meaning but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying (i.e., male) over another (i.e., female)."[83] In classic deconstructive readings (say, those of Derrida and de Man) the domination/decidability proposed by traditional textual interpretations is undermined by demonstrating that the text, far from being a selfsame, coherent unit "in itself," is the site of reversal, alterity, excess, and difference. Difference, as we have said, is to be understood here not in the sense of a text being different from other texts (from its "outside") but from itself (from

its "inside"), a difference that in fact problematizes the distinction between "outside" and "inside." Deconstruction reveals the text to be a highly reversible and thus unstable and undecidable entity. The undecidability of the text is the effect of the warring forces in its signifying processes in which the "connotation" displaces the "denotation," the "tropological" undermines the "thematic" (the extractable thematic) and thus foregrounds the inability of the text to "represent" anything outside its processes of signification. No longer regarded as a representation of themes, ideas, things outside itself, the text becomes an extended commentary upon its own textuality and moves towards signification, or in Paul de Man's words, becomes an "allegory of reading." There is a radical difference between the text as an allegory of its own textuality and the text as an unproblematic instance of representation in which reality, in its "full plenitude," stands behind the text and guarantees its "truthfulness."

In order to extend the implications of deconstruction, several operations in the above reading of Freud must be more carefully examined. On the whole, one can mark two stages in deconstructive reading, stages which we shall name "dehierarchization" and "reinscription." In the first stage, an aggressive reading demonstrates that the "meaningfulness" of the Freudian sexual narrative is the effect of the oppositions it postulates: male/female, presence (of the penis)/absence (of same), for example. Having located the binaries between the terms, the reading then proceeds to indicate how these binaries are in fact metaphysical impositions rather than "natural" oppositions; this is accomplished by a slow and careful reading of the text and by a detailed and rigorous teasing out of the presuppositions of the text (castration complex, penis envy. . .) about sexuality—all of this demonstrating how Freud presents these as the actual conditions of women. All aspects of the text, especially its tropological and figural elements, are analyzed in order to show that the assumptions are enabled and naturalized by textual operations. Concepts, which are regarded as embodiments of ideas (truth), are revealed to be the products of textual knots—of metaphors and metonymies, synecdoches and metalepses. Such rigorous reading can show that textual effects and not actuality set up these binaries and that although these binaries are offered as equal and neutral, they are in fact based on, and used to perpetuate, a power relation. The male/female duality, for example, is revealed to be only a repetition of a series of such binaries in Western thought, of which speech/writing, presence/absence, heterosexual/homosexual, literal/figural, science/literature are well-known instances. These binaries rely on the "obviousnesses" that ideology has circulated about them; and since they are linked to the good/bad dichotomy, the first term of the oppositions is always prior to the second. The function of this hierarchization is to privilege the first term whose superiority over the second is necessary for the uncontested continuation of what Derrida calls "logocentrism": the belief in the possibility of access to full and self-present truth, the logos. In Freud, the logos is the selfsame male. Such a metaphysics of presence is ultimately a mode of transcendence, and from its perspective the textual series is regarded as a mere opacity that has to be overcome. A deconstructive reading shows that in fact all that is available to the subject is various modalities of textuality and that the self-present truth is always differed through the differences of these texts.

For the traditional humanist, dehierarchization is the most unsettling and threatening operation in deconstructive reading, for in this stage almost all the accepted norms and operations of commonsense reading are put under erasure. In fact for most critics, deconstruction is associated mostly with this "dehierarchizing" stage. In his famous essay, "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure," J. Hillis Miller describes deconstruction, for the most part, as an operation of dehierarchization:

> Deconstruction as a mode of interpretation works by a careful and circumspect entering of each textual labyrinth. The critic feels his way from figure to figure, from concept to concept, from mythical motif to mythical motif, in a repetition which is in no sense a parody. It employs, nevertheless, the subversive power present in even the most exact and unironical doubling. The deconstructive critic seeks to find, by this process of retracing, the element in the system studied which is alogical, the thread in the text in question which will unravel it all, or the loose stone which will pull down the whole building.[84]

Having located the binaries and dehierarchized them, the Derridean deconstructive reading then proceeds to situate the binary terms in a new relation in which they are not seen as opposed or prioritized, but instead considered to be versions of an inclusive, generalized prototerm (in Freud, for example, male and female are seen at this stage as both being versions of a new term, protowoman). In other words,