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Sub-Versions of Reading

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Abstract

My PhD is entitled *Sub-Versions of Reading*. The thesis is concerned with critical refractions such as reading, interpretation, criticism, commentary... activities which resemble each other in that they do not resemble that from which they derive; thus derived rather than original, secondary rather than primary, their status is also deemed second-rate. My aim has been both to reread their inferior plight and rewrite this plight through the theoretical insights culled from recent literary theory. I therefore compare two theoretical frameworks, one hermeneutic, the other post-structuralist, both of which have contributed, each in different ways, towards a theorization of reading. Following this, I come to argue that the kind of unitarian, totalizing hermeneutic approach, which seeks to reduce the original text's polysemantic possibilities, unlike a post-structuralist strategy which renders the "original" indeterminable and unleashes the isotropisms of textuality, can make no real critical difference to empower the refractor, be it the reader, critic or translator. Thus my argument finally uses translation, as the very site, that 'impossible place' where the multiple discourses on reading, re-reading, misreading, (un)readablity, reading/as/writing connect, and where the (sub)version of translation can be theorized differently. Here, theories can be seen to multiply, and in multiplying, they not merely transform the "state" of translation (as a re/writing) but also the state of "theory" (as a multiplication of theorems).

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Acknowledgments

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, Margarete Schutz, and my supervisor, Susan Bassnett, who each in their own way, have made this thesis possible.

I would also like to thank Iain Hamilton Grant, who shares my books and whose books I share, for always coming up with the right quote at just the right time. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the University of Warwick, for cultivating a stimulating academic climate which both excited and inspired me constantly during my happy years of study there.

It is arming people with the power to read, which I see
as an absolutely fundamental necessity in order for
them to make their way in the present world: this is
what I think the study of literature can really do.

J. Hillis Miller

Preliminary Remarks: Re-reading Criticism

> There are some exquisite echoes in India... The echo in the Marabar
> cave is not like these, it is entirely devoid of distinction. Whatever
> is said, the same monotonous noise replies and quivers up and down the
> walls until it is absorbed into the roof. 'Boum' is the sound as far
> as the human alphabet can express it, or 'bou-oum', or 'ou-boum', -
> utterly dull. Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeek of a
> boot, all produce 'boum'. (145)
> But suddenly at the edge of her mind, Religion appeared, poor little
> talkative Christianity, and she knew that all its divine words from
> 'Let there be Light' to 'It is finished' only amounted to 'boum'. Then
> she was terrified over an area larger than usual; the universe, never
> comprehensible to her intellect, offered no repose to her soul...
> (149)   Mrs. Moore in *Passage to India* by E. M. Forster

If much of human activity has been the pursuit for ultimate knowledge and
truth, to unravel the mysteries of the universe, and man professed himself
to have discovered his and her place in this universe, thereby giving both
purpose and meaning to his life and death, this world he thought to have
understood adhered to a stable, divinely controlled order, able to define
and reaffirm value for him. The reality of this existence was commonly
shared - at least by its patriarchial order - and thus provided a stable
basis to which humankind, or to be more specific, to which mankind was able
to refer for its meaning. In the light of intellectual developments leading
into the twentieth century (Darwin's relegation of the human to 'animal
status', Marx' questioning of our place in history and society, Nietzsche's
death of God, and Freud's exploration into our unconscious psyche...), the
human subject's comprehensive concept of Reality fragmented into a welter
of realities, thus reducing the world's Reality into a mere interpretation.
"Reality", phallocratic comprehension, crumbled under a welter of
realities, entailing the subjection of "meaning" to power (as the
mathematicians say); meanings then, all lacking in divine, superior, or
final, judgement. Unable to fall back on reason for good judgement, for

Kant had already dismantled it back in Königsberg, Western man and woman's scientific and rational way of knowing was proving incapable of *comprehending* the universe. Uncertainty thus took over from truth, leaving poor Mrs. Moore, a victim of this dissipating phallocracy, groping for "the meaning of meaning" in an increasingly meaningless universe.

> I have, I am aware, told this story in a very rambling way so that it may be difficult for anyone to find their path through what may be a sort of maze. I cannot help it... One remembers points one has forgotten and one explains them all the more minutely since one recognizes that one has forgotten to mention them in their proper places and that one may have given, by omitting them, a false impression. I console myself with thinking that this is a real story and that, after all, real stories are probably told best in the way a person telling a story would tell them. They will then seem most real. (167)
> I don't know. I know nothing. I am very tired. (220)
> I don't know. I leave it to you. (220)
> Perhaps you can make head or tail of it; it is beyond me. (213)
> I know nothing in the world - nothing in the world - of the hearts of men. I only know that I am alone - horribly alone. (14)
>   Mr. Dowell in *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford

We can chart a shift, then, in our attitudes to comprehension, a shift, the effects of which, can also be discerned in twentieth century literature. While the nineteenth century author seemed to share a social sense of significance with an audience, ' guiding the reader to a conclusion, twentieth century literature explores, to a large extent, "inner experience", ways in which the subject attempts to constitute itself in the writing process, leaving the reader to make up his/her own mind, thus finally involving the reader in epistemological quests through literature's formal devices. Meanings are not so much deposited or given by the author, but are produced, or later, de/constructed by readers. In the modernist work, the reader is to fill out the meaning and in the post-modern text, the reader becomes the player in games of signification. This 'birth of the reader'

then marks the end of the reign of the author or the closing of the convention of authors creating *author*itative meaning (a reflection of the desire to comprehend truth as single and unequivocal); it is not long until "text" is seen not as an autonomous, identifiable, and coherent entity, but as a site to be explored in its relation to other texts, readings/contexts; thereby also displacing the text's priority.

> There is nothing - I mean no incontrovertible evidence - that might allow anyone to place Simon Lecoeur's story among tales of pure fiction. n the contrary, one can observe that numerous and important elements of that unstable, incomplete text, fissured as it seems, coincide with facts (commonly known facts) with a strange recurrence that is therefore disconcerting. And while other elements of the narrative stray deliberately away from those facts, they always do so in so suspicious a manner that one is forced to see there a systematic intent on part of the narrator... (7-8)
> About the author himself, little is known. His true identity is itself open to question. Nobody knew any of his relatives, distant or close. (8)
>
>   The Narrator in *Djinn* by Alain Robbe-Grillet

What this brief sketch of European intellectual history charts, are linkages between specific cultural and literary developments, which may then be mapped onto certain approaches to literature itself. The shift that can be charted here is one from literary scholarship to literary criticism to literary theory. These three categories can be broadly summarized as follows. Literary scholarship 'studied literature almost exclusively in its relation to its factual causes or genesis: the author's life, his recorded intentions in writing, his immediate social and cultural environment, his sources... it was an extrinsic rather than an intrinsic approach to texts'. [2] Literary scholarship thus regarded the literary text 'as the expression of the psychology of an individual, which in its turn is the expression of the *milieu* of the period in which the individual lived, and of the race he belonged to' (Jefferson & Robey 1982: 3), disregarding questions of

intrinsic literary merit, i.e. literariness. In a nutshell, it is a source and author-centered approach, an approach though, which has guided much of European and American academe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Literary criticism on the other hand, focuses its attention on the text. It is inclined to discuss areas such as literary value or the nature of literature in general. In this sense it calls for the definition of the subject-matter of literary study, and is consequently eager to discuss literature's intrinsic properties. The criticism of F.R. Leavis for instance, concentrated on those aspects of texts which he considered most significant from a literary point of view, 'stressing the centrality of rigorous critical analysis, and foregrounding a disciplined attention to the *words on the page*' (Eagleton 1983: 32). This kind of practical criticism or close reading closes in on the 'words on the page' rather than opening up 'the contexts which produced and surround them' (44). And to quote Eagleton once more, 'It was the beginning then of a 'reification' of the literary work, the treatment of it as an object in itself, which was to be triumphantly consummated by the American New Criticism' (44).

In an early attack by Wellek & Warren on Leavis, we can already see, how the acknowledgment of a theoretical impulse in literary studies began to undermine this kind of practical criticism. Wellek, though admiring Leavis' writings, made an incisive criticsm. As Ann Jefferson and David Robey sum up Wellek's point, 'it [Leavis' criticism] failed to state explicitely and defend systematically its assumptions concerning the nature and value of poetry' (1982: 5). This call, in Wellek's words, for

'defend[ing ones] position more abstractly and to become conscious that large ethical, philosophical and, of course, ultimately, also aesthetic *choices* are involved' (Wellek 1937: 376, qu. in Jefferson & Robey 1982: 5), marks a turn towards a more systematic, self-reflexive and theoretical approach in literary studies. Wellek's view of the critic here invokes a set of norms and standards as well as a conceptual formulation of the task of literary criticism. This stands in stark contrast to Leavis' advocacy of the aims of the critic, which he saw for the most part as the same as that of a good reader who *feels into* the experience of the text in its 'concrete fullness' (Jefferson & Robey 1982: 6). This reader or supremely humanist subject belongs to a minority, upon which depends 'the discerning appreciation of art and literature... a small minority [...] who are capable of endorsing such first-hand judgement by genuine personal response...' (Leavis 1930: 3-5). ⁳

Wellek & Warren's influential book *Theory of Literature* may be seen as one of the earliest formulations of a theoretical approach to literature, an approach to literary studies as a self-aware discipline. It singles out three areas for literary study. The first one is concerned with the definition of literature. The theorist here is primarily interested in isolating those qualities or properties which all literary works and only literary works possess. The second area is concerned with the function of literature. The theorist here asks what function, purpose, or need literature has fulfilled for society and its members. The third area concerns the institution of literature and looks to the reader. The theorist in this instance, seeks to discover what the reader does when he reads something as literature. Recognizing that society thinks of certain

writings as being literary, and assuming that it deals with them in a special way, this sort of theorist tries to discover the conventions or implicit rules that comprise that literary institution.

We have now charted some of the major shifts in nineteenth and twentieth century approaches to literature; two things have consequently began to emerge: firstly we can discern a shift from unsystematic, anti-theoretical positions to systematic, theoretical, in other words, self-reflexive accounts of what is involved in literary study. Secondly, we can trace a shifting emphasis in approaches to literary studies: from a more traditional concern with the figure of the author, to a text-centred emphasis, to a reader-oriented approach. To formulate this differently, we may see a shift from understanding the author's experience, to understanding a particular text, to the very terms of understanding in general, i.e. to a kind of reading of making sense. ⁴ In brief then, we can see a shift from literary scholarship to practical criticism to literary theory, a shift from an authorial intention to close reading to the description of signifying effects. ⁵

> My own view is that it is most useful to see 'literature' as a name which people give from time to time for different reasons to certain kinds of writing within a whole field that Michel Foucault has called 'discursive practices', and that if anything is to be an object of study it is this whole field of practices rather than just those sometimes rather obscurely labelled 'literature'. (Eagleton 1983: 205)

What is inherent in Eagleton's statement is a paradigm shift. As Antony Easthope points out, 'only two generations separate Leavis from Eagleton here. Yet in those fifty three years modern literary studies was invented, institutionalised in the academy, fell into crisis, and is now being transformed into something else, cultural studies' (1991: 5). If literature is to be opened up as a 'whole field of practices', then we literally have

'exploded English' to use a phrase coined by Bernard Bergonzi to describe the recent struggles in English Literature departments and we are well on the way to Cultural Studies (also anticipated by Bergonzi, though in a rather different vein from Easthope). The crisis which has been gnawing away at English as a discipline has also pervaded most of the other humanities disciplines. The crisis that is much discussed, debated, quarreled over, may most aptly be summed up through Thomas Kuhn's 'paradigm shifts'. ⁵ If consensus has broken up, and the Habermasian ideal of communication broken down, giving over to doubt, (even celebrating) contradiction or Lyotardian dissent, we find ourselves at the very shifts and junctures of the Kuhnian crisis. In Easthope's words, we find ourselves at 'a return to "first principles" and an intense interest in theory' (1991: 3). Martin Kreiswirth's 'theory wars' are thus still raging in the nineties, indeed, theory is the rage of the post-graduate, the post-modern PhD student attempting to push research beyond this fin-de-siècle. Should we then rather say, as Paul de Man does in *Blindness and Insight*, that 'the notion of crisis and that of criticism are very closely linked, so much so that one could state that all true criticism occurs in a mode of crisis. To speak of a crisis in criticism is then, to some degree, redundant' (1983: 8). If we excuse De Man here for a faintly Leavisite tone, we may instead, see this crisis positively rather than falling victim to the 'conservative myth', Partick Brantlinger characterizes:

> The conservative myth that 'theory' - structuralism, deconstruction, Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and so on - has *caused* the crisis in the humanities needs to be turned around: theory is a response to crisis, not its cause. (1990: 10)

'What then is the crisis'? we may ask more specifically. Is it theory, the move from literary into cultural studies? Undoubtedly, the two are connected, for theory is precisely that field which irrigates all the different disciplines in the humanities, even the sciences. If it has thus broken down the protective boundaries which a discipline has erected around its identity, theory has proven itself truly interdisciplinary, pervading and fecundating the multi-disciplines. It does more than this though: it is not only limited to the 'literary field' as Brantlinger has it - 'structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminism, and Marxism *re-read* and "decenter" familiar texts and strive to revamp "the canon" and hence the curriculum in radical ways' (1990: 11, my emphasis). And we may add other critical theories to Brantlinger's list, particularly those which concern themselves with reading. For to read is to re-read, or to push it one step further with Barthes: 'And no doubt that is what reading is: rewriting the text of the work within the text of our lives'. [7]

Reading thus becomes critical in more than one sense. The reader no longer slave to his master or author, the reader freed from the bounds of the text, opening up the boundaries of textuality, the reading subject becomes intimately tied up with recent developments in literary theory as a whole. As Elizabeth Freund points out, '[r]eading-oriented criticism is the smaller probe, as it were, within the larger nexus, which entails a reopening (perhaps infinitizing) of the question of the authority or grounding force we desire to claim for the negotiation of our meanings or our knowledge' (1987: 18). Reading, or to be more precise re-reading, as the larger probe, is that which has pushed the larger nexus into crisis. As Freund reminds her reader, 'the so-called crisis in contemporary criticism

(which repeatedly emphasizes the etymological relationship of "crisis" to "criticism") arises with the problem of understanding "understanding"', and she urges her reader to keep in mind, 'that no discourse, even that of primers, is transparent or innocent' (19). It is this self-awareness that Susan Suleiman sees as a recent evolution in all the disciplines, the 'questioning and making explicit the assumptions that ground the methods of the discipline' (1980: 4). This self-reflexiveness, she continues, 'has its analogue in the principles of relativity and uncertainty as they emerged in Physics early in this century' (4). At this point we can recall our opening paragraph, but we may also go one step further, for this self-reflexivity, according to Suleiman, 'necessarily shifts the focus of enquiry from the observed - be it defined as texts, psyche, society, or language - to the interaction between observed and observer' (4).

This is what this thesis will set out to do: to consider the relation between the observed and the observer, or more to the point, the multiple relays between texts, readers, the text's many versions and those other refractions, = to use André Lefevere's term, which generate sub-versions; and to situate the discourses which surround these issues within the general field of theoretical conflict, known as post-modernism. Thus we will move beyond the traditional boundaries of literary studies, will argue against the kind of literary approach which has hailed the great (unified) literary text as its sole object of study, and will turn to those critical refractions, such as reading, criticism, interpretation, double writing and finally translation, which not only have the power to reread, indeed rewrite their "originals", = but also have the power to make a discursive difference, both to the object of their enquiry and to our perspective as

enquirers. And if our readings are never innocent, but motivated - even manipulative - then our readings are always already politicized. As Jane Tompkins points out aptly, '[w]hen discourse is responsible for reality and not merely a reflection of it, then whose discourse prevails makes all the difference' (1980: xxv).

1. AUTHOR-IZATIONS

Resistance to Authority in Foucault and Barthes

1.1 The Death of Authors

The notion of the author according to Michel Foucault, 'constitutes the privileged moment of *individualization* in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy and the sciences' (1984: 101). This is to say, since 'we are accustomed... to saying that the author is the genial creator of a work in which he deposits, with infinite wealth and generosity, an inexhaustable world of significations' (118), and since 'we are used to thinking that the author is so different from all other men, and so transcendent with regard to all languages that, as soon as he speaks, meaning begins to proliferate, to proliferate indefinitely' (118), we have created a dominion and hierarchy for the author which re sembles that of a pre-Nietzschean God. If the author's role is one of control, his function is also regulatory: 'to group together a number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others (107), thus 'marking off the edges of a text' (107). It is in this sense that the author becomes 'the principle of a certain unity of writing' (111). If this 'unity of writing' constitutes the author's work, his/her oeuvre and we contend with Foucault that '[t]he word 'work' and the unity that it designates are probably as problematic as the status of the author's individuality' (104), we abandon old premises. Instead of endowing individuals with the free agency to 'penetrate the substance of things and give it meaning' (118), we analyze their position as subjects within discourse, we examine the function of the subject within discourse and the system of dependencies or rules which the subject obeys (118). This is to say we no longer hold with the notion of the free individual, bearer of meaning and utterer of eternal truths, but see the subject as part of a 'system of dependencies'. Foucault puts it like this, 'it is a matter of depriving the subject (or

its substitute) of its role of originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse' (118). Since the formation, mode of circulation, valorization and appropriation of discourses 'vary and are modified within each culture' (117), the function which is attributed to the author is therefore never given but itself subject to change. This then is Foucault's revision of the author function:

> ... the author is not an indefinite source of significations which fill a work; the author does not precede the work, he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, and recomposition of fiction. (118-119)

As Foucault puts it elsewhere, the author's function is,

> to master and control the great proliferation of discourse, in such a way as to relieve its richness of its most dangerous elements; to organise its disorder so as to skate round its most uncontrollable aspects. (1972: 228)

The author here becomes a means of control (a function of discourse) of the 'cancerous and dangerous proliferation of signification' (1984: 118); the author is also however, the prolific 'initiator of discursivity',[1] of 'endless possibility of discourse' (114). What goes hand in hand here is the diffusion and power of knowledge. But there occurs a subtle shift of emphasis in power relations: once 'an indefinite source of signification, a powerful 'originator' of discourses - now the 'initiator' of powerful discourses; once the master of knowledge - now the facilitator of knowledge. This revision of the functionary principle of the author constitutes a resistance to the reign of the author, which has further consequences. For, if we accept Foucualt's point that 'power and knowledge directly imply each other' (1977: 27), moreover, if we accept his premise that 'where there is power, there are resistances' (Sheridan 1980: 184), we

can see how discourse 'transmits, produces, and reinforces power', but also how it 'undermines, exposes and even blocks it' (184). This is to say, points of resistances can effect shifts in power relations. And it is at this juncture that we may bring the reader and reading to Foucault. Whilst Foucault's 'What is an Author' never considers the reader (contrary to Barthes's 'The Death of the Author'), we may formulate this reader in Foucauldian fashion. We may see the function of the reader as that site of resistance where those initiators or 'founders of discursitivity' who have established 'an endless possibility of discourse' have their discourses 'curtailed, divided, overthrown, caricatured, theatricalized or what you will' (Foucault 1980: 81). To put this differently, it is precisely because we see the author no longer as a 'genial creator', an 'originator', but as an 'initiator of discourses' that we can prepare the strategic ground for the function of the reader.

If the function of the author is to channel, control the proliferation of meaning and the function of the reader is the site of its resistance, can we then 'imagine a culture in which the fictive would operate in an absolutely free state' (Foucault 1984: 119)? Are we not then to be accused by Foucauldian discourse of 'pure romanticism' (119)? The answer is no here, for if we begin to map the power relations between author and text and reader that have hitherto dominated literary practice, and begin to see the function of the reader as this site of resistance, we may call for reading as a strategy and/or a tactics by which we, as readers, may freely 'circulate', 'manipulate', 'compose' and 'recompose' the fictive, the literary. In brief then, we may see the reader empowered to read, resist readings, re-read, misread, recycle our texts, re-read, write, re-write our textual past.

1.2 The Birth of Readers

Whilst Foucault's essay pays its last debt to the function of our authors, Roland Barthes' famous essay 'The Death of the Author' acts as a kind of manifesto to and for the reader. According to David Lodge, it is 'an assertion that struck at the very heart of traditional literary studies' (1988: 166) and we may add, that it has remained one of the most serious challenges to our literary humanist sensibilities. This is what Barthes writes,

> Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. Such a conception suits criticism very well, the latter then allotting itself the important task of discovering the Author (or its hypostasis: society, history, psyché, liberty) beneath the work: when the Author has been found, the text is 'explained'... (1977a: 147)

In liberating literature from the authority of an all-powerful presence behind it which organizes and gives it meaning, Barthes not only shakes the ancient assumption of discovering a single and univocal meaning, put there for all eternity by the mysterious and wonderful mind of the great author, but he also releases the text from the constraints of a single and univocal reading. This is to say, the reader is no longer the discoverer of the author's meaning and intentions, a mere consumer of the work, but is allowed the pleasure of producing the significations of the text. If literature refuses 'to assign a 'secret', an ultimate meaning, to the text (and the world as text)' (147), it 'liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases - reason, science, law. (147).

Hence, we are beginning to move into the age of the "post-"; as Lodge points out, the essay represents 'one of the most controversial tenets of post-structuralism' (1988: 166); this being undoubtedly the case, we must draw attention to one particular aspect of this controversy. Whilst Barthes's work is difficult to categorize, because of the great variety of his writings 'which have been structuralist, ideological, semiotic, Freudian, and more' (Bennett 1990: 63), ¹ this particular essay may be seen as containing two tenets on which later literary theorists, theorists working from very different premisses, could draw.

Written in 1968 thus preceeding the bulk of post-structuralist writings as well as audience centered criticism, Barthes not only formulates one of the most important features of post-structuralism, but he also anticipates some aspects of German and American reader-response criticism of the 1970's and 80's. If reader-response criticism elevates the reader to a central position, makes him into 'that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the text is written' (Barthes 1977a: 148), post-stucturalism celebrates the text 'not as a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash' (146). The Author is 'buried' then; and 'the modern scriptor' merely 'traces a field without origin', a field, which 'has no other origin than language itself' and language itself 'ceaselessly calls into question all origin' (146). If the 'text is a tissue of quotations' and if 'a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures' (146), then it spins a post-structuralist web of textuality. 'In this multiplicity of writing, everything is to be

disentangled nothing deciphered' (147), and it is here that the role of the reader emerges for Barthes. Rather than deciphering the meaning of the text, this reader disentangles the multiple threads spun by textuality. Moreover, the reader becomes the 'one place where this multiplicity is focused', the reader is 'the space on which all the quotations that make up writing are inscribed without any of them being lost' (148); and it is precisely here that we encounter the German *response to the reader*, this unified construct which lives on in much of American audience-centered criticism. As Barthes has put it so succinctly, 'a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination' (148).

On the one hand then, Barthes debunks the comforts and solutions of classical humanist criticism, destabilizes what is perhaps the most foundational representation in the philosophical traditions that inform our culture - that of the subject; on the other hand he resurrects that subject in form of the reader. 'Without history, biography, psychology' (148), this seemingly transcendent reader is a unified construct as opposed to the 'I' of the author which is 'never more than the instance of writing' (145). And, since writing is never more than 'a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely' (146), the author becomes the product of a text rather than the reverse. Any rigorous poststructuralist move is deferred though, at least until *S/Z* for if all writing is gathered, inscribed in the Barthesian reader, we have returned to a unity which has gripped our critical imagination for a long time; too long as this thesis will come to argue. As Susan Suleiman puts it, 'the notion of the unified text, like that of the unified self, is an illusion, and the virtue of deconstructive criticism is that it places this

potentially tragic insight at the center of its activity' (1980: 43). Barthes, nevertheless, evades the full force of poststructuralist criticism or deconstructive logic, for whilst he raises his suspicion about the "subject" of the author, he places his full trust in the reader. Whilst he dismantles the unified origin of both the text and the author, postulating the differential nature of textuality, he gathers that which was dispersed in the reader.

His essay may thus be argued to play out a hermeneutics of suspicion and a hermeneutics of trust, or alternatively a negative and a positive hermeneutics. A hermeneutics of suspicion is nothing else than the post-structuralist doubt in unities, and a hermeneutics of trust is nothing else than the hermeneutic faith in overcoming difference. [2] What these terms signify then, is a debate about the privilege of authority and identity – whether authorial, textual or readerly; in a nutshell, whether these identities are marked by difference or unity, whether we take difference as a mark or trace which is always already within the text or whether we strive to gather that which is dispersed to form a new comprehensible harmonious whole. Barthes' essay may therefore be argued to contain two irreconcilable 'interpretations of interpretation'. As Derrida puts it in 'Structure, Sign and Play':

> There are more than enough indications today to suggest we might perceive that these two interpretations of interpretation – which are absolutely irreconcilable even if we live them simultaneously and reconcile them in an obscure economy – together share the field which we call, in such a problematic fashion, the social sciences. (1978: 293)

Barthes may be accused here of living these irreconcilible 'interpretations of interpretation' 'simultaneously', and of reconciling these tenets in an

'obscure ecomomy'. Thus his essay gives rise to a debate (which we shall return to in more detail later) which raises 'issues', which in Susan Suleiman's words, 'not only constitute the crux of contemporary literary theorizing, they also function as dividing lines within and between the varieties of audience-centred criticism' (1980: 38).

It is here that we shall return to the reader. First, we turn our attention to the unified reader which the early Barthes has given birth to and which lives on in the work of many reader-response critics, before we consider Barthes' *other someone*, 'this "I" which approaches the text as already a plurality of other texts' (Barthes 1974: 10), the textual reader of the later Barthes of *S/Z* In other words, Barthes' early and late reader, is used as a linchpin from which to chart the work of literary theorists such as Iser, Culler and Fish - unified "positive hermeneuts", and the work of theorists such as Hartman, Bloom, Miller, and de Man - "negative hermeneuts".

2. READING

Positive Hermeneutics and the Quest of the Reader

2.1 Wolfgang Iser's Subjected Reader

Iser is both a reader-response critic as well as a theorist from the Constance School of reception theory. Whilst reception theory is to be understood as a 'cohesive, conscious, and collective undertaking' (1984: xiii) within literary theory according to Robert Holub, thus representing a particular re-orientation in West German literary thinking, reader-response criticism is a more loosely defined term for those theorists which have placed the reader in a central position for literary investigation. Whilst reader-response critics share several important features, they cannot be grouped into a school of thinkers with common aims, for they had 'very little contact with or influence on one another'. Holub therefore concludes: '[i]f reader-response criticism has become a critical force... it is by virtue of the ingenuity of labeling rather than any communality of effort' (1984: xiii).

Nevertheless, this thesis will single out two broad directions in reader-response criticism. One direction, which Iser is clearly part of, takes its impetus from a German critical and philosophical tradition, the other direction, takes it impetus from recent French thinking. It is also at this point that we return to the faith a "positive hermeneutics" expresses in the subject and the doubt with which "negative hermeneutics" seeks to undermine that subject. More specifically, however, we turn to those theorists such as Iser (Culler and Fish) who implicitly argue for unity, coherence, consistency and the stabilisation through the act of reading; before turning to those *other* theorists who doubt such certainties.

Within the work of the Constance School, Iser is less concerned with the 'macrocosm of reception' than with the 'microcosm of response'. For within the aesthetics of reception Iser's special concern is the reading process. He is therefore best known for his interest in the reader and the reading process. Hence, his book, *The Act of Reading*, poses the question: how and under what conditions a text has meaning for the reader? In contrast to traditional interpretation, which has sought to discover a hidden meaning in the text, he sees meaning as the result of an interaction between text and reader, as 'an effect to be experienced', not an 'object to be defined' (Iser 1978: 10). Meaning is therefore not directly accessible or even present in any way either to the reader or in the textual object, but is something that emerges in the process of interaction between the two poles. As Iser puts it in *The Act of Reading*:

> Meaning must clearly be the product of an interaction between the textual signals and the reader's act of comprehension [...]. As text and reader thus merge into a single situation, the division between subject and object no longer applies, and it therefore follows that meaning is no longer an object to be defined, but is an effect to be experienced. (1978: 9-10)

His emphasis on the interactive nature of the reading process opens up a space between the two poles. 'From this polarity, it follows', Iser writes, 'that the literary work cannot be completely identical with the text or with the realization of the text, but in fact must lie halfway between the two' (1980: 50). But how does Iser describe this relation between the two poles more precisely? Or more to the point, how does the text signal the reader and how does the reader then realize, concretize or construct the work? How, in short, do text and reader merge in this happy and harmonious unison which 'brings the literary work into existence' (50), which produces meaning for the literary work?

The text is 'a pattern', 'a structured indicator to guide the imagination of the reader' (1978: 9). Elizabeth Freund summarizes Iser's position:

> This set of instructions it gives, however, is incomplete, full of 'gaps' or 'blancs' or 'indeterminacies' which must be filled by the reader, both according to his disposition and to the perspectives offered by the text. [...] The reader is free to fill in the blanks but is at the same time constrained by the patterns supplied in the text; the text proposes, or instructs, and the reader disposes, or constructs. (1987: 142)

As Iser puts it, 'the written part of the text gives us the knowledge, but it is the unwritten part that gives us the opportunity to picture things; indeed, without the elements of indeterminacy, the gaps in the text, we should not be able to use our imagination' (1980: 58). The gaps or *Leerstellen*, thus 'stimulate the reader into filling the blancs with projections' (Iser 1989: 33-34). The reader is consequently 'drawn into the events and made to supply what is meant from what is not said' (33). 'What is said', Iser continues, 'only appears to take on significance as a reference to what is not said; it is the implications and not the statements that give shape and weight to the meaning' (33). If blanks thus indicate 'that the different segments and patterns of the text are to be connected' (34), thus prompting 'acts of ideation on the reader's part' (34), completion can finally occur 'when the schemata and perspectives have been linked together', and as a result, 'the blanks "dissappear" (35). In other words, '[w]henever the reader bridges the gaps, communication begins' (34). The importance of the gaps for Iser becomes clear: they 'function as a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves' (34). They also, however, allow the reader to act, in Jane Tompkins' words, 'as a co-creator of the work by supplying that portion of it which is not written but only implied' (1980: xv).

There is another point to be made here. These gaps, according to Iser, may be filled in differently since variations in ideation are always possible.

> ... one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way; thereby excluding the various other possibilities; as he reads he will make his own decision as to how the gap is to be filled in... By making his decision he implicitly acknowledges the inexhaustibility of the text; at the same time it is the very inexhaustibility that forces him to make a decision. (1980: 55)

Iser can therefore draw this conclusion: 'With all literary texts... the reading process is selective, and the potential text is infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations' (55). In this sense, 'the literary text makes no objectively real demand on its readers, it opens up a freedom that everyone can interpret in his own way' (Iser 1971: 44). To put this differently then, the text is a plenitude and by virtue of this fullness, the text allows for, creates, even programmes different responses for the different readers. If the text then, as Iser argues, is 'infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations', the corporate body of the text seems "economically" more powerful than any or all of its potential readers. The text may be said then, to be the dominant partner on the board, so to speak, with its potential readers. In other words, the literary work does not 'lie half-way' between the text and the reader, but lies very much on the side of the text. In Tompkins words, '[t]he text's intentions may be manifold, they may even be infinite, but they are always present embryonically in the work itself, implied by it, circumscribed by it, and finally traceable to it' (1980: xv). Iser throws further light on the issue.

> The text is constructed in such a way that it provokes the reader constantly to supplement what he is reading... Whenever this occurs, it is clear that the author is not mobilizing his reader because he

himself cannot finish off the work he has started: his motive is to
bring about an intensified participation which will compel the reader
to be that much more aware of the intention of the text. (1971: 32-33,
qu. in Suleiman 1980: 25)

Iser is making several revealing points here. For one, the text, as

was already indicated by Tompkins, has an intention; secondly, there is an

indication that the work may be "finished off" - if not by the author -

then, by implication, by the reader; more importantly though, the author

seems to be smuggled in through the back door, or to put it in Isererian

terms, the author is smuggled in through the gaps. Is this to say then, as

Suleiman suggests, that 'the kind of pattern the reader creates for the

text is foreseen and intended by the author' (1980: 25), and the reader

merely "finishes off" what was initiated by the author? Iser makes the

following points.

If the reader were given the whole story, and there were nothing left
for him to do, then his imagination would never enter the field, the
result would be the boredom which inevitably arises when everything is
laid out cut and dried before us. (1980: 51)

and in more precise terms,

The author of the text may, of course, exert plenty of influence on
the reader's imagination - he has the whole panoply of narrative
techniques at his disposal - but no author worth his salt will ever
attempt to set the *whole* picture before his reader's eyes, If he does,
he will quickly lose his reader, for it is only by activating the
reader's imagination that the author can hope to involve him and so
realize the intentions of his text. (1980: 57)

Is Iser saying here that 'the *whole* picture' can be set before a reader?

This indicates a wholeness which can never be more than a comprehensiveness

and totality rather than an inexhaustibility. We may also add as a kind of

footnote, that Iser, at this juncture, is furthest removed from Barthes'

formulation of textuality as an infinite web. And, he is closest to

Foucault's function of the author as 'the genial creator of a work in which

he deposits, within infinite wealth and generosity, an inexhaustable world of significations [...] by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses...' (Foucault 1984: 218-219). Iser never, of course, leaves the humanist terrain of subjects as agents of decision and control. Nevertheless though, Iser seems confused who, infact, is in control, who wields authority over the production of literary meaning. This not only permits us to argue that Iser defines his object rather than allowing for its effect to be experienced; moreover, it commits us to re-read the Iserian reading subject. For, in the final instance, this subject is subjected to the author.

Iser's spots of indeterminacy begin to take on the appearance of blindspots in his own thinking. Moreover, spots of indeterminacy, gaps, blanks are less spaces of undecidability, ambiguity than gaping, yearning holes to be filled.   To put this differently, if the author does not lay the *whole* picture before his reader, then the reader is charged with the responsibility of reconstructing the latent whole picture. The question which remains to be aswered here, is, whether this is, indeed, the Iserian reader's task and if so, how does he accomplish this task, and finally, what are the wider implications of *closing* holes, drawing 'whole pictures' *to a close*?

In the initial stages of the reader's engagement with the text, s/he builds up a consistent picture of the text. If the text cannot be grasped as a whole, it is to be grasped as 'a series of changing viewpoints, each one restricted in itself and so necessitating further perspectives' (Iser 1978: 68). This then, according to Iser, is 'the process by which the

reader "realizes" an overall situation' (68). As Freund sums it up, '[t]he reader's acts of comprehension are structured by his attempts to build up a consistent view of the textual segments as he moves between the shifting perspectives of the text' (1987: 144). Of central importance here is the 'wandering viewpoint'. The reader's wandering viewpoint has the task of 'consistency building'; 'that is, of developing an account of the text which can provide an explanation of it which satisfies all of the information provided by the text up to any point by the reading' (Maclean 1987: 131). Iser likens the reader's activity to,

> a traveler in a stagecoach who has to make the often difficult journey through the novel, gazing out from his moving viewpoint. Naturally, he combines all that he sees within his memory and establishes a pattern of consistency, the nature and reliability of which will depend partly on the degree of attention he has paid during each phase of the journey. At no time, however, can he have a total view of that journey. (1978: 16)

When we read a text it is composed of a variety of perspectives between which the reader's wandering viewpoint moves. Iser outlines four main perspectives in narrative texts, 'that of the narrator, that of the characters, that of the plot, and that marked out for the reader' (1978: 96). Freund explains, '[a]s the reader's viewpoint travels between segments, his focus on a perspective will form a theme (or foreground) in relation to which the rest are horizon (or background) - until she/he moves on, and the theme of a moment ago will in turn become horizon.' (1987: 144) The wandering viewpoint thus 'permits the reader to travel through the text... unfolding the multipliciy of interconnecting perspectives which are offset whenever there is a switch from one to another' (Iser 1978: 118). As Holub puts it, '[t]he assumption behind this description of the reading process is, of course, labelled "consistency building"'; he concludes that

'[i]n confronting the various signs or schemata of a text, readers try to establish connections between them that lend coherence to their activity' (1984: 90). Coherence is finally achieved, and the journey through perspectives and shifting themes and horizons is finally accomplished by the reader's incessant acts of ideation. Ideation is the formation of ideas in the reader's mind or the final gathering that makes up a *complete impression*. In other words, it is by virtue of the reader's acts of ideation that segments from the text are organised and connections between them are construed. Acts of ideation are, in Freunds's words, 'gap-filling activities that ultimately produce the synthesis we think of as comprehension or meaning' (1987: 145).

This 'synthesizing process', Iser tells us, 'is never sporadic - it continues throughout every phase of the journey of the wandering viewpoint' (1978: 109). This is not only because incompleteness 'necessitates synthesis' (109), but also because 'the reader will strive, even if unconsciously, to fit everything together in a consistent pattern' (1980: 58). Consistency is never simply a yearning the reader may have, it is more than that:

> If we cannot find (*or impose*) this consistency, sooner or later we will put the text down. The process is virtually hermeneutic. The text provokes certain expectations which in turn we project onto the text in such a way that we *reduce the polysemantic possibilities* to a single interpretation in keeping with the expectations aroused, thus extracting an individual, configurative meaning. (Iser 1980: 59, my emphasis)

And it is precisely here that we can see the twofold function of reading for Iser. It produces coherence, it gathers the blanks, gaps and spots of indeterminacy into a consistent whole, a totality. It tames polysemantic potential into some order. Or as Eagleton sardonically puts it, the Iserian

'reader, it would seem, is engaged in fighting the text as much as interpreting it, struggling to pin down its anarchic "polysemantic" potential within some manageable framework' (1983: 81) Furthermore, through formulating this totality, it enables us to formulate ourselves, and I may add, it formulates us as a unified subject. Iser makes the point.

> The constitution of meaning not only implies the creation of a totality emerging from interacting textual perspectives..., but also, through formulating this totality it enables us to formulate ourselves and thus discover an inner world of which we had hitherto not been conscious. (1978: 158)

Reading becomes a medium through which consciousness comes to realise itself. It is that 'need to decipher', that, according to Iser, 'gives us the chance to formulate our own deciphering capacity - i.e., we bring to the fore an element of our being of which we are not directly conscious' (1980: 227).

In conclusion, we may therefore say, rather than opening up a space of 'dynamism' between text and reader, as he so clearly states in *The Act of Reading*, Iser ressurrects the author to oversee a "subjected reader". The impulse which underlies this covert move is, undoubtedly, a quest for stabilisation. The making sense of reading is not only a reading of making sense, but a "*ratio*-nalisation" of sense (Bedeutung), a subjection of (the readers') sense to (authorial) reason. For to eliminate textual authority - be it from the text or the author - is to eliminate the unity, wholeness and identity of the text on the one hand, and the unicity of the subject as master of his discourse on the other hand. The Iserian reader who gathers the text's perspectives, who fills and completes the circle is that faithful hermeneutic slave, still serving the continuity of a circumscribed and cohesive tradition. In other words, the reader remains the subjecting

and subjected humanist subject par excellence - the deserving marionnette of the Barthesian (author-)God and 'his hypostasis - reason, science, law', whilst simultaneously assuming the 'author-function', the Foucauldian ideological construct which marks not only 'the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning', but by which "we" mark "our" consistent efforts to conceal the *total*-itarianism that masquerades as bourgeois liberal pluralism.

2.2 Jonathan Culler's Conventional Reader

If Iser guides us towards the phenomenology of the text as an object of experience by individual readers, reading necessarily constitutes a somewhat "private" affair; and if Iser's reader thus makes sense in solitude, Culler's reader participates in 'highly social activities which cannot be separated from interpersonal and institutional conventions' (1980: 53). His reader's interpretations are never the result of 'subjective associations', but are 'public and can be discussed and justified with respect to the conventions of reading [literature]..., of *making* sense' (1975: 116). Whilst the Iserian reader experiences and perceives thus paying his debt to phenomenology, Jonathan Culler's reader exercises competence. This competence, according to Elizabeth Freund, is nothing else than 'the bringing to bear of a whole latent system of interpretive conventions for deciphering the meaning of literary texts' (1987: 82).

This is also the point at which Culler's structuralist programme begins: if language is defined as a culturally constructed system rather than a natural entity, so also must the reading process be thus defined; if structuralist analysis of language sets itself the task of isolating the underlying set of laws and principles which structure the linguistic system as it constructs meaning, then this task must also be put to reading. If meaning is thus explained in terms of conventions - so is the subject, the reading subject, the reader. This, of course, denies the subject any conscious agency, denies it the role as source of meaning:

> once meaning is explained in terms of conventional systems which may escape the grasp of the conscious subject - the self can no longer be identified with consciousness. It is 'dissolved' as its functions are

> taken up by a variety of interpersonal systems that operate through
> it. [...] the self comes to appear more and more as a construct, the
> result of systems of convention. (Culler 1975: 28-29)

Culler never dispenses with the subject entirely, for one can gain evidence of the conventions of reading through it/her/him: '[h]e may no longer be the origin of meaning, but meaning must move through him... it takes place through him... (1975: 30). This then is how Culler sets the analyst's – his own task: 'to reconstruct the conventions' (31). In short, Culler argues for our awareness of the interpretive conventions which guide our reading, which operate through us. Whilst Iser stressed that through formulating 'our own deciphering capacity', we may formulate our-selves thereby raising our consciousness, Culler calls for 'the expansion of self' (1975: 130) through a reflexivity brought to bear on the conventions that govern our reading practices. A turn which has also characterized a general trend in the humanities, a turn towards self-reflexivity: to question and make explicit the assumptions that ground the methods of our disciplines (Suleiman 1980: 4).

What we are describing here, is the structuralist premise from which Culler seeks to explain the enabling systems of competence which make intelligibility possible. His exploration of the reading process does therefore not centre on the notion of determining meaning in the work, but on the question of how works have meaning. A purely interpretive task is abandoned in favour of 'the task of formulating a comprehensive theory of literary discourse and assigning a secondary place to the interpretation of individual texts' (Culler 1975: 118). As Freund puts it, the object of interpretation becomes interpretation itself, leading to 'a theory not only

of reading but of the reading of reading' (1987: 72). This citation summarizes Culler's position well:

> To account for the form and meaning of literary works is to make explicit the special conventions and procedures of interpretation that enable readers to move from the linguistic meaning of sentences to the literary meaning of works. To explain facts about the form and meaning works have for readers is to construct hypotheses about the conditions of meaning, and hypotheses about the conditions of meaning are claims about the conventions and interpretive operations applied in reading. In brief, I am arguing that if the study of literature is a discipline, it must become a poetics: a study of the conditions of meaning and thus a study of reading. (1980: 49)

For Culler then, 'the work has structure and meaning because it is read in a particular way, because these potential properties, latent in the object itself, are actualized by the theory of discourse applied in the act of reading ' (1975: 113). To take this one step further, the text is never inherently meaningful, but 'can', however, 'be made intelligible if one invents appropriate conventions' (1975: 123). In this way, the invention of conventions is never more than a *demand* for sense. As Culler puts it, 'if a difficult work later becomes intelligible it is because new ways of reading have been developed in order to meet what is the fundamental demand of the system: the demand for sense' (123). The importance of this argument, as Freund puts it, 'is that some interpretation is always guaranteed and that consequently there would be no aberrant texts, just as there would be no aberrant readings' (1987: 82). Reading here is always greater than the text. Reading can and will make any text mean, interpretation will always have the last word in that no text can ever escape the 'drive', as Culler says, of our sense making capabilities. In brief, no text will ever be able to resist the force of being "tamed", "domesticated", "institutionalized" by the reader. To quote Freund once more, 'this is precisely the enabling

assumption of poetics: every interpretation is an instance of the laws governing the system of interpretation' (1987: 82).

This 'demand for sense' is accompanied by a 'drive towards totality'. If texts are neither inherently meaningful, nor 'harmonious totalities, autonomous natural organisms, complete in themselves and bearing a rich immanent meaning' (Culler 1975: 116), it must be the reader, who becomes the organizing principle of order. In Culler's words:

> The crucial point, however, is that even if we deny the need for a poem to be a harmonious totality, we make use of the notion in reading. Understanding is necessarily a teleological process and *a sense of totality* is the end which governs this process. Ideally, one should be able *to account for everything* in a poem and among *comprehensive explanations* we should prefer those which best succeed in relating items to one another rather than offer separate unrelated explanations. And poems which succeed as fragments or as instances of incomplete totality depend for their success on the fact that *our drive towards totality* enables us to recognize their gaps and discontinuities and to give them a thematic value. (1975: 171, my emphasis)

Culler can, therefore, conclude that to interpret a poem 'is to assume a totality and then to make sense of gaps, either by exploring ways in which they might be filled in or by giving them meaning as gaps' (171). The overall quest here, is, of course, unity:

> ... and there seem good reasons to suppose that if in reading and interpreting poems *one is seeking unity* one must have at least a rudimentary notion of what would count as unity.

We can see Culler, the structuralist, and Culler, the dialectician, at work here:

> The most basic model would seem to be the *binary opposition*, the *dialectical resolution* of a binary opposition, the displacement of a an unresolved opposition by a *third term*, the four-term *homology*, the series united by a *common denominator*, and the series with a transcendent or *summarizing final term*. It is at least a plausible hypothesis that the reader will not feel satisfied with an interpretation unless it organizes a text according to one of these formal models of unity. (1975: 174, my emphasis)

The desire for unity may, ultimately, be less fulfilling or satisfying for the reader than Culler may have envisaged. Readers become constrained and restrained, since their meaning-making becomes utterly dependent upon a *meta*-convention - that of creating a *sens*ible unified totality. Their differences as readers and the differences of their readings are always subject to what this *master*-convention deems to be appropriate. This may be the **weak** point, at which different, even contradictory readings are neutralized, for they may differ in detail, but are ultimately regulated in accordance with the master-convention. This is more than apparent in Culler's claim that '[d]isagreement about a text is of interest only because we assume that agreement is possible... Indeed, we notice differences of interpretation precisely because we take agreement for granted as the natural result of a communicative process based on shared conventions' (1975: 258). [1] If shared conventions assure agreement, [2] it is because they create a uniformity of expectation. This citation seems to support our point:

> The claim is not that competent readers would agree on an interpretation but only that certain expectations about poetry and ways of reading guide the interpretive process and impose severe limitations on the set of acceptable or plausible readings. (1975: 127)

In the final instance though, Culler's meta-convention does not so much impose agreement "from above", but secures a kind of Gramscian hegemony by subordinating differences to the overarching horizon of Culler's own metadiscourse. Since we already know that conventions are never natural or universal, but are constructed and learned, we begin to see the close link between interpretive conventions and our institutions of learning. As Culler puts it, 'conventions are the constituents of the

institution of literature' (1975: 116), and we may add that, here, Culler is primarily interested in 'what an ideal reader *must know* implicitly in order to read and interpret works in ways which we consider acceptable, in accordance with the institution of literature' (1975: 123-124, my emphasis). This is our point: the stress is on *knowing*, and this knowledge supposedly constitutes our mastery of the system. For, as Culler puts it: '[a]nyone lacking this knowledge, anyone wholly unacquainted with literature and unfamiliar with the conventions by which fictions are read, would, for example be baffled if presented with a poem', hence, 'it is obvious... that understanding depends on mastery of a system' (1975: 114).

Knowledge is defined as knowledge of the system of convention, yielding a position of mastery: the competent (ideal) reader has gained a certain mastery of the "moves" permissible within the literary/institutional discourse. This is precisely the point - the shift from student to master, from recipient to lecturer - at which the meta-discourse that purports to DESCRIBE the system, slips into the consolidation of a community of masters who, by advancing their learning coextensively with their power within the institution, effectively PRESCRIBE and maintain the meta-discourse that both regulates this system and consolidates their power. What *we* are describing then, are the positions of mastery within the power structure of the institution; and Culler's blindness in relation to how thoroughly infiltrated his alleged conventions are by precisely these power structures. As Eagleton says, '[t]o be on the inside of the discourse itself is to be blind to [its] power, for what is more natural and non-dominative than to speak one's own tongue' (1983: 203). Culler's reflexivity on the systems of conventions

which govern our reading practices thus never includes a self-reflexive moment or questioning of his own preferred conventions, his own master-convention.

Culler's reading conventions beg for a Foucauldian analysis here. Power and knowledge are linked, because discourse is never merely an intra-linguistic phenomenon, but a practice, which has effects. These effects distribute roles which necessarily embody certain power relations. If we accept, however, that literary discourse is not merely a reflection of reality, but is also to some degree responsible for constructing it, then the prevailing dominant discourse [3] or competent reading convention will make all the difference. What Culler does in the end then, is to set up the mastery of a meta-convention which is nothing other than a conventional mastery. For to limit the potential range of conventions and discourses is to concentrate power in the hands of the institution. This citation from Robert Morley bears relevance here:

> The meaning of the text will be constructed differently according to the discourses (knowledge, prejudices, resistances etc.) brought to bear upon the text by the reader and the crucial factor in the encounter of audience/subject and text will be the range of discourses at the disposal of the audience. (1980: 18, qu. in Turner 1990: 133)

This range or multiplicity of discourses constitutes a powerful resistance to the hegemony of any metadiscourse. Differing, even conflicting discourses thus undermine the institution's claim for unity and totality by which it has always consolidated its hegemony. And it is this concentrated power which a multiplication of differing discourses can undermine and disperse. We would like to note this point here and bear it in mind for later discussion.

2.3 Stanley Fish's Communitarian Reader

'Scourge' of the literary establishment (Shepard 1989: 95) and *enfant terrible* of the reader-response world, Stanley Fish represents the rather extreme pole of reader-response criticism. Through a "vary-orum" of often conflicting literary readings/critical writings, Fish has never ceased to annoy his army of critics. In an essay entitled 'Constraints and Politics in the Literary Theory of Stanley Fish', William E. Cain summarizes Fish's position from an early piece of his writing: 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics'. Though Fish tells us, 'I would no longer stand behind its every statement', ' we shall nevertheless provide Cain's lengthy account here:

> In 'Literature in the Reader', Fish describes his method in detail. He wants, first of all, to guard against the charge that his theory invites 'inpressionism', whereby each reader (merely) reports on his personal responses. Borrowing from 'modern linguistics', Fish outlines a 'competence model' which assumes that 'if the speakers of a language share a system of rules that each of them has somehow internalized, understanding will, in some sense, be uniform; that is it will proceed in terms of the system of rules speakers share' [Fish 1970: 141]. Because these rules act as 'constraints', they establish the 'boundaries' within which responses are made, and even suggest that response is 'to some extent, predictable and normative'. Far from lapsing into impressionism, Fish argues, his accounts of the reader are based on the fact that, within a certain range, readers' responses are the same. (1981: 78)

Cain protests, that 'this argument bypasses critical history', since readers do respond in very different ways, so that one might ask 'whether they are even reading the same text' (78). Fish's argument does not 'bypass' Jonathan Culler in our account though. For what is most apparent in Cain's summary of Fish's position, is, of course the striking parallel between Culler's theoretical stance (his meta-convention, as we discussed in the previous section), which remains unacknowledged as such, and Fish's rather more honest and often very self-reflexive account of his own

critical enterprise. This is to say, Fish does not hide behind the pluralist mask of a Culler who fails to acknowledge the subtle enforcement of interpretive constraints in his own discourse. Nor does Fish preach determinacy of meaning for fear of 'off-the-wall' interpretations and interpretive anarchy as Meyer Abrams and E.D. Hirsch do. What is at stake for Fish, then, is not so much a debate between pluralism and constraints on the one hand, and indeterminacy and determinacy of meaning on the other, nor is Fish concerned to constrain interpretive activity; instead, as he reminds us in *Is there a Text in this Class*, 'the mistake is to think of interpretation as an activity in need of constraints, when in fact interpretation is a *structure* of constraints' (1980: 358). In short, what Fish is working towards and what his later writings in particular acknowledge and expose, are the forces of constraints implicit in interpretive activity.

Another case in point is Fish's account of the institution. We are quite openly reminded of the constraining role it plays. For Culler, this constraining role is concealed behind an overt consensual liberalism: readings and interpretations have to be 'acceptable', 'plausible', 'justifiable', 'defensible'. If meanings or new meanings thus have to be 'acceptable', 'defensible' before the 'institution of literature', then the critic's role is that of a lawyer defending his case before the court, before the institution. For Fish, meanings and interpretations also have to be 'acceptable', but rather than 'defensible' they have to be 'persuasive'. The Fishian "lawyer" takes on a different role here, he does not so much defend his beliefs, but persuade of his belief-systems. He does not justify his interpretations, but gains them through "rhetorical ploys". He no

longer believes in the ideal of justice, but he knows how the court works and how to work it. He is, in other words, aware of its limitations and contraints. If the early essay 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics' shows many similarities with Culler's position, it shows little resemblance with Fish's later work. It nevertheless points to one endeavour, which permeates the Fishian canon. Against the grain of the arguments many other critics have put forward, we take Fish's moral at its word — '[t]he moral is clear: the choice is never between objectivity and interpretation but between an interpretation that is acknowledged as such and an interpretation that is at least aware of itself.' (1980: 167)

Of late then, Fish has been arguing for the abolition of the very distinction between reading and writing. This seems to have struck at the very heart of the reader-response establishment. Accused of monism by Culler (1985: 5), accused of undermining the entire reader-response project by Freund (1987: 6), he maintains that texts become the products of readers. In this sense, texts dissappear and in Freund's words, 'our "texts" are our readings, the poems we "write"' (1987: 106). The aim of the 'Interpreting the Variorum' essay, according to Fish, is that it 'begins by declaring that formal features do not exist independently of the reader's experience and ends by admitting that my account of the reader's experience is itself the product of a set of interpretive assumptions' (1980: 147). [2] It is these two points of Fish's argument which we shall follow most closely.

'What', Fish is, 'suggesting is that formal units are always the function of the interpretive model one brings to bear; they are not "in" the text...' (1980: 164). His argument is clearly directed at theorists

such as Iser, who discern a pattern in the text which guides the reader's interpretive endeavour. For Fish concludes:

> If I read *Lycidas* and *The Waste Land* differently (in fact I do not), it will not be because the formal structures of the two poems (to term them such is also an interpretive decision) call forth different interpretive strategies but because my predisposition to execute different interpretive strategies will *produce* different formal structures. (169)

To put this differently, if 'interpretive acts are the source of forms rather than the other way round' (167), then, 'interpretive strategies are not put into execution after reading... they are the shape of reading, and because they are the shape of reading, they give texts their shape rather than, as is usually assumed, arising from them' (168). If texts do not shape readings but interpretive strategies shape readings, it suggests that, 'these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way round' (171). It is here that we find the thrust of Fish's argument. Texts are the products of the interpretive strategies readers use; readers do not extract structures from texts but ascertain that which by prior interpretive procedures is always already in place. Thus assuming that an interpretation is already in place, we have to face two consequences: texts cannot therefore control readers' responses, nor can readers control interpretive strategies, for they merely put them into operation.

Fish's notion of 'interpretive strategy' according to William Ray, 'thus unites writer and reader, reading act and textual structure, under a single conceptual umbrella' (1984: 167) Having thus dissolved the hierarchical structure governing the relationship between author/text/reader, Fish can put forward his case:

> This then is my thesis: the form of the reader's experience, formal
> units, and the structure of intention are one, that they come into
> view simultaneously, and that therefore the questions of priority and
> independence do not arise. (165)

The function of interpretive strategies is more than a mere deconstruction

of hierarchies. It is a way to both account for and preserve the stability

of the interpretive process. The question why the same reader may perform

differently when reading two different texts (167) and why different

readers may perform similarly when reading the same text (167), is

intimitely linked to the existence of interpretive strategies. Moreover,

it is linked to the prior existence of interpretive strategies. For these

strategies not only give rise to both similar and different readings but

always already preserve the stability and guarantee the variety of

interpretations amongst readers. Their prior-ity is not simply temporal but

part of a structure of prior-ities. This is to say, interpretive strategies

are part of a higher authority. They are the very operations by which

'interpretive communities' execute their interpretive moves. For as Fish

tells us,

> Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive
> strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing
> texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their
> intentions. (171)

The 'repertoire of strategies' at the disposal of an interpretive

community for interpreting texts will differ from that of another

community. Henceforth, '[t]he assumption in each community will be that the

other is not perceiving the 'true text', but the truth will be that each

perceives the text (or texts) its interpretive strategies demand and call

into being' (171). According to Fish, '[t]his, then is the explanation both

for the stability of interpretation among different readers (they belong to

the same community) and for the regularity with which a single reader will employ different interpretive strategies and thus make different texts (he belongs to different communities)' (171). If the existence of interpretive communities thus explains and ensures stability, on the one hand, it can also explain 'why there are disagreements and why they can be debated in a principled way: not because of a stability in texts, but because of a stability in the make-up of interpretive communities and therefore in the opposing positions they make possible' (171). Fish, of course, concedes that interpretive communities 'grow and decline', that 'individuals move from one [community] to another', their overall function though – not unlike the function Foucault attributes to the author – is to impede the 'cancerous and dangerous proliferation of signification' (to use Foucault's words here). In this sense, their function is also deeply ideological. For as Fish insists:

> The notion of interpretive communities thus stands between an impossible ideal and the fear which leads so many to maintain it. The ideal is of perfect agreement and it would require texts to have a status independent of interpretation. The fear is of interpretive anarchy, but it would only be realized if interpretation (text making) were completely random. It is the fragile but real consolidation of interpretive communities that allows us to talk to another, but with no hope or fear of ever being able to stop. (172)

Interpretive communities are intimately linked with our institutions for Fish and it is at this point that the charge of his critics takes hold. As Freund puts it, '[t]he appeal to the imperialism of agreement can chill the spines of readers whose experience of the community is less happily benign than Fish assumes' (1987: 111). Ray accuses him of supplying a theory that may be used 'to bastion the institutions and traditions' (1984: 167), and 'of proposing a stasis of certainty that makes the individual an

object of history rather than an agent' (169). In this sense the Fishian reader may well be the fixed Althusserian subject - interpellated in the discourse his interpretive strategies call into being; in another sense, this reader may well be the more liberated Gramscian subject - which is never forced but can "freely" consent to belonging within a community of interpretors. We may well charge him with not resisting the power of the institution, and its drive for stability and consensus; or reprimand him with Culler and Ray for not provoking any change, criticise him for not 'outflank[ing] the beliefs of the institutions that define him' (Ray 1984: 169).

All these criticisms are valid, in that they point to the ideological dangers of his position - but only to an extent. For, unlike Culler as we have seen, Fish does not prescribe a "communitarian" readership, but performs the role of that Fishian reader who describes the function interpretive communities fulfil within the institutional system. And he is never blind to the institutional discourse he describes, the stability it demands, the ideal of consensus it sets and the controlled freedom it grants. Instead, his preferred arguments for instituting constraint with which he regales us, also expose the institution's drive for order and control. Accusations of blindness, or sheer 'conservative submission to authority' (Freund 1987: 111) miss the point, precisely because of the extent to which Fish constantly theorizes t/his position. In other words, Fish's discourse is self-reflexive: the product of a set of interpretive assumptions, he produces 'just one more intepretation', using one amongst many interpretive strategies which may be at his disposal. This is to say, he 'humbly acknowledges the limitations of his discourse'; and when asked

about the implications his argument has for literary criticism, he can candidly assert - 'none whatsoever' (Fish 1980: 370).

This is the point at which we humbly agree to disagree with Fish. His discourse may be limited and celebrate limitations, but it is not limiting. This is to say the content of his argument moves within the context of a closed system, i.e. Fish reading how Fishian readers read in Fishian ways,[5] the Fishian reader who writes the text within the confines of the interpretive strategies that are open to him. The form his argument takes though, is rhetorical, one of persuasion. And it is in this sense that his writing takes on a more radical edge, for his moves become strategic. In this sense, also, he does make a difference to literary criticism, or to literary-critical practices. David Shepard summarizes Fish's stance:

> The authority of a given community, and that of the interpretations it puts forward, is for Fish something persuasive rather than coercive. Criticism is '*a matter (endlessly negotiated) of persuasion*' in a world where '*political and persuasive means...* are the same thing.' (1989: 99, my emphasis)

If Freund sees his theory as a powerful tool that wields and is wielded by the political power of the institution and sees his literary criticism 'reduced to no more than a gesture of persuasion, which dangerously trivializes the vigilant travail of reading' (1987: 110), she misjudges the radical thrust of persuasive power. For if 'political and persuasive means... are the same thing', we have moved into a post-modern condition, where the goal 'is no longer truth but performativity' (Lyotard 1986: 46) to use a phrase of Lyotard's. Fish's theory is never true or false, but performs a function, rhetorically persuades us of one belief-system amongst many. It is a world where external forms of legitimation have been usurped and deposed, where we are left with an agonistic field where each

discourse, or in Fishian terms, where each interpretive community, defines its own stakes, sets its own strategic aims in direct conflict with every other discourse. This competition amongst communities is not a deadly struggle between true and false, good and evil assumptions, but a competitive game for the persuasive edge one community may have over another. As Fish declares 'this is the whole of critical ability, an attempt on the part of one party to alter the beliefs of another so that the evidence cited by the first will be seen as evidence by the second' (1980: 365). If critical ability rests on persuasion, then we may say with Fish that 'no-one can claim privilege for the point of view he holds and therefore everyone is obliged to practice the art of persuasion' (Deleuze 1985: 143).

Critical writing thus becomes freed from the great hypostases: truth, reason, law. By implication, writing is thus freed from the source, the origin and eternal truth. No longer slave to an original truthful moment, the Fishian reader only knows one style and writes his texts in accordance with this style: playfully, performatively and above all persuasively. The three *p's* take another *p* on board, so to speak. Here the persuasive becomes the political and vice versa, for the aim is to subvert by persuasion rather than convert by coercion. The politics of Fishian writing manoeuvres is thus stategic: it negotiates in specific moves rather than mediates in grand gestures. And it is in this sense only that we can see the real political power of Fish's reader. This reader becomes empowered to "write" her/his text performatively without having to read it first truthfully. To paraphrase Gilles Deleuze, Fish's emphasis on persuasion as strategy, or the rhetorical use of language 'permits him to transmit something

uncodifiable: the notion of style as politics' (Deleuze 1985: 143). This potential empowerment of the reader and/or critic constitutes an important move in the 'interpretation game':

> ... perhaps the greatest gain that falls to us under a persuasion model is a greatly enhanced sense of the importance of our activities. (In certain quarters of course, where the critical ideal is one of self-effacement, this will be perceived to be the greatest danger). No longer is the critic the humble servant of the text whose glories exist independently of anything he might do; it is what he does, within the constraints embedded in the literary institution, that brings texts into being and makes them available for analysis and appreciation. The practice of literary criticism is not something one must apologize for; it is absolutely essential not only to the maintenance of, but to the very production of, the object of its attention. (Fish 1980: 368)

2.4 *Fellowships of Discourse*: Iser, Culler and Fish

> We ask authors to answer for the unity of the works published in their
> names; we ask that they reveal, or at least display the hidden sense
> pervading their work... The author is he who implants, into the
> troublesome language of fiction, its unities, its coherence, its links
> with reality. (Foucault 1972: 222)

As we have seen though, Foucault exposes the author in 'What is an Author'
as a function by which we impede the free circulation of discourse; a
figure we elevate as that founding father of discursivity only to constrain
through him the 'cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations'
(Foucault 1986: 118); an 'ideological figure' by which we can measure,
'mark' the very 'manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning'
(119). If for Foucault, the author-function safeguards the unity of the
text, acts as a strategy to contain the multiplicity of writing, for
Barthes, the author is used 'to impose a limit on that text... to close
writing' (1977a: 147). If for Foucault, the author-figure holds together
those uncontrollable aspects of textuality which threaten to explode the
ideal of coherence, for Barthes, the author-god is the means by which we
'furnish it [the text] with a final signified' (147). If for Foucault, the
author is the attempt by which we tie language to its extra-textual
reality, for Barthes, the author is our way of saying that writing is 'an
operation of recording, notation, representation, "depiction"' (145), in
other words, that reality preceeds language. If Foucault thus exposes the
author-function, Barthes dethrones the author-god. In a nutshell, both
Foucault and Barthes *dis-close* the figure of the Author as the limit and
ultimate constraint which our society uses to organize and tame the
potential disorder and proliferation of discourse. The author is not the
only safeguard, however, that our society uses to preserve order, to

ensure coherence, to maintain unity, to master and control textuality, to delineate the borders of discursive practices.

> We tend to see, in an author's fertility, in the multiplicity of commentaries and in the development of a discipline so many infinite resources available for the creation of discourse. Perhaps so, but they are nonetheless principles of constraint [...]
> It could even be that the act of writing, as it is institutionalised today, with its books, its publishing system and the personality of the writer, occurs within a diffuse, yet constraining, 'fellowship of discourse' (Foucault 1972: 224, 226).

With the notion of 'fellowships of discourse' (*sociétés de discours*), ' Foucault introduces another means by which we de-limit the free circulation of discourse; for their 'function is to preserve or to produce discourse, but in order that it should circulate within a closed community, according to strict regulations, without those in possession being dispossessed by this very distribution' (225). In analysing the regulatory principles which govern discourse, Foucault singles out signification, originality, unity, creation as the very benchmarks of our logophilic thinking, as the very ideals on which humanism has based its sovereignity. They, according to him, 'have in a general way, dominated the traditional history of ideas; by general agreement one sought the point of creation, the unity of a work, of a period or a theme, one looked also for the mark of individual originality and the infinite wealth of hidden meanings' (230). These regulatory principles are a response, of course, to our fears of the anarchic potential of discourse. To organize into order, to control the uncontollable is nothing other than the 'dumb fear' or 'logophobia' as Foucault puts it, 'of this mass of spoken things, of everything that could possibly be violent, discontinuous, querulous, disordered even and perilous in it, of the incessant, disorderly buzzing of discourse' (229). Hence, if

logophobia as the fear of proliferation of meaning makes the author a guardian/controller of discourse, imposes 'strict regulations' on discursive practices and confines these practices within 'closed communities', it must also guard itself against the critic and by extension the reader.

The early Barthesian reader falls prey to precisely this, for we have to remember that 'there is one place where this multiplicity [of writing] is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said the author... a text's unity lies not in its origin but its destination' (1977a: 148). If writing is a multiplicity, dispersed, and knows no limits, the early Barthesian reader gathers the multiple threads of textuality thus unifying and delimiting writing. This reader's function here, to put it into Foucauldian terms, 'is to preserve or to produce discourse... according to strict regulations'. The regulation is, of course, that of unity, since it is unity which neutralizes the potential 'disorderly buzzing of discourse'. The Barthesian reader of 'The Death of the Author' thus belongs to a 'fellowship of discourse', a community which strictly maintains the demand for unity in the figure of the reader. And it is here that we may see Barthes part of a fellowship with Iser, Culler and Fish; for their readers also fulfill a Foucauldian function. If Iser works according to 'strict regulations' of consistency, and Culler works towards the regulating force of totality, Fish also works 'to preserve or to produce discourse, but in order that it should circulate within a closed community', a closed interpretive community. And it is precisely in this sense that the early Barthes, Iser, Culler and Fish not only regulate potential disorder but champion stability in unity.

> Discourses must be treated as discontinuous practices, which cross
> each other, are juxtaposed to each other, but can just as well exclude
> and be unaware of each other. (Foucault 1972: 229)

However discontinuous the writings of Barthes, Iser, Culler and Fish may
be, however discontinuous their critical heritage is, [2] their discourses
cross each other at the very point at which they adhere to a principle of
unity. The unifying reader of the early Barthes, who lives on in the work
of Iser, Culler, and Fish, is that unified 'positive hermeneut' who knows
no doubt, but has faith in the unity, coherence, consistency of
interpretation, and provides reading with a sense of certainty and
stability. If Iser's reader will impose consistency on the text, by
'fit[ting] everything together in a consistent pattern' (1980: 58), then it
is because he fears the 'buzzing' of textuality, the proliferation of
meaning. The Iserian reader can make no difference, because his priority is
to 'reduce the [text's] polysemantic possibilities to a single
interpretation' (1980: 59). If for Culler texts merely 'give the impression
of strangeness, incoherence, incomprehensibility' (1975: 122), and it is
the reader's 'drive towards totality' (171) which compels him to organize
this multiplicity into a 'model of unity' (174), to 'account for
everything' (171) in a text and fit it into a meaningful whole, then it is
because he fears the 'discontinuous, querulous... disorderly buzzing of
discourse'. Unity here becomes the meta-convention which guides our reading
expectation and ensures academically acceptable readings. The Cullerian
reader can make no difference, because he is willing to allow this meta-
convention to 'impose severe limitations on the set of acceptable or
plausible readings' (127). If Fish adheres to the regulative principle
exercised by interpretive communities in order to reassure us of the
stability of the interpretive process and the consensus amongst readers,

then it is because he answers to our fears of the potentially 'off-the-wall' interpretive anarchy of 'buzzing' readings. The Fishian reader is thus unwilling to make a difference for he happily accepts the subjugation to and force of a communitarian consensus.

What these 'fellows' share then is this: their demand, be it for consistency, totality, stability, is a demand for unity, at the basis of which we can discern a new hidden set of safety measures, a new set of constraining mechanisms by which we seek to regulate discursive practices and their perilous proliferation of meanings. If reader-response theory saw through the function of the author, dethroned this author to make space for the reader, to thus allow for the free play of signification, this reader now finds its power equally impeded. The potentially 'many infinite resources available for the creation of discourse' in the figure of the reader is thus curtailed. This is to say, readers here cannot but read consistently and coherently, they cannot but render a text intelligible, they cannot   account for all the 'buzzing' in anything other than a managable framework, they cannot but put unity above all else. This not only ensures a measure of stability in the reading process, it also ensures a level of consensus amongst reading communities.

Whether textual gaps are completed and deciphered à la Iser, whether any text whatsoever 'can be made intelligible if one invent appropriate conventions' (1975: 123) à la Culler, or whether texts are always intelligible because readers merely activate 'systems of intelligibility' (1980: 307, 321) which are already in place à la Fish, all these stories of reading share a drive towards comprehension, sense-making and

intelligibility. Nothing is disentangled, but everything is deciphered. [3]
Intelligibility here constitutes a drive towards the full understanding of
the text, it is a vision of absolute comprehension which institutes a
rationalising order. Intelligibility is, in other words, driven by a sense
of totalization and mastery. To make a text decipherable then, becomes a
means of tying the text down, taming its multiplicity, even to eliminate
indeterminacy. It is also here that 'the vexed issue of (in)determinacy,
touches on some of the central problems of reader-response criticism at
large' (Freund 1987: 148).

If Iser's gaps [4] or '[t]extual indeterminacies just spur us on to the
act of abolishing them, replacing them with a stable meaning' (Eagleton
1983: 81), then we may say that Iser's reader accomplishes determinacy. If,
on the other hand, Culler's metaconvention does to an extent 'secure
agreement about what should count as proper "understanding" of a text
(1975: 122) then we may say that 'as soon as we register similarity of
interpretation, we are bound to admit something determinate, controlling
our agreement in interpretation'. [5] Finally, if 'systems of
intelligibility', as Fish has it, 'exist prior to the act of reading and
therefore determine the shape of what is read' (1988: 327), then we may
argue with Freund, that 'from Fish's metacritical perspective, it would
make just as much sense to say everything is determinate as to say
everything is indeterminate, for these categories are irrelevant when there
is no way for a reader to place himself beyond the assumptions of a system
of intelligibility' (1987: 149) It is precisely here that Holub's criticism
of Fish, has bearing on all three of their enterprises: in the final

instance, Iser, Culler and Fish have 'accomplished little more than a shift in determinacy from the text to another construct, whether it be called reader, convention or community' (1984: 151).

Thus far, we have seen how the function of the "Iser-Culler-Fish-fellowship" is 'to preserve or to produce discourse, but in order that it should circulate within a closed community, according to strict regulations'. To put this differently, we have seen how their discourses, not only regulate, order and organize the potential multiplicity of writing, but also how their theories thus reinforce the institution's very need to maintain stability and consensus for the activity of interpretation. Whilst Iser takes this stability for granted and Culler never acknowleges it as the very impetus behind his theoretical thinking, Fish at least shows himself aware of it. What we have drawn attention to in the final instance, is the very 'regulating, ordering, systematizing force of theory'. In Elizabeth Freund's description, theory is a 'regulating principle', with a 'definite plan or system', a generalized abstraction, a grand vision which 'is set off from and governs the random disorder of the reading of individual texts' (1987: 16). In this sense, we could also argue, that for Iser or Culler or Fish *theory is an instrument for reduction*: 'of everything', as Foucault had it, 'that could be violent, discontinuous, querulous, disordered even and perilous in it, of the incessant, disorderly buzzing of discourse' (1972: 229). Since as Geoffrey Hartman puts it, 'the unitive and reconciling critic... his devotion to "unity" may become a demand for "totality" and turn against art in the name of a more comprehensive... vision' (1978: 10-11), we may well accuse the "Iser/Culler/Fish/-Order" of mastery over its object - here, the literary

text. Freund pushes this point further, when she sums up the mastery of such a position:

> To invoke an order is not only to claim intelligibility; it is also to invoke some notion of a scale of being or a disposition of things in which the conditions of mastery and authority (or, alternatively, the solace and sanction of a brotherhood or community) are evident to all. (1987: 16)

We may therefore say that all principles of regulation share an underlying 'temptation' to 'reify such an order into a reflection of a "natural" state of affairs instead of viewing it as a culturally determined artifice, an institution' (Freund 1987: 16). The institution hides behind the claim of such a 'natural state', because otherwise it would have to admit that order is also coercion and 'coercion is camouflaged as the statement of the obvious' (Moriarty 1991: 36).

And this is the precise juncture where Barthes's account of the reader begins to differ, where Barthes's theory differs from theirs and itself. It is where Barthes's discourse of 'The Death of the Author' no longer 'crosses paths' with the "*Iser/Culler/Fish-fellowship*", but finds itself 'juxtaposed' to their discourses. It is also where Barthes's discourse, to borrow Foucault's words once more, 'must be treated as [a] discontinuous practice[s]'. 'The Death of the Author' is discontinuous with itself, for it is where the Barthesian reader 'holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted' (1977a: 148) *and* where this same 'someone' never deciphers the hidden meaning of a text, but disentangles the 'tissue of quotations', this 'ready-formed dictionary', of which 'its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely' (146). To put this differently, whilst 'the reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up writing are inscribed

without any of them being lost' (148), the text for Barthes is intertextual thus indeterminate, and can never be deciphered, merely repeatedly, endlessly disentangled. This is to say, the text can never be accounted for and can only be accounted for by the reader; the text can never be made intelligible and can only be intelligible for the reader. If the text for Barthes is discontinuous, so is 'The Death of the Author' as a text for us as readers. As Michael Moriarty points out:

> The structure of the essay is fragmentary, discontinuous paragraphs articulated by no linear logic. It gives its own reason why this might be so: the linear utterance seems to suggest the unfolding of a single message towards a predestined conclusion; an eschatological, theological model... The fragment, on the contrary, prevents the discourse cohering into a continuous utterance of a single subject: it de-authorizes discourse. For what is at stake in 'La Mort de l'auteur' is the subversion not just of the ideology of authorship but of authority in all its forms... 'La Mort de l'auteur' juxtaposes, making no attempt to synthesize, a plurality of discourses... (1991: 101) [6]

This passage by Moriarty foregrounds two important points. The fragmentary nature of Barthes's style coupled with the discontinuous form his conceptualization takes, marks a first stage in what we shall later call the destabilisation of theory. Theory here cannot be identified as a grand narrative, a meta-discourse which expresses a total vision. Instead, Barthes pluralises theory, for the essay 'simultaneously lives' two irreconcilialble 'interpretations of interpretation', 'reconciling these tenets in an obscure economy' (Derrida 1978: 293). What Derrida sketches here is, of course, the debate between a discourse of unity and a discourse of dispersion: '[t]he one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth, an origin which escapes play... the other affirms play' (292). [7] This not only echoes the crux of a debate in contemporary literary theorizing which we pointed to earlier (see Preliminary Remarks), but also highlights the very 'dividing lines within and between the varieties of audience-centred

criticism' (Suleiman 1980: 38). What Barthes's essay plays out then is both a 'positive hermeneutics' and a 'negative hermeneutics'; or putting it differently, the essay stages the very debate between a hermeneutic search for unity and a post-structuralist upsurge of difference, more specifically, it rehearses the difference between the concern of the Iser-Culler-Fish 'brotherhood' of faith and the Yale 'hermeneutical Mafia', [9] albeit suspicious (we shall turn to the latter shortly). If 'the brotherhood' attempts to hold writing together, to unify multiplicity, the 'Mafia' disperses writing.

Barthes's essay not only spotlights the 'dividing lines within and between' reader-response theory, but, in its very structure, it dramatizes the plurality of disparate/divided discourses, performs the multiplication of discourses. In Moriarty's words, '[t]heory here is itself implicated in this process: it assumes the status of a word-hoard, a store of signifiers used to produce further signifiers (writing)' (1991: 102). There has occurred a shift then, theory is no longer held as an authoritative global vision, but to use Foucault's term, becomes a 'local criticism'. With this notion, Foucault seeks to redirect our thinking; for his avoidance of the word theory, throughout his writings, is indicative of his rejection of theoretical thought as a unified, omniscient gaze. This comment by Moriarty with regard to Barthes echoes the Foucauldian project:

> For in so far as theory is identified with science or truth, it turns out to be no more than a deity, thus complicit, whatever its implicit assertions, with a theological frame of reference. Forestalling as they do the unification of the text under a single authorial message, the fragmentation of discourse, and the multiplication of discourses, are thus the indispensible conditions in which writing about writing can be true to its object' (1991: 102).

The use of style in Barthes's essay crosses paths briefly with the Fishian discourse here, for we remember that Fish's rhetorical use of language to persuade in specific moves rather than by grand gestures 'permits him', to recall the words of Deleuze, 'to transmit something uncodifiable; the notion of style as politics' (1985: 143). It is also at this point that Barthes's writing is never merely stylish, playful, literary, but becomes subtly political. Or as Moriarty states, 'Barthes is and remains emphatic on this point: the place of politics in writing is as politics of writing'. Writing becomes political because it 'de-authorizes discourse', it is, for Moriarty, 'the subversion not just of the ideology of authorship but of authority in all its forms'. Moriarty elaborates his thesis:

> The author in Western culture is an authority because in the prevailing ideology he functions as a barrier against interpretation: the text cannot mean what he did not consciously want it to mean. But he is not the only figure of authority: 'society' and 'history', in short, any idea or agency that can be presented as *the* signified of a text, can be invoked in the same way. The fragmentary structure keeps the signifier on top, where it belongs, prevents an ultimate meaning from arriving to close down its operations. It favours, moreover, the multiplication of discourses that the essay identifies as a characteristic of text' (1991: 101).

If authorship and authority are always implicated in positions of hierarchy and power, then Barthes's essay opposes this drive in style and conceptualisation. We may also say that whilst discourse or theory are not figures of authority, but can be used as principles of authority, regulation and control - in short, power - that this essay then works precisely against, resists the force of any such totalization. Deleuze's words, which will take on an increasing importance in the course of our thesis, here, spoken in conversation with Foucault bear relevance:

> A theory does not totalize but is *an instrument for multiplication* and multiplies itself. If it is in the nature of power to totalize and it is your position, and one I fully agree with, that theory is by nature opposed to power.' (Foucault 1977a: 208, my emphasis).

3. CRITICISM

Negative Hermeneutics and the Question of Criticism

3. 1 *Qui parle?* - Barthes?

In the opening paragraph of 'The Death of the Author', Barthes raises the
question 'Who is speaking thus. Is it...?' (1977a: 142) In the concluding
sentence of 'What is an author?', Foucault asserts 'What difference does it
make who is speaking?' (1986: 120). If the question for the speaker, is
the question for the origin of the utterance, and its rejection signifies
the refusal of an origin, then we have abandonned our probing for the
single voice once and for all. By implication, we have avoided according
privilege to a single speaker, the voice of the Author-God. When Barthes
poses the question once more in *S/Z* he draws a distinction between the
modern and the classical text:

> 'Who is speaking?... The more indeterminate the origin of the
> statement, the more plural the text. In modern texts, the voices are
> so treated that any reference is impossible: the discourse, or better,
> the language, speaks: nothing more. By contrast, in the classic text
> the majority of the utterances are assigned an origin, we can identify
> their parentage, who is speaking: either a consciousness (of a
> character or an author) or a culture (the anonymous is still an
> origin, a voice)... (1974: 41-42)

What we find here is, of course, Barthes's evaluatory classification of
texts: the modern Text is the *scriptible* (writerly) polyphonic text and the
classic Work is the *lisible* (readerly) univocal text. Whilst the latter
imposes an order, is 'serious, fixed, closed structured, constrained,
authoritarian, and unitary', the former is 'playful, fluid, open,
triumphantly plural, and in its plurality impervious to the repressive rule
of structure, grammar, or logic' (Suleiman 1990: 37). Whilst the readerly '
text asks of its reader to merely consume that which is given, thus
reducing the reader to a passive pawn faithfully following the promptings
of this text, the writerly text 'gives no indications as to how it is to be
read', but 'opens up a vast range of potential meanings' (Moriarty 1991:

118), thus engaging the reader to participate in the writing of it. The readerly is devalued and the writerly becomes 'our value' for Barthes, as he puts it, '[b]ecause the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text' ((1974: 4).

A text we read for consumption, is a text we 'devour', and once it is 'devoured' and known, it is exhausted and may be discarded. 'This reduction of reading to consumption is clearly responsible for the "boredom" experienced by many in the face of the modern ("unreadable") text, the avant-garde film or painting: to be bored means that one cannot produce the text, open it out, *set it going.*'[2] Barthes is implying here that we need to free ourselves from the habit of reading for consumption, and play with the text in the sense of opening up its plurality and diversity. The writerly   text   facilitates   this   enterprise;   the   readerly text takes a little more effort (this is the effort Barthes makes in *S/Z*. To arrest consumption then is to read a text in its plurality, and for this reason we need to reread texts:

> Rereading, an operation contrary to the commercial and ideological habits of our society, which would have us 'throw away' the story one it has been consumed ('devoured'), so that we can move on to another story, buy another book, and which is tolerated only in certain marginal categories of readers (children, old people, and professors), rereading is here suggested from the outset, for it alone saves the text from repetition (those who fail to reread are obliged to read the same story everywhere), multiplies it in its variety and its plurality. (Barthes 1974: 15-16)

If rereading thus 'multiplies [the text] in its variety and plurality', it it because, we only come to appreciate the text's multiplicity when we reread it; this is to say, we only realize that texts

are plural, because when we reread them, we can read them again
differently. As Barthes put it 'rereading is no longer consumption, but
play (that play which is the return of the different)' (15). Difference
here is not meant as the difference between types of text, or the
difference which 'designates the individuality of each text' (3), or
difference in our imposition as readers, instead 'it is a difference of
which each text is a return' (3). If we reread then, 'it is in order to
obtain, as though under the effect of a drug (that of recommencement, of
difference), not the *real* text, but the plural text: the same and the new'
(16). It is in this sense that according to Barbara Johnson, 'the rereading
of the same engenders what Barthes calls the text's difference' (1980: 3).
In other words, the text becomes different because it was already
different. This passage by Johnson sums up the points brilliantly:

> ... a text's difference is not its uniqueness, its special identity.
> It is the text's way of differing from itself. And this difference is
> only perceived in the act of rereading. It is in this way that the
> text's signifying energy comes unbound... through the process of
> repetition, which is the return not of sameness but of difference.
> Difference is not what distinguishes one identity from another. It is
> not difference between (or at least not between independent units),
> but difference within. (1980: 4)

To put this in another way, the text here is 'a multidimensional space in
which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash'
(Barthes 1977a: 146). It is an intertextual space where a network of voices
differ and defer. In Barthes's words, '... in their interweaving, these
voices (whose origin is "lost" in the vast perspective of the *already
written*) de-originate the utterance: the convergence of the voices...
becomes *writing*, a stereographic space...' (1974: 21). '*Qui parle*' *ici*? The
answer must be, the multivocal, pluralized text. What reading does here is
deconstructive: 'the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification

within the text itself' (Johnson 1980: 5). What rereading does here is to point to the plurality of readings from within one text. And it is precisely in this sense, that we are never dealing with a single reading, nor with a first reading '(as if there were a beginning of reading, as if everything were not already read)' (Barthes 1974: 16), because the possibility of rereading the same text differently has already pluralized the activity of reading. The sound of Barthes's call: 'for those of us that are trying to establish a plural, we cannot stop this plural at the gates of reading: the reading must be plural' (15), can be picked up as it begins to echo in the pages of *S/Z*

If the text one prefers to read is the plural text, then the reading one prefers to do is a plural reading, even when one is reading a classic text. Hence, in *S/Z*, Barthes does not simply read the classic text of *Sarrasine*. Instead, this classic, classically readerly text by Balzac, is reread by Barthes as a "writerly reader". This is to say, Barthes begins to erase the voice of Balzac by listening to the voices within the text.

> ... however it may happen that in the classic text... the voice gets lost, as though it had leaked out though a hole in the discourse. The best way to conceive the classic plural is then to listen to the text as an iridescent exchange carried on by multiple voices, on different wavelenghts and subject from time to time to a sudden dissolve...' (41-42)

Barthes here does not only want to highlight that which is 'productive in the classic text' (12), but wants to affirm the classic text's plural. The new model of reading which this involves, is a 'step by step method', a '*decomposition* of the work of reading: a *slow motion*, so to speak, neither wholly image nor wholly analysis' which 'avoids structuring the text *excessively*, avoids giving it that additional structure which would come

from a dissertation and would close it', thus 'star[ring] the text, instead of assembling it' (12-13). Such a reading or 'commentary, based on the affirmation of the plural, cannot therefore', Barthes tells us, 'work with respect for the text'; this is to say, 'the work of such a commentary, once it is separated from any ideology of totality, consists precisely in manhandling the text, *interrupting* it'; in other words, 'the tutor text will ceaselessly be broken, interrupted without any regard for the natural divisions...' (15). As Barthes puts it, '[i]f we want to remain attentive to the plural of the text... we must renounce structuring this text in large masses, as was done by classical rhetoric and by secondary-school explication: no construction of the text' (11-12). Barthes's reading of *Sarrasine* is therefore not geared towards 'establishing the truth of the text', nor directed to provide a 'metameaning which would be the ultimate construction', but a reconnection 'of certain sequences which might have been lost in the tutor text' (14). Thus, Barthes does not 'set forth the criticism of a text, or a criticism of this text', but the proposal of 'several types of criticism': be it 'psychological, psychoanalytical, thematic, historical, structural', 'it will then be up to each kind of criticism (if it should so desire) to come into play, to make its voice heard, which is the hearing of one of the voices in the text' (14-15). Consequently, no one reading becomes privileged, for '[t]o privilege one reading over the other is to silence one of the voices of the text thus betraying its constitutive plurality...' (Moriarty 1991: 134). The plural reading of this readerly text, is really its rereading as a writerly text.

If the text one prefers to read is the plural text, and the reading is a plural reading, then the text one prefers to write is also the plural

text. Barthes's reading of Balzac and Barthes's writing of *S/Z* go hand in hand here: his reading breaks apart, interrupts and breaks open *Sarrasine*, while his writing style is broken up, fragmentary and loose. *S/Z* is thus broken into 561 fragments and *Sarrasine* is heard through five different voices. In Barbara Johnson's words, '[t]he purpose of these cuts and codes is to pluralize the reader's intake, to effect a resistance to the reader's desire to restructure the text into a large, ordered masses of meaning...' (1980: 6). This 'resistance to the reader's desire to restructure the text' into a wholeness is performed doubly: Barthes as a reader of Balzac resists the integrative force of *Sarrasine* and transforms this classic text into a 'complex network' with 'multiple entrances and exits'; and *S/Z* remains 'as heterogeneous and discontinuous as possible', thus avoiding 'the repressiveness of the attempt to dominate the message and force of the text into a single ultimate meaning'. [2] The point is succinctly put by Moriarty: 'A performance rather than an exegesis of *Sarrasine*, *S/Z* calls for a similar performance on the reader's part, and thus invites him or her to become a producer rather than a consumer of text. To this extent, it realizes the goal of the scriptible text' (1991: 142).

If the text one prefers is the plural writerly text, then it is, in Moriarty's words, because 'the *scriptible* text liberates writing in that to read it means in effect to rewrite it' (118). In turning a classic text, like *Sarrasine*, into a writerly text, Barthes empowers the contemporary reader to resist the ideology of a text with a determinate tale to tell of "that foreign country", the past. In other words, his deconstructive reading opens up the text as a site for different reading positions. Its usefulness, particularly, for the feminist reader re-reading the texts of

our patriarchial past, whilst simultaneously being able to re-write this past must be noted here (we will make more *use* of this later). [3] For the moment though, it suffices to say that the Barthesian reading practice of *S/Z*, exemplifies a reading strategy which has freed itself from any slavish reconstruction of an origin, for it has already pluralized this origin; *S/Z* illustrates the need to pluralize the text first, before it becomes viable to read it plurally; *S/Z* performs, what it states: '[t]he more plural the text, the less it is written before it is read' (Barthes 1974: 10). Reading here is no longer 'a parasitical act, the reactive complement of a writing we endow with all the glamour of creation and anteriority' (10), but it can become 'a form of work' because we may write our reading. [4] Reading here is no mere act of interpretation; it is no longer a derivative, parasitic and secondary discourse, but is productive. This blurring of the boundaries between the critical and the creative, brings reading and writing, criticism and literature into the realm of écriture. To put this differently, 'if an author comes to speak of a past text, he can only do so by himself producing a new text (by entering into the undifferentiated proliferation of the intertext)' (Barthes 1981: 44). '*Qui parle ainsi*', we may ask?

> [f]rom the desert of the *lisible* the Promised land of the *scriptible* is glimpsed... the *lisible*, its plural can give the sense of what an unlimited plural might be. The gaps of the classical text, when it is no longer possible to answer the question "Qui parle?", offer the desirable image of a kind of text where that question was simply impossible to put. (Moriarty: 137)

To reformulate this point, we may say, that 'from the desert of the *lisible* the Promised land of the *scriptible* [can be] glimpsed' - here, for the reader, who may gain a 'sense of what an unlimited plural might be' for him/her as this new reader-writer, at the very moment when '*Qui parle*' is

suspended as the question for the speaking subject, as the quest for the origin. At this moment, we should not really be asking: '*Qui parlait*' (in) *S/Z*: Balzac, Barthes? For convenience's sake though (and after all we are writing a *lisible* [readerly/readable] thesis), let's hang on to Roland Barthes, who 'step by step', in 'slow motion' makes '*Qui parle*' an impossibilty, and cite this fragment to support our claim:

> ... *one never knows if he* [the author] *is responsible for what he writes* (if there is a subject *behind* his language); for the very being of writing (the meaning of the labor that constitutes it) is to keep the question *Who is speaking?* from ever being answered (1974: 140).

If the author is not responsible for what he writes, and the reader is said to write the text, this reader/writer is not, however, instituted as another author, a new 'father and the owner of his work' (Barthes 1977: 160). Instead, this reader-writer, is like 'the modern scriptor', 'who is simultaneously born with the text' (1977a: 145): for him 'every text is eternally written *here and now*' (145), '[f]or him... the hand is cut off from any voice, borne by pure gesture of inscription (and not of expression), traces a field without origin - or at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins' (145-146). What this scriptor-reader - as we shall name *it* - traces or disentangles then, is the text as this 'multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash' (146). If writing marks this loss of origin, it 'comes along very precisely at the point where speech stops, that is from the moment one can no longer locate who is speaking and one simply notes that speaking has started' (Barthes 1988: 194).

> What we hear,' therefore, is the *displaced* voice which the reader lends, by proxy, to the discourse: the discourse is speaking in the reader's interests. Whereby we see that writing is not the

communication of a message which starts from the author and proceeds to the reader; it is specifically the voice of reading itself: *in the text, only the reader speaks* (Barthes 1974: 151).

The scriptor-reader here does not have a voice which can be located or identified apart from the text, which might be easily separated from the text. This voice is not anterior to the text, but inter(ior), between layers of text, embedded, so to speak, in the whole web that textuality spins. This then is the intertextual model: both writing and reading are marked by intertextuality. Or, both writer and reader have '[entered] into the undifferentiated proliferation of the intertext' (Barthes 1981: 44). Rather than speaking of reading as a 'form of work', Barthes here prefers to speak of it as,

(... a lexeological act - even a lexeographical act, since I write my reading), and the method of this work is topological: I am not hidden within the text I am simply irrecoverable from it: my task is to move, to shift systems whose perspective ends neither at the text nor at "I": in operational terms, the meanings I find are established not by "me" or by others, but by their systematic mark: there is no other *proof* of a reading than the quality and endurance of its systematics; in other words, than its function ing. To read, in fact is a labour of language. (Barthes 1974: 10-11)

The question clearly can never be 'Qui parle?' here; nor could its answer be the reader. We need to recompose this question altogether and ask as Barthes does in 'Theory of the Text': 'The text works what? Language.' (1981: 37) What is foregrounded then is language, 'the workings of language as autonomous' (1991: 148) according to Moriarty. We may therefore say: 'thus is the text restored to language; like language, it is structured but off-centred, without closure' (Barthes 1977: 159). And we may add, that *the reader* is also restored to language at this point; 'like language, *it* is structured but off-centred, without closure'. The *I* of the reader which is irrecoverable from the text, is also inseparable from language. This *I* is nothing more than a linguistic moment, or in Barthes's words, the '*I* is

nothing other than the instance saying *I*: language knows a "subject" not a "person", and this "subject", empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to hold language together' (Barthes 1977a: 145). This then is why in *S/Z*, the...

> *I* is not an innocent subject, anterior to the text, one which will subsequently, deal with the text as it would an object to dismantle or a site to occupy. This "I" which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost). (1974: 10)

In other words, if Barthes once saw multiplicity focused in the reader, saw the reader as that '*someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted' (1977a: 148), this new scriptor-reader of *S/Z* is already a textualised construct. Its self is merely a plurality of other texts, or codes, without origin; in Culler's words, this reader is a 'virtual site' - of intertextuality rather than intersubjectivity; ⁷ and in Holub's assessment, our scriptor-reader 'approximately correspond[s] to a "post-structuralist reader"', which according to him marks the precise difference between German and French criticism: 'while reception theorists have displaced their interpretive focus from the text to the reader, post-structuralists have displaced all focus by textualising the reader' (1984: 154). In conclusion we may therefore say that, the late Barthesian reader, is not the kind of unifying reader we encountered in Iser, Culler and Fish from which meaning originated, but is rather 'a construct characterized by dispersion and plurality' (Holub 1984: 154).

3.2 Geoffrey Hartman: Criticism on the Mild Side

If, as Roland Barthes had it in *S/Z,*   reading is a 'form of work', and
the   reader   writes   the text, then we have travelled some way towards
the new world of America. This is to say, we have finally left those
unified "positive hermeneuts" that we named a 'fellowship of discourse',
who take their impetus from a German critical and philosophical tradition
(as we shall see in greater detail in the subsequent chapter), and have
arrived   with   those   "negative   hermeneuts",   those   mild,   or   'barely
deconstructionists' such as Geoffrey Hartman and Harold Bloom, and those
'boa-deconstructors' such as Hillis Miller and Paul de Man ' , who take
their impetus from recent French thinking, or more to the point, from the
philosophical writings of Jacques Derrida (whom we shall also deal with in
the subsequent chapter) . In other words, if, as we have seen, Barthes's
'Death of the Author' played out both a 'positive hermeneutics' and a
'negative hermeneutics', staged, so to speak, the debate between a
hermeneutic   search   for   unity   and   the   poststructuralist   upsurge   of
difference,   rehearsed   the   difference   between   the   Iser-Culler-Fish
'fellowship' of faith and the Yale 'brotherhood' of suspicion, then *S/Z*
finally enacted the post-structuralist reader as the 'virtual site of
intertextuality', placed this textualised reader/writer before us, and
helped us to now situate the "parasite reader" who operates from Yale,
enabled us to cite, as it were, those creative critics or critical creators
who inhabit, in Frank Lentricchia's words, that 'critical house of ill-
fame' (1983: 162) on the campus of Yale University.

The tenants of this 'critical house', familiar and (in)famous under
the literary household name of Yale, by no means though form a coherent
ménage à quatre. In what has often been referred to as their manifesto, the
book *Deconstruction and Criticism*, edited by Bloom et al., '[i]f it wants to
"manifest" anything', according to Hartman's preface, then it is precisely
to 'retain the style and character of each writer' (1979: vii). As the
preface closes, Hartman emphatically reiterates his concern 'that the
critics amicably if not quite convincingly held together by the covers of
this book differ considerably in their approach to literature and literary
theory' (ix). As Wallace Martin points out in *The Yale Critics:
Deconstruction in America*, 'when presenting themselves as a group, they
scrupulously point out their differences', nevertheless though, he asserts
that Hartman, Bloom, Miller and de Man, 'can be lumped together because
regardless how they differ, they represent what we (as critics, scholars,
humanists, teachers, and perhaps citizens) should be against'. ² What then
is this radical potential, this 'ill-fame' that has characterized these
critics from the beginning?

Hartman's 'confession': 'I have a superiority complex vis-à-vis other
critics, and an inferiority complex vis-à-vis art' (1975: 3), provides a
first clue here. For what this statement introduces, is how Hartman et al.
set about to work out the alleged secondariness of literary criticism vis-
à-vis literary creation, set out to re-work the question of the primary and
the secondary. This statement also, however, implies, what Wallace Martin's
'critics, scholars, humanists, teachers, and perhaps citizens' have worked
against, and that is, the reversal of these categories, "the putting-into-
question" of the clear demarcations between literature and criticism,

between first-hand art and second-hand criticism, between author as god and the critic as priest. [3] For, if the difference between literature and criticism is seemingly wiped away, deconstructed, so increasingly, is the distinction between writing and reading, between the writer and the reader; and we may yet be able to argue that writing involves reading just as much as reading involves writing. Though we welcome and shall work with this reversal of the primary to the secondary, of master to slave, in our account, what critics should get worked up about is not Hartman's 'arrogance in wanting to raise criticism to a level of "genuine" creative writing' as Christopher Ricks does [4], but the assertion of superiority that the critic Hartman exerts over non-Yale criticism, his claim to Great Criticism at the very point we sought to have dismantled the notion of Great Art with all its trappings of the great, eternal canon. Before turning to the implications of Hartman's claim to superiority though, let us examine why Hartman (and his brothers at Yale) may wish to reverse what he sees to be the critic's secondariness *vis-à-vis* the artist writer.

As a way to make '[c]riticism... attractive again and haggish no longer' (Bové 1979: 12), Hartman *et al.* attack the kind of 'explication-centred criticism' (Hartman 1970: 56) which the New Criticism, had initiated and perpetuated from as early as the 1930's and well into the 1960's. [5] Against, what Hartman calls the 'Anglo-Saxon formalism' (56), with its insistence on the organic unity of the work, and its reductionist semi-scientific appeals to be able to determine all the literary devices which cohere harmoniously in the literary artifact, the Yale Critics hark back to an earlier, we might say more philosophical criticism; as Edward Said puts it, 'you will see immediately that one novel thing about these

critics is that their rituals and procedures differ from the ones fathered
on academic literary criticism since the end of the nineteenth century'
(1976: 30). We are referring here to the kind of Anglo-Criticism as
practiced by Coleridge, Ruskin, Pater, Arnold and Symons, which, on a par
with literature, does not involve 'a mere describing and comparing of
books, a mere paise and blame of this and that', but 'can almost explain
the origin of creation' (Symons 1906: ix). To put this in another way then
we might say, that what Hartman et al. are reacting against, is that
particular tradition of criticism which merely serves literature, its
literariness. Murray Krieger explains:

> Indeed, during the days of the largely unquestioned supremacy of the
> New Criticism, the critics's role as faithful vassal to the poem
> achieved its strongest assertion: the poetic "object" was to be
> treated as the critic's idol, as the sole justification of his
> joyfully acknowledged subsidary existence. Of course, the work was to
> be taken totally as interpretable, so that the critic was to have
> arrogance enough to offer the ultimate key to interpretation, but
> always - so the oath of fidelity went - in the service to each master
> text, from which it was his obligation to keep his own interests
> apart. (1981: 284) *

Consequently, Hartman et al. induce a new sense of worth for criticism, to
counter this type of internalization of the critic's own inferiority.

To also use a Foucauldian argument at this point, we can argue that
whilst the New Criticism religiously contains all meaning in the text,
it uses the unity of the work of art   as a guardrail, in order to
halt the processes of signification at source. Thus to inferiorize and
reduce criticism to a second-order product, is nothing other than the
attempt to reduce its potential for unleashing the 'cancerous and dangerous
proliferation of signification'. In Hartman's rather flamboyant and ironic
assessment, "he", this critic,

> subdues himself to commentary on work or writer, is effusive about the *integrity of the text*, and feels exalted by exhibiting art's controlled, fully **organized** energy of imagination. What passion yet what objectivity. What range yet what **unity!** What **consistency** of theme and style! (1975: 9, emphasis added)

Though the critic here can be seen to have devised mechanisms to justify the noble worth of the critical endeavour, he nevertheless is the loyal servant of that which is deeply logocentric: unity, coherence, presence, hierarchies, authors, canons... "What profusion, yet what control", we might exclaim, "What multitude, yet what coherence". This critic, in other words, integrates, organizes, unifies and builds up consistencies [7], not only to implicit ly praise his master's authorial genius behind the Great Work, but to foreground the "homeostatic and safe proliferation of signification". This critic's works, according to Hartman,

> [h]is essays and articles, merchandized in the depressed market place of academic periodicals, conform strictly to the cool element of scholarly prose. They are sober, literate, literal and pointed. Leave behind all fantasy, you who read these pages. (1975: 9)

Hartman's point here is, of course, that this critic 'is writing, after all, criticism not fiction' and that '[h]e will not violate the work of art by imposing on it his own, subjective flights of fancy' (9). This critic, in other words, knows his place, and knows his dues, will not step out of line, will not transgress, but will reconstruct an original intention of unity, will reconstruct the original context of utterance, come what may.

For what is feared above all else is the critic's potential power, the power of criticism to decontextualize literature. What this implies is, 'that a work becomes detached from its original context or that criticism actually helps to detach (decontextualize) it, and so make it available for another purpose, generation or place' (Hartman 1975: 14). To divorce the

work of art from its 'original context' is for the critic thus 'to appear as a thief, or a purveyor of stolen goods' (14). Hartman's analysis of the critic as villain in these passages of *The Fate of Reading*, is reworked very effectively in *Criticism in the Wilderness*, when the very power of criticism comes to be reformulated in terms of its positive force: 'the perspectival power of criticism, its strength of recontextualisation, must be such that the critical essay should not be considered a supplement to something else' (1980: 201).

What is at stake here is, of course, the Derridian notion of iterability. This is to say, precisely because 'iterability' is the 'power of being transferred from one specific context to another' [*], that original utterance or original intention, once iterated, once repeated in different circumstances (be it another 'purpose, generation, place') is always taken out of its originary context of utterance, is always at least to some extent taken out of context. In other words, the original utterance is not only determined by its original context, but, more importantly, when transferred, it becomes indeterminate in its new context(s). For as Derrida describes this double-bind in 'Living On Border Lines': 'no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation' (1979: 81). The very possibility of iteration then, is also its re-iteration, its multi-iteration, its feast and excess [*] in a multitude of new and different contexts. Which is another way of saying, that in citation, iterability, a detachment occurs which is not only a dislocation (decontextualisation), but also a re-location (recontextualisation) and more to the point, an inter-textualisation. Texts and contexts in this sense can always be grafted on to other con/texts, (re)inscribed in new con/texts which escape

previous formulations. It is here that notions such as citability, iterability, and grafting become part of the broader field of intertextuality.

Intertextuality, of course, puts the very notion of the clearly demarcated text into question, into quotation marks so to speak. Text here, conceived in Barthesian terms, is a 'ready-formed dictionary', a 'multi-dimensional space', a 'tissue of quotations', or in Derridean terms, is a trace of traces of other texts. Thus texts are not closed sites dependent upon the scrupulous installation and policing of the borders of these sites, but relate, or relay *para-sitically* (in-between sites) to other texts. As Hartman, if a little tentatively, suggests, '"textuality" **may** lead us indefinitely on to other texts' (1975: 268, emphasis added), by posing the 'complex [question] of how to decide where a text ends or begins' (268). This "differential" view of discourse, Frank Lentricchia (1983: 188) writes, is based on the 'view that language is a play of differences', and as such, 'affirms that there are no isolate texts, no atomic cores that can be fenced off as untouchable private properties... affirms that there are no larger ranges of discursive territory whose boundaries can be securely drawn (as literature, philosophy...)', and we may add criticism here. The very notion of intertextuality poses, in other words, the 'question of the relation between texts once their limits and borders can no longer be rigorously determined'. [10] Since all texts, in this conceptualisation, are tissues of anonymous citations embedded in the language, and since 'so many authors who know or do not know one another, criticize one another, ... pillage one another, meet without knowing it and obstinately intersect their unique discourses in a web of which they are

not the masters, of which they cannot see the whole, and of whose breadth they have a very inadequate idea...' (Foucault 1972: 126), then we may reformulate literature or indeed criticism as writing, as *écriture*. As Hartman may have put it, "*bricology*":

> Writing is always theft or *bricolage of the logos*. The theft redistributes the logos by a new principle of equity, as unreferable to laws of property, boundary, etc... writing is an act of crossing the line of the text, of making it indeterminate, or revealing the *midi* as the *mi-dit*. (Hartman 1980: 205; emphasis added) ''

If "bricology" or écriture extends to both creative writing and critical writing, and if creative writing is marked by theft and bricolage just as much as critical writing, then Terry Eagleton's description of poststructuralism as having 'no clear division between "criticism" and "creation": both modes are subsumed in writing' (1983: 139), is appropriate here. Moreover, in Hartman's thesis, '[t]he writer - critic or artist - is a bricoleur and has always been such... if so much is quotation, or a bricolage... then all writing, not merely criticism, is parasitic' (1980: 178-79). Hartman seems to be evoking Hillis Miller's notion of the parasite, which the latter uses as a metaphor for reversal, for deconstructing the hierarchical privilege of the term primary over the term secondary. And it is in this sense that Hartman argues that:

> The line of exegesis will therefore tend to be as precariously extensible as the line of the text. The subject matter of exegesis is, in fact, this 'line'. Yet criticism as commentary *de linea* always crosses the line and changes to one *trans lineam*. The commentator's discourse, that is, cannot be neatly or methodologicaly separated from that of the author: the relation is contaminating and chiastic; source text and secondary text, though separable, enter into a mutually supportive, mutually dominating relation. (1980: 206)

Though 'lines of exegesis' are not textual webs, 'chiasmus' is a cross-over rather than a textual weave, and 'precariously extensible lines' suggest that intertextuality is in need of some sort of balancing act, though all these phrases indicate that Hartman seems to be steering away from the full implications of intertextuality at this point, he nevertheless emphasises the 'contaminating' relation between commentator and authorship. Giving Hartman the benefit of the doubt, for the time being, the very distinction between the secondary and the primary, between the critical and the literary is rendered impure or 'contaminated' here, which is to say, the very hierarchy between Author-God and critical priesthood is beginning to be destabilized. For, if, '[t]he situation of the discourse we name *criticism* is', as he writes in *Criticism and the Wilderness*, 'no different from that of any other', and if 'this recognition implies a reversal, then it is the master-servant relation between criticism and creation that is being overturned...' (1980: 259). And since 'the master-servant relation' is overturned 'in favour of... "mutual domination" or "interchangeable supremacy"' (259), not only can we see how 'that great divide between criticism and creation... is now in dispute' (204), but also how criticism is gaining a more equal footing with creation.

Consequently, Hartman can and does argue, that criticism or commentary is enabled to exercise its own critical powers rather than merely serving to explain or reify existing texts (201-202). Criticism's subordinate position ing is thus being reevaluated and we are consequently entering a new era:

> I think this is where we are now. We have entered an era, that can challenge even the priority of the literary to the literary-critical text. Longinus is studied as seriously as the sublime texts he

comments on; Jacques Derrida on Rousseau *almost* as interestingly as Rousseau. (Hartman 1975: 17, emphasis added)

Even though Hartman is giving voice to a newly elevated criticism here, which exercises fresh 'critical powers', and illustrates a sense of the 'fading distinction between primary and secondary texts' (17), we are left with an inkling, however, that he is very much edging towards a confirmation of the contaminating interweaving of texts, is edging towards the affirmation of the "bricology" of *Of Grammatology*, is *almost* saying that Derrida on Rousseau is as interesting as Rousseau. Why is Derrida not as interesting as Rousseau, why such reservations we may ask given criticism's apparent challenge to the literary, the creative, all that which has been deemed primary? Again though, let us give Hartman the benefit of the doubt, as G. Douglas Atkins does, and add here the latter's observation on Hartman's "creative criticism" on, or "critical creation" of Derrida's *Glas* in *Saving the Text*, where 'it becomes impossible to separate Hartman from Derrida, commentator from text(s) commented on'. As he puts it, 'Who can point to a spot where Hartman's exposition of Derrida ends and his own contribution begins?' (1990: 75)

The 'fading distinction' between the primary and the secondary, finally gives over to the bold assertion, finally opens up the possibility of a reversal 'whereby this "secondary" piece of writing turns out to be "primary"' (1980: 201). When Hartman utters this claim with respect to Derrida's *Glas*, then it is because *Glas* demonstrates par excellence that 'literary commentary is literature' (202). For '*Glas* not only interanimates many sources (Hegel, Nietzsche, Genet) by inner quotation and surrealist wit; it not only incorporates, in particular, passages from Genet's *Journal*

du voleur (1948)... become(s) a thievish book' (204-5), but in Seáne Burke's recent assessment it is

> *too good* to be a distant cousin of literature, so much so that [Hartman] predicts for it a destiny comparable to *Finnegan's Wake.* Derrida's text, in short, possesses all the attributes by which we have conventionally recognized the great work of literature. (1992: 161)

Though we will return to the implications of Burke's argument later, it suffices to say here that this 'fusion of creation with criticism... in the writings of contemporary critics' (Hartman 1980: 190), no longer renders criticism subservient or subordinate to literature, but allows for it a new 'freedom of interpretive style with a matchless gusto' (Norris 1991: 98). Henceforth we can witness that overcrossing where 'literary commentary may cross the line and become as demanding as literature' (Hartman 1980: 201), where 'literary criticism' can be seen to be 'crossing over into literature' (213). But Hartman is careful here to also remind us that '[w]hat is happening is neither an inflation of criticism at the expense of creative writing nor a promiscuous intermingling of both. It is, rather, a creative testing and illumination of limits' (202). Whilst on the one hand then, Hartman has described the inter-relation between the literary and the critical in terms of 'a textual infinite, an interminable web of texts and interpretations' (202), which points towards a promiscuous intermingling between the critical and the creative, points towards "bricology", on the other hand, he polices and limits the full force of this argument by denying the contaminating vectors of intertextuality.

The division of literary activity into artists and commentators, creators and critics, which Hartman seeks to dismantle, is a division, as he puts it, which is 'neither fortunate nor absolute'; nor by implication,

is the division between 'writers and readers', between writing as a primary
and reading as a secondary activity. As Hartman explains:

> It is crass to think of two specialities, one called reading and one
> writing; and then to view criticism as a particularly specialized type
> of reading which uses writing as an "incidental" aid. Lately,
> therefore, forms of critical commentary have emerged that challenge
> the dichotomy of reading and writing. (1980: 19-20)

If Hartman reminds us of Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse* (as well as
Derrida's Glas) at this very instant, we may also recall Barthes's own
reading in *S/Z* as a writing of Balzac. Whether we endorse the critic as
creator à la Hartman, or empower the reader as a scriptor-reader à la
Barthes, what we are increasingly discerning, is the reader as a writer.
'What is happening' therefore, in Hartman's account, is that

> the reader is taking back some of his authority... Refusing the
> subterfuge of a passive or restrictive role, he becomes at once reader
> and writer - or takes it fully into consciousness that he is both an
> interpreter of texts and a self-interpreting producer of further
> texts. (1980: 162)

Not only does Hartman forge an implicit alliance between the Foucauldian
'initiator of discourses' and his own reader as 'self-interpreting producer
of further texts' here, but he also points towards the Barthesian
"scriptor-reader", that active reader who writes the text. As Hartman
reminds us, '[i]t is the reader who makes the verse responsive, however
inward or buried its sounds: he also calls a voice out of silence' (1975:
291). In this sense, he can assert that 'critical reading is not only the
reception (*Rezeption*) of a text, but also its conception (*Empfängnis*)
through the ear' (1981: 141-2), and it is in this sense also that we may
recall once more the voices of the Barthesian text, the plurivocal voices
of *Sarrasine* that Barthes is responsive to in *S/Z* If Barthes thus defined
reading as 'a form of work', Hartman invokes this when he states: 'We have
talked for a long time, and unself-consciously, of the *work of art*; we may

come to talk as naturally of the *work of reading* (1980: 162). (Why naturally, we may ask to sow the seeds of further doubt?) [12]

If reading turns into a 'form of work', will come to be known as 'the work of reading', and if criticism as that '"secondary" piece of writing turns out to be "primary"', then neither reading nor criticism can any longer be described in terms of being a 'supplement to something else'. This is to say, neither reading nor criticism are merely supplementary additions, reading is not a secondary afterthought and criticism is not a mere ornamental embellishment. Instead, they also act as replacements. Replacement here has to be understood in two senses of the word: criticism (or commentary or reading), it re-places, it re-locates, it 'has the power to [recontextualize]' (as we illustrated earlier), but also, it has the power to replace or substitute. To take this argument one step further, we may evoke Derrdia's logic of the *supplément* at this point, for the *supplément* is a double movement of addition and substitution. The *supplément*, Derrida writes, 'adds itself, it is a surplus, a plentitude...'. On the other hand, it 'adds only to replace. It intervenes itself *in-the-place of*, if it fills, it is as if one fills a void' (1976: 144-155). We may therefore say that the critical work will inevitably display material which is lacking in the literary work, quite likely not apparent as lacking until the act of criticism has been performed, but then revealed as significant. At the same time, the work of criticism, by revealing this lack, reveals also a potentially infinite series of future readings providing further supplementations. [13]

One might therefore argue that critical readings put the very notion of the original in question and all expressions of such readings, and by extension, all critical works, affirm an excess of signification. Herein lies the twofold transgressive potential of criticism: it undermines the uniqueness of the creative work for it can provide an infinite series of further critical supplementations *and* it undermines the notion of a *unique* and autonomous creative work (as emphasized by the New Critics for instance) because the latter needs criticism, commentary or interpretation because it is not a wholeness, it is neither self-determining nor self-sufficient. In Gayatri Spivak's exposition:

> The so-called secondary material is not a simple adjunct to the so-called primary text. The latter inserts itself within the interstices of the former, filling holes that are always already there. Even as it adds itself to the text, criticism supplies a lack in the text and the gaps in the chain of criticism anterior to it. The text is not unique (the acknowledged presence of polysemy already challenges that uniqueness); the critic creates a substitute. The text belongs to language, not to a sovereign and generating author. (1976: lxxiv)

If we have now arrived at the conclusion that criticism is, in accordance with the Derridean vocabulary Hartman shares, a supplement, that is, both an addition and a substitution, we need to pose the question as to why, despite Hartman's professed allegiance to Derrida, he institutes a denial of this very supplementarity at the very moment that the hierarchical relation between primary and secondary is removed; at the very moment that, as Hartman has it, 'this "secondary" piece of writing turns out to be "primary"' (Hartman 1980: 201). To unpack this, if supplementarity for Derrida puts notions such as the original, the unique, the proper into question, Hartman wishes to remove these question marks and to place, not only great literary works (as we shall see in a moment), but also great critical works, above criticism in the domain of the primary. For Hartman

not only speaks of 'the work of reading', he also has it, as we have seen,
that criticism 'may... become as demanding as literature' (1980: 201); and
consequently, he assert that 'literary commentary today is creating texts -
a literature - of its own' (213). The question which therefore arises here,
is whether Hartman merely evokes the vocabulary, the "language" of
Derridian discourse, whether he merely uses the language of the *supplément*,
rather than its logic, uses it, in fact, to suggest that criticism can be
a work in its own right, autonomous and self-sufficient, that it 'can also
write texts of its *own*' (1980: 259, emphasis added), can create 'texts - a
literature - of its *own*' (213 emphasis added), a *proper* literature, a
Literature Propre. [14] Since 'literary commentary becomes literature' (200)
and also becomes 'as demanding as literature', it also comes to '[possess]
all the attributes by which we have conventionally recognised the great
literary work' (Burke 1992: 161). [15] Here, the "secondary" becomes a
"primary", 'turns out to be a "primary", because the "secondary" is also a
"primary", another "primary". Or as Peter de Bolla has it, the critical act
is 'promoted' to the 'equivalence' of the literary act (1988: 24).

It is also at this very juncture that we can see why Hartman does not
explore the full implications of intertextuality (as we indicated earlier),
why he hovers indecisively between the "language" of inter-textuality and
his own "logic" of auto-nomy. Hartman's 'indecisiveness' [16] or 'poise of
balance' [17] vis-à-vis the radical textual criticism of a fully blown
deconstructive project, is well summed up by Raman Selden:

> He both admires and fears Derrida's radical theory. He welcomes
> criticism's newly-found creativity, but hesitates before the yawning
> abyss of indeterminacy, which threatens it with chaos. As Vincent
> Leitch has written, 'he emerges as a voyeur of the border, who watches
> or imagines crossover and warns of dangers'. (1985: 95)

'What is happening' then to iterate Hartman's words once more, and apply them to his own critical project, is, that there occurs 'neither an inflation of criticism at the expense of creative writing nor a promiscuous intermingling of both', but, and here we re-iterate his words with a difference, that there is 'a creative testing and illumination of limits' - the illumination of the borders of literary criticism, its autonomy as a literature in its own right. Let us therefore consider the following statement in this light:

> There is a great fear in us that to abandon the concept of the primary or classic work would mean ushering in chaos again: mingling great with inferior, primary with secondary, or even trivial. But I am arguing against, not for, chaos. If certain works have become authoritative, it is because they at once sustain, and are sustained by, the readers they find. Only when the work of reading is taken as seriously as the work of art is confusion avoided. (1980: 170)

Hartman's fear of chaos is nothing other than the fear of the 'disorderly buzzing of discourse' (1972: 229), Foucault describes in 'The Discourse of Language'. And it is in this sense that we have to understand Hartman's pledge to a criticism that is as demanding as literature, criticism that is Literature Proper. In short, we see Hartman's hankering for a second "primary" here, as a pledge for canonized criticism: the secondary as primary, as the other primary in Hartman's discourse, is a canonized criticism, which 'conserves even as it criticizes' (1980: 170) the great work of art. As he puts it:

> our problem today is that as the quantity of writing increases, the quality of reading should also increase to preserve the great or exceptional work as something still possible... (165)

It is at this very point that Hartman's brand of deconstruction is never 'on the wild side' as Norris had it (1991: 92), but moves on the mild side for us. This is to say, if deconstruction for Spivak entertains the

notion - '[a] reading that *produces* rather than *protects*' (1976: lxxv), we have to reformulate this as "a reading that protects rather than produces" when it comes to Hartman. It is in this sense also that we can see that '[r]eading is not a neutral technique' for Hartman, but one that 'is shaped by classics it in turn supports' (1975: 304). What we begin to see emerging here is what Christopher Norris referred to, at a recent conference on Geoffrey Hartman entitled 'Reading after Hartman' (University of Warwick 8. May 1993), as Hartman's 'appreciative criticism'. The question which was at stake for Norris, was a sense of Hartman's lack of resistance to poetry, to Romantic poetry and to Wordsworth, in particular. If Hartman interpreted Norris's interlude as a question for 'what is effective criticism', we may both interpret Norris's point in relation to our own argument and answer it with an appropriate passage from *The Fate of Reading*:

> The extinction... of the personal names of *both* author and reader shows what ideally happens in the act of reading: if there is a sacrifice to the exemplary, it involves the aggrandizement neither of author nor of reader but leads to the recognition that something worthy of perpetuation has occurred. (1975: 255)

What Hartman is expressing here is, of course, his allegiance to the canon, his appreciation of 'the great work of art' which according to him is 'more than a text. It is the "life-blood" of a "master-spirit"' (255). What we should express at this point then is not our allegiance to Hartman, but to Norris's call for resistance. For, his claim to Great Art is intimately connected with his claim to Great Criticism, at the very point, when so much of criticism, on both sides of the Atlantic, had sought to have shaken some of the very foundations of the very idea/l of a great eternal canon. His attempted reversal of the opposition between the "primary" and the "secondary" should not be seen as a sole response to the inferiorisation of the secondary term by particular trends in literary criticism (be it an

Author-centred servile criticism, or the "vassalage" of New Criticism), but
should, in particular, be examined in relation to his confession that he
has 'a superiority complex vis-à-vis other critics and an inferiority
complex vis-à-vis art'. For what emerges from this claim is this: 'it is
envy' (1980: 259) which seems to spur Hartman to rework this opposition and
endow the critic with the same status as the artist; furthermore, it is an
outright construction (not even a Yale deconstruction) of elitism that
gives Hartman the sense of superiority over other critics, critics that on
his terms, fail to appreciate Great Art and Great Criticism when it is
handed to them on the silver tray by 'the master-spirit', or force-fed to
them by the silver spoon of tradition.

3.3 Harold Bloom: Poetic Criticism Goes Wild

If Hartman's reworking of the opposition between the critical and the creative constituted an effort to put criticism on a par with literature, and if, in the final instance, this effort was driven by a sense of 'envy' for that primary status which art and artist have always enjoyed, as we have previously argued, then Bloom's first and foremost effort has been to foreground this very envy, 'rivalry' or 'oedipal struggle' to use his words, as the driving *force* of literary history. The history of literature is thus nothing other than a 'poetic warfare' between great poetic egos, and literary history is nothing other than a 'psychic battleground' between great poets and 'strong' critics. This is to say, both poets who live 'anxiously' in the shadows of their 'strong' precursors, in the shadows of their fathers so to speak, and critics who take umbrage at their great masters, need to wrench themselves from their predecessors' repressive hold, free themselves of the burden of the past, or respectively, of the influence of the other, so 'as to open a space for [themselves]' (Bloom 1982: 64). What Bloom sets out to write then, is 'a theory of literary history as canon-formation' (Bloom 1975a: 63), which traces this 'endless civil war, indeed [this] family war' which has characterized, in more specific terms, the 'history of poetry' (63). Thus, on the one hand, Bloom focuses on the new poet's anxiety over the precursor poet's influence on him and maps the former's routes of escape from this influence, his disarming of the 'strong' predecessor's power over him, so he may carve out a space for himself amongst the 'strong' in the canon, whilst on the other hand, he provides an account of the part the critic plays in this

'civil war', his role in being part of this 'family war', and his contribution in the shaping of the literary canon.

The history of literature is by no means therefore to be understood in terms of cooperation, in terms of the harmonic preservation, transmission, or further development of our literary inheritance, but is seen in terms of competition and conflict. It is in other words, about the struggle of 'going alone' (Bloom 1975: 24), about the anxiety of being influenced and the defence against this influence from the predecessor. 'No one', according to Bloom, 'is ever happy about being influenced; poets can't stand it, critics are nerv ous about it' (103). This is why,

> The dialectics of influence, if examined without over-idealizing, reveal that literature itself is founded upon rivalry, misinterpretation, repression, and even plain theft and savage misprision... To see literature for what it is, the dark mirror of our egoism and our fallen condition, is to see ourselves again as perhaps eternity sees us, more like one another than we can bear to believe. (1976: xii)

What is at stake here, of course, is 'the greatest of all human illusions, the vision of immortality' (Bloom 1973: 9). The poet's posterity in words demands that the new poet, the latecomer or the *ephebe*, as Bloom calls him, 'open a space for [him]self', ' demands that he should go against his precursor, demands that he would assert his 'originality' (Bloom 1975: 24) and 'uniqueness' (70) against his rival, that he should misinterpret, savagely misread and subvert (24) the work and the standing of his precursor, thereby demolishing the latter's uniqueness. '[A] poet, [Bloom] argue[s] in consequence, is not so much a man speaking to men as a man rebelling against being spoken to by a dead man (the precursor) outrageously more alive than himself' (1975: 19). Only the 'latecomer poet's' antithetical behaviour, his 'wilful revisionism' (Bloom 1973: 30)

and his will to power will ensure that his art will survive: for, '[i]f we have been ravished by a poem, it will cost us our own poem' (Bloom 1975: 18). In other words, only the successful defence against influence, it seems, is the making of a great poem or a great poet. 'As the hungry generations go on treading each other down' (Bloom 1973: 6), only the 'strong poets' will be capable of mounting a strong defence, only the "Über-poets" of this world will survive as victors thus destined 'to beget [their] own self, or become [their] one Great Original' (Bloom 1973: 64).

When Bloom therefore writes that 'a poetic "text", as I interpret it, is not a gathering of signs on a page, but a psychic battlefield upon which authentic forces struggle for the only victory worth winning (1976a: 2), he is drawing attention to the poetic warfare *between* poets. This is to say, he is making the point that poetic influence, rather than being a source study, is a tracing of connections. [2] It is a tracing of connections between poet and poet, and also between poems. Whether Bloom puts an emphasis on the warring relations between poets, or whether he emphasises the inter-connectedness between poems, between texts, the point which emerges is, that 'any poem is an inter-poem, and any reading of a poem is an inter-reading' (Bloom 1976a: 2-3). [3] This is to say, he does 'not believe that meaning is produced *in* and *by* poems, but only *between* poems' (1975a: 88). He no longer holds with the New Critical doctrine that 'a single poem is an entity in itself' (Bloom 1973: 43), but advocates instead that 'meaning is always a wandering between texts' (Bloom 1975a: 106). And it is in this sense that Bloom can argue that '[t]he interpretation of a poem necessarily is always interpretation of that poem's interpretation of other poems... to interpret a poem, necessarily you interpret its

difference from other poems' (1975: 75). In short, influence is a tracing of inter-connections, 'influence means that there are *no* texts, but only relationships *between* texts' (Bloom 1975: 3), and furthermore it means, that 'I only know a text because I know a reading of it, someone else's reading, my own reading a composite reading' (Bloom 1979: 8).

Since influence is therefore the interconnection between one text and another, between one reading/interpretation and another, but also the interconnection between one poet and another, the inter-textual, as it were, also gives way to the inter-subjective. Inter-relations are thus never part of an anonymous network of citations, in the Barthesian sense of textuality, but rather they are governed by the *heroic struggles* between "relatives", between the sublime poet and his dominant predecessor, between the child's text and the parent text, between son and father, which is, of course, the precise point at which the subject inserts itself in the Bloomian discourse. Therefore, whilst Bloom 'does away with the static notion of a fixed and knowable text' (Kolodny 1985: 46), does indeed hint at intertextuality, he does not pursue the Barthesian notion of the intertext – as this subjectless 'ready-formed dictionary' (1977a: 146) – but retains the subject at least insofar as textual relations are also constitutive relations between subjects, yielding occasional great rival poets who deny their great fathers, to constitute themselves as such. Bloom, in other words, is 'barely deconstructionist' (Hartman 1979a: ix), for when he writes that 'a poem is a response to a poem', he immediately adds that this is so just as much 'as a poet is a response to a poet, or a person to his parent' (Bloom 1975: 18). To quote Christopher Norris, '[h]is argument shrewdly undermines the deconstructionist position by insisting on

the conflict of wills to expression behind the encounter of text with text' (1991: 122).

Bloom not only endows the reading subject with much power, but also calls upon the ephebe to exercise his reading power over the predecessor's poetic work. The response by a poet to a poet, which is also the ephebe's confrontation with his rivalling precursor, must take the form of a powerful revisionary interpretation, of a strong (mis)reading on part of the new-comer according to Bloom. When Bloom therefore writes that '[p]oetic warfare is conducted by a kind of strong reading that I have called misreading (1979: 5), he is urging the new poet to '[confront] his Great Original', which is nothing other than the neccessity of having to 'find the fault that is not there' (1973: 31). This is to say, the ephebe needs to misread the precursor in order to overcome the influence and power the latter exerts over him. As Bloom puts it at some length here:

> Poetic influence - when it involves two strong, authentic poets - always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence... is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, wilful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist. (1973: 30)

Misreading by its very definition is thus never non-agonistic, nor weak, but 'wilful[ly] revisionist'. It is in this sense also that revision might be argued to be the very 'key to an ongoing literary history' (Kolodny 1985: 59. For Bloom's revisionist reader 'strives to *see* again, so as to *esteem* and *estimate* differently, so as then to aim "correctively"' (1975: 4). Here we may also invoke Adrienne Rich's point about a reading practice - though it predates Bloom's writings in *A Map of Misreading* by some four years, and though it is part of a feminist project - it nevertheless shares

this revisionist strategy. 'Re-vision' in Rich's account, is 'the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction' (1980: 35). As Annette Kolodny sums up their "mutual" concerns: '[a]nd each, as a result - though from different motives - strives to make "the literary tradition... the captive of the revisionary impulse"'. *

Bloom's revisionary impulse, unlike Rich's, his wilful revisionism and acts of deliberate misinterpretation are, of course, part of an oedipal struggle. The survival of the newcomer is based on the displacement of the predecessor, or as Bloom has it, '[t]o live the poet must misinterpret the father, by the crucial act of misprision, which is the re-writing of the father' (1975: 19). Such then begins the cycle of literary history, the ongoing revision and re-writing of poetry, the shaping and re-shaping of the canon, where '[s]trong poets *must* be misread' and where '[e]very strong poet caricatures tradition and every strong poet is then necessarily misread by tradition that he fosters' (Bloom 1975a: 103), thus the ephebe becomes the Father. Misreadings, induced by and as defences against the anxiety of influence, are strong readings and as such they will 'provoke other readings' (Bloom 1975a: 125), they will produce further antagonistic readings against the "first" strong reading. Since '[e]very poem is a misinterpretation of a parent poem', (in fact a Dad poem) *, and Bloom consequently has it that '[a] poem is not an overcoming of anxiety, but *is* that anxiety' (1975: 108, my emphasis), then with every new anxiety-induced, antagonistic reading, with every deliberate misreading, we have a re-writing which is also a new poem. *A poem is that anxiety.* To put this differently, we may say, that '[p]oems are defensive processes in constant

change, which is to say that poems themselves are *acts of reading*' (Bloom
Bloom 1976a: 25-26). Or more to the point, if poems are 'acts of reading',
then the ephebe's poems are his anxious, defensive readings (taking umbrage
at his precursor and under the shadow of this influence); and furthermore,
if readings are also necessarily misreadings, then the ephebe's poetry is
his acts of misreadings. It is in this sense that Peter de Bolla can state
that 'the act of misprision *is* the creation of a new text' (1988: 24).

It is in this light also that Bloom can argue: '[n]o one "fathers" or
"mothers" his or her own poems, because poems are not "created", but are
interpreted into existence, and by necessity they are interpreted from
other poems' (1982: 244); and we can add here they are 'interpreted from
other poems' as the ephebe's rewritings, as his/her wilful miswritings of
the precursors' poems. This is how Bloom explains this 'poetic misprision'
in *Kabbalah and Criticism*

> Poetry begins, always, when someone who is going to be a poet *reads a
> poem*. But I immediately add - when he *begins* to read a poem, for to
> see how fully he reads that poem we will have to see the poem that he
> himself will write *as his reading*... the meaning of a poem [can] only
> be another poem. Not I point out, the *meaning* of another poem, but the
> poem itself, indeed the *otherness* of the poem. (1975a: 107-108)

The ephebe writes his reading; which are really misreadings. The ephebe's
poetry is his readings, which are really misreadings; the ephebe's poetry
is his writings, which are really rewritings of the precursor poems, and
as such miswritings. The ephebe's poetry *was* (the escape from) anxiety.
This is to say, '[t]he influence-relation governs reading as it governs
writing, and reading is therefore a miswriting just as writing is a
misreading' (Bloom 1975: 3).

Bloom does not therefore 'propose another new poetics, but a wholly different practical criticism'. As he suggests in *The Anxiety of Influence*: '[l]et us pursue instead the quest of learning to read any poem as its poet's deliberate misinterpretation, *as a poet*, of a precursor poem or of poetry in general' (1973: 43). The point to be made here is, of course, that Bloom is rewriting criticism. For, not only is the critic called upon to read poetry as part of a 'family romance', in terms of rival relations, not only is he called upon to write literary history as a series of defensive and deliberate acts of misinterpretation, but by extension the critic's calling is that he (mis)read, (mis)interpret, (mis)write poetry/poets in a same fashion as ephebes do. Bloom explains:

> A poet attempting to make his language new necessarily begins by an *arbitrary act of reading* that does not differ in kind from the act that *his readers* subsequently must perform upon him. [...] A poet interpreting his precursor, and any strong subsequent interpretor reading either poet, must *falsify* by his reading. (1975: 69)

What is at stake here is this: although Bloom tells us that '[p]oets' misinterpretations or poems are more drastic than critics' misinterpretations or criticism', he adds that 'this is only a difference in degree and not at all in kind' (1973: 94-95). Indeed, by the time he writes *Kabbalah and Criticism*, Bloom is adamant that 'the relation of the earlier poet to the later poet is exactly analogous to the relation of the later poet to yourself' (1975a: 63). As he puts it some pages later,

> The reader is to the poem what the poet is to his precursor - every reader is therefore an ephebe, every poem a forerunner, and every reading and act of "influencing", that is, of being influenced *by* the poem and of influencing any other reader to whom your reading is communicated. (1975a: 97)

This is to say, '[w]hen we read/misread a poem, then, we do nothing less than repeat the sequence of poem/precursor poem, ephebe/poetic father, which had generated the text in the first place' (1988: 28), according to

Peter de Bolla. It can therefore be argued that the critic as rival of the poet, also produces defensive and corrective (mis)readings of the poet, *also creatively misunderstands* (Bloom 1973: 93) the precursor in an act of 'wilful revisionism' to ward off influence.

Furthermore, since 'there are no texts, but only interpretations', and since 'a strong reading is the only text, the only lie against time that endures' (Bloom 1979: 7), then we may well extend this argument to the critic and say that without the critic 'modern poetry as such could not exist'. By twisting the emphasis of this argument one more turn, we may also say that since poems are 'interpreted into existence' – and we have to remember that this is the creation of a (new) text – since, in other words, the critic (just as much as the ephebe poet) also writes his reading, indeed, 're-writes his father', then critical writings, acts of criticism are also 'poetic misprisions' and as such are also creations of new texts. Critical texts are creations of new texts in the sense that they are *creative*, for if the ephebe's misreadings are his writings, in other words, are the poems that he writes, then the critic's misreadings are 'the prose poetry' that he writes. In fact, '[a]ll criticism is prose poetry' (1973: 94), according to Bloom; which is why Christopher Norris claims that '[c]riticism for Bloom is a kind of poetic re-enactment' (1991: 117), and Frank Lentricchia can claim that 'Bloom has permitted us to understand that what he means by interpretation is the making of a critical poem that would go into competition with the poetic text supposedly under consideration' (1983: 345).

Thus, the 'critical act is brought into the same orbit as the act of poetic creation' (De Bolla 1988: 23). Indeed, as de Bolla hastens to add, 'understanding of the critical act is profoundly poetic' (24). Bloom's statement therefore that 'as literary history lengthens, all poetry necessarily becomes verse-criticism, just as all criticism becomes prose-poetry' (Bloom 1975: 3), which renders the poetic critical just as much as it renders the critical poetic, and which, on the surface at least, seems to negate the difference between the critical and the creative, is finally gathered though under the aegeis of the poetic, under poetry. This is to say, since 'the meaning of a poem can only be another poem', Bloom ultimately urges us to see that

> critical theory [needs to] stop treating itself as a branch of philosophical discourse, and adopt instead the pragmatic dualism of the poets themselves... A theory *of* poetry must belong *to* poetry, must *be* poetry, before it can be any use in interpreting poems' (1975a: 109).

The critical, in other words, is subsumed under the poetic, which marks a crucial point in understanding Bloom's position. For the 'drastic models for creative reading and critical writing' (Bloom 1979: 6) that Bloom puts forward in his work, not only aim, in the end, to lift the critical into the realm of the creative, the sublimely poetic, but also endow the critic with a newly found creative freedom, with a libertarian creativity that many critics have deemed as sheer interpretive anarchy, or utter poetic obscuritanism.[7]   If 'for Bloom' as de Bolla explains, 'all criticism aspires to the condition of poetry' (1988: 24), then 'the critic as poet joins the poet as critic' (Lentricchia 1983: 337), then Bloom joins the poet, this original artist, becomes 'the poet in the reader' (Bloom 1979: 8), becomes a 'poet-reader' (Bloom 1975: 69), has become, to use Lentricchia's phrase, 'an original theorist' (1983: 346); which is

precisely why Bloom has characterized his "poetics" as 'a severe poem,
reliant upon aphorism and apothegm, and a quite personal... mythic pattern'
(1973: 130).

    This is also however, another reason why Bloom is 'barely
deconstructionist'. For, as Lentricchia puts it, '[i]f the deconstructive
method could speak to the relations of critics and poets, it would not tell
us that criticism is poetry' (1983: 345); it would not emphasize the
'personal' *artistry*, 'mythic' *poeticity* of criticism. Neither would it
exclusively concentrate on 'the titanic willfulness of strong poets', or we
may add the will to power of the "strong critic", which has the effect, as
Lentricchia points out, of 'reinstating, against every theoretical point
[Bloom] has made, the principle of the author – if not in splendid
isolation, then in splendidly isolated dialogue with his strong ancestors'
(1983: 343). Has Bloom not come back here via the strong ancesteral poet,
via the great precursor to the Author 'who is reputed the father and the
owner of his work' (Barthes 1977: 160). Is Bloom, in other words, moving
from text to work when Barthes had already moved *from work to text*? Whilst
in the essay entitled 'From Work to Text', the text, according to Barthes,
'reads without the inscription of the Father', 'can be read without the
guarantee of its father' (161), 'is a tissue of quotations' (1977a: 146),
of 'citations which... are anonymous, untraceable' (1977: 160), Bloom's
"poetic oeuvres" are never anonymous, but bear the mark of the father, must
be inscribed by the father, so that they may be re-scripted by the son. Is
it not also here, as Norris observed that 'Bloom wants to halt the process
of deconstruction at a point where it is still possible to gauge the poet's
creative stature in terms of expression' (1981: 119), or the critic's

creative expressivity, indeed, any Author's 'wish to *express himself*' (Barthes 1977a: 146), his 'strive to create... a working-space of presence for his own imagination' (Norris 1991: 119)? The poet remains Author-god here, and the critic becomes his own Author, at least insofar as Bloom is bringing back the creative expressive genius that Barthes sought to dispose of, dispossess.

If the Author is therefore smuggled through the back door here,[8] it is "tradition" which left this entrance to the house of fame wide open. For tradition needs its heroes, the hero-worship [9] which is nothing other than that 'splendidly isolated dialogue with [our] strong ancestors', that 'exclusive comparison' with our forefathers. [10] And it is in this sense that Lentricchia writes:

> So, despite the fact that he has been received as a radical destroyer of traditional methodology, there is a conservative impulse in Bloom's theory which succeeds in shoring up the institution of literary studies as we have always known it. His concentration on the *poet* in a poet, and on strong poets rather than weak ones, are confirmations of the way that most literary scholars in America teach and have been taught (great books; major - i.e., "strong" - writers of England and America; the Olympian perspective of the typical sophomore survey which tends to enforce exclusive comparison between strong writers, there being nothing else to compare; etc. etc.). (1983: 344)

Strong ancestors, strong fathers, strong poets, strong authors, strong *author*ial critics are thus the "substance" that literary evolutions are made of. Here, '[p]oets survive because of inherent strength' (Bloom 1975: 200), a stength we may say that they inherited from their strong fathers, and a strength that, according to Bloom 'is manifested through their influence upon other strong poets' (200); here, the "fittest" survives, for '[o]ut of the strong comes forth strength, even if not sweetness, and when strength has imposed itself long enough, then we learn to call it

tradition, whether we like it or not' (200). In short, here, the canon is formed and makes sure it survives for all eternity.

What then we may ask, is tradition? Where then would we be without tradition? Or, more to the point and closer to the Bloomian spirit, where would we be without the Father? 'What', Bloom asks in *A Map of Misreading*, 'happens if one tries to write, or to teach, or to think, or even to read without the sense of tradition?' And he cannily answers: 'Why, nothing at all happens, just nothing'. This is because:

> You cannot write or teach or think or even read without imitation, and what you imitate is what another person has done, that person's writing or teaching or thinking or reading. Your relation to what informs that person *is* tradition, for tradition is influence that extends past one generation, a carrying-over of influence. Tradition, the Latin *traditio*, is etymologically a handing-over or a giving-over, a delivery, a giving-up and so even a surrender or a betrayal. [...] Literary tradition begins when when a fresh author is simultaneously cognizant not only of his own struggle against the forms and presence of a precursor, but is compelled also to a sense of the Precursor's place in regard to what came before *him*. (1975: 32)

If for Bloom 'the rejection of the precursor serves only to reconfirm the influence of the precursor' (Burke 1992: 159), then Bloom affirms the very same 'master-spirit' that Hartman saw 'worthy of perpetuation'. This is to say, if for Hartman 'the great work of art... is a master-spirit', and as such is 'worthy of perpetuation', and if Great Criticism on a par with Great Art discerns and hands down that which is 'worthy of perpetuation', for Bloom, criticism might not be 'appreciative' of tradition, but is 'cognizant' of it, is aware, in other words, of the precursor's presence and place, and thus the need to rival, measure up, supercede and re-place this greatness. The Bloomian critic thus rivals poets as well as other critics '', for he is in combat with all strong (fore)fathers in order to jealously cut out a space for himself amongst the great, amongst those that

have imposed themselves long enough that we have had to accept them as tradition. Bloomian criticism, in other words, ensures that Bloom will be able to have an unrivalled pedestal in literary history. A pedestal which has inscribed on it the re-inscription of the critic as author-poet, it reads:

> Criticism is poetry; poetry is as criticism defined it; poetry is as Bloom defines it; and Bloom, we shall remember, once upon a time, defined criticism as poetry; long live Harold Bloom.

3.4 Hillis Miller: Reading Unreadability

If Hartman posed the question 'What difference does reading make?' (1989:
19) at the opening in *Criticism in the Wilderness* and answered it in terms
of '[t]he difference that reading makes is, most generally, writing' (19),
then it was to suggest that reading and writing cannot be easily separated
since reading does not use 'writing as an "incidental" aid' (20), since
reading and writing, critical and creative writing are neither 'two
specialities' (19), nor is one subordinated to the other, but the reader is
also a writer, or more to the point, 'what a literary critic does is
literature' (20). This has the effect, of course, of reversing the
secondary into a primary, of endowing the secondary term, be it reading,
commentary or criticism, with the same, primary, status as literature.
Bloom, as we have seen, takes this premise to its "wild" conclusion. By
suggesting that poets, critics and readers alike 'write' their reading,
and more to the point, that critics' (mis)readings are indeed the 'prose-
poetry' that they (mis)write, Bloom renders the critical also poetic. By
thus instituting a poet-reader, a creative critic, an 'original theorist',
Bloom not only revises the relation between criticism and poetry, but
begins to deny the difference between that which was deemed primary and
that which was once secondary. Hillis Miller, contrary to Hartman and
Bloom, sets out to deconstruct "the very ground" which both the critical
and the creative inhabit. This is to say, whilst Hartman, Bloom and Miller
are concerned with the relation of the secondary to the primary, Miller
does not, however, seek to reverse nor to revise the position they hold,
but seeks to subvert it, attempts to make its very proposition untenable,
tries to pull away the ground, so to speak, which has fertilized the very

existence of the two terms, which has provided the basis for the privilege of one term over the other. Whether Miller succeeds here, will form the crux of our discussion of his work.

What Miller does then is this: he illustrates that language constantly undermines its own meaning. This is to say, in his continuous evocation of the myriad ways in which language refuses to be constrained by the paucity of literalness or by the hard logic of the concept, Miller draws attention to language's 'equivocal richness' (1979: 223). In this sense he writes, 'criticism is in this respect... continuous with the language of literature', and further that 'there is no conceptual expression without figure' (223). Miller thus draws our attention to the figurality of all language. If 'literal' language is not 'literally literal' (Eagleton 1983: 145), but always metaphorical and figural, then all forms of discourse are marked by the figurative, all writing is fictional and not only is literature no longer the privileged realm of the figural, but neither is the critical the bastion of the literal. As Eagleton says, '[p]hilosophy, law, political theory work by metaphor just as poems do, and so are just as fictional' (145). This then not only pulls away the ground for the distinction between literature and other forms of discourse, but it immerses us in a linguistic universe where 'it is impossible to get outside the limits of language by means of language' (Miller 1987: 59). It is in this sense that readers, critics alike are, to use Terry Eagleton's words once more, 'cast dizzyingly into a bottomless linguistic abyss by a text which has become "unreadable"' (1983: 145).

Texts for Miller become "unreadable", precisely because the figurality of language renders texts undecidable. Another of the resources on which Miller draws in order to highlight language's 'equivocal richness', its undecidability, is his 'recognition of a performative function of language' (1979: 250). Which is to say — and here we borrow a phrase from Paul de Man to re-enact Miller's thesis — because '*Sprache verspricht (sich)*', ' because language promises (itself), speaks the promise of its own truth and makes a slip of the tongue, it speaks with forked tongue, speaks in *two* tongues. The undecidability of this phrase is, of course, exemplary of the shifting and unstable structure of language. Words, to put this in other *words*, will not stay in place, will not stay still, but will slip, slide, perish, decay with imprecision; [2] which is to say, '... other meanings are always there as a shimmering in the word which makes it refuse to stay still in a sentence' (Miller 1979: 219). Thus ambiguous and indeterminate, language necessarily opens up 'a margin of unpredictability', which inevitably leads us to our 'failure to read' (Miller 1987a: 214), thereby illustrating the unreadability of texts. To use our word-play once more, we may say that all texts *versprechen (sich)*: texts harbour the promise of a truth, hence the promise of a univocal meaning, the promise of their own readability, but equally fall into a *lapsus linguae* which contradicts their claim for 'the obvious' readability. The double movement encapsulated in the phrase, *(sich) versprechen*, is therefore already the mark by which texts are '"unreadable", if by "readable" one means a single, definite interpretation' (Miller 1979: 226). To push the implications of Miller's argument one step further then, it follows that texts are both "readable" and "unreadable", they display an irreducible heterogeneity of (at least) two contradictory readings. And this is precisely why Miller can argue that

the failure to read, or that this '"unreadability" is not located in the reader but in the text itself' (Miller 1989: 159). [3] "Unreadability" is, in other words, the consequence of the difference within texts, of difference within.

If, both the figurality and the performativity of language undermine the traditional distinction between literature and other forms of discourse, and if this gives language an undecidable quality, 'a margin of unpredictability', and if in turn it also undermines any notion of a 'obvious or univocal reading', [4] then the difference between literary and other tropes is evident only in the fact that 'literary works... are in a sense less deluded than other forms of discourse, because they implicitely acknowledge their own rhetorical status', because they draw attention, so to speak, to the 'figurative structures which render them ambiguous and indeterminate' (Eagleton 1983: 143). It therefore follows that literature for Miller (as well as Paul de Man) 'does not need to be deconstructed by the critic', but 'it can be shown to deconstruct itself, and moreover is actually "about" this very operation' (Eagleton 1983: 145). As Miller puts it with regard to de Man:

> Deconstruction... is not something the critic does to the text from the outside in the act of 'reading' it, but something all texts inevitably do to themselves. It is a built-in fatality in language... (1989: 157-8)

And we can therefore see once more why '"unreadability" is not located in the reader but in the text itself'. This then is the crux of much of Yale writing, of those 'boa-deconstructors', and here that 'boa-deconstructor' Miller, who to put it in Hartman's words once more 'enjoys his own style of disclosing again and again the "abysm" of words' (1979: ix). In a practice

of close reading then Miller sets out to demonstrate the 'built-in fatality' or inherent playfulness of language, exposes not only the undecidability within texts but also the undecidability within words.

The undecidability within texts does not give us - though some critics have accused Miller of this - the free reign to make texts mean anything we like (1987: 9, 10), does not give us a free licence to be disrespectful to the words on the page. Miller is emphatic on this point in *The Ethics of Reading*:

> As a reader... I should above all have respect for the text, not deviate by one iota in my report of the text from what it says. The letter of the text must become my law when I read it. (1987: 10).

Thus Miller advocates a practice of 'close reading' (1979: 230), for, as he puts it, '[t]he thing all readers share is those words on the page' (1982: 20). What is at stake here is, of course, the kind of deconstructive (un)reading which ceases upon 'the undecidable structure contained within [a] word' (1979: 236), which traces the 'mazy route' (Norris 1991: 93), the labyrinthine coilings, the twisted etymological roots of words. Miller's 'tactics in reading a text' then, according to Vincent Leitch, involves

> ... trac[ing] the meaning of a key word back to its etymological roots. In doing so, he shifts the apparent stability of the master term out of a closed system and into an ongoing bifurcating labyrinth. The effect of such semantic dissemination is to deracinate the text, revealing the inexhaustible possibilities for interpretation... (Leitch 19: 191).

The 'status of these etymologies' according to Miller, is not by any means a search for the 'true meaning of the word', instead, '[t]hey serve rather to indicate the lack of enclosure of a given word' (Miller 1978: 158). As Miller puts it in his essay 'Ariadne's Thread: Repetition and Narrative Line',

> Each word inheres in a labyrinth of branching interverbal relationships... *all words were originally metaphors*. Moreover, one encounters for a single word, not a single root, but forks in the etymological line leading to bifurcated or trifurcated roots [...] *In any case the effect of etymological retracing is not to ground the word solidly but to render it unstable, equivocal, wavering, abysmal.* (158-9, emphasis added)

Miller thus concludes that 'only through the *patient* work of following some thread as far, deep into the labyrinth of the text, as it will go' (162, emphasis added), that a close reading reveals, or as he has it, that 'such an effort of interpretation is not the "deconstruction" of a given novel but rather a discovery of the way it deconstucts itself in the process of constructing its web of story-telling' (162). Consequently, 'by pushing the *analysis* of the text in question far enough' that we see clearly how 'the impossiblity of a single definite reading emerges' (163, emphasis added). Whether Miller homes in on a word, words, or a text, his method works via a patient and close analysis. And here we may call up Barbara Johnson's point that deconstruction as a word is closely related with that of analysis, which 'etymologically means "to undo" - a virtual synonym for "to de-construct"' (1980: 5). It is in sense that she argues, and we may take her argument on board for Miller also, that '[t]he de-construction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by a *careful* teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself' (5, my emphasis). Neither 'random', 'arbitrary', nor "anything-goes", Miller thus engages in close etymological readings which *carefully* unravel the very 'letter of the text', which *patiently* (un)read the difference within a text.

Miller's emphasis on close reading makes him wary of the notion of an overarching theory, be it of literature, texts, or reading. If, as he

argues, 'too much attention is paid to this theory or that [...] and not enough to the readings made possible by the theories in question' (1982: 21), then it is because we do not pay sufficient 'respect' to 'those words on the page' and their 'mazy routes', because we do not read carefully, patiently enough. This passage from *Fiction and Repetition* bears out his concerns:

> A theory is all too easy to refute or deny, but a reading can be controverted only by going through the difficult task of rereading the work in question and proposing an alternative reading. A skirmisher in the rarified atmosphere of pure theory argues that criticism went wrong when it became close reading. This, if I may say so, is a major treason of our profession. That profession is nothing other than the love of words, the teaching of reading, and the attempt in written criticism to facilitate the act of reading. What counts for most in literary criticism is the citations made and what the critics say about those citations. (1982: 21)

If, on the one hand then, Miller 'teases out' the difference within texts through his close readings, shows how words *versprechen sich* through his etymological readings, on the other hand, he also uses this tactic to read his opponents so carefully as to highlight their unintentional *lapsus linguae*. Miller's 'characteristic form of critical response' to his adversaries, is therefore, to put it in Donald Pease's words, a 'co-optation and neutralization of the language of his critics'. This then constitutes the careful deconstructive readings practiced at Yale, and we should add Miller's comment here that, '[d]econstruction is nothing more or less than good reading as such' (1987: 10).

It is also at this precise point that Miller's 'good reading' carefully engages with the discourse of his adversaries, etymologically undoes the other's words, in short, 'co-opts and neutralizes' the language

of M. H. Abrams. When Abrams accuses Miller's deconstructive readings of being 'plainly and simply parasitical' on 'the obvious or univocal reading', [5] Miller responds by pursuing the implications of the notion of 'citation' and the word 'parasite'. This is to say, if Abrams accuses Miller of picking 'key words' or key textual passages out of their specific context to let them run wild in an ceaseless etymological 'echolalia', [6] if Abrams thus implies that Miller's etymological readings of any citations – be it words, phrases or passages of text, he may have singled out for close scrutiny – are neither 'obvious nor univocal', but 'plainly and simply parasitical' in that they feed off their host unashamedly, infect their host like a virus would an alien body, Miller responds to Abrams by applying the very etymological vigour (or should we say rigour) that Abrams charges him with. He thus poses the following questions:

> What happens when a critical essay extracts a "passage" and "cites" it? Is this different from a citation, echo, or allusion within a poem? Is a citation an alien parasite within the body of the main text, or is the interpretive text the parasite which surrounds and strangles the citation which is its host? The host feeds the parasite and makes its life possible, but at the same time is killed by it, as criticism is often said to kill literature. Or can host and parasite live happily together, in the domicile of the same text, feeding each other or sharing the food? (1979: 217)

If Miller puts into question here whether a citation is host or a parasite, whether criticism feeds off its literary host, or whether the literary is the parasite within the work of criticism, then he has made his first move in undoing Abrams's claims, for in Abrams universe, there stand rigidly the clearly demarcated entities of the primary and the secondary, of that which is created by a primary hand and that which is derived second-hand. Moreover, since we already know that '[w]hat counts for most in literary criticism' according to Miller, 'is the citations made and what the critics say about those citations', we can see how Miller seizes the opportunity to

make the most of his citation of Abrams. For when Miller cites Abrams, the latter's assertion that a deconstructive reading of a work 'is plainly and simply parasitical', is itself a citation, cited from Wayne Booth. When Miller thus cites Abrams citing Booth, it becomes 'a kind of chain which it will be part of [his] intention here to interrogate' (Miller 1979: 217). This is to say, any 'citation cut off from its context takes on a different meaning, becomes a son without a father, defenseless wandering the world, more likely to be vulnerable to [his] *misreading*' (Miller 1987: 42, emphasis added). [7] And since the citations that Miller is handling here are twice removed already, they begin to take on very different meanings in Miller's hands.

To push this further, since misreading, unreadability or the failure to read - as we have seen - are inevitable, given the undecidability within language, then Abrams's cited words become all the more 'vulnerable' at the very point when Miller begins to unpick the 'undecidable structure contained within the word "parasite"' (Miller 1979: 236). For when Miller begins to retrace the Abrams/Booth citation, he (un)reads the failure of the word "parasite" to signify univocally. As Miller argues his case in 'The Critic as Host':

> "Parasite" is one of those words which calls up its apparent opposite. It has no meaning without its counterpart. There is no parasite without its host. At the same time both word and counterword subdivide. Each reveals itself to be fissured already within itself... (1979: 219).

In the course of this essay and in a complicated [8] retracing of the multiple roots and numerous etymological branches of "para", "per", "sitos", "ghos-ti" and "hostis", Miller, in Christopher Norris's lucid summary, thus

cunningly deconstructs the oppositional semantics of the words "host" and "parasite". He traces a mazy route through the twin etymologies, showing how their meanings cross and redouble until both seem to partake of an ambivalent, almost symbiotic relationship where the "host" (text) is at least as parasitic as the "parasite" (critic). (Norris 1991: 93)

If, on the one hand, as Miller has it, an 'uncanny antithetical relation exists not only between pairs of words in this system, host and parasite, host and guest, but within each word in itself' (221), and if the difference within here, 'inscribed within the word parasite and its associates, host and guest, invites us to recognize that the "obvious and univocal reading" of a [literary text] is not identical to the [literary text] itself', [9] then we can re-iterate once more that a text calls up more than one reading. And by extension, a word such as "parasite" also calls up more than one reading: "parasite" may thus be read as a kind of leech in biological terms, as Abrams *obviously* does, or it may be read as that Greek socialite, that fellow guest who shares the food 'there with you beside the grain' (220), as Miller does; and incidentally as Michel Serres does when he states that '[t]o parasite means to eat next to (1982: 7). [10] One term positive, the other negative, one invited, the other uninvited, "para-site" moves between one and the other meaning in Miller's account, moves between (para) sites.

Thus the Derridian *plus d'une langue* (more than one language/no more of one language) may be invoked here to say *plus d'une lecture* (more than one reading/no more of one reading. Or to use our German play on words once more, *Sprache hat (sich) versprochen* here, language promised to tell the truth, promised to be translucent and readable, and made a slip of the tongue, which contradicted this readability. "Parasite" promised to mean

leech and in an etymological twist of the tongue became also a socialite. "Parasite" promised to be the stanger in the home of the host, when in a further etymological twist, the Latin *host* revealed himself to be a stanger also. To put this differently yet again, we may say that although, on the surface, the word "parasite" was readable, Miller's deeper probings ('letting language go as far as it will take one') '' into the etymology of the word revealed that the word promised more than Abrams was led or wanted to believe. "Parasite" also *versprach sich*, made a *lapsus linguae*, became unreadable, 'if by "readable" one [has meant] a single, definite interpretation'. "Parasite" is therefore readable in Abrams's world and readable as well as unreadable in Miller's: for Miller can read Abrams (Abrams's parasite), but can also unread Abrams (Abrams's parasite). In short, Miller re-reads "parasite" as *plus d'une lecture*.

> Miller's etymological procedures and his ploy of strategically reversing a traditional metaphor, are both powerful tactics borrowed from Derrida. They lead to the upshot of his argument: that critics are no more "parasites" than the texts they interpret, since both *inhabit a host-text of pre-existent language which itself parasitically feeds on their host-like willingness to receive it.* (Norris 1991: 93, emphasis added)

Miller's careful and patient readings of the word "parasite" as this irreducible heterogeneity of at least two contradictory readings within its own structure, is therefore the very spin-off of a *Sprache, die sich verspricht*, of the 'fatality in language' to use Miller's words, or of that 'pre-existent language' which is an only too willing resource 'to receive' the kind of linguistic exploits which Abrams so deplores and Miller makes such good use of.

Moreover, 'such arguments can clearly be put to a great variety of tactical uses' according to Norris. Here against Abrams:

> Miller extends his semantic juggling to the question of whether
> deconstructionist readings are "parasitic" (as M. H. Abrams had
> claimed) on normal main-line historical interpretations. He is able to
> demonstrate, once again, that the norm not only presupposes but in
> some sense *contains* whatever deviations it is required to exclude.
> (Norris 1991: 93)

If the norm is the 'main-line historical reading', the 'obvious and
univocal reading', and if this norm 'contains' its own 'deviation' from
itself, i. e. contains a deconstructive reading, then again, we come back
to our phrase *Sprache verspricht (sich)*; for this phrase also 'contains'
its own 'deviation'. Language promises the truth (verspricht), **and** language
contains within it the very deviation from this claim (verspricht sich).
This is is why Miller can argue in 'The Critic as Host' that 'the "obvious
and univocal reading" always contains the "deconstructive reading" as a
parasite encrypted within itself as part of itself' (224). This is also, of
course, why the 'obvious and univocal reading' contains its deconstructive
lapsus linguae, its unreadability. If one reading therefore contains the
other within itself, is also a trace of the other, it follows for Miller
that '"the deconstructive reading" can by no means free itself from the
metaphysical reading it means to contest' (225). [12] Rather than
illustrating the difference between Abram's (obvious or metaphysical)
readings of literary text and Miller's own (deconstructive) readings,
Miller seeks to highlight the difference *within* texts which gives rise to
the differences *between* readings.

This is also why Miller often speaks of a 'relation of tense co-
existence' between 'the deconstructive reading, and what he sometimes calls
the "metaphysical" reading or, following M. H. Abrams, "the obvious and
univocal reading"' according to Jonathan Culler (1983: 269). This co-

existence between these two readings is further defined by Miller when he writes that, 'logocentrism and nihilism, are related to one another in a way which is not antithesis and which may not be synthesized in any dialectical *Aufhebung*' (1979: 228). 'Each', in other words, 'defines and is hospitable to the other, host to it as parasite' (228). It is precisely because the literary text 'is neither host nor the parasite but the food they both need', that '[b]oth readings are at the same table together' (225), that the Abrams reading can share a table with the Miller (un)reading. Since both readings are host and parasite to each other, and since both readings remain antithetical, remain un-synthesized, we can maintain with Miller that this 'tension between dialectic and undecidability is another way in which this form of criticism remains open, in [a] ceaseless movement...' (250). This is to say, if Abram's is a dialectician who seeks the *Aufhebung* or at least an overcoming of the difference between the literary text and its reading (which is why he holds on to the very notion of 'an obvious and univocal reading' which is meant to be identical with the literary text) and if Miller is the dismantler who seeks to *erheben* the undecidability within any structure (be it language, a word, a text, reading); in a nutshell if both *inter*-act ceaselessly at the same dinner table, but do not eat each other, do not consume each other, do not subsume each other in the totalizing movement of a Hegelian grand synthesis (symbiosis not indigestion), then Miller may indeed claim for his particular brand of deconstruction that it 'attempts to resist the totalizing tendencies of criticism', that '[i]t attempts to resist its own tendencies to come to rest in some sense of mastery over the work' (252); and it has to be added here, be it a 'mastery over' a literary work or critical work, or even the critical work of M. H. Abrams.

What Miller then demonstrates again and again is the 'undecidable structure within' - be it within a word, a text or language as a whole. This linguistic or textual difference within, is what according to Barbara Johnson, 'informs the process of deconstructive criticism' (1989: 5). 'A deconstructive reading is,' for her, therefore 'a reading that analyzes the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself' (5). It is in this sense also that Miller, for instance, reads Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* in his essay 'A "Buchstäbliches" Reading of *The Elective Affinities*'. For here he claims, that the traditional 'religio-aesthetic-metaphysical interpretation of the novel' that Goethe seems to have authorized, also contains 'features of the text [which] lead to an entirely different reading of it' (1979a: 11). This produces according to Jonathan Culler (1983: 269-70) 'an irreducible heterogeneity as these readings, both of which are thematized in the work, articulate "two entirely incompatible notions of our tradition"'. The two traditions Miller is referring to here, are of course, the "old" 'tradition of metaphysics' and the "new" 'tradition of difference' (Miller 1977: 60) '3 and since both sit 'at the same table together', but the latter cannot free itself from the former which it really 'means to contest', it can nevertheless undo it from within, subvert and neutralize it from the inside. This is to say, because 'deconstruction is a form of criticism which is not outside but within' (Miller 1979: 251), that it is already within the text, that we may also say that texts deconstruct themselves.

This 'incoherence within any single literary text' (Miller 1979: 224) which is nothing other than the text's own dismantling of itself, relies, according to Miller, on the critic 'to identify an act of deconstruction

which has always already, in each case differently, been performed by the text on itself' (Miller 1975: 31). The obvious metaphysical reading together with the deconstructive reading which are '*thematized* in the text itself' (31, emphasis added), thus 'wait there in tense co-existence' according to Culler, 'for acts of identification that will bring them out' (1983: 269). The very point that texts 'thematize' their incoherence, their auto-deconstruction, that literature is 'actually "about" this very operation' (Eagleton 1983: 145), and moreover that this involves an act of identification on the part of the critic/reader, needs to be examined more closely. Let us consider the following passage from 'A "Buchstäbliches" Reading of *The Elective Affinities*', where Miller argues that both readings are 'woven into the text, articulated there':

> The text is heterogeneous. The novel's lines of self-interpretation contradict one another. *The meaning of the novel lies in this contradiction*, in the way each of these readings generates its subversive counterpart and is unable to appear alone.

This then according to Miller, makes the novel, makes

> *Wahlverwandtschaften* another demonstration of the self-subverting heterogeneity of each great work of Western literature. This heterogeneity of our great literary texts is one important manifestation of the equivocity of the Western tradition in general. (13, my emphasis)

The point about this passage is, of course, Miller's emphasis on the notion of what counts as great literature. Whilst the New Criticism might have proceeded from the assumption that great literature or a 'good novel is necessarily going to be homogeneous or organic in form' (Miller 1982: 5), Miller takes the premise 'that much in many works of literature seems unaccountable by traditional standards of coherence and unity' (19). Leaving behind such 'theories of unity', '♦ he 'attempts to *identify* and to *acccount* for one *form* of this unaccountability' (19, emphasis added). If on

the one hand then what counts, so to speak, is unacountability, in other words that which "slips, slides and perishes", that which "will not stay in place, will not stay still", that which playfully moves within the text, differing and defering, that difference within, then it seems rather strange that this apparent unaccountability should have a form at all. Furthermore, how are we to identify, or account for, that which "will not stay in place, will not stay still", that which playfully moves within the text, differing and defering? How can difference within or in Johnson's more combative words, those 'warring forces of signification within the text itself' be accounted for, be accountable? Unless, of course, and here we come back to Miller's point that this unaccountability has a form, Miller is still holding on to the notion of an identifiable form or entity, to the presence of an identity. And if Miller is still holding on to the presence of an identity, how then may we justify his claim for and his insistence on difference within? We cannot; for what is an act of identification, if not a univocal reading, a sublation of difference? Moreover, if Miller can identify the difference between identity and difference sufficiently to be able to constitute or even *formu*late an identity, then ipso facto, one has also lent credence to the seemingly paradoxical view that one can also identify difference itself: one has effectively forged an identity relation between identity and difference, a stable opposition in other words that becomes an equation. Difference, to put this differently, is as identical to itself as identity, otherwise the distinction would not hold.

Let us bear with Miller though for the moment if only to unravel another thread of his argument. If through a practice of close reading

(which is quite unlike the New Critics' close reading), Miller sets out to identify an 'act of deconstruction which has always already... been performed by the text on itself' (1975: 31), Miller sets out to identify, in other words, the 'tradition of difference' within texts; and since this very tradition is also the mark of the 'equivocity of the Great Western tradition' of literature, then, rather than seeking to dismantle the notion of a great canon, rather than deconstructing the greatest of monoliths which has haunted literary criticism, Miller has indeed merely rewritten the criteria which apparently define a canon. Rather than adhering to a notion of canon which is based on 'theories of unity', Miller sets different criteria, advocating a canon which has no ground other than the self-deconstructive difference within; a canon of literature which is '"about" this very operation', a canon, a "logomonolith", nevertheless.

Isn't this also where we can come back to Geoffrey Hartman, for if Miller merely sets different criteria for why some literary works are great and others are not, he never averts the charge we levelled at Hartman. He, like Hartman, whilst questioning our metaphysical base, our logocentric basis, fails to make that final move or twist, fails to undermine the capital letter in the word Great: Hartman (re)claims Great Criticism and Miller (re)claims Great Literature. Moreover, since as Miller writes in 'Deconstructing the Deconstructor' that,

> Great works of literature are likely to be ahead of their critics. They are there already. They have anticipated explicit ly any deconstruction the critic can achieve. A critic may hope, with great effort, and with the indispensible help of the writers themselves, to raise himself to the level of linguistic sophistication where Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, George Eliot, Stevens, or even Williams are already. (1975: 31)

The auto-deconstruction referred to here, is nothing other than the autonomy of the literary text. 'Since the text performs on itself the act of deconstruction without any help from the critic' (31), the text itself contains, paradoxically, the totality of its dissemination, it retains property rights even over *its own, proper* dissolution. Is it not also precisely here that Miller has, in fact, returned to the old subordination of criticism vis-à-vis its object, has indeed rendered the object — here the text — the privileged site, the autonomous primary which has determined already that which the critic might possibly achieve.

Let us put this in another way. 'The deconstructive critic' who according to Miller, 'seeks to find by [a] process of retracing, the element in the text... which will unravel it all, or the loose stone which will pull down the whole building' (Miller 1976: 341), merely finds that which has already taken place, finds that literature has already done the job, all by itself. Deconstruction is therefore not the 'subversive power' (341) he claims for it, at least in his hands. For, if deconstruction according to Miller 'annihilates the ground on which the building stands by showing that the text has already annihilated that ground... [that] the structure of the text... its apparent solid ground is no rock but thin air' (341), deconstruction à la Miller annihilates the critic, reveals instead that the critic dissolves into thin air. For, if everything and all is contained within the text, and any deconstruction is already anticipated and achieved by the text itself, then the critic's secondary operations to identify that which is already within, remain secondary, remain derivative. Rather than having pulled away the ground which as we said earlier, fertilizes the very existence of a primary and a secondary term, Miller

pulls away the ground from under the critic. In other words, Miller appears to have removed the ground from under the hierarchised pair of literature and criticism, but this serves merely as a pretext to another operation: as Miller's criticism alerts us, the literary host is inevitably inhabited, in a parasitic manner, by criticism; the removal of the ground from under this pair is less their total symbiosis *than* a means of purging the literary ground, from which both spring, of the last vestiges of the parasite, whose function then becomes merely to observe the great strong trunks of literature adopting the parasitic function by themselves. Miller's brand of criticism, then, while apparently insinuating itself into the very grain of literature, once and for all displays, and even points to, *identifies*, the very process of its increasing redundancy, *for those who can read between the lines already.*

Literature, the literary, in other words, remains the privileged ground, the primary source that contains within it 'any deconstruction the critic can achieve'. Though all is contained/constrained within the text, 'the critic', according to Miller, 'still has his uses' (1975: 31): 'this use may be no more than to identify an act of deconstruction which has always already... been performed by the text on itself' (31). Miller makes good use of his own formulae here, since 'with great effort' he can *obviously* identify and has *univocally* identified this difference within, which makes up Great Literature, then we may say it is only a critic as great as Miller who is capable of such acts of identification. And here we come back to Harold Bloom, for not unlike Bloom, though rather more inadvertently, Miller also seems to make claims for his grandeur, greatness as a critic. Miller may well have said to Hartman then: "I have a

superiority complex *too* vis-à-vis other critics"; or have exclaimed with Harold Bloom: "I too have opened a space for myself amongst the Great". The question which still remains then is this: should we therefore accept that "out of the great comes forth greatness and when greatness has imposed itself long enough, then we learn to call it tradition, whether we like it or not"?

3.5 Brotherhood *of Man*: Disorderly Readings

If Hartman, Bloom and Miller recognize great art when they read it, re-read the canon for its great self-deconstructing works of art, are the connoisseur-readers of this new canon, then they not only perpetuate one of the greatest monoliths in literary studies, but they have stopped short of the more radical implications of French thinking, or more specifically of Derridian deconstruction. [1] This is to say, rather than undermining the foundations on which canons are built and greatness can rest, on which oppositions find solid ground and hierarchies stand high, rather than dismantling the very notion of an opposition, and deconstructing any binary conceptualisation which gives rise to a privileged term, Yale criticism conceives of the opposing relation, be it between a primary and a secondary, between art and criticism, between literary and critical writing, merely in terms of an 'opportunist reversal' (Norris 1988a, 75) or a revision. In other words, Yale reverses the status or revises the status quo which has governed this old hierarchy, instead of disinheriting all states on which privilege or notions of greatness may be founded; [2] which is precisely why all three critics have their own "personal primats". As we have seen, criticism for Hartman is like literature, another primary; criticism for Bloom is poetry; and criticism for Miller is subsumed in the great primary, literature. [3] Be it great criticism or great self-deconstructing literary works, American deconstruction at Yale "thinks big", to put it mildly.

Let us briefly then reconsider Yale deconstruction. A one-time poor bastard-offspring of literature, secondary and second-rate, criticism

may now rate itself amongst the first, create its rank amongst the primats, reclaim for itself a new a priori status. If Hartman puts the critical on a par with literature, thus not so much putting into question the distinction between the critical and the creative, but raising the question of the distinctness, the "distinguished" nature of the critical; criticism ('as demanding as literature') could never be a bastard, but is a brother of, equal to literature. Bloom on the other hand, gives birth to a poet-reader, which is why second-hand art becomes art and which is also why there could never be a bastard in Bloom's family; after all, there are only strong fathers who breed legitmate sons. And what we are left with are two creators locked into an oedipal family feud. In Miller too, there is no poor relation, no illegitimate son claiming his inheritance, no meagre parasite feeding off his kin, because criticism is already subsumed, the parasite is already within literature itself. There are no adulterous relations here, no bastard-offsprings, for all is incestuously kept within the family.

Furthermore, literature is never compromised by its promiscuous relation with other forms of discourse (be it criticism, philosophy, popular literature...), is not the 'promiscuous intermingling' or blurring that Derrida's notion of *écriture* suggests, but literature at Yale has its unadulterated greats, whose pedigree is identified by the critic *distinguée*. Literature, here, is never denigrated to writing, as the 'orphan-bastard', whose activity takes place in the absence of the father, as Derrida has it in *Dissemination.* Neither is the literary work drawn from an 'immense dictionary' (Barthes 1977a: 160), nor is it language which 'speaks', 'acts', 'performs' it anonymously. Hence, the 'classless

democracy of texts' (Krieger 1981: 291) which a Murray Krieger fears, 'the new egalitarianizing of writing' (288) which he deplores, that 'utterly primary' (288) which he sees de-authorized by 'the new vogue in criticism' (289), and this indulgent critical irresponsibility (288) which he blames on Yale (294-5), need not worry him; for the 'elite canon of works' (282) which he sees bastardized by the promiscuous inter-relations between discourses, is still intact at Yale, is still the thorough-bred that it traditionally has been.

If Yale merely reinscribed greatness into canonical literature and criticism, what then we may ask was this brand of deconstruction which they subscribed to so uncannily? We may cite Jonathan Culler at this point: 'to deconstruct an opposition is to undo and displace it, is to situate it differently', is in effect to give it 'a different status and impact' (Culler 1983: 150). Hartman, Bloom and Miller 'situate' criticism, of course, differently, give it a 'different status'. Though, whilst Hartman uses the old opposition between the privileged term (author, writer, literary text...) and its denigrated other (critic, reader, critical commentary...) to lend weight to the underprivileged term, and Bloom suggests that there is little difference between them, Miller protests from within the opposition to assert that criticism is contained within the literary already, none of then undoes, does away with hierarchy. To put this differently then, whilst Hartman uses the old opposition between the primary and the secondary, not really to reverse this opposition, but to reverse merely the status of criticism, to make it an equal, which, according to Norris, 'amount[s] to nothing more than a kind of opportunist reversal, a move to secure for criticism exactly the same value that has

traditionally accued to writing under its "so-called" creative aspect' (1988a: 75), Bloom revises the status of criticism to give it the same status as poetry, and Miller merely raises the status of the literary as that which encompasses the critical. The literary, the creative is still therefore in place, positioned hierarchically.

This subsequent statement by Culler (elaborating Derrida) may be levelled at Hartman, in particular: '[a]ffirmation of equality will not disrupt hierarchy', because '[o]nly if it includes an inversion or reversal does a deconstruction have a chance of dislocating the hierarchical structure' (1983: 166). So, Hartman never really disrupts this hierarchy by dislocating the very structure on which this opposition rests, for he, in effect, creates another hierarchy: the '"secondary" piece of writing turns out to be "primary"' (1980: 201). Let us cite Derrida here to offer a further critique of Hartman. Derrida 'strongly and repeatedly insists',

> on the necessity of the phase of reversal, which people have perhaps too swiftly attempted to discredit... To neglect this phase of reversal is to forget that the structure of the opposition is one of conflict and subordination and thus to pass too swiftly, without gaining any purchase against the former opposition, to a *neutralisation* which *in practice* leaves things in their former state and deprives one of any way of *intervening* effectively. *

Isn't it at this precise juncture that Hartman arrives too quickly at the 'neutralisation' Derrida warns us of, reaches merely a 'precarious' balancing act between the terms of the opposition, thus 'leaves things in their former state', by merely claiming a reversal for the status of criticism rather than a reversal, inversion of the opposition which it co-inhabits with literature? Indeed, by claiming autonomy for criticism, as we saw previously, Hartman's affirmation of equality will be nothing other

than the confirmation of the autonomy of both literature proper and criticism proper. To *invent* a new status for criticism is one kind of *intervention*, but to create a new autonomy still operates very much within rather old conventions. Moreover, we may say that Hartman, Bloom and Miller never really 'gain purchase against the former opposition', never really deconstruct any opposition, because the poetic, the literary is the great yard-stick to which criticism still aspires, and they do not so much blur the distinction between the critical and the literary, but attempt to render the critical within the literary (Miller), render it literary (Hartman and Bloom). Only insofar as the literary is also critical, in Bloom's narrative (though this comes to be subsumed by the grand poetic), do we discern the merest hint of a literature *impure* rather than a literature *propre*. Thus the literary is always privileged, always the hierarchical other to aspire to.

If we thus seem to have reached some kind of conclusion about the tenants of the 'critical house of ill-fame' (Lentricchia 1983: 162) on the Yale campus, we may now ask where is the tenant Paul de Man? Or we should rephrase this point and say, where is de Man, the landlord of this critical house? 'Godfather de Man' (183), the '"canniest" of all' (Norris 1991: 100), 'hard to forget' (Bathi 1989: 244), indeed '[t]here is no way to say adequately what the significance of de Man might be' (Jacobs 1989: 105), let us nevertheless hazard to write about this Great Man. Despite these laurels then, why have we not paid tribute to him before now? Why have we not drawn on his work earlier? Let it suffice to say here, that much of Yale writing is, indeed, indebted to de Man, much of Hartman, Bloom and Miller's work is, infact, based on de Man's work (Lentricchia 1983: 283)

and thus de Man, at least, has implicit ly informed our readings of their writings. This is to say, de Man's readings of the Romantics also influenced Hartman's readings of Wordsworth, de Man's misreading is picked up, although differently by Bloom, and Miller's notion of unreadability is nothing other than de Man's insistence on the impossibility of reading. Although de Man is also concerned with reading then, although he is also concerned with the relation between literature and criticism (philosophy), it is de Man's very specific 'insights' into the epistemology of reading which has warranted our treatment of his work more specifically for this concluding section on the Yale critics. Which is to say, precisely because de Man deals with the ways in which we understand reading and read understanding, that his work is also of particular relevance viv-à-vis, indeed, against the ways in which Iser, Culler and Fish saw reading linked to a process of understanding.

What we have attempted to trace then, are the ways in which the question of reading and criticism, the question of the relation between reading and writing, criticism and literature, has been approached differently by our positive hermeneuts on the one hand, and their negative counterparts, on the other hand. If Iser/Culler/Fish advocate reading as a unified, consistent, ordered activity, Yale advocates (mis)reading as a dispersed, aporetic, disorderly 'buzzing' of activities. If texts for Iser and Culler were stable unified entities (Fish also seeks a stability of kind), texts for Yale are at least in part marked by Barthesian textuality; texts are not valued for their harmonious unity, but appreciated for their difference within. Similarly, the Yale critic does not seek to impose unity on the text, order the text through his readings, but procedes by 'the

careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself' (Johnson 1980: 5), is careful to unravel, to follow 'some thread deep into the labyrinth of the text' (Miller 1978: 162). Textuality is not tamed here, but unleashed. The Yale critic does not therefore seek to contain the 'disorderly buzzing' of texts, does not set out to master the text by accounting for its buzzing, make sense of it, render it totally intelligible, arrive at a full understanding of it. Nor is theory used as a regulating principle, as a framework which makes manageable the 'disorderly buzzing' within, as we shall see. The Yale critic is not, to use Hartman's words here, 'the unitive or reconciling critic... [whose] devotion to "unity" may become a demand for "totality" and turn against art in the name of a more comprehensive... vision' (1978: 10-11), a charge with which we have accused Iser, Culler and Fish. The Yale critic does not seek to understand a specific text in its totality, its wholeness, nor is this understanding the result of a system of intelligibility, to borrow Culler's term here; instead, texts are in parts, so to speak, and our understanding of a text is only ever partial. Indeed, and this is precisely why we wish to turn to Paul de Man at this juncture, our understandings are the misunderstandings, the errors we make (de Man 1983). - Let us turn then to de Man's impossible understanding of reading.

> Once upon a time, we all thought we knew how to read, and then came de Man... (Gozich 1983: xvi)

Even though Wlad Gozich tells us in his introduction to Paul de Man's *Blindness and Insight*, that 'such a statement remains misleading, for it is far from certain that *we*, as literary scholars, knew how to read' (xvii), we may add here also that "it is far from certain that we know how to read

now". And it is in this additional sense, which is obviously quite de Manian, that we may fleetingly glimpse the flickering uncertain shadows of reading following de Man's radical scrutiny of the very idea of *knowing* how to read. Let us be certain though that far from suggesting that we could possibly read from this, from these hiatuses, de Man's shady past; what we are saying is that in Gozich's 'fairy tale motif', we may see some of the de Manian stand on reading, the sense of uncertainty which in his account veils the activity of reading, be it now or be it then, the limited insight we might gain of and from reading, the blindness which prevails, but also quite importantly, we may discern some of de Man's standing through 'the tone of respect, even reverence, with which the name of Paul de Man is mentioned' (Lentricchia 1983: 283), here by Gozich. Thus, from the writings of the 'Godfather' at Yale and father of Yale deconstruction, 'we must', according to Gozich, 'learn to read, and learn to read the question of reading in de Man' (xvi).

What then do we learn from what de Man says about reading, what do we learn from his readings ? To go some way towards answering our first question we may use Elizabeth Freund's succinct account of de Man on reading here:

> From the perspective of a scrupulous linguistic scepticism, the late Paul de Man's closest of close readings demonstrate the view that 'the impossibility of reading should not be taken too lightly' [de Man 1979: 245] because rhetoric puts 'an insurmountable obstacle in the way of any reading or understanding' [131]. (1987: 155)

If reading is impossible then it is because, rather than presupposing that as a reader one's teleological and definite task is to pierce the translucent skin of language, to penetrate into the last wrinkles of hidden meaning, which, once stretched out, begins to unfold itself, comes to the

surface and is revealed in its full glory and plenitude, rather than this presupposition of reading as that which can uncover the eternal flame of the texts's truth, can reveal that ultimate flash of knowledge, can give us the experience of some higher insight, reading for de Man is precisely not possible because language never communicates translucently, nor do texts communicate the full vision of some inner being. What de Man is at pains to illustrate then, is that '[t]he possiblity of reading can never be taken for granted', because '[i]t is an act of understanding that can never be observed, nor in any way prescribed or verified' (1983: 107), and more to the point still, because it is 'an understanding that has to remain immanent because it poses the problem of its intelligibility in its own terms' (107). Understanding, in this sense, is necessarily a 'fragmentary, and error-prone activity which can offer no hermeneutic guarantee that true communication has taken place' (Norris 1988a: xviii). Furthermore, since 'every form of knowledge [...] is somehow contingent on the radically figural character of language' (1988a: 105), since 'all language [is] rhetorical' (de Man 1983: 135), and consequently, is also 'unreliable' (de Man 1979: 19), rhetoricity marks the very limits of intelligibility, to understanding; which is also why 'far from constituting an objective basis for literary study, rhetoric implies the persistent threat of misreading' (de Man 1983: 285).

The practice of close reading in de Man's writings then, pays attention precisely to those instances which resist our understanding, ceases on those spots in the text which resist total insight, which resist the clear, "the beyond any shadow of a doubt" transmission of meaning. In other words, de Man's account of reading hinges on those spots where the

disruption of meaning occurs. A disruption which 'occurs' precisely then, 'when the literal or the figural status of the text's central event (its understanding) has to be and cannot be decided'. [7] As he elaborates this point in *Allegories of Reading*, 'when we have on the one hand, a literal meaning and on the other hand a figural meaning, but when it is impossible to decide by grammatical or other linguistic devices which of the two meanings (that can be entirely incompatible) prevails', then '[r]hetoric radically suspends logic and opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration' (1979: 10). The point here is, of course, that 'it is not a question of a literal meaning on the one hand, and a figural meaning on the other, but a genuine moment of blindness, an "aporia" or figure of doubt, when it is impossible to know which of the two mutually self-destructive meanings should be understood' (Young 1981: 266). This 'aporia', the text's fissure of self-doubt, or these 'blindspots', do not only highlight the text's resistance to meaning, as well as the text's radical indeterminacy, they also constitute a 'vision contained in the text, and the vision's concomitant blindness' (Godzich 1983: xxix).

To put this differently, we may say that rhetorical blindspots will not allow criticism or reading to simply make visible that which is dark and hidden, that the spotting of them, so to speak, the very location of this resistance to meaning which they signify, the excess of signification they spotlight, will not give us some full vision. For, the knowledge of this very aporia is less a lightning, less an insight than a bringing to light of blindness; and by extension, the critic rather than following the spark of illumination, may be said to be wandering a blind alley; and the only "insight" he/she may have had, is that there is darkness, that there

is blindness. For how could we possibly even lay eyes on blindspots when they signify that which is obviously impossible to give substance to, to substantially visualize, to detect clearly.

A criticism then, which seeks to bring light to where the reader may be in the dark or be blinded by indeterminable rays of signification, or to put it more generally, criticism which has traditionally seen its task in terms of bringing illumination, bringing about the complete understanding of a text, as a 'vehicle for transporting truth' (Gozich 1983: xxiii) is severely blinded. This is to say, a criticism which 'aims to achieve "controlled" or "correct" readings is seriously deluded' (Leitch 1983: 185), because it takes for granted that language gives unmediated access to the material world, assumes that the signifier has its unequivocal referent, that signifier and signified are joined in a marital bond for eternity. Since this is not so in de Man's linguistic universe, it would not be untrue to say as Leitch does, that 'misreading is a necessary and inevitable constituent of literary history' (185), that, indeed, 'the history of criticism constitutes itself as a systematic narrative of error' (187). Since, as de Man puts it, '[n]o degree of knowledge can ever stop this madness, for it is the madness of words' (1979a: 68), words, language, rhetoric thus inevitably put 'insurmountable obstacle[s] in the way of any reading or understanding' (de Man 1979: 131), make reading impossible, understanding aberrant and criticism unreliable. Or as de Man had it in *Blindness and Insight*: '[c]riticism then is a metaphor for reading, and this act is itself inexhaustible' (1983: 107).

At this point, we also come to our second question: what do we learn from de Man's readings? Since criticism which is nothing other than 'the actualization in language of the potential language in reading' (de Man 1983: 66), since reading, criticism speaks in language, since 'criticism emerges as the story of a story told in a figurative language about figurative language' (Leitch 1983: 188), and since we already know that figurative language is loaded with rhetoric, then we may also extend de Man's "insights" into literature to criticism. Not only therefore does de Man seek out 'the moments of necessary failure - the rhetorical blindspots, swerves from intent [...] - that ensue when criticism seeks to achieve full understanding of the text' (1988: 162), but, moreover, when there is 'a willed blindness to the omnipresence of figural language, even in the writings that expressly or routinely mark themselves off from "literature" as such' (Norris 1988a: xi), does de Man take as his target the very rhetorical undecidabilities, those unreliable linguistic structures, which also, of course, inhabit and consequently undermine the writings of criticism. If de Man therefore seizes on the blindspots in critical texts then it is to alert us through his close readings to the rhetorical tensions within any texts, be it literary, critical or philosophical. As Norris puts it in his book entitled *Paul de Man*:

> ... this applies equally to the language of philosophy, a discourse that has always (or at least since Plato's quarrel with the poets and rhetoreticians) considered itself exempt from the seductions of merely figural language. If such beliefs still hold sway - if indeed they constitute the very self-image of philosophy and the grounds for its existence as an autonomous discipline - then this can only be because (as de Man would argue) its texts have escaped, or its practitioners actively discouraged, such close rhetorical readings. (1988a: xii)

If critical as well as philosophical texts therefore share what has been traditionally attributed to literary texts only, then de Man's 'most "original" achievement' according to Norris, 'is to have extended the techniques of rhetorical close reading developed by modern literary critics to the texts of other disciplines (like philosophy and criticism itself) where up to now those techniques have not been applied' (1988a: xii). ᵉ

When de Man thus examines the work of other critics in *Blindness and Insight* he comes to the conclusion that 'a paradoxical discrepancy appears between the general statements [critics] make about the nature of literature (statements on which they base their critical methods) and the actual results of their interpretations' (1983: ix). To explain this crucial point in de Man's thinking we might say that a criticism which bases its critical method on notions of unity and coherence, a criticism which in other words, seeks out the unity *in* the text, sees a text as an organic unity (de Man here refers both to the New Criticism and to Hermeneutics), and at the same time acknowledges the ambiguity inherent in literary works (as indeed the New Criticism did when it argued for the ambiguity and irony in poems, or a Hermeneutics does when it postulates unity in multiplicity within texts), is a critical method which not only overlooks that 'this unity... resides not in the poetic text as such, but in the act of interpreting this text' (de Man 1983: 29), but also wishes to suppress the potential disruptive nature of language. This is to say, in assuming that everything that is ambiguous is finally acountable, and that any text should therefore make sense, such a criticism 'overcomes any obstacles in its way', and, moreover, has no wish to 'expos[e] textual problems and resistances that might jeopardize the whole [of its critical]

project' (Norris 1988a: 42); in other words, this kind of criticism does not want to recognize 'those deviant linguistic structures, or elements of rhetorical "undecidability", that work to undermine any form of self-assured hermeneutic understanding' (42).

Such a criticism then, is a particular 'method of reading' which, in de Man's account, will simplify, omit difficulties, will not problematize the question, in Robert Young's words, 'whether meaning should be integral to understanding at all costs', will not allow meaning 'to disintegrate under the negative elements in a text', according to de Man, but will silence those elements 'by suppression', [3] will silence that which resists the integration of those elements into a neat unity, a managable coherent framework. In a nutshell, it will suppress everything that threatens to explode the harmonious cohesion which a text is presumed to be. Such a criticism is not only self-deluded then, but is marked by a 'willed blindness', to re-iterate Norris once more. And it is precisely here that de Man will not only analyse the linguistic resistances within literary texts which other critics have suppressed in their readings, but will also put the very rhetoric of those critics under scrutiny.

De Man will, in other words, 'examine... the structure of an argument that approaches the limits of intelligible discourse by attributing every last concept and category to the workings of language or rhetoric' (Norris 1988a: 43). So, when Stanley Fish, for instance, argues in "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" that the 'author's *language*' (Fish 1980: 47; de Man 1983: 287, his emphasis), to be more specific, that a particular '*sentence*' by Walter Pater 'deliberately frustrates the readers's natural

desire to organize the particulars it offers' (Fish: 36; de Man: 287, his emphasis), and we must remember that the bulk of Fish's essay puts forward the thesis that 'the place where sense is made or not made is the reader's mind rather than the printed page...' (36), de Man singles out and scrutinizes the very words 'sentence' and 'language' to suggest that it is here that Fish's text seems to have 'its share of reservations and ambivalences with regard to its own doctrine' (1983: 287), seemingly ascribing agency – even deliberate and deliberating intention – to 'language' and 'sentences'. In short, de Man will have it, it seems that Fish deploys anthropomorphising tropes at every turn, giving language a set of desires, hopes, aims, and so on. In other words, if Fish is questioning whether the '[artifact's] logical content is able to make sense' (36), if he is challenging the presumed 'direct relationship between the meaning of a sentence (paragaph, novel, poem) and what its words mean' (32), if he is suggesting that a 'sentence doesn't [necessarily] mean what it says' (32) thus urging us to 'think of language as an experience rather than as a repository of extractable meaning' (67), persuading us that meaning lies not in the object, but is performed by the reader, that it is an effect to be experienced by the reader, and moreover that one treat any utterance as a strategy (88), that it only 'makes perfect sense as a strategy, as an action made upon the reader rather than as a container from which a reader extracts meaning' (23), de Man, then revokes Fish's very claims by putting the workings of the Fishian language to the test:

> It is impossible to speak of a text as performing stategically without projecting into it the metaphor of an intentional consciousness or subject. No trace in Fish's text suggests that the possibility of such an unwarranted metaphorization is ever being considered, let alone dominated. Yet it dominates his own discourse throughout, as is apparent, among other things, from his choice of examples. (1983: 287)

In other words, de Man poses the question whether the 'grammatical subjects' of these phrases (the *sentence* frustrates; the author's *language*) are not indeed the 'transitive verbs that perform highly anthropomorphic gestures' (287), since to say that Pater's '*sentence* deliberately frustrates...' or 'that errors are forced upon the reader by the "author's language"... is presumably not quite the same as Pater or the author doing these things themselves' (287). Thus, despite all of Fish's emphasis on the reader's role as performer of meaning, he gives himself away linguistically, in de Man's close reading, for grammatically, a sentence cannot do anything 'deliberately', unless Fish has already accepted that behind the subject 'sentence' stood a higher Subject which governed this subject as a direct object; or unless he was blind to the structures of language he employed. This then must also be Fish's greatest insight by default, for what he does not know linguistically we now know through de Man's examination of 'the workings of language'. It is in this sense that de Man may argue then that: '[c]ritics' moments of greatest blindness with regard to their own critical assumptions are also the moments at which they achieve their greatest insight' (1983: 109). And, it is in this sense also that de Man may claim for his essays in *Blindness and Insight* that:

> Our readings have revealed even more than this: not only does the critic say something that the work does not say, but he even says something that he himself does not mean. (109)

If de Man's critical project then is about the error-prone nature of reading, about pointing out that which 'resists or disrupts the hermeneutic process and repeatedly [to] oppose an understanding which overcomes textual difficulties so tp hear in the text what it is thought to say' (Norris 1988a: xv), then de Man's statement that 'our readings have revealed...

this', in the light of what we have just said, articulates an insight despite the error-prone reading which he postulates throughout his writings. In other words, de Man's 'readings have [*truly*] revealed even more than this...', they have revealed, despite his disclaimers of ever being able to reach an insight, that he is a critic who has 'a grip on the truth' (Lentricchia 1983: 284). Lentricchia thus comes to the conclusion that although de Man

> acknowledges that *Blindness and Insight* has its own pattern of blindness [106] which he, since he is its author, is incompetent (in one of his favorite phrases) 'to put into question', I believe that de Man's candor is only *pro forma* and that his various analyses, and especially the tone of those analyses, are marred at every point by the suggestion that he is in undisputed, authorative, and truthful possession of the texts he reads. (299)

It seems therefore that de Man not only reaches certain insights, but possesses the right insight to distinguish and assess how blind some readings are compared to others. When de Man, for instance, exposes Derrida's deconstructive reading of Rousseau as erroneous, as a misreading, and argues moreover that 'Derrida's blindness merely confirms Rousseau's foreknowledge of the misinterpretation of his work' (1983: 139) and that there was 'no need to deconstruct Rousseau' since it is rather 'the established tradition of Rousseau interpretation [which] stands in dire need of deconstruction' (139), in other words, that Rousseau's text already deconstructed itself, this merely *re*-poses the question as to whether 'Rousseau's foreknowledge of the misinterpretation of his work', the fact that "Rousseau" had auto-deconstructed "his" text already, constitutes, in fact, the same re-instatement of an author's intention, of an author's deliberative and performative agency for which, as we have seen, de Man had earlier critically deconstructed Fish's language.

This is to say, is de Man not 'projecting into [Rousseau's foreknowledge] the metaphor of an intentional consciousness or subject'? And is it not also possible at this juncture to use de Man's words against "himself" here: for despite all his emphasis on the writer's and the reader's blindness, de Man gives himself away linguistically, through his close reading, for grammatically, the genitive between the name 'Rousseau' and the word 'foreknowledge', is an insertion testifying that Rousseau apparently *possesses* a certain foreknowledge, possesses knowledge, is not blind; and unless de Man has already accepted that behind the subject 'foreknowledge' must stand a higher Subject which necessarily governs this subject as a direct object, he either brings back the author '⁹ into a "deconstructive" project, thereby author-izing his 'undisputed, authorative, and truthful' readings as a critic '' who has 'come closer' to the text; or, on a more charitable note, contrary to Lentricchia's point, and in keeping with his arguments, he, de Man is also blind to the structures of language he employs.

Let us put this differently: have we here, in all modesty, just deconstructed the Great (de) Man, or, to adopt his game-rules, are we utterly blind in thinking this, since there was, in fact, no need to deconstruct de Man. When we therefore claimed that de Man was blind to the structures of language in *Blindness and Insight*, this may well turn out to be our blindness, merely confirming de Man's 'foreknowledge of the misinterpretation of his work', thus proving his point precisely – our blindness would indeed be our greatest insight: '[t]he deconstruction is not something we have added to the text but it constituted the text in the first place' (de Man 1979: 17). So, it makes little difference whether it

was de Man who was doing the deconstructing here or the text, because the deconstructive move was always within the writing of the text rather than its reading. Let us attempt to exploit the "play" in de Man's game-rules from a different perspective. For instance, when Hartman and Bloom *versprachen* a new status and impact for criticism, *haben sich* Miller and de Man *versprochen* when they attributed such a similarly primary role to the activity of reading. Let us consider then this statement from *Allegories of Reading*:

> [A] reading is not 'our' reading, since it uses only the linguistic elements provided by the text itself; the distinction between author and reader is one of the false distinctions that [a] reading makes evident. A literary [but also a critical] text simultaneously asserts and denies the authority of its own rhetorical mode, and by reading [a] text as we did, we were only trying to come closer to being as rigorous a reader as the author had to be in order to write the sentence in the first place. (1979: 17)

Should it come as a surprise here that de Man seems to be endorsing the author, making the author a kind of model reader to which we should aspire? Does this not rather jar with the insinuation here that texts deconstruct themselves? Or is he saying, in fact, that authors, quite deliberately, make texts deconstruct themselves? How then, may this be squared with his notion of 'the absolute randomness of language' (1979: 299)? [18]   Also, if difference within is placed there, within the text, by the author, isn't this the very kind of formalism which de Man has otherwise sought to discredit, deconstruct? [19]

So, have we spotted here a *glaring* contradiction in de Man's discourse? Or is de Man far more clever, so that we should really read this passage as an aporia? And if so, is our bringing to light of this glaring contradiction, an illustration of our blindness? For when we

thought we had exposed de Man, and speak of a *glaring* contradiction have we not fallen into the trap of claiming an insight for ourselves - an insight that really turns out to be a blindness to the aporia which inhabits all discourses. This passage, in other words, has deconstructed itself already, auto-deconstructed the very moment the author was brought into the picture. For how in the light of de Man's writings could anybody in their right mind argue that de Man could possibly have resurrected the figure of the author behind the notion of the self-deconstructing text? Thus, this passage must be practicing a difference within itself. And here, we have been forced once more to let de Man off the hook, so to speak, for the notion of an aporia in this passage, the undecidability between the false distinction between reader and author and the approximation of the reader to the author, allows de Man to get away with what would otherwise be regarded as a shockingly traditional stance, particularly since it has emanated from what many see as Yale's most radical deconstructionist. Having said all this, and having been caught within de Man's *jeu* we are determined to have the final word and say: the only insight there ever was, was this: de Man, above all else and all others, knew of this aporia already. And here we may also make our final move and say that de Man is playing the Derridian *jeu* ("play", "give") not 'in the sense of the ludic' (Derrida 1992: 64), but 'in the sense of that which, by the spacing between the pieces of an apparatus, allows for movement and articulation'. Let us use therefore Derrida's words against de Man here and say:

> This play is sometimes what allows the machine to function normally, but sometimes the same word designates an articulation that is too loose, without rigor, the cause of an anomaly or a pathological malfunctioning. (64)

The question whether de Man's discourse is joyfully playful or malfunctioning here, presents us, of course, with a further undecidability. Rather than resolve this undecidability we shall provisionally let it play (perhaps let it play itself out), while we, for our own theoretical and strategic purposes, will play with his writings, use his texts, cite his words ('I am citing, but as always rearranging a little') [14] in order to deploy "his" words for our own theoretical ends. This is to say, since we shall wish to argue for a strategic re-vision of the very term theory, even suggest the destabilisation of theory in the face of its multiplications, we will make use of de Man's theoretical aporia in order to further undermine the solid ground which theoretical thought has inhabited, or the unified perspective which it has always assumed for itself. Thus de Man's aporetic discourse will re-surface when we address these issues surrounding the question of theory in a later chapter.

For the moment though, if we accept de Man's thesis that his theory is based on rhetorical readings, and that this 'theory... in the form of an applied rhetoric... would mark exactly those points of divergence between what a text says – the stubborn materiality of the words on the page – and what the various critics have made it say for theoretical and ideological reasons of their own' (Norris 1988a: 42), and if we further accept that there is a divergence between what de Man's text says and what de Man says about (his) texts, and indeed what we as a critic have just said about de Man's text, then the point we wish to bring out here 'for theoretical and ideological reasons of our own' is this: de Man's rhetorical readings have provided us with a different conceptualization of theory altogether. This

subsequent passage from *The Resistance of Theory* will go some way towards illustrating the point:

> The most elastic theoretical and dialectical model to end all models and they can rightly claim to contain within their own defective selves all other defective models of reading-avoidance... They are theory and not theory at the same time, the universal theory of the impossibility of theory. *To the extent however that they are theory... rhetorical readings, like the other kinds, still avoid and resist the reading they advocate.* (1986: 19, my emphasis) [15]

When Christopher Norris analyses this passage, he reaches a conclusion which, in part, is not unlike our concluding remark about de Man's *jeu*, above:

> This extraordinary passage brings out all the tensions and *paradoxes* that run through de Man's late essays. It presents a number of provocative theses in a language of straightforwardly constative or truth-telling force *which scarcely seems to brook any kind of dissenting response.* Yet in each case *this authoritative stance is undercut* by what the passage goes on to suggest: namely, that there is no vantage point from which *any* kind of theory, *de Man's included*, could possibly claim to control or comprehend the workings of figural language. (1988a: 42, emphasis added)

The point we wish to make via Norris then, is this: although de Man forces us to play by the rules which he sets, although the master leaves us little space for manœuvre in coaxing us to accept his argument about the auto-deconstructive character of language, he has nevertheless also provided us with a conceptualization of theory, which may at any point undo de Man's own theory, undo ours, but moreover, here, theory *s'est déjouée* elle-même. In short, the mastery of theory is put into question.

This is because theory (for de Man and) for the purposes of our thesis, is at best partial, contradictory, disjunct... And it is at this precise juncture that (de Man and) we may 'hold[] out against the premature seductions of coherent sense' (Norris 1988a: 106). [16] This is to say,

'theory is strictly impossible in so far as it aims - as most theories do'

- according to Norris:

> to achieve a sense of having thoroughly mastered the relevant problems
> and issues. To de Man, such illusions are precisely what criticism has
> to give up as it comes to recognize those deviant linguistic
> structures, or elements of rhetorical 'undecidability', that work to
> undermine any form of self-assured hermeneutic understanding. 'Nothing
> can overcome the resistance to theory since theory *is* itself this
> resistance' [de Man 1986, 19]. (Norris 1988a: 42)

From this point of view then, it follows that any criticism which desires
to make sense of texts, or postulates that texts should make sense, any
criticism that, apparently 'overcomes any obstacles in its way', that tries
to reach a full understanding of and with the text, neither appreciates
that 'no degree of knowledge can ever stop... the madness of words', nor
'recognize[s] this inbuilt liability of human understanding' (Norris 1988a:
xvi), which manifests itself in inevitable misunderstandings arising from
'deviant linguistic structures', from 'rhetorical undecidability'.

Therefore, the 'methodological completeness and rigor of... theories',
such as the hermeneutics of Hans-Robert Jauss, [17] which 'cannot entertain
the possibility... that reading may at any time come up against "linguistic
factors" that "interfere with the synthesizing power of its historical
model" [de Man 1986: 56]', that displays a willed 'indifference to certain
kinds of wordplay - puns, ambiguities', that has an 'aversion to
poststructuralist theory and its doctrine of the "arbitrary" sign' (Norris
1988a: 41), is a theory, de Man claims, whose 'ulimate aim of a
hermeneutically successful reading is to do away with reading altogether'
(de Man 1987: 56). This is to say, precisely because a hermeneutics is a
theory which seeks to reconcile all that   is disjunct, seeks to do
away with all that   is undecidable, it promises an all-embracing model

that could master any resistance, any obstacle, and it adopts such 'a self-assured method and grasp where no counterevidence - no difficulties met with in the process of reading - would suffice to deflect or to complicate that aim' (Norris 1988a: 41). Reading, in the light of a theoretical gaze of this kind, would assume that it not only translucently represents but also duplicates that which is there already. And it is against this notion of an unproblematic and all-encompassing theory, such as hermeneutics, [18] that de Man puts his notion of close reading. For, a 'close reading', as Norris points out, is precisely what 'forces the critic to recognize those problematic elements of meaning, structure, and style which hold out against a reading intent upon reducing them to consistency with its own fixed ideas' (39).

Is it not also at this very point that we may return to Iser, Culler and Fish, to those positive hermeneuts whose stories of reading all shared a drive towards comprehension, sense-making and intelligibility (as argued in section 2.4). If Iser's interpretive project worked according to 'strict regulations', and Culler worked towards a regulating force of totality, Fish operated via the regulations of interpretive communities. And we must remember that readers, in their accounts of reading, could not but read consistently and coherently, they could not but render a text intelligible, they could not account for all the "discursive buzzing" in anything other than a manageable framework; in short, they put harmonious unity above all else. Theory, in their hands, as we previously argued, could therefore be seen as an instrument for reduction of everything that could be deemed 'discontinuous, querulous, disordered' (Foucault 1972: 229); theory, in other words, was nothing other than a grand gesture which sought

to encompass a total vision, sought to bring about a full understanding. If we drew attention to the regulating, ordering, systematizing force of their theories, it was to now suggest that theory can hardly be this all-embracing gaze, unless, of course, there is a wilful blindness amongst its praction ers to ignore any obstacles which might get in its sense-making quests and which might prove to expose or 'jeopordize [the] whole project' (Norris 1988a: 42).

Thus in de Man (as in Foucault), theory is not a quest to provide a comprehensive description of reading, articulate a systematic explication of its processes, its aim is not so much to illuminate, bring about the full understanding of what reading *is*, or what a text *is*. If the goal of theory was once meant to establish a transcendental truth-value about its object — here reading, we should, however, revert to theory's initial sense, for *theatai* has less to do with a-historical truths than with judgements upon events. Thus we may evoke Foucault here, whose distrust of theory, whose avoidance of the very word, in a reaction against the totalizing nature of theory with its advocacy of a total vision, and quest for absolute knowledge, has led him to articulate the notion of a 'local criticism'. [19] Theory here is *theatai*, it is local and regional, not global and all-encompassing. As Gilles Deleuze has it, 'a theory is always local and related to a limited field', and consequently, 'a theory does not totalize but is an instrument for multiplication' (Deleuze in conversation with Foucault 1977: 205, 208; we shall return to this point again later). And it is precisely in this sense that de Man's aporia, the undecidability between conflicting perspectives in "one" text, in "one" discourse, in de Man's "own" writing may be understood here. It is also, of course, how we

(that is myself and Michael Moriarty) understood Barthes's 'The Death of the Author' in section 2.4. Furthermore, it is also at this point that de Man's insistence (as well as Miller's) on the necessity of close readings finds its theoretical justification. For, we must remember, that only a 'close reading' may '[force] the critic to recognize those problematic elements of meaning, structure, and style', which undermine a text at any point, and that a '[c]lose reading is to this extent the active antithesis of "theory" in its more doctrinaire or reductive forms' (Norris 1988a: 39).

Having thus drawn out de Man's arguments about the partial nature of understanding, the inevitability of our misreadings, the impossibility of theory, in short, the errors and the blindness which face us when we read, we may conclude our treatment of de Man by suggesting that despite all his non-totalizing moves, he nevertheless gestures towards the transcendent, towards the universal inspite of himself. For when de Man claims for his theoretical model – for his 'rhetorical [close] readings' – the status of a 'universal theory of the impossibility of theory' (1986: 19), and despite this apparent paradox, de Man, very consistently, as Lentricchia observes, 'speaks openly of the "whole of literature" responding to his thesis' (1983: 284). This passage from the introductory essay in *Allegories of Reading* and cited by Lentricchia (284) illustrates the point. De Man writes:

> The whole of literature would respond in similar fashion, although the techniques and the patterns would have to vary considerably, of course, from author to author. But there is absolutely no reason why analyses of the kind here suggested for Proust would not be applicable, with proper modifications of technique, to Milton or Dante, or to Hölderlin. *This will in fact be the task of literary criticism in the coming years.*
> It would seem that we are saying that criticism is the deconstruction of literature, the reduction to the rigors of grammar of rhetorical mystifications. (1979: 17)

As Lentricchia aptly points out, de Man 'presumes to tell us not only what literature has been but also what it must be'. And Lentricchia adds, that 'somewhat chillingly... he tells us not what literary critics ought to be doing but what "in fact" they shall be doing' (284). Thus, 'in the guise of the Derridian poststructuralist, de Man has been speaking that way about literature and criticism for many years' (284). [20] If this earns de Man the title of *Don Paolo, capo di tutti capi*, Godfather from Lentricchia's poisoned pen, then it is because de Man's most authoritative and masterful statements are about the destabilisation of figures of authority, of rhetorical/theoretical mastery. In other words, '[his] style at its most intimidating' (284), champions the notion of close readings to undo closed readings, when, in fact, he is re-writing the 'task of literary criticism' to prescribe his own readings as a model for Reading. If all readings should therefore be like de Man's readings, this not only suggests a closed 'interpretive community', to use Fish's term, of de Manian readers, but represents a definite theoretical closure. De Man's proper 'interpretive community' therefore becomes his very own Brotherhood *of Man*. The question which remains then for our readers is: Do we really want another brotherhood of man?

4. WRITING

Two Interpretations of Interpretation

4. 1 *Qui parle ainsi?*

Thus far, we have compared and contrasted those critics who theorize reading as a coherent activity, which aims to understand the literary work in its plenitude, which seeks to make the artifact intelligible, with those critics who practice close readings, which bring to the fore the 'deviant linguistic structures' of textuality, which highlight those resistances in a text that frustrate the full interpretive grasp of the critic. Whilst reader-response criticism envisaged a central role for the reading subject in literary criticism, Yale made criticism the subject of a literary revisionism. Both redirected our thinking in terms of the secondariness of reading/criticism vis-à-vis its object, the literary text; "the fellowship" raised our awareness of the importance of reading in literary reception, whilst "the brotherhood" went one step further and elevated the status of criticism to literary production.

To put this differently, we have charted a shift from a concern with the coherent identity of the text, the unified and consistent reading, the theoretical stabilization through conventions of reading or communities of readers towards intertextuality, misreadings, the destabilization of theory. We have not only moved from a positive to a negative hermeneutics, but since we have mapped out the moves by which criticism may also be understood as the writing of a reading, indeed, that reading is a writing, and that criticism might even be literature, in short, that the secondary (if not necessarily elevated to a primary) is at least no longer a secondary and second-rate, we have produced the very conditions for a further revision of our thinking. This is to say, reading may no longer be

a second-order product, and criticism may no longer be a second-hand art, indeed reading may no longer be a product, and criticism may no longer be an art, but reading/criticism may be in the process of becoming performances of writing. No longer a product, but a process, no longer passive, but active and participating, the reader/critic has moved into an age, where we no longer ask whether something is true, but how it works, how it performs. This then is the postmodern world where a reading does not so much act out the score of the text, but plays with a script, plays it out in an endless cycle of productions. In short, here the goal 'is no longer truth but performativity' (1986: 46) to use Jean-François Lyotard's slogan, and from here we may stake out our further moves to get beyond the concept of reading, beyond the concept of criticism to writing, to *écriture*. As Barthes put it in his 'Theory of the Text':

> ... all in all, it is the whole of criticism which is outdated. If an author comes to speak of a past text, he can only do so by himself producing a new text (by entering into an undifferentiated proliferation of the intertext). There are no more critics, only writers. We can put it still more precisely: from its very principles, the theory of the text can produce only theoreticians or practitioners (writers), but absolutely no 'specialists' (critics or teachers); as a practice, then, it participates itself in the subversion of the genres which as a theory it studies. (1981: 44)

If 'the real theory of the text is the practice of textual writing', and if this practice of *écriture* blurs the generic borders between the critical and the creative, between criticism and literature, it is here, as a practice then that it participates in the subversion of literature as a superior genre and an old style criticism as its subordinate. In short, it takes an active part in the bastardization of literature, for writing or *écriture* knows no generic boundaries; it has become that superb post-modern hybrid, which calls monism into question and gives birth to plurality. Here

then, we no longer speak of reading/criticism as this illegitimate off-
spring of literature, but speak of and for the labours of love, the
pleasures of textuality. In short, we write (and) read *écriture*. Not only
though, do we, as practitioners, participate in the subversion of the genre
of literature, but we also take pleasure in the subversion of the genre of
criticism which as a theory we have studied. 'How', Barthes asks then, 'can
we take pleasure in a *reported* pleasure [...] How can we read criticism?'
(17) This is to say, how may we read criticism, the old-style critical work
in the face of this new 'practice of textual writing', in the face of
écriture? Barthes writes:

> Only one way: since I am here a second-degree reader, I must shift my
> position: instead of agreeing to be the confidant of this critical
> pleasure — a sure way to miss it — I can make myself its voyeur: I
> observe clandestinely the pleasure of others, I enter perversion; the
> commentary then becomes in my eyes a text, a fiction, a fissured
> envelope. The writer's perversity (his pleasure of writing is *without
> function*), the doubled, the trebled, the infinite perversity of the
> critic and of his reader. (17)

If Barthes advocates that criticism, the critical work may be re-written
here, reworked in, through, with *écriture*, then we may ask who is this
practitioner, this writerly reader who takes such pleasure in textuality ?

> Imagine someone... who abolishes within himself all barriers, all
> classes, all exclusions, not by syncreticism but by a simple discard
> of that old specter: logical contradiction; who mixes every language,
> even those said to be incompatible; who silently accepts every charge
> of illogicality, of incongruity... who endures contradiction without
> shame? (Barthes 1975: 3)

This someone, according to Barthes, exists. 'This anti-hero exists: he is
the reader of the text at the moment he takes pleasure', and '[t]hus the
Biblical myth is reversed, the confusion of tongues is no longer a
punishment, the subject gains access to bliss by the cohabitation of
languages *working side by side*: the text of pleasure is a sanctioned Babel'

(3-4). This then is the Barthesian "reader-scriptor" who *mixes languages*, and whose 'power is to mix writings' (1977a: 146), and who 'ought... to know that the inner "thing" he thinks to "translate" is itself a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely...' (146). And if we have, though quite deliberately, mixed Barthes's writings here, mixed our citations from the "Barthesian dictionary", for, we have to remember, in 'The Death of the Author' (1977a), Barthes is, to all effects and purposes, speaking about the end of the author and the burgeoning of the 'modern scriptor', whose writings, whose 'every text is always written *here and now*' (145), whereas in those passages from of *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975), he is speaking about the reader's *jouissance* in a textuality 'where there is not, behind the text, someone active (the writer) and out front someone passive (the reader)' (1975: 16), then our mixing performed, at least to some degree, the very 'practice of textual writing', as articulated not in 'The Death of the Author' nor in *The Pleasure of the Text*, but in 'The Theory of the Text'.

Have we thus 'enter[ed] into a desperate plagiarism' (1975: 22)? Or, are we explaining the very terms of 'mixed writing' and 'plagiarism'? Are we, in fact, explaining, speaking in the very words of Barthes, through the very words of Barthes, with the very words of Barthes, or merely 'prattling' (5)? Is Barthes's thesis of the text beginning to perform another thesis here, our own? Is it here that, '[w]ith the writer of bliss (and [her] reader) begins the untenable text, the impossible text' (22), begins *écriture*, even *écriture feminine*? 'Why, in a text, all this verbal display?' (23) Is it, in other, more words, that 'you cannot speak "on" such a text, [as *The Pleasure of the Text*], you can only speak "in" it, *in*

its fashion, enter into a desparate plagiarism...' (22)? '[C]riticism is always historical or prospective: the constatory present, the *presentation* of bliss, is forbidden it' (22), has forbidden us, Barthes's words cooly remind us.

Let us therefore delineate, soberly and respectfully, the larger philosophical rethinking, which is part of Barthes's thinking here. Let us, in other words, trace, historically and prospectively, the shift from a positively inclined criticism which sees our engagement with literary texts in terms of interpretation, states that criticism is about the interpretation of texts, to a negatively inclined hermeneutics, or more to the point here, a poststructuralist project, which engages us in writing, in *écriture*. Ernst Behler accuratey summarizes the stakes here: '[t]he present preoccupation with texts, textuality, the textual character of everything is nowhere more directly articulated than in those two trends of contemporary thought... hermeneutics and deconstruction' (1987: 201). We shall therefore turn our attention to the *Schriften* of Hans-Georg Gadamer and to the *écriture* of Jacques Derrida, whose divergent perspectives provide us with a prospective historical lynchpin which will further accentuate our descriptions of the previously discussed "fellowship" and "brotherhood", and radicalize further the differences between these groupings. Thus, with historical precision, we shall pinpoint April 23 and 24 in 1981, for there, at the Goethe Institute in Paris, took place the actual meeting of these two continental thinkers, took place the historic event of their discussion on 'Text und Interpretation'. '

And although Gadamer spoke with Derrida in April 1981, 'deconstruction and hermeneutics [must still be] seen to occupy opposite poles within

continental philosophy'; [2] although deconstruction and hermeneutics 'name
what are often taken to be clashing, even mutually exclusive standpoints'
(Michelfelder & Palmer 1989: 1), their differences after the "Paris Talks"
still remain unresolved; and despite the fact, that 'Gadamer has formulated
his relationship to Derrida in terms of their communalities, whereas
Derrida emphasized their differences' (Behler 1987: 221), we can only
confirm that their differences over the specific question of the text, does
not so much unite and perhaps divide them, as Gadamer has it, but merely
brought them together in Paris in '81.

Even though it may be a little 'narrow', even 'misleading' to claim
that both Gadamer and Derrida's work could be 'conceive[d] of... as a
theory of literature' (Behler 1987: 203), primarily because much of their
thinking is concerned with textuality, we may nevertheless re-claim some
of that work for our own writings on the relation between literature and
its other; we may nevertheless make use of their work to articulate the
shifting relations between literature and its denigrated other, be it
reading, criticism, interpretation or (re)writing. For their different
approaches to textuality may inform, indeed, have informed the differing
formulations of the secondary (the denigrated Other). If for hermeneutics,
the primary, the literary text is a unified entity which stands opposite
its interpreter, for deconstruction such an identitarian relation always
collapses under the notion of *écriture*. If for hermeneutics the gap between
text and interpretation needs to be overcome, if text and interpretation
need to come together so *close*ly that their difference must be annihilated
for only then can the interpreter reach a full understanding of and with
his/her object, for deconstruction the relation was always already marked

by the play of *différance*. If for hermeneutics, in other words, interpretation is a means of entering a text, hearing its inner voice, and becoming One with that voice, for deconstruction there never was an originary voice which might be clearly heard, but the voice has always been a species of writing, speech is already written (and thus already marked by the undecidability of the sign). As Derrida puts it, 'il n'y a pas de hors texte', thus reading and writing here are not separate entities, but reading is writing in the infinite play of supplementarity.

If deconstruction is concerned then, 'with the detailed dismantling of the integrity and unity of philosophical and literary texts, and suspicious of every trace of presence, of fixation of meaning, of points of secure understanding', hermeneutics, on the other hand, 'is committed to interpretation, to understanding texts, to a reading which deepens meaning rather than breaking it up, and aims at a completeness of understanding' (Wood 1990: 118). This is to say, if the text for Derrida, is a tissue of contradictions, a play of *différance*, a plurality within, radically polysemous, it follows that every reading is always a writing, and will necessarily be different; here no truth can be extracted from the text, no univocal meaning can be determined, here the text does not present itself as a self-contained sameness which is merely understood in different ways. In short, plurality lies not within the structure of interpretation (Risser 1989: 99), and polysemy is not something that is dealt with in the intermediary between the text and its interpretation, as is the case of Gadamer, but plurality is the necessary condition of all texts. In short, if Gadamer, 'locates polysemy not in the factual sign (expression) itself, but... midway between word and response', then, to use Behler's words,

'[i]dentity... precedes difference and ambiguity for Gadamer, whereas for Derrida, text and writing themselves are inherently structurally different, i.e., polysemous' (Behler 1987: 208).

We may therefore argue, as Diane Michelfelder and Richard Palmer have, that the very 'signatures "Gadamer" and "Derrida" [...] name two radically different interpretations of interpretation, of writing, even of language itself' (1989: 1). Thus in the "Paris talks" was 'produced one of the great intellectual controversies of our time' (Behler 1987: 203) which radically split the academic community between those who *faithfully* hold onto the idea of a coherent text which communicates the harmonious unity of meaning, and those who are *suspicious* of such certainties and question the full presence of meaning as that which emanates from a unified textual masterpiece. In a nuthell, the notion of text is what ultimately brings Gadamer and Derrida together, but immediately also 'divides' them. It is at this point then that we shall turn to Gadamer's texts, his textualisation in detail, before turning to Derrida's textuality.

4.2 Hans-Georg Gadamer: Interpreting the Imperium

'The classic discipline concerned with the art of understanding texts is hermeneutics' (1975: 146) according to Hans-Georg Gadamer. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur states that '[h]ermeneutics is the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts' (1981: 43). Consequently we may say, that hermeneutics is about understanding texts; it seeks to account for our understanding of a text, it seeks to explain the process of understanding between a text there/then and an interpreter here/now. If the process of understanding is central to hermeneutics, so is the act of interpretation. Moreover, since 'interpretation is not an additional act subsequent to understanding' (Gadamer 1975: 274), in Gadamer's account, 'but rather understanding is always an interpretation' which makes interpretation, of course, 'the explicit form of understanding' (274), then he may well conclude, as he does in *Truth and Method*, that 'understanding and interpretation are ultimately the same thing' (350). Therefore, if understanding a text, means to interpret it, and if to interpret a text means to understand it, what does this mean for the reading subject, what does this mean for the reader reading a text?

Our understanding of a text is by no means guided by the author, in Gadamer's words, 'a text [is] no longer dependent on an author and his/her intention' (1989: 96), ' for the 'meaning of a text goes beyond its author' (1975: 264). Neither is understanding located in the text, nor for that matter in the reader. Instead, understanding occurs in the interaction between the text and its reader; [2] understanding occurs in the dialogue between text and reader. The text, in this sense, 'is not simply a given

object, but a phase in the execution of the communicative event' (1989: 35), in other words, the text is a kind of 'intermediate product (*Zwischenprodukt*), a phase in the event of understanding' (31). Thus the text is a 'thou' with which the reader communicates (1979: 127), and the reader can therefore be said to participate in a communicative event in which the text speaks; the reader, in other words, has entered into a conversation with the text. This then constitutes the dialogic principle which underlies the hermeneutic project.

This also takes us to the very point at which Gadamer can argue that 'the hermeneutic phenomenon also contains within itself the original meaning of a conversation and the structure of question and answer' (1975: 333). As Gadamer explains elsewhere: '... reading and understanding mean that what is announced [the original announcement] is led back to its original authenticity' (1989: 35). Whilst this does not mean that we refer back to the author's intention, it does mean, however, that we open up a conversation with the then/there, that we return to the initial speech event, to the dialogue then/there, if only insofar as to mediate with the there and then from our here and now. It is in this sense that we return not to the origin of that speech event, but to the original authenticity, or presence that any speech event can transmit; we return to the spirit, so to speak, that speaking embodies in a here and now. To put this differently, since 'all writing is... a kind of alienated speech' according to Gadamer, 'its signs need to be transformed back into speech and meaning... this transformation back is the real hermeneutical task' (Gadamer 1975: 354-6).

Gadamer's fear then — like Plato's — of 'the weakness of writing' (1975: 354), writing as divorced from the originary presence of the voice, as divorced from the context of its original utterance, leads him along a well-trodden *phonocentric* path (to use Derrida's term here), for in order to overcome this self-alienation, interpretation must act and bring that which was fixed in writing back to speech, back into a dialogic situation, back once more to a conversation with the present, back to a communicative event with the reader here and now. Speaking, conversation, dialogue is therefore presumed to give unmediated access to an unequivocal truth content. And it is in this sense that Gadamer can state that '[e]ven the simple act of reading in which one reads something to oneself is dialogical, in that in it one must bring the sound and the meaning as much as possible into harmony' (1989: 47). To understand therefore is a kind of 'reading out loud', for '[o]nly then can writing return to speaking', precisely because we know that '[o]ne cannot read what is written without understanding it — that is, without expressing it and thereby making an intonation and modulation that anticipates the sense of the whole' (Gadamer 1989: 118). [3] Intonation and modulation, we might say 'give away what someone has really wanted to say', and it is hermeneutics, of course, which reveals itself here as '*the* art of grasping what someone has really wanted to say' (118, my emphasis).

If with the 'concept of *écriture*', and Gadamer has it that this 'seems perfectly reasonable', 'one is thrown back to this broader sense of what a word is', and more to the point, that since 'words are what they are only as spoken discourse', then it would be true to say, at least for Gadamer, that '[w]riting in all its spirituality, is only there when it is read'

(Gadamer 1989: 124), and we must add when it is 'read out loud' in the here and now of a conversation. In short, writing must be the living dialogue that we, as readers, have with the text. Words come alive, indeed language is alive, and meaning comes alive with language. For Gadamer then, language is a living thing through which we communicate, through which we enter into a dialogue with the other, through which we understand and reach an understanding of and with the other, be it another person, a text, a different time period. Language, to put this differently, is the very medium through which we express ourselves, the translucent tool which we use to communicate with, with the other, with each other.

Since '[f]for Gadamer, language is a living language - the medium of dialogue' (1989: 1) as Michelfelder and Palmer point out, it follows that each partner in this dialogue needs to be open to the other, so to keep this conversation alive, so that this conversation may be a success. As Michelfelder and Palmer put it:

> When in *Truth and Method* Gadamer holds up the Platonic dialogue as the model for philosophical conversation, he makes it clear that the success of dialogue depends on the continuing willingness of its participants [...] "to give in" to language, to be carried along by the conversation for the purpose of letting meaning emerge in an "event" of mutual understanding. (1989: 1) ◄

The willingness to understand here, is also a willingness to come to a mutual understanding, in short to reach agreement. Since '[u]nderstanding begins when something addresses us' (Gadamer 1975: 266), and since this has as its 'goal' that agreement is reached, for as a Gadamer puts it, 'the goal of all communication and understanding is agreement concerning the object' (1975: 260), then we can argue that in this 'to and fro of dialogue' (1975: 348), through which the reader engages with the text, a

mutual understanding of and with the text is reached, in short, the meaning of the text is mediated and finally established here. In other words, '[i]nterpretation, like conversation, is a closed circle within the dialectic of question and answer' (1975: 351), and it is this very dialectic which brings about the successful mediation, synthesis between the two separate horizons of text and interpreter, between the question that the text poses and the answer that the interpreter puts forward. And more to the point, once the text and the interpreter have found a 'common language', they begin to communicate sucessfully, and then they may settle on, agree on the 'correct understanding' (1975: 259), the 'real meaning of the text' (1975: 263). As Gadamer sums up the point in *Truth and Method*:

> ... it is quite correct to speak of a hermeneutical conversation. But from this it follows that a hermeneutical conversation like a real conversation, finds a common language, and that this finding a common language... coincides with the very act of understanding and reaching agreement. Even between the partners of this 'conversation' a communication takes place as between two people... (1975: 349-350)

A true conversation does not simply mean that we 'get to know the other', merely 'discover his standpoint of his horizon', but means instead, that we seek genuine 'agreement concerning the object' (Gadamer 1975: 270). Only then can both partners come to a mutual understanding, only then may we speak of genuine understanding, only then 'takes place a real fusing of horizons' (273). Since 'understanding [therefore], is always the fusion of these horizons' (273), according to Gadamer, it follows that neither horizon, neither that of the interpreter nor that of the text do survive in tact, nor would it be the case that either one or the other partner contributed more dominantly to this conversation which then produced this mutual understanding (so Gadamer claims). ⁸ As Georgina Warnke summarizes these points:

> In describing understanding as a form of dialogue, then, Gadamer is not suggesting that the successful outcome of the process of understanding favors either the initial claims of the interpreter or those of the object. Rather just as the conclusion of a genuine conversation is not the sole property of either one of the dialogue-partners, the outcome of *Verstehen* [...] just as in conversation... is a unity or agreement that goes beyond the original positions of the various participants; indeed the consensus that emerges in understanding represents a new view... (1987: 104)

In other words, the point here is that both partners need to be united with one another, need to be able to 'agree with each other on the subject' (Gadamer 1975: 347), need to be at one with each other concerning the subject-matter. And it is precisely because 'the understanding they share is not the original property of one or the other' (1987: 101) according to Warnke, but this 'shared understanding of a subject-matter... [which then] represents a new understanding of the subject-matter at issue' (101). It is here then that the 'common language' is fully achieved in true Gadamerian spirit. [6]

This then is the movement of a fully fledged dialectics. For here, thesis and antithesis are always *aufgehoben* in the final fusion, in the final synthesis. In Warnke's words, '[l]ike Hegel, Gadamer conceives of the reciprocal integration of initially opposed opinions as a process of sublation (*Aufhebung*) or cancellation' (1987: 170). Thus, '[a]t the conclusion of a conversation, the initial positions of all participants can be seen to be inadequate positions on their own and are integrated within a richer, more comprehensive view' (Warnke 1987: 170). This 'richer, more comprehensive view' of the successful mediation between the one and the other, here, between text and interpreter, is nothing other than the happy vision of the resolution of their differences, of all differences. Indeed, as Hegel put it long before Gadamer:

> The speculative stage, or stage of Positive Reason, apprehends the
> unity of terms... in their opposition - the affirmative, which is
> involved in their disintegration and in their transition. (1830 §83:
> 119)

To put this differently then, we may say, that *difference between* is
overcome here, is sublated and cancelled. Moreover, difference was never
within, there never even was any question of a *difference within*, for
'difference exists within identity' (1989: 125) according to Gadamer. In
other words, if there is any *difference within* at all, then it remains
firmly enclosed and its borders stringently policed by the overarching
identity within which this limited differential movement must always be
contained and curtailed. Thus when Gadamer adds in his next sentence that
'[o]therwise, identity would not be identity' (125), then we have really
come to the crux of Gadamerian thinking: a thinking which will brook no
difference, and which will posit unity, coherence, consistency, identity at
all costs. And even though he claims vis-à-vis Derrida that '[t]his
standpoint ["which is the theme of my confrontation with Derrida"] has
nothing to do with the establishment of the correct meaning of words'
(125), indeed, 'as if meanings were firm or possessed a firmness that could
be grasped' (125), we may simply remind ourselves here of his earlier claim
that 'hermeneutics is *the* art of grasping what someone has really wanted to
say' (118), and also quote the overall claim, we puts forward in this
concluding passage, that this after all was 'the unavoidability of the
hermeneutic standpoint' (125). The question which therefore remains, is how
might Gadamer cope with the *difference between* various interpretations of
the "same" text?

When Gadamer therefore states, here specifically with regard to the temporal distance between a text then and an interpreter now, that

> ... the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process. Not only are fresh sources of error constantly excluded, so that the true meaning has filtered out of it all kinds of things that obscure it, but there emerge continually new sources of understanding which reveal unsuspected elements of meaning... (1975: 265-266)

we might be slightly puzzled here by these apparent contradictory claims. For, on the one hand, if there is any notion whatsoever of a 'true meaning', even though it may never be 'finished', on the other hand, there is the yearning for this 'true meaning' which merely seems temporarily obscured. Similarly, if Gadamer indicates here that the process of understanding is infinite, for we know that 'there emerge continually new sources of meaning', how may we square this against his very positing of the concept of a 'true meaning'. For if we excuse Gadamer on the grounds that true meaning is only true as far as it relates to the very moment of its emergence in the here and now of interpretation, then we are nevertheless still left with the problem that there must be different interpretations of the "same" text; and consequently these different interpretation will also have to be mediated, cancelled out, or must be *aufgehoben*, after all Gadamer will brook no difference; and thus while 'never finished', the interpretive process will nevertheless be arrested at least in the here and now by the temporary close of the dialectical synthesis. Therefore, if we take this dialectical urge even further, in true Gadamerian consistency, then we must also dialectically fuse this local fusion with a higher fusion, must integrate this position with any other position that may be different from it, that may have come up with a different 'true meaning', that may have reached a different agreement of

and with the text; in other words, we must integrate it 'within a richer more comprehensive view' (1989: 170) as Warnke put it. This is to say, the apparent plurality within the structure of interpretation must reach some agreement in the end; for as we know, 'the goal of all communication and understanding is agreement concerning the object' (1975: 260).

What may we ask would happen then if agreement could not be reached? And with this point we have touched upon the Derridian critique of Gadamer. For agreement, mutual understanding, the success of communication, the 'common language' we reach, are all notions so deeply engrained in the hermeneutical project that we begin to suspect that Gadamer's dialectic of question and answer with which he describes the interpretive event, must have an overall answer in place already, before the question was even posed. To put this differently, we might say that a hermeneutics presupposes that whilst there are two separate horizons between text and interpreter, they already share, indeed, are part of a larger horizon which forms a kind of stable backdrop, which has already to a large extent structured our responses – here to the text – in a certain way. And this has to be the 'horizon of expectation' through which we have already come to expect, through which we know that communication must be possible, that texts must be able to communicate, that, indeed, they must be readable.

What we may ask, at this juncture, happens in or even to this Gadamerian world if language failed to communicate, if language showed itself opaque, unintelligible, unreadable, despite the 'continuing willingness' of its users, despite all the good will of its 'participants' to reach understanding, to obtain mutual understanding? In other words,

what happens when 'deviant linguistic structures', to use our earlier de Manian phrase, resist the emergence of an identifiable, unambiguous meaning, frustrate the interpretive grasp of the reader, hinder his/her, our understanding of a text? How does the Gadamerian urge for a 'common language' cope here?

The interpreter's task is, of course, according to Gadamer, to 'help[] the reader to an understanding of the text' (1989: 41), and consequently, Gadamer can tell us, that 'whatever is alienating in the text, whatever makes the text unintelligible, is to be overcome and thereby cancelled out by the interpreter' (41). Thus,

> the interpreter steps in and speaks only when the text (the discourse) is not able to do what it is supposed to do, namely to be heard and understood on its own. The interpreter has no other function than to dissappear completely into the achievement of full harmony in understanding (*Verständigung*). The discourse of the interpreter is therefore not itself a text; rather it *serves* a text. (41) [7]

The interpreter's entrance into the dialogic event between text and reader, is a kind of 'entering into the communication in such a way that the tension betwen the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader is dissolved' (41). This then is, of course, once more the famous 'fusion of horizons' which comes into operation here. As Gadamer explains: '[t]he separated horizons, like the different standpoints, merge with each other', which is to say, 'the process of understanding a text tends to absorb the reader into that *which* the text says, and in this fusion, the text itself dissappears also' (41, translation modified [German 1984: 46]). Thus, we may confirm that agreement, at least for the moment, remains salvaged, preserved and protected here.

Gadamer is, of course, describing the reader's engagement with the literary text here, [*] which compels the stepping in of an interpreter. This is because the literary text 'is not simply open to interpretation, but in *need* of interpretation' (Risser 1991: 100). And it is in this sense that Gadamer, in Risser's assessment, objects to the 'privileging [of any] form[] of distorted communication as the normal case in textual interpretation' (100), and furthermore also rejects a 'hermeneutics of suspicion as the paradigmatic case of textual interpretation' (100). For, when '[d]istorted communication manifests itself both as a disruption of possible agreement in understanding and possible consensus', then according to Gadamer, this merely 'motivates us to search for the true meaning behind the distortions' (1989: 39). [*] Since interpretation therefore always and only occurs when 'the meaning content of the printed word is disputable and it is a matter of attaining the correct understanding of what is being announced' (Gadamer 1989: 35), it follows that 'as a written expression the text did not fulfill its task of being understood without any difficulties' (32). It was unreadable, it was marked by 'unreadablity' (32) to use Gadamer's term here. But precisely because Gadamer postulates that a 'text must be readable' (31), which is another way of saying that language must be readable, another way of stating that language is the very 'precondition' upon which comprehension is based (31), that we are beginning to see just how important a transparent understanding is for the Gadamerian hermeneutic project. This is to say, readability is so intimately linked with comprehensibility and intelligibility, that the entirety of the hermeneutic project becomes subsumed by our will and ability to understand. As Gadamer puts it: '[f]or the hermeneutic approach [...] comprehension of what is said, is the sole concern' (31). [*]

If 'the printed text must be decipherable, so that the comprehension of what is... written, is at least possible' (Gadamer 1989: 31), then according to Gadamer,

> We find confirmation here that we always already look ahead to an understanding of that which is said in the text. It is only from this point that we grant and qualify a text as readable. (32)

We may therefore say, that it is here that the reader or interpreter is guided by the anticipation of the text's readability, is guided in advance by the anticipation that the text does, indeed, must make sense, must be meaningful. (Is guided by a grand 'horizon of expectation', as we also indicated earlier.) This then is the projection of intelligibility which Gadamer characterizes in *Truth and Method* as the 'fore-conception of completion' or as the 'anticipation of completion' ['*Vorgriff der Vollkommenheit*' (1965: 278)]: as that which is 'fundamental for all understanding' (1975: 261), as that which is 'obviously [really that obvious, we intersperse] a formal condition of all understanding' (261); this *Vorgriff der Vollkommenheit* 'states that only what really constitutes a unity of meaning is intelligible' (261). Consequently, 'when we read a text we always follow this complete presupposition of completion, and only when it proves inadequate, ie the text is not intelligible, do we start to doubt the transmitted text and seek to discover in what way it can be remedied' (261), cancelled out, sublated, gotten rid off, in short repressed, we should add here.

The point which emerges here is this. Not only does this anticipation of a unified meaning, of unity in meaning (rather than the dispersal of endless significations) ensure that a text is readable, unproblematically readable and hence decipherable (there is no unreadability which might

produce misreadings and thus disturb this harmonious Gadamerian universe),[11]

but it also safeguards the reader from his/her own prejudices. This is to say, '[a] text would say whatever the reader wanted it to say' (1989: 182) according to Risser, unless we presuppose this coherent, harmonious identity for the text. This 'demand for sense' (1975: 123), to use Culler's terms at this point, which is also, of course, 'the fundamental demand of the system' (123), that is to say, a system which 'is seeking unity' (Culler 1975: 174), which, indeed, seeks 'to account for everything' (171) in the literary text, and which thereby reflects 'our drive towards totality' (171), is therefore nothing other than what de Man saw as the ploys of a unitarian criticism which does not 'hold[] out against the premature seductions of coherent sense' (1988a: 106) as Norris so aptly put it. If, according to Risser then, the Gadamerian text 'has an interpretive free space precisely because what the interpreter follows is its meaningful sense and not the text itself (as literal)' (1989: 182) then we must add here that this communicative free space between reader and text turns out to be, rather than a truly free space, a predetermined and controlled environment which brings about, not merely the 'meaningful concretization' (183) which Risser speaks of, but the concrete actualization of a 'demand for sense', a will and 'drive towards totality'.

When Gadamer therefore states in *Truth and Method* that the 'process of construing is itself governed by an expectation of meaning' (1975: 259), and since we know that this expectation "expects" 'the unity of meaning' (259),[12] then 'the hermeneutic rule' which has it 'that *we must understand the whole* in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole' (258, emphasis added), is only fulfilled when we can account for all the

details, when we can 'account for everything' in true Cullerian fashion. Thus Gadamer puts forward the thesis that '[t]he harmony of all the details with the whole is the criterion for correct understanding', and furthermore, that '[t]he failure to achieve this harmony means that understanding has failed' (259). Gadamer's 'unitary understanding' (1989: 244) [13] is nothing other than a demand to render that which might be unintelligible intelligible, to render that which might be incoherent coherent, to gather that into unity which may have been dispersed, to 'reduce', in short, the 'polysemantic possibilities' (Iser 1978: 220) of the text, to tame the 'disorderly buzzing of discourse' (Foucault 1972: 229). Thus, to presume, as Risser points out, that 'in order to understand at all, a reader presupposes that the subject matter of a text has a perfected unity of meaning' (Risser 1989: 182), is not only to stipulate that 'this perfected unity of meaning thus enables the text to stand as a self-presenting and authoritative whole' (182), but is, moreover, a means of control: '[t]he anticipation of meaning is more regulative than constitutive of text and reading' (182). In other words, since '[a] text must be followed according to its meaningful sense [*Sinngemäß*] and this is what the communicative situation is directed towards' (182) in Risser's description, we may well say, using the words of Foucault, that the communicative situation here works according to 'strict regulations' and that it works within 'a closed community' (1972: 225); it works, in other words within a closed hermeneutic community which sets up its very own horizons of interpretive expectations. Unity, agreement, consensus keep us going (but also keep us in check).

It follows therefore that the unity of the text, rather than being an inherent quality of the text - as a hermeneutics would suggest - is something that is being imposed, if necessary and then at all costs. We are reminded then of Wolfgang Iser, who candidly put it that '[i]f we cannot find (or impose) consistency, sooner or later we will put the text down' (1978: 220). We are also reminded of de Man's assessment of the New Criticism, which, whilst stipulating the harmonious unity of the work of art, nevertheless, and as de Man put it 'inspite of itself [...] becomes a criticism of ambiguity', thus revealing that this 'unity... resides not in the poetic text as such, but in the act of interpreting this text' (de Man 1983: 28-29). Furthermore, if we therefore follow this 'process' (which imposes consistency and) which 'is virtually hermeneutic', according to Iser, it is because we need to 'reduce the polysemantic possibilities to a single interpretation... thus extracting an individual, configurative meaning' (220) in order to prove, so it seems, that the very theory we, (let us rid ourselves of the consensual "we" that Iser imposed on us here), that they, as good hermeneuts, have postulated actually also works in practice. This is to say, they, Gadamer and Iser (and the New Critics in de Man's account) seem to be ignoring any obstacles which might get in their sense-making quests, in order to 'protect[]', to use Norris's words once more, '[their] own methodological assumptions by not exposing them to textual problems and resistances that might jeopardize [the] whole project' (1988a: 42) of their theory. To put this differently again, this theory 'cannot entertain the possibility... that reading may at any time come up against "linguistic factors" that "interfere with its synthesizing power' (1986: 56) as de Man pointed out in *The Resistance to Theory*. It cannot, in other words, tolerate any '"distortion of communication"

[*Kommunikationsverzerrung*]' Gadamer 1989: 31). In a nutshell, a hermeneutics cannot have difference interfere, for it only entertains unity.

Unity is therefore the grand expectation which structures all "our" anticipations, fore-conceptions, it is the very aim "we" all seek to fulfill, "we" all share this goal, and thus it is "our" common goal. And we might just say that "our" hermeneutic legacy is "our" tradition of unity. Therefore, '[t]he anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the communality that binds us to the tradition' (Gadamer 1975: 261), that binds us moreover to this tradition of unity (as against Hillis Miller's new 'tradition of difference, for instance). It is also in this sense that we may say that 'tradition as a whole remains the largest (and ever expanding) context to seek the greatest possible understanding of any text' (Shusterman 1989: 218). This then is also why Gadamer posits tradition as the great arbitrator. For when Gadamer argues that '[i]n cases of conflict the larger context should decide the issue' (1989: 50), we already know that the largest context is, of course, tradition. To put this differently then, we might say that the hermeneut, quite hermetically, lives in 'an all-embracing, common, unified tradition whose *Lebenszusammenhang* prestructures and ultimately guarantees our shared mutual understanding and the fusion of our different contexts or horizons' (Shusterman 1989: 218). Though Shusterman also presses upon us that '[w]e should remember that unity may admit of degrees and certainly does not require total uniformity, and that the coherence necessary to speak of a common, unifying tradition can be a coherence that embraces conflict and debate, even about the nature of

tradition itself' (1989: 219), we are inclined to be a little more suspicious
here. For when Gadamer has it that what ensures the fusion of different
horizons, is

> ... the one great horizon that [...] embraces the historical depths of our
> self-consciousness. It is, in fact, a single horizon that embraces
> everything contained in historical consciousness. (1975: 271)

At this very point we begin to see that the two "different" horizons were
already joined, as Gadamer, indeed, put it, 'in the depth of tradition' (273).

If finally then, we have found that 'understanding' for Gadamer, 'is not to
be thought of so much as an action of one's subjectivity, but as the placing of
oneself within a process of tradition, in which past and present are constantly
fused' (1975: 258), then we are compelled, determined to understand, hence
interpret, hence read through the constant mediation with tradition. And more to
the point still, since we also know that 'tradition has a justification that is
outside the arguments of reason and in large measure determines our
institutions and our attitudes' (Gadamer 1975: 249), Gadamer not merely
confronts us, but overpowers us here with the sheer weight of the authority
that tradition implicitly and unquestionably holds, at least for him. When he
reminds us furthermore, that 'we stand always in tradition' (250), and that
tradition moreover 'needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated' (250), we,
certainly I, begin to recoil and shudder, for everything without fail here, is
always, and forever after, 'shaped by existing relations of power' (Schott 1991:
204) that remain utterly unacknowledged, whilst forever cloaked in the polite,
affirming, harmonious conversation that we apparently all are. 'We who are a
conversation' (Gadamer 1989: 110), perhaps do not wish to converse with a
Gadamerian tradition, the canons it preserves, the old powers of an "imperium"
it perpetuates, we perhaps do not want to reach a 'common language' with
certain others, we do not even agree to differ here, [14] but differ from this
universal, 'hermeneutic standpoint which is the standpoint of every reader'
(Gadamer 1989: 31).

4.3 Jacques Derrida: (The) Double (Writing of) Reading

For Gadamer interpretation means to reach an understanding of and with the text. Derrida, however, doubts this unmitigated faith in true understanding, is suspicious of the 'hermeneutic project which postulates a true sense of the text' (Derrida 1979a: 107), questions 'the idea that a truth can be wrestled from a reading' (Cook 1991: 113), puts into question this interpretive project which 'seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign' (Derrida 1978: 292), in short, rejects the 'interpretation proper' (Derrida 1990: 73) which a hermeneutics proposes. Thus the 'exchange' between Gadamer and Derrida, writes Fred R. Dallmayr, 'revolves around a conflict of interpretations or conceptions of interpretation, conjuring up a powerful array of dichotomies or oppositions: understanding versus non-understanding, immanence versus otherness, continuity versus rupture, truth versus non-truth... intentional activity versus non-intentional playfulness, ethics versus art, practical hermeneutics versus aesthetics' (1989: 83-4).

The conflict of deconstruction "versus" hermeneutics then, is the conflict between 'two interpretations of interpretation' (Derrida 1978: 293). But, this conflict is not merely oppositional as Dallmayr suggests, is not merely a conflict between two positions which might easily be overcome, two conflicting positions which might yet reach a mutual understanding during a friendly hermeneutic conversation, to adopt a Gadamerian perspective, but 'stand in a relation of alterity to each other, of non-oppositional difference' (Michelfelder & Palmer 1989: 9) to take a

Derridian viewpoint. In other words, we can neither 'reconcile them' (Derrida 1978: 293), nor choose between them (293), for if we were, we would have fulfilled the hermeneutic task (rather than played the deconstructive game), we would have closed the hermeneutic circle, we would have reached the common language, reached agreement, merged in *Gleichnis*, *sind gleich gemacht worden*, have submerged and submitted ourselves to the universal condition of a hermeneutics: identity, unity and equality before (and after) difference (we shall explore this point in detail in section 4.4.). Instead then, we 'must acknowledge and accentuate their difference and define their irreducibility' (Derrida 1978: 293); and here we turn to Derrida, and here also (as throughout this thesis) we align our sympathies (once more) with a deconstructive project.

Derrida, through his close readings of the major philosophical texts of the history of metaphysics, exposes logocentricism as a frame of thinking which, since Plato, not only has based itself on 'some external point of reference, such as the notion of truth' (Jefferson 1982: 104), but has also 'acted on the presupposition that language is subservient to some idea, intention or referent that lies outside it' (104). In other words, Derrida's project has been to expose the illusion 'that ideas, and indeed content of any kind, exist independently of the medium in which they are formulated' (104), his aim has been to undo the privilege which content has held over form, which thought has held over and above its means of expression. This secondarisation of language as a mere medium, as a transparent vehicle giving access to the speaker's pure thought, getting across the speaker's true intention, is also, of course, part of the inferiorisation which writing has suffered at the hands of those that

advocate speech. This is to say, long before Gadamer, Plato gave credence to the self-presence of speech which alone is (apparently) able to give direct and unmediated access to the sheer essence of the content or meaning of what is being said, expressed by an intention in the here and now of the speech-act; as opposed to writing (being a mere copy of speech), which as we already know from Gadamer, through its distance from its addressee, displays a 'weakness', takes certain risks, for 'no one could come to the aid of the written word, if it falls victim to misunderstanding, intentional or unintentional' (Gadamer 1975: 354).

Derrida counters such phonocentricism, counters this repression of writing which Gadamer implicitely suggests here, by coining the term *archi-écriture*, which not only describes language in general as a kind of writing, but which also thereby reverses the hierarchy between the couplet speech/writing, makes it impossible, to differentiate between speech and writing on a priori grounds. This is to say, in post-Sassurean terms, speech just as much as writing, is inscribed in the differential matrix of language, is structured by difference (rather than by identity). Since the very differentiation of signs, terms, phonemes, semes and so on, depends not merely on each sign's, term's... difference from the next, but also depends for its meaning on its association with other signs, terms which are not present in the linguistic sequence, but are absent, then signs, terms etc. take on meaning by their differential relations to other signs, terms etc., which are present and to those that are absent. It follows that signs, terms etc. are always marked by the present/absent graphism of *archi-écriture*. In short, speech like writing is never totally present, but

is marked by presence and absence, is marked by distance just as much as writing.

Let us though accentuate the difference between Gadamer's phonocentricism and Derrida's archi-writing even further (let us fall victim to explaining away Derrida's "position" even more transparently). For when Derrida coins the term *différance*, as a kind of "opposition" to logocentrism, the very word remains, of course, ambiguous. Its two senses that of differing and that of deferring not only explain the workings of language in a post-Sassurean fashion, [1] but also illustrate the Derridian point that writing does not copy speech, for here, the difference between the two senses can only come across in writing, not as the phonocentrist might suppose through the directness of the speech event. Derrida's stylistic playfulness as well as his exploitation of the resources of language becomes a far cry from Gadamer's sober analytic tracts. Moreover, the strategic use-value of drawing attention to the workings of language through his own writing supports the very point that language, rather than a mere means of expression, rather than a vehicle for expressing pure thought, cannot be separated from that which it formulates. If this is the case for Derrida's writing, it is also the case for his readings of other writer s' writings. For what a Derridian reading will seize on (as a de Manian reading did) are precisely those 'deviant linguistic structure in a text which unleash its signifying energies, and thus threaten to subvert the text's logic at any point; as Jefferson puts it, very specifically here, a deconstructive reading will try 'to bring out the logic of the text's language as opposed to the logic of its author's claims' (1982: 110). [2] This is to say, the uncontrollable excess of

language's signifying energy, its disseminating force, escapes both the author's conscious control as the great proliferator of meaning, and the critic's control as the great gatherer of meanings. Language, in other words, prevents us from ever reaching closure.

Here, of course, the differences between hermeneutics and deconstruction become accentuated most boldly. Whilst for a hermeneutics, language's signifying energy may always be verified, by the return to the spoken word of conversation, by the return to the presence of the spoken word, and whilst language's excess may always be accounted for by the return to the origin, the return to the consciousness of the speaker, in other words, whilst a hermeneutic discourse, according to Derrida, 'remains in its pre-critical relation to the signified, in the return to the presence of the spoken word, to a natural language, to perception, visibility, in short, consciousness' (Derrida 1979a: 113), a deconstructive discourse or 'reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language he uses' (Derrida 1976: 158), will always, to put this differently, reveal 'the failure of intention to govern linguistic effects... [which] points to a deeper failure of intention to determine [a] meaning' (Knapp and Michaels 1987: 61); this then points to the very failure of an originary intention, points out the *the failure* of any point of origin.

Let us push this point further. Since any alleged origin, such as intentionality or the full self-presence of speech is itself positioned within language, and since language is marked by *différance*, and *différance*

marks the absent/present (non-)relation between linguistic elements, or rather since every element of the system is marked in its difference from elements which are there and not there, bears the trace of those other elements, we may therefore argue, that any element is therefore not so much an (identiarian) "element" but a trace, and moreover, that any alleged origin is/was itself already riven with the differential traces of language. To put this differently then, since '[t]hese traces are not what a certain linguistics calls distinctive features, being nothing other than the traces of the *absence* of the other "element", which is moreover not absent in the sense of "present elsewhere", but is itself made up of traces', it follows, that '[e]very trace is a trace of a trace' (Bennington 1993: 75). This then is what constitutes the failure of the origin; as Derrida puts it in *Of Grammatology*:

> The trace is not only the disappearance of origin – within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin. From then on, to wrench the concept of the trace from the classical scheme, which would derive it from a presence or from an originary nontrace and which would make of it an empirical mark, one must indeed speak of an originary trace or arche-trace. Yet we know that that concept destroys its name and that,   if all begins with the trace, there is above all no originary trace. (1976: 61)

It is precisely here that we come to recognize that not merely signs, terms, phonemes, semes and so on, are traces of other signs, terms, phonemes, semes etc., but that any text is "itself" a trace of other texts, inter-text, *archi-écriture*, and furthermore, we also come to recognize, 'we must recognize' according to Geoff Bennington, that 'any theory is an unstable network of texts in which every text bears the traces of all others' (1993: 92). In short, 'il n'y a pas de hors texte' [there is nothing outside of the text/ there is no outside-text] (Derrida 1976: 158).

Here, Derrida begins to formulate a different conception of *text*. As he puts it at some length in *Positions*:

> The play of differences... Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each "element" – phoneme or grapheme – being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. This interweaving, this textile, is the *text* produced only in the transformation of another text. Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces. (1981a: 26)

Therefore, a text is '[n]o longer... defined by its markings: title, margins, beginning, end, and authorship' (Risser 1989: 177), a text is, to quote Derrida once more, 'no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces' (Derrida 1979: 84). It is in this sense also that the text as *enchaînement* surpasses any notion of the origin, the very notion of original expressivity:

> ... I would say that if expressivity is not *simply and once and for all* surpassable, expressivity is in fact always already surpassed, whether one wishes it or not, whether one knows it or not. In the extent to which what is called "meaning" (to be "expressed") is already, and thoroughly, constituted by a tissue of differences, in the extent to which there is already a *text*, a network of textual referrals to *other* texts, a textual transformation in which each allegedly "simple term" is marked by the trace of another term, the presumed interiority of meaning is already worked upon by its own exteriority. It is always carried out outside itself. It already differs (from itself) before any act of expression... [Thus] the notion of text, conceived with all its implications, is incompatible with the unequivocal notion of expression. (Derrida 1981a: 33-4)

And here, of course, we may come back to hermeneutics as this 'interpretation proper', for here, we have acknowledged, indeed 'define[d] their irreducibility', Gadamer's interpretation of original expressivity and Derrida's re-writing of expressivity, of the origin – of the *arche*. ³

If "expressivity" or "intention" is therefore marked by a 'network of textual referrals to other text', if in other words the "I" which engenders the text is "itself" a kind of Barthesian plurality of other texts which is infinite, and this "I" is 'cut off from any voice, borne by a pure gesture of inscription (and not expression), traces a field without origin... has no origin than language itself (Barthes 1977a: 146), then this "I" is "itself" textualized. There is a double absence at work here: 'cut off from any voice', from any source of expression, from any origin, and cut off from speaking with the other, from the originary conversation in the here and now with an addressee, the author's intention becomes doubly displaced. This is to say, intention or expressivity, '[i]t [not only] already differs (from itself) before any act of expression', but to supplement Derrida's point here, *it always differs (from itself) after any act of expression*. In short, it will always differ (from itself) after each and every act of expression in a new context, after each and every repetition or iteration.

With this point, we have come to Derrida's "other" dis-articulation of the authority of intention, of the source of expressivity, of the original voice of utterance... For, the very possibility of iteration, citation, in other words, the principle of iterability, of citability, undermines the authority of intention as the 'utterance-origin' (Derrida 1977: 193), as the '*source* of the utterance' (193), as the unequivocal source of "meaning". And even though 'the category of intention will not dissappear' here, for 'it will have its place, but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterance' (Derrida 1977: 192), because 'the intention animating the utterance will never be through and through present to itself and to its content' (192). Thus, authorial

expression 'cannot govern the scene of utterance' (Knapp and Michaels 1987: 61), and 'the author cannot enforce communication' (61), which is to say, that '[a] speaker or writer can always fail to communicate' (61), and moreover, 'misinterpretation is always possible' (61). When Derrida therefore speaks of the 'sender', the author, the '[o]ne who writes in order to communicate something to those who are absent' (1977: 177), in other words, communicates something to the absent 'receiver' or reader, he makes the point that 'the mark', the text 'which cuts itself off from him', i.e. the 'sender', 'continues' as he puts it, 'to produce effects independently of his presence and of the present actuality of his intentions (*vouloir-dire*)' (177) which is, of course, because the author is absent at the very moment when the receiver, the future receivers or readers come face to face with "his" text.

Since, in other words, his/her/the/a/any text or mark is readable — and iterable — in a context other than its immediate production, it not only can perform in other contexts, other than the "original" context, but it, moreover, must be iterable, citable, repeatable in another context, it is necessarily open to re-contextualization *ad infinitum*. As Derrida puts it in 'Signature Event Context':

> And this is the possibility on which I want to insist: the possibility of disengagement and citational graft which belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written, and which constitutes every mark, spoken or written, and which belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written, and which constitutes every mark in writing before and outside of every horizon of semio-linguistic communication; in writing, which is to say in the possibility of its functioning being cut off, at a certain point, from its "original" desire-to-say-what-one-means (*vouloir-dire*) and from its participation in a saturable and constraining context. Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written... can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. (1977: 185)

This then, once more, is that deep 'failure of intention to determine the meaning of a mark' (1987: 61) which Knapp and Michaels remarked on and which we wish to mark out here, as the very irreconcilability between the Gadamerian hermeneutics which as we have seen, seeks to mediate between contexts, seeks to overcome the gap between the original context of utterance and the present context of the interpreter, and a Derridian deconstructive enterprise which points to the ruptures between the text and its many contexts.

If a text or a 'writing' for Derrida 'is by definition destined to be read in a context different to that of the act of inscription', then 'from the start [writing] break[s] [ruptures] with its context of "production" and with every determined context of reception' (Bennington 1993: 85-6). This inevitable 'recontextualisation' (Derrida 1992: 63) , this 'alteration in repetition' (63), this very 'structure of iterability which would prevent us... from distinguishing rigorously between performance and competence, as between producer and receiver' (75), also, of course prevents the text's unreadability, or more to the point, neccessitates the text's readability. This is to say, since '[a] writing that is not structurally readable - iterable - beyond the death of the addressee would not be writing' (Derrida 1977: 180), for as Derrida has it, '[t]o write is to produce a mark that will constitute a sort of machine which is productive in turn, and which my future dissappearance will not, in principle, hinder in its functioning, offering things and itself to be read and to be re-written' (1980). It is in this sense then that 'the sign possesses the characteristic of being readable even if the moment of its production is irrevocably lost and even if I do not know what its alleged

author-scriptor consciously intended to say at the moment he wrote it,
i.e. abandoned it to its essential drift' (182). And we must remember here
that this absence, that 'his absence' not only 'belongs to the structure of
all writing', but to the structure 'of all language in general' (177). Or
as Bennington puts it, '"writing" will name properly the functioning of
language in general' (1993: 49-50).

When Derrida therefore writes in *Dissemination* that '[e]ven while it
keeps the texts it culls alive, this play of insemination - or grafting -
destroys their hegemonic center, subverts their authority and their
uniqueness' (1981: 344), then it is to stress '[the] unlimited power of
perversion and subversion' (Derrida 1978: 296) that is repetition. As he
put it in *Writing and Difference*, '[t]he return of the same does not alter
itself [...] except by amounting to the same' (1978: 296). In other words,
'[r]epeated, the same line is no longer exactly the same... no longer has
exactly the same center, *the origin has played*' (296); and furthermore,
'[t]his repetition is writing because what dissappears in it is the self-
identity of the origin, the self-presence of so-called living speech'
(296). Here, iterability is the 'very factor' which permits the mark 'to
function', that is, 'the possibility of its being repeated *another* time',
and here also, this very possibility 'breaches, divides, expropriates the
"ideal" plentitude or self-presence of intention, of meaning (to say) and *a
fortiori*, of all adequation between meaning and saying'. [4] Here also,
Gadamer and Derrida are breached and divided, irreconcilable and
irreducible. For, whilst one of the interpretations of interpretation
'dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the
order of the sign' (292); the *other* joyously affirms 'genetic

indetermination... the *seminal* adventure of the trace' (292).

Writing then implies absence (the absent father), the risk of loss, even death, and if writing has therefore always been debased as a gamble, a bad risk, at worst a parricidal offspring of this absent, allegedly self-present logos and at best a kind of bastard, the other in one's own home; writing has been rejected as a secondary and inferior operation to the fullness of speech and its secure delivery of meaning; and writing, furthermore, is feared because it may turn back, reflect on its alleged source, casting doubt and suspicion on the purity of the line and perverting the spoken '*logos spermatikos*' (Derrida 1981: 50), subverting the ideal of transparent communication, of meaning consum(at)ed in the blessed fertile coition of speech and sign, scattering its seed and losing its substance. All writing becomes a ghost writing, marking the absence of its source at the same time as it doubles it, repeats it, without ever coming to (the) term.

If speech is always (running the risk of) dying through placing the burden of its inscription on the written, writing lives on, survives speech as its uncanny double, in repetition. Iterability constitutes its readability. Thus *dissemination* replaces - or perverts - *insemination*: we no longer have to do with producing an other in our own image , but with proliferating otherwise. The question ceases to be one of speech as the guardian and guarantee of writing, and becomes instead one of the iteration, repetition of writing in reading. Reading, however, is another iteration, a re-marking of writing, reinscribing writing. Reading, then, is (at least) a double writing. *Survie reads sur-lit. Überleben reads Über-*

lesen. At this juncture, we may well use Derrida's words, and say, '*une théorie de l'écriture est inseparable d'une théorie de la lecture*'; [5] and here we may also say with Derrida that '[t]here would be no reading of the work — nor any writing to start with — without this iterability' (1992: 68). Addressing the iterability of writing becomes the re-iteration of writing through the addressee. One signature implies another, (re)textualizes/contextualizes/inscribes/writes the other's sign, another *mark*.

In the 'duel of writing and reading', 'in the course of which', as Derrida has it, we come to see a kind of play of signatures: 'a countersignature comes to confirm, repeat and respect the signature of the other, of the "original"', and moreover, comes 'to *lead it off* elsewhere, so running the risk of *betraying* it, having to betray it in a certain way so as to respect it, through the invention of another signature...' (1992: 69) The text's repetition then, necessarily implies the 'multiplicity or proliferation of countersignatures' (69). And it is precisely in this sense also that 'no reading [could be] absolutely respectful of a text, for a total respect would forbid one from even touching the text, opening the book', from which follows, of course, that 'no countersignature [could be] absolutely respectful of the signature it countersigns' (Bennington 1993: 165). Reading here exceeds the signature of the author, 'in spite of him' and 'thanks to him'. [6] Which is to say, that the function which Foucault ascribed to the author, as an intitiator of discourses, sets in play a signifying excess which may be endlessly repeated, (re)read and (re)written by the countersignature.

If we have come here, as Bennington has it, to 'rethink reading as a relation of signature to countersignature' as one where 'the text's signature calls up the reader's countersignature', then we not only can 'see more clearly that the countersignature it calls up is the countersignature of the other', but we may also see that this other signature may 'be that other myself' (1993: 162-3). In other words, this 'play of signatures countersigning each other, and thus committing each other' (163) is not only at work between writer and reader, sender and receiver, but is already at work when '[a]s author, I am *already* addressee at the moment I write' (53). Or as Derrida puts it, 'writing is also already a countersigning reading, looking at it from the work's side' (1992: 69). Or even as Lyotard puts it, '[t]hey say that anyone who writes - an *écrivant* or more rarely, an écrivain - is *his/her own first reader*' (1989: vi). When Bennington therefore 'suggests that the two "activities" of writing and reading interact otherwise than in the obvious symmetry that constitutes their usual concept', he warns us, however, 'of celebrating too quickly the "death of the author" and believing that this death can be paid for by the "birth of the reader' (1993: 52). Instead, he postulates that 'the death of the reader (and therefore of interpretation in its usual form) is an analytic consequence of the death of the author' (52). This is to say, since the mark, the text must be readable after the death of the of both sender and addressee, that this endows writing with the knowledge that both sender and addressee are both mortal (52).

Moreover, it emphasizes the very point that writing and reading are not separate categories, independent entities, but that writing - as the Barthesian 'ready-formed dictionary' (1977a: 146) not only lives before,

but also always outlives both sender/receiver. *Survit writes sur-scrit.*
Überleben writes Überschreiben. Since '"death" [thus] opens writing to
general alterity of its destination, but simultaneously forbids any sure or
total arrival at such a destination' (Bennington 1993: 55), it follows that
'reading has no end, but is always to-come as work of the other' (56), as
an-other signature. It can therefore be argued that:

> Here, the customary divisions between author and reader, sending and
> reception, dispatch and arrival are not watertight. [...] The act of
> writing is from the first divided by this complicity between writing
> and reading, which immediately prevents one from considering this act
> so easily as an act, and blurs at the same time the activity/passivity
> (or production/consumption) distinction that underlies the usual
> understanding of writing. (Bennington 1993: 53-4)

This then describes a Derridian deconstructive move, for here, the
opposition between writing and reading is undermined and undone, opposition
gives away to the play of *différance.* As Derrida underwrites this move in
Disseminations:

> If reading and writing are one, as is easily thought these days, if
> reading *is* writing, this oneness designates neither undifferentiated
> (con)fusion nor identity at perfect rest; the *is* that couples reading
> with writing must rip apart. One must then, in a single gesture, but
> doubled, read and write. (1981: 63-4)

And it suffices to say here that Derrida can hardly ever be the beneficiary
of the understanding bequeathed him by Gadamer's 'good will': this
particular, hermeneutic, *logos spermatikos* falls on deaf ears, on which
surface it is repeatedly, relentlessly, disseminated.

4.4 Reading the Other

While Gadamer theorizes the text in a general and universal manner, as we have seen, Derrida's close readings of particular texts locate inter-textual performance at the scene of writing. Here each text is singular, in the sense that each text is different from itself, differs *from* itself, and reading is the return not to the origin, as Gadamer may have it, but the return and repetition of difference. The very condition for the possibility of a coherent, *pan-textual* discourse is not only undone here, but theory, be it of textuality, of reading or writing, is localized in the particular, not globalized as the general. For Gadamer, on the other hand, difference is located between text and reader, and as such must be overcome, not merely to guarantee the fusion of the one and its other (text and reader) in the harmonious unity of understanding that is the interpretive event (for we know that interpretation is understanding, that is, agreement, and therefore fusion between the one and its – already "its", its *in advance* – other), but also to safeguard understanding, indeed the very terms of understanding from fraying at the margins, from spilling over the demarcated seams or borders of the hermeneutical horizon. In other words, understanding of a text must be guaranteed, and moreover, understanding in general must also be guaranteed.

For hermeneutics then, a theory of the text, of reading, of writing is therefore a theory also of understanding, of the very terms of understanding which bring about, each and every time, the total understanding of the object under scrutiny. Theory here must be able to bring about this understanding, must be able to account for everything in

every instance to ensure total understanding, must be capable of providing us with the tools that safeguard this understanding each and every time, in each and every instance. This then is the universalizing dogma of a hermeneutic understanding, this then is also why a hermeneutics does not refer to itself as a theory, but presupposes that it is the theory of practice par excellence. Derrida's reading/s, *au contraire*, locate the 'textual fissures in the governing textual logic as an activity of an other [...] which leaves its trace or signs the text as a network or relay of textual displacements'. ' And in this sense, a text is marked by the differential logic of (inter)textuality: no text, be it literary, philosophical, critical or theoretical, stands outside textuality, is other than textual, escapes textual play, and would thus avoid the local indeterminacies of (deviant) linguistic structures. Theory here is just another text, which is to say, it can neither generalize, nor extract an essence, nor mediate a full understanding, but remains partial, fissured, fractured, and consequently has no grounds for, nor ground from which to claim omniscience.

Since the reader's task for Gadamer is to come to an understanding of and with the text, and since 'understanding and interpretation are... the same thing' (Gadamer 1975: 350), as we have already seen, then it follows that reading is understanding is interpretation. This then is the comprehensive theory of reading that hermeneutics promises. If, furthermore, as Gadamer clearly had it, 'comprehension... is our sole concern' (1989: 31), then reading seems to be subsumed under the grand horizon of comprehensibility, intelligibility, in short, understanding. We have not only come to expect that texts must be readable, must be

comprehensible and intelligible, must be meaningful, but we require them to be just that, otherwise understanding would not be guaranteed. And here, of course, the Gadamerian 'fore-conception of meaning' becomes the very safeguard by which this might be ensured, becomes the 'formal condition of all understanding', according to Gadamer, which, to remind ourselves once more, 'states that only what really constitutes a unity of meaning is intelligible' (1975: 261). If unity of meaning is therefore interpretation's presupposition, then so must be textual integrity and therefore also identity; that is a stable entity, called text. The Gadamerian I which is also, *naturally*, the classic stable unified subject of the humanist tradition, which enters a dialogue with this monolith of a text, and thereby seeks, of course, to overcome the separated horizons between him/herself and that of the text, seeks, in other words, to bridge the gap, overcome the difference between them, to merge with the text, so that both text and reader might dis appear in this fusion, unified beyond recognition, dissolved in this synthesis. When Ernst Behler therfore writes that '[i]dentity... precedes difference and ambiguity for Gadamer', and also succeeds difference, we should add, 'whereas for Derrida', Behler continues, 'text and writing themselves are inherently or structurally different, i.e. polysemous' (1987: 208), we have, of course, come to *the* irreconcilable difference between their ways of reading texts, and reading the world.

For, if 'identity... precedes difference' and results from its overcoming in the hermeneutic universe, then the identity of the text must already be in plaçe before the reader comes onto the scene. (There is not merely an anticipation to be empirically determined at work here, but a

presupposition, indeed, even a determinant transcendental prejudice). This is to say, the text comes before the reader, the text comes first, the reader comes after the text, comes second. We have come full (hermeneutic) circle then, for we began with a reader whose role was merely to fill in the gaps left by a generous but omniscient author; now, however, that Gadamer has given us a reader who produces of and with the text a full understanding, he has given us an active and determining reader; but since we find that through his/her acts of interpretation/understanding, this reader not only comes up against a text which is, or at least should be a stable entity, an integrated whole/ness, that this determining reader therefore becomes once again a reader determined not merely by the mediating instance, the last court of appeal - understanding as such - but moreover, that this reader is solely determined by having to understand the text. Furthermore, once agreement is reached, once understanding is completed, this reader dis appears altogether in the fusion with the text (and so does the text, of course): subsumed, we might say in the act of understanding.

We might therefore argue that the reader for Gadamer not merely fulfills a certain task, but fulfills also a certain function. A function that is not unlike the one Foucault ascribes to the author. This is to say, the reader here, like the Foucauldian author in 'What is an author', is only covertly endowed with an interactive role, a participatory role as producer of meaning. The reader, rather than the co-producer of meaning, alongside the text, with the text, might be said to be the very 'functional principle by which , in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation,

the free composition, and recomposition of fiction' (1984: 118-9). Or as Foucault puts it in 'The Discourse on Language', we might describe the Gadamerian reader, as a principle 'to master and control the great proliferation of discourse, in such a way as to relieve its richness of its most dangerous elements; to organise its disorder so as to skate round its most uncontrollable aspects' (1972: 228). In this sense then, the reader would take over where the author had left off, he/she would become ''[t]he principle of a certain unity of writing' (Foucault 1984: 111). Though, we, of course, already know that 'a text is no longer dependent on an author and his/her intention' (Gadamer 1989: 96), we might nevertheless rephrase this statement here and say: though whilst not dependent on an author, a text is dependent on his/her reader, but only insofar as the reader is the hermeneutic tool or serves the hermeneutic quest, indeed, is the servant who ensures that understanding, above all else, is completed, brought to a close; in a nutshell, that hermeneutic theory sees its promises fulfilled.

What remains unquestioned here and throughout though, is that reading equals coming to an understanding, and that understanding equals reading: at no stage do we touch upon the questions of production in this double equation, this tautologous relation of reading and understanding. What we do not see is the covert position of authority provisionally granted to the producing instance of writing (i.e. in advance of understanding), which *méconnaissance* is instead epistemophilically glossed by the pan-textual theory of understanding. (Not unlike, of course, Iser's 'consistency building' or Culler's 'demand for sense'). The unity of textual understanding is preserved at the cost of the exclusion of writing: understanding erases text and reader, as I have said. Once again then, the

repression of writing which, according to Derrida, constitutes the history of Western metaphysics occurs. Writing is repressed precisely because it would lend the absolute and unquestioned authority of the written word, the present text, to the interpreter, to those acts of disparate and multiple readings that, rather than bringing all readings under the one noiseproof hermeneutic umbrella, would turn all readings into rewritings. Thus the central dichotomy at the core of the Gadamerian project: the indubitably self-present, meaningful text and the honest-to-God truthfulness of all the good will in the world of understanding; understanding is not reading (but interpretation) then - it is the erasure of reading in the constitution of understanding, and concomitantly the primal repression of writing. Once again then we must ask, what is so dreadfully dangerous about writing? The answer here, of course, is provided by Foucault: we fear the 'disorderly buzzing of discourse'. Derrida, on the contrary, rather than impeding this buzzing, seems to amplify it. And Derrida's 'bruit parasite' (Derrida 1981: 128) is nothing other than Michel Serres's noisy interference. In other words, Derrida's double writing of reading, his reading as writing and writing as reading always comes dangerously close to '*lead[ing]* [the text] *off* elsewhere' (Derrida 1992: 69), leading it astray. Such is the chance or risk of "interpretation": dissemination.

We can see then that the ideal unity of reading and understanding, the original possibility of understanding that is always actualized in reading, locates difference wholly within its synthetic operations, effacing the difference between its textual constitutents and its hermeneutic acts. We can see, however, that this original and final understanding rests in turn on the repression of the difference between reading and writing. Against

this totalizing gesture then, is precisely Derrida's *différance* which traces its fractal webs throughout writing, constituting writing as such. The difference therefore between the 'two interpretations of interpretation' might be further acknowledged through this subsequent statement. According to Deleuze, there are

> two readings of the world in that one bids us to think of difference in terms of similarity, or a previous identity, while on the contrary, the other invites us to think of similarity or even identity as the product of a basic disparity. (1984: 52)

What we have drawn out thus far then, are not merely the differences between a positive hermeneutics and negative hermeneutics, as regards reading, the differences between hermeneutics and deconstruction, as regards interpretation on the one hand, and writing on the other, but we have brought these different theoretical frameworks to a head, as it were, through our discussion of Gadamer and Derrida. What has thus implicitely emerged so far is, that the very terms by which we described our "fellowship" - as a positive hermeneutics, and our "brotherhood" - as a negative hermeneutics (as I have already indicated), are not only a misleading terminology, in that they liken deconstruction to hermeneutics, but is also an ill-chosen description of the tendencies in hermeneutics as against those of deconstruction. The term "positive" endows Gadamerian hermeneutics, the hermeneutics of faith, with a good valuation, whilst the term "negative", as far as it describes (Yale) deconstruction, gives the latter nihilist overtones. This not only proves inadequate, given that we have argued for their 'irreconcilability', but also because the terms "happy" and "unhappy", to distinguish a positive from a negative

hermeneutics, have become increasingly more apt. For, whilst a positive hermeneutics, rather than as Elizabeth Freund suggested, is marked by an 'unhappy ending' (see section 2.1, particularly footnote 1), we might well argue that, instead, it is characterized by an "unhappy" disposition, in the sense that it continuingly fears 'the disorderly buzzing of discourse', fears the risks of writing and seeks to annihilate the dangers of the proliferation of significations, by containing the merest possibility of dissemination, by seeking to preserve, whatever the cost, the unity of meaning. And as such it stands contrary to what we therefore may call a "happy" (hermeneutics) deconstruction, which celebrates the 'joyous affirmation of play' (Derrida 1978: 292), which celebrates '[t]he second interpretation of interpretation, to which Nietzsche pointed the way' (292); and it is precisely in this sense that we might regard a hermeneutics of faith as that 'saddened, *negative*, nostalgic, guilty... thinking' (292), which as such stands on the 'other side' of the 'Nietzschean *affirmation*... the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation' (292).

Having thus 'defined', 'acknowledged', 'accentuated' some of the traits of their irreducibility, we may more clearly see why the meeting that took place in Paris was a failure, in as far as it did not bring about a dialogue between Gadamer and Derrida (though we can already see why Derrida might not have wanted to enter into a *dialogue* with Gadamer; and we may also say that Gadamer's incessant pleas for a dialogue with Derrida might well be born of the frustration of bearing witness to the crumbling empire, based on understanding). In order though to sketch out this

"failure" further, in order to bring to a head more fully the incompatibility between these "opposing" discursives frameworks, we must consider their relation to each other; not only from the point of view of how they relate to each other, but also how they relate at all, and above all, what they have to say about relating, about relations. For, the question which (still) needs to be addressed is: what, given the thesis so far, is therefore the relation that we may make between hermeneutics (be it positive, or unhappy) and deconstruction (be it negative, or happy)? How (and to an extent also why) can these disparate frameworks of thinking be brought together, how, in effect, and to what effect, can we relate these disparate (rather than opposing) discourses? For the moment though, it suffices to examine, how one discourse relates to the other, "its" other, and what they have to say about the Other. The offshoots of their Paris-talks then brings to the fore both Gadamer's and Derrida's very different stances on relating to the other. And here we might begin, first with Gadamer's stance on relating, how he describes a relation between the one and the other, before turning to Derrida's non-relation to the other. [2]

First of all, relating to the other always, of course, involves a dialogic principle for Gadamer. Indeed, what 'first opens up in dialogue' (Gadamer 1989: 95) is 'the recognition of oneself in the other' (95). And this is, very precisely, what 'constitutes' for him 'the universality of the hermeneutical experience' (95). Similarly in *Truth and Method* he points out that:

> To recognize oneself (or own's own) in the other and find a home in it
> - this is the basic movement of spirit whose being consists in its
> return to itself from what is other. (1975: 15, 1965: 11, translation
> modified)

If we recognize what is familiar to us in the other we relate to the other as a kind of extension of ourselves; in other words we understand the other in terms that are familiar to us. We are also required, however, to familiarize ourselves with what is unfamiliar in the other. Putting oneself in the shoes of the other so to speak; taking this step, Gadamer writes,

> to *understand* means that one is capable of stepping into the place of the other in order to say what one has there understood and what one has to say in response [...] understanding means to stand for the other and represent [him/her]... (1989: 96)

Gadamer further points out that this understanding takes place on condition of 'remain[ing] open to the meaning of the other person or of the text', and he reminds us here however that 'this openness always includes our placing the other meaning in a relation with the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in a relation to it' (1975: 238).

The question that now arises is: does Gadamer step into the place or indeed step on the toes of the other. Or does he take the necessary steps when he formulates the highest principle of hermeneutics and states that one should, 'always recognize in advance the possible correctness, even the superiority of the conversation partner's position' (1989: 245)? And, again, in *Truth and Method*, we find that:

> it is characteristic of every true conversation that each opens himself to the other person, truly accepts his point of view as worthy of consideration and gets inside the other to such an extent that he understands not a particular individual, but what he says. The thing that has to be grasped is the objective rightness or otherwise of his opinion, so that they can agree with each other on the subject. Thus one does not relate the other's opinion to him, but to one's own view. (1975: 347)

For hermeneutics then, as we have come to see, any relation takes the form of a dialogue. This dialogue is reciprocal, and as we already know, its aim is to find a common language between the partners of the conversation

(Gadamer 1975: 349). One and the other partner are exchanging views in order to be able to agree with each other. Gadamer elaborates this coming to an agreement in the form of a dialogue: '[u]nderstanding is primarily agreement or harmony with another person. Men generally understand each other directly, i.e. they are in dialogue until they reach agreement' (1975: 158). This then, of course, points to the Gadamerian notion of the 'fusion of horizons' ('The separated horizons, like the different standpoints, merge with each other' [1989: 41]). This agreement then takes the form of a fusion of their horizons, a kind of mediation which produces a new understanding (which in return is mediated by the historical horizons, tradition can be seen to impose). [3] Furthermore, the agreement and understanding that is sought presupposes, we have to remember, the infinite 'good will' of both partners ('Both partners must have the good will to try to understand one another' [1989: 33]). This fusion or harmonious merger therefore advocates the unity or completion between the two elements in a relation; it mediates the very opposition between the partners of a relationship.

Gadamer's position towards the other (as was his position towards the text) may thus be summarized in key concepts such as: dialogue, good will, mediation, agreement, consensus, fusion, understanding. Derrida, in contrast, questions the dialogic nature of understanding, the very possibility of arriving at a clear understanding of and with the other and points to the dangerous implications of concepts such as good will, mediation and consensus for the position of the other. [4] In his response to Gadamer therefore, Derrida poses questions about two issues: the completeness of understanding and good will. As he puts it:

> The first question concerns what [Gadamer] said to us last night about "good will", appealing to one's good will and to the absolute obligation to desire consensus in understanding. (1989: 52) [5]

This 'absolute obligation to desire consensus in understanding' is, of course, Derrida's reference to Gadamer's claim that understanding, 'comprehension... is our sole concern' (1989: 31). For not only does this assume that there is something to be understood, but also that something is given and can be understood. Furthermore, if understanding always involves a dialogue, ie, an understanding of and with the other, as we have seen, and this understanding the other requires 'finding a home in it', recognizing oneself in the other, then we may argue that the one annexes the other in a kind of extension of the self [6] (having understood what is familiar to us). Moreover, if the other can be understood on condition that 'one does not relate the other's opinion to him, but to one's own view', as Gadamer has argued, then the one appropriates the other. Understanding thus takes place on our own terms, the terms that are ours and not the other's. There is another point to be made here. Understanding the other also presumes the necessity for consensus and we are reminded of Gadamer's statement that 'understanding is primarily agreement'. Agreement, we already know, is reached in a dialogue with the other. The other, however, becomes subsumed in this dialogue for its otherness is consummated by the very notion of a communality; it is consumed in this very fusion of horizons. Can Gadamer's good will redeem this willing to subsume, consummate, consume?

Josef Simon in his essay 'Good Will to Understand and the Will to Power: Remarks on an Improbable Debate' puts forward a counterposition to

good will. This 'counterposition', he argues, is Derrida's and he plays it out with regard to Nietzsche's concept of the 'Will to Power':

> ostensible "good will" to reach a commensurate understanding is, in Derrida's view, really only a delusion, eventually a self-delusion. Understanding is, then, imagining the other into one's own world-picture, reconstructing a world-picture whose coherence has been disturbed by the other. The presupposition of a common understanding is, on this reading, a means of making one's own understanding prevail. (1989: 165)

Simon therfore concludes that '"good will" to understand is seen as actually a "good will to power"' (165). Gadamer in stating that '[he] sought to reach an understanding of and with Derrida' (1989: 119), may be argued to have been attempting to willfully overpower Derrida as other, fuse the other in the fusion, so to speak. Derrida in return plays a kind of power-game: he performs the very breach or rupture which he sees inherent in 'understanding the other and one another' - he refuses to reach agreement in understanding, he refuses to engage in a dialogue with the other partner, he refuses appropriation by Gadamer. (And it is in this sense also that we begin to "understand" Derrida's insistence on the irreconcilability between these 'two interpretations of interpretation' in 'Structure, Sign, and Play'). Derrida thus puts it to Gadamer in the following terms:

> Whether one speaks of consensus or of misunderstanding [...], one needs to ask whether the precondition for *Verstehen*, far from being the continuity of *rapport* (as it was described yesterday evening), is not rather the interruption of *rapport*, a certain *rapport* of interruption, the suspending of all mediation? (1989: 53)

Whilst Gadamer sees mediation as a path to the other, as the meeting and fusion of paths, Derrida is more cautious when he states in *Altérités*: 'everything depends on the manner in which one handles mediation' (1986: 82). This is because a Gadamerian path to the other is less a path than an

roundabout; this is to say, hermeneutics presupposes the complicity of the

other in the return to the one, closing the path in a limitless circularity

- closing the path to the other. Derrida points another way in *Altérités*:

> But there is a mediation which does not close off the path to the
> other, or to the completely other, just the opposite. The rapport to
> the completely other as such is a rapport. The relation to the
> completely other is a relation. (1986: 82) [7]

He explains this in the following terms:

> For a relation with the other to exist, interruption must be possible:
> the relation must be a relation of interruption. And the relation here
> does not interrupt the relation to the other, it opens up the relation
> to the other. (1986: 82)

Derrida thus points the way out of the Hegelian type mediation which

threatens to efface the other in its reconciliatory and totalizing

movement. He describes the relation to the other as a:

> crazy relationship, a relation without relation, which understands the
> other as other in a certain relation of incomprehension. It is not
> ignorance nor obscurantism nor resignation before any desire for
> intelligibility: but it is necessary that at a given moment the other
> remains as other, And if it is the other it is other: at this moment
> the relation to the other as such is also the relation of
> interruption. (1986: 82)

This then constitues Derrida's step away from the other rather than

stepping on the other, it is a step in-between the one and the other. Or to

put it differently, mediation between the one and the other as a kind of

integration or fusion is ruptured to avoid the force of appropriation. As

David Wood points out: 'The word *interruption* is carefully attuned, to its

purpose, to capture a break, a rupture, in the *inter*, the *between* by which

we relate to the other' (1990: 127). [8]

When we therefore posed the question: what happens between the one and

the other? - we, I, took the relation to the other as a crucial pointer to

examine Gadamer's and Derrida's irreconcilability. If this relation is

based, as we have continuously seen, on the famous Gadamerian dialogue which presupposes the agreement/fusion between "I" and "thou", Derrida, from the very start, doubts the very notion of a unity, be it between two parties, or within "one" member of the party. Derrida rejects, in other words the notion of a stable identity within "itself" as well as the stable relation between "two" identities. The consensual "we" is not only an illusion for him, but an act of force. Indeed, Derrida uses the term dialogue only 'to talk crudely of the relation of force which exists even in dialogue' (1986: 83). This, according to him, is why he prefers to use the term negotiation (83). Consequently, we may say that whereas dialogue involves mediation and merger, negotiation suggests interruption and rupture; and if dialogue leads towards a completion of understanding, negotiation marks the very limits of understanding, highlights a kind of incompleteness. To put this differently, whilst hermeneutics seeks to secure an understanding of and with the other, deconstruction practices the difference. In short, one seeks closure, the other performs an excess.

To put what we have argued thus far in the context of reading, we might say that to read then is to to engage "*one*self" with the text as other. Hermeneutically, this means to mediate with the other, deconstructively, this signifies negotiating with the other. Hermeneutically, this mediation closes the gap between oneself and one's other, to appropriate the other not merely in an extension of oneself, but to overpower the other as other. It is, in other words, to relate the text to ourselves, to understand the other (the text) as a mere instance of understanding ourselves, which is, of course, already predetermined by the very way we (this is Gadamer and Hermeneuts Limited) have defined

understanding itself. For if understanding always involves the mediation with the other, and the subsequent fusion with the other, then the very terms we have set for any understanding, the very rules we have set for understanding, have already determined the only possible way we might understand the other - i.e. through ourselves . Understanding here, is not simply the sole aim, but understanding as understood by hermeneutics is the precondition of reading the other. And text, in this sense, is never a 'final product', but a 'mere intermediate product, a phase in the event of understanding' (Gadamer 1989: 31).

How then do we account for what makes a "proper" understanding for Gadamer, for surely he cannot be claiming that every reading is automatically an understanding, since we must *work towards* an understanding? There must be some delimiting function that specifies, retains propriety of, a given text and its reading. This function then is, of course, appropriation, the maturation of understanding. For although 'understanding and interpretation are... the same thing', the activity of reading, of coming to an understanding, of reaching agreement with a text, appropriation is not immediately thereby given; if this were the case, then there could be no (dis)agreement over what a text means. Appropriation then is the guarantor of the propriety, the identity of a text and its comprehending/comprehensive (*full* understanding) reading/interpretation. What then of the interpretation of particular texts? Similarly, if interpretation is given, there is no work for the hermeneut to do. That understanding could be simply given is, of course, naive, and nobody, not even Gadamer, is claiming this. There are internal obstacles to proper reading, just as there is work to do in the dialogue between understanding

and interpretation. One such obstacle is polysemy, the threatening multiplicity of meanings that potentially swarm through a text, the hideous prospect of several readings being 'proper' readings, without being the same reading. And here, once more, we might come back to Ernst Behler's point that, 'Gadamer, in contrast to Derrida... locates polysemy not in the factual sign (expression) itself, but in the intermediary zone of dialogue, midway between word and response. Identity, in other words, precedes difference and ambiguity for Gadamer, whereas for Derrida, text and writing themselves are inherently and structurally different, i.e. polysemious' (1987: 208). Which is to say, once more, that the ideal unity of the text, of reading, of understanding, is based on the original possibility of understanding that is always actualized in reading, and that, as we have said already, locates difference wholly within its mediating operations. Consequently, what is suppressed, is not only the difference between writing and reading, but also the possibility of multivalent readings, the difference in (writing) reading.

Derrida, on the other hand, not only doubts the possibility of 'completely understanding the other's meaning', but reads the other, as other, which is to say, includes a necessary moment of distance, interruption to the other as part of their relation. Their relation though is not based an opposition, but plays out difference. For how could there be an opposition between two elements if an element is always already a trace, a residue. In other words, if the text is a trace of traces of other texts and the "subject", if the reading "I" is a trace of traces of other readings and texts, and so on and so forth. Thus text and reading are never present as stable entities for they multisect with other texts and

readings/writings. It is therefore not a stable relation since the shifting relations diffuse a simple static binary opposition. Consequently, to arrive at an opposition between two elements is necessarily to refuse the residue, the excess of reference. Furthermore, it would imply that the very relation between text and reader can be mediated or harmonized. This then is why Derrida prefers to write about *différance*. *Différance* with an a defers the possibility of such a distinction or clear opposition. *Différance* with an a describes the tracery of relations thus indicating that there is no stable relation but relations which always defer to other relations. As Derrida puts it in *Altérités*: 'precisely because [*différance*] defers opposition, and therefore the dialectic, [it] is the mark or the name, of radical difference [...] that which cannot be assimilated within a single unity' (1986: 83). *Différance* then is the ruptured or rupturing non-relation between the one and the radically other. It is the necessary interruption to the other for the other to remain other. It is the non-relation which splits the difference for difference was always already different from itself and to each other.

If reading and writing are thus constituted in a play of *différance*, then reading and writing not only become indistinguishable, but *différance* already marks a diffusion of reference or an excess which can never be totally captured. And here we may recall this passage from *Dissemination*:

> If reading and writing are one, as is easily thought these days, if reading *is* writing, this oneness designates neither undifferentiated (con)fusion nor identity at perfect rest; the *is* that couples reading with writing must rip apart. (Derrida 1981: 64)

In other words then, '[o]ne must, in a single gesture, but doubled, read and write' (64), and one must, we may add, acknowledge that a reading that

is a writing, is a reading that is doubled, reinscribed as a re-writing, a diffusion, an excess.

How then, we may finally ask, can a hermeneutics read/interpret a deconstructive discourse, and how can a deconstructive discourse, in turn, read/write a hermeneutic discourse. For, if hemeneutics reads the other (here deconstruction) in terms of itself, insists on mediation, fusion and consensus, and if deconstruction reads the other (here hermeneutics) as the radically other, insists on the necessary distance, rupture and difference to the other, how might these disparate, conflicting discourses be translated for each other, how might the failure of their encounter in Paris be translated into a context where their relation to each other might be re-inscibed altogether. How may their discourses, or for that matter, how may the discursive frame of our "fellowship" and that of our "brotherhood", whose differences are mirrored to a large entent in these Paris talks, be translated into one another's idiom? Are their discourses translatable or not? It is at this juncture that we shall turn to the question of translation, not merely from the perspective of what Gadamer says about translation, or what Derrida writes of translation, but to examine the question of their un/translatability, of the in/commensurability between discourses, theories, frameworks of thinking, ways of reading the world... As Richard Beardsworth puts it, '[i]ncommensurability is always a question of translation and of the limits of translatability' (1992: 71).

5.   REWRITING

Sit(uat)ing Translations

5.1 Reading the Alien Other

The Paris talks not only raise problems about human communication, about the very possibility of human relations, but have brought to the fore the split between a European tradition which largely follows Hegelian dialectics, which 'labours' (Hegel 1977: 10), and the more recent framework of thinking which embraces Nietzsche, and 'plays'. If the debate between Gadamer and Derrida has more specifically also been about the transfer of philosophical messages across the borders of the Rhine, it is here that the issue becomes one of communicating with the other, about one's relation to the other. At this point, the debate also, of course, becomes one about translation: about communicating with, or the reading of the radically other, the "alien" other. Translation, for the purpose of our thesis then, becomes a privileged site, not only because it highlights the interaction between different, even incompatible modes of thinking, but also because it makes visible the reading/writing of the other, a point we shall return to in sections 5.3 and 5.4.

The question of translation has also assumed an important role in both Gadamer and Derrida's thinking. For Gadamer this thinking is hermeneutic, of course: when he stipulates that 'the situation of the translator and that of the interpreter are fundamentally the same' (1975: 349), and indeed that 'every translation is at the same time an interpretation' and adds that '[w]e can even say that it is the completion of the interpretation that the translator has made of the words given to him' (346), we can see how translation here may be defined as a kind of 'extreme case that duplicates the hermeneutic process' (347). Derrida, on the other hand, has

it that 'deconstruction is also through and through *the* question of translation, and of the language of concepts, of the conceptual corpus of so-called metaphysics' (1991: 270), and as such it is also, of course, about 'the problem of the very passage into philosophy' (1981: 72). This is to say, 'the difficulty of translation', and here Derrida makes specific reference to Plato's double-translatable term of the *Pharmakon* (writing as poison, and/or as remedy?) and its (re)inscriptions by various translators in the tradition of philosophy (sometimes as poison, other times as remedy) is,

> a difficulty inherent in its very principle, situated less in the passage from one language to another, from one philosophical language to another, than already, as we shall see, in the tradition between Greek and Greek; a violent difficulty in the transference of a nonphilosopheme into a philosopheme. With this problem of translation we will thus be dealing with nothing less than the problem of the very passage into philosophy. (1981: 72)

Since the term *Pharmakon*, by its sheer plurivocality, challenges the pure transfer of a signified, and since its 'undecidability' ' therefore undermines any notion of a transparent translation, it follows that what is at stake here, is, of course, the difference in one language ('*plus d'une langue* – more than one language, no more of one language' (Derrida 1986a: 14-15) which poses itself in terms of a resistance to translatability, be it 'from one language to another', or within "one" language (Greek).

When Barbara Johnson therefore writes with particular reference to the translation of *Pharmakon*,

> Derrida's entire philosophical enterprise, indeed, can be seen as an analysis of the translation process at work in every text. In studying the *différance* of signification, Derrida follows the misfires, losses, and infelicities that prevent any given language from being *one*. Language, in fact, can only exist in its foreignness to itself. But all of Western philosophy has had as its aim to repress that foreignness... (Johnson 1985: 146-7)

it becomes clear just how much the Gadamerian project is "alien" to the Derridian enterprise. Thus when Gadamer had it that translation 'is the completion of [an] interpretation', and if we furthermore put this statement in relation to Gadamer's point that we need to seek 'a common language' before we can reach agreement, consensus, fusion, completion etc., as we saw previously, then we can accuse Gadamer here of repressing the foreignness within language. This is to say, since Gadamer argues that '[i]f we really master a language then no translation is necessary' (1975: 346), and adds that '[f]or two people to be able to understand each other in conversation this mastery of language is a necessary pre-condition. Every conversation automatically presupposes that the two speakers speak the *same* language' (347, my emphasis), it becomes evident that Gadamer not merely takes as a given the unity of one language, but also assumes the very transparency of language, its translatability. Hence, for Gadamer, foreignness, otherness is always (already) obliterated in (the quest for) the return of the same. as the return of the same. And we might rephrase Johnson's words here and say: all of *hermeneutics* has had as its aim to repress that foreignness.

Paul de Man's point that '[w]e think we are at ease in our own language, we feel a coziness, a familiarity, a shelter in the language we call our own, in which we think we are not alienated [1986: 84], bears relevance here. For, as Norris explains, such assumptions, which de Man is exposing here, not only 'go deep', but also 'ignore [despite] the evidence... offered by problems in the theory and practice of translation – that language may produce anomalous, aberrant, or seemingly random signifying structures that resist all forms of semantic accountability'

[1988a: 118]. This then becomes Derrida's 'entire philosophical enterprise': to *analyse* 'the translation process at work in every text', is to unleash those deviant (de Manian) linguistic structures which *misfire* in a text. In the course of his readings/writings then, Derrida, more specifically, unfolds undecidable signifying structures, such as that of the very term *Pharmakon*.

As Johnson points out, Derrida's own writings present a challenge to translation also (we only need to refer to a text such as 'Living On Border Lines'); it is here that we might see Derrida not merely unleashing foreignness (as Johnson puts it, he 'stick[s] out his tongue — his mother tongue — at the borderline between translated text and original' [1985: 147]), but through the play of *différance*, through paying attention to the 'functioning of his own *écriture*' (147) according to Johnson, he 'increasingly frustates the desire for unified meaning' (147) (even to the point of addressing the translator directedly about the un/translatability of Living On), and as such, pushes language to the limits of translatability. This serves to highlight once more, that language is far from being one; instead, it 'misfires', is 'foreign[] to itself'. To repress this foreignness is in itself a repression of *écriture*, in favour of the *écrit*, a repression of writing in favour of "it is written", the black and white of the law of understanding which is automaticaly, the understanding of the law. To therefore propose, as Gadamer does, that one return to the initial speech conversation, for there is found, must be found a 'common language', is to repress doubly, through the closure of the written and the transparency of translation that which is foreign/other in the search for the same.

Derrida's 'problem of translation', is not only about the 'problem of the very passage into philosophy', but is also about the problem of reading/writing in(to) language in general, over which philosophy has always sought dominion; in short, it is also a problem of textuality. Thus the 'problem' as a kind of 'passage' is, in effect, the problematic that Barthes sees as part of textuality: '[t]he text is... a passage, an overcrossing; it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination' (Barthes 1977: 159). Texts are made of other texts, and as such texts are always translations of other texts. Here translation and inter-textuality imply each other. In this precise sense then, 'the translation process [is] at work in every text'.'Plus d'une langue'. If we put this in terms of foreignness, we could say that "a" text is also foreign to "itself", and it is here that "a" text is marked by unreadability, by untranslatability, since the text, far from being closed, is an "open texture of quotation" etc. At this point, misprision, misreading, mistranslation come into "their own". To put this differently, within the context of our "happy hermeneutic" discussion, misreading is always a possibility, since those deviant de Manian linguistic structures in a text that 'misfire' within it, not only constitute a text's unreadability in Miller's or de Man's sense, but also open the text up for 'dissemination', for 'explosion'. In short, texts that are translated are also rewritten, when they are read in "one" language, or across an-other. Mis-translation as a necessary form of untranslatability is a productive force here; mis-understanding is productive - a point which Gadamer may never understand. For in the Gadamerian world, "we" interpret, understand, bring across to ourselves that which is other, render transparent that

which evades our grasp, make translatable that which threatens to disperse itself into the corners of the world...

We might argue here that for Gadamer translatability is a necessary condition of all understanding, for otherwise the hermeneutic promise for a full understanding could not be guaranteed, and as such he must presuppose, to put this in Derrida's words, a 'pre-critical relation to the signified' (1979a: 113), which is to say, the very 'theme of a transcendental signified [takes] shape within the horizon of an absolutely pure, transparent and unequivocal translatability' (1981a: 20); whereas for Derrida, '[i]n the limits to which it is possible, or at least appears possible, translation practices the difference between signifier and signified' (20). Since, however, 'this difference is never pure, no more so is translation', it follows that 'for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of *transformation*' (20). In short, total translatability is never given, nor can translation preserve, keep intact, *not touch* that which must come across, but rather the crossing "itself", inevitably, is a transformation, a transgression of borders, an 'overcrossing', a 'dissemination' - a mis-translation.

The quest of a hermeneutics is to unify, gather that which is dispersed, and deconstruction pays attention to that which resists such gathering that which may not be unified, that which 'misfires'. Consequently, to outline translation in terms of a hermeneutics on the one hand, and a deconstructive enterprise on the other hand, makes clear the different movements by which each discourse proceeds: one ensures translatability, the transfer of meaning - the other brings out

difference, and articulates for the very instances of untranslatability which undermine the ideal of a pure meaning which might be transferred intact. More specifically, this implies that a hermeneutics presupposes that something can and must be understood (be it a text, a discourse, even a philosophical framework, here deconstruction) and as such can be securely transferred/translated into another domain (tamed, appropriated, completed...), whilst deconstruction works on the assumption that misunderstanding is always a possibility, and that '[w]e will never have, and in fact have never had, to do with some "transfer" of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched' (Derrida 1981a: 20, translation modified).

So far, we have examined language as a relation of foreignness to itself. Let us now examine, not the relation *within* "self" or "other", but the relation between the one and the other, in other words, the relation between text and translation. This is what Gadamer writes in *Truth and Method*:

> For every translator is an interpreter. The fact that it is a foreign language which is being translated means that it is simply an extreme case of hermeneutical difficulty, i.e. of alienness and its *conquest*. All 'objects' with which traditional hermeneutics are concerned are, in fact, alien in the same sense. The translator's task of recreation differs only in degree, not qualitatively, from the general hermeneutical task presented by the text (1975: 349, my emphasis).

The task is then how to overcome this gap to the other, the alien. According to Gadamer, the translator is painfully aware of 'his inevitable distance from the original', and, '[h]is dealing with the text has something of the effort to understand another person in conversation' (Gadamer 1975: 348). This situation involves, as he puts it, 'an extremely wearisome process of

understanding, in which one sees the gap between one's own and that of the other person as ultimately unbridgeable' (348). However, just 'as in conversation, when there are such unbridgeable differences, a compromise can be achieved in the to and fro of dialogue, so that the translator will seek the best solution...' He goes on to say, '[a]s in conversation one tries to get inside the other person in order to understand his point of view, so the translator also tries to get right inside his author' (348). We must remember though that according to Gadamer, 'one does not relate the other's opinion to him, but to one's own views' (347). This '[r]eaching an understanding in conversation presupposes that both partners are ready for it and are trying to recognize the full value of what is alien and opposed to them' (348). He thus concludes that, '[i]f this happens mutually [...] it is finally possible to achieve, an imperceptible but not arbitrary reciprocal translation of the other's position (we call this exchange of views), a common language and a common statement' (348). In the hermeneutical conversation, like in the real conversation, this finding of 'a common language... coincides with the very act of understanding and reaching agreement... a communication takes place' (349-350). And we may add, a fusion of the separate horizons has ensued.

Derrida, as we already know, not merely questions this dialogic nature of understanding, but rejects Gadamer's appeal 'to the absolute obligation to desire consensus in understanding' (Derrida 1989: 199), and thus reminds Gadamer of the necessary 'interruption of *rapport*' (1989: 53) in any communicative event. If for Derrida, as we have seen, any 'relation must be a relation of interruption' for only then is the relation opened up to the other (1986: 82), it follows that alterity, this 'relation without

relation, which understands the other as other in a certain relation of incomprehension' (82), seeks to ensure that the other may not be overpowered by the movement of appropriation, by 'conquest', to use Gadamer's very term here, but can remain other. The other here is not rendered translucent, but remains the dark other. In this sense, '[t]his other has not been, nor can it be, illuminated... but [remains] as a blind spot or dark region'. [2] Undefinable, this dark other cannot be categorized, but evades the definitive grasp; not unlike Irigaray's notion of the Other (**woman**) as a dark continent. [3] The radical alterity which is put forward here does not insist on a common language, a communality of understanding, (on equality), does not seek complete understanding of and with the other, does not put up front, the ideal of communication, when Janus-faced, it smuggles in appropriation, 'conquest', overpowerment through the back door.

At this juncture, Derrida's very treatment of the term communication becomes revealing, for it throws further light on the issue. In 'Signature Event Context', Derrida poses an incisive question: 'Is it certain that there corresponds to the word *communication* a unique, univocal concept, a concept that can be rigorously grasped and transmitted: a communicable concept' (Derrida 1982: 309)? He goes on to reflect:

> If *communication* had several meanings, and if this plurality could not be reduced, then from the outset it would not be justifiable to define communication *itself* as the transmission of a meaning, assuming that we are capable of understanding one another as concerns each of these words (transmission, meaning, etc.) (309).

Isn't it at this very juncture that we call up once more the Derridian phrase: '*plus d'une langue*', the very password he once attributed to deconstruction. [4] *Plus d'une langue*, we remember, plays out, of course, two meanings: more than one language, no more *of* one language. If the word

communication does not possess a unique identity it is more than one language - equally language can therefore no longer be one. The translation of this phrase into English bears out this point only too adequately. What is at stake here though, is, of course, Derrida's rethinking of translation.

> At best, it (translation) can get everything across except this: the fact that there are, in one linguistic system, perhaps several languages or tongues. Sometimes - I would even say always - several tongues. This is impurity in every language. This fact would in some way have to threaten every linguistic system's integrity... (which) presumes the existence of one language and of one translation in the literal sense... So, if the unity of the linguistic system is not a sure thing, all of this conceptualization around translation (in the so-called proper sense of translation) is threatened. (Derrida 1985a: 100)

What is questioned here is both the 'unity and identity of a language, the decidable form of its limits' (Derrida 1985: 173) By deconstructing the concept of translation, he pushes us to 'the almost unthinkable notion' in Peggy Kamuf's words 'of an originary translation before the possiblity of any distinction between original and translation' (Kamuf 1991: 242). We can make a sideways step at this point and mention once more Derrida's text/texts 'Living On Border Lines'. These parallel texts in an above and below margin, stage the very 'question of the relation between texts once their limits and borders can no longer be rigorously determined' (Kamuf 1991: 255). In other words, what is at stake is the putting into question of the notion of text. Can a text have identifiable limits and borders, does it exist in a stable system of reference to other texts?

The answer is, of course, *différance* here. *Différance* does not institute an opposition as we have seen, but works to undermine oppositions such as that between text and translation, for instance. For, if the text

to be translated is always already in relations with other texts, is always a trace of other texts, is already marked by intertextuality, then no text can stand in a clear relation to another, and more to the point, a text and "its" translation cannot stand in a kind of opposition to each other. For, as we have seen, there can be no opposition between two elements if an "element" is always already marked by the traces of traces of other texts, if 'the translation process [is already] at work in every text' (1985: 146), to cite Johnson once again. In other words, if the text is a trace of traces of other texts and the translation is a trace of traces of other translations and texts and so on and so forth, then the relation between text and translation, is not one where two stable entities are present, because "each entity in itself" multisects with other texts, is an intersection of other texts. Since *différance* defers any opposition, 'is the mark or the name, of radical difference [...] that which cannot be assimilated within a single unity' (Derrida 1986: 83), *différance* then is that ruptured or rupturing non-relation between the one and the radically other. It is, as we have already seen, the necessary interruption to the other for the other to remain other. Thus, text and translation are marked by the play of *différance*, the shifting inter-relations that are the ruptured or rupturing non-relations between the "one" and the radically "other".

Différance, this word, or concept which is 'neither a word nor a concept' (Derrida 1973: 130), may only be circumscribed as that which 'can refer to the whole complex of its meanings at once, for it is immediately and irreducibly multivalent' (Derrida 1973: 137). It thus marks a diffusion of reference or an excess which can never be totally captured. It is at

this point that Derrida's notion of *supplément* produces another more specific relay. For, the *supplément*, as we have also seen, is a double movement of addition and substitution. The *supplément*, 'adds itself, it is a surplus, a plentitude enriching another plentitude...'.   On the other hand, it 'adds only to replace. It intervenes itself *in-the-place of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void' (1976: 144-155). This double movement has much in common with translation. For the translation will 'inevitably display material lacking in the original text, quite likely not apparent as lacking until the *translation* takes place, but then revealed as significant and necessary [thus redetermining the original as another version of its/an/other]. At the same time, the *translation*, by revealing this lack, reveals also a potentially infinite series of future *translations* providing further supplementations'. *

Translation, in deconstructive terms then, is not defined in terms of lack. Gadamer approaches this issue quite differently though, and writes:

> Every translation that takes its task seriously is at once clearer and flatter than the original. Even if it is a masterly re-creation, it must lack some of the overtones of the original. (1975: 348)

If we, however, deploy a Derridian reversal here (i.e. move in accordance with the logic of the supplement), and argue that it is the original which lacks, rather than the translation, after all, translation makes visible this lack by the sheer possibility of further supplementations, creating a demand in the original that it "go forth and multiply", that it be doubled by all others, i.e. constantly reaffirmed as original, then we can argue instead that translations put the notion of the original into question altogether. Not only do all translations affirm an indeterminacy of significations, but with each new reading/writing of the original, with

each new translation, what is highlighted, is that meaning is not so much tampered with, but that the very notion of the "definable (definitive) original" is in question. Hence, also, a translation could never be a re-creation. Translations necessarily defer and are different to their "original sources", and as such enact the play of *différance*. Here, it is not a question how 'faithful we try to be' (Gadamer 1975: 347), nor is it a question whether the translation is, or as Gadamer has it, is not 'at liberty to falsify the meaning' (346), instead, the after-life of the text in translations constitutes the refusal/failure (*Versagen*) of the closure of their 'originals'. And the event of translation repeats this survival, guarantees it in and through the passage of translation. The *supplément* survives all after-lives, so to speak; it lives on as further supplementations. As Derrida puts it: 'translation is neither the life nor the death of the text, only or already its living *on*, its life after life, its life after death' (1979: 102-3); and when he adds that '[t]he same thing will be said of what I call writing, mark, trace, and so on' (103), we can begin to see that in both translating a text, or in reading/writing a text (which in this sense, must really be a double-writing), that in these kinds of iterations, texts live on indefinitely, are rewritten indefinitely. It is this link between reading/writing and translation which will resurface in 5.4; not however through linear descent, but through grafts and supplementations, indeed, fractal multiplication. *

It is in this sense also, that one need not lament that which is apparently lost in translation, for, unlike Gadamer, we do not (have to) expect to retain the totality of the original's 'overtones', and thus are prone to disappointments when (not if) the translation does not measure up

to the great original. Indeed, is is not even a question of a "measuring up", for the very term "original" is already under erasure here), but we rejoice in the disseminating notes, tones, the variations on a theme, that the translation's new melodies will endlessly play. Furthermore, unlike Gadamer, we do not seek to *conquer* foreignness of the other, make it 'clearer', by rendering it transparent, make it 'flatter' by rendering it intelligible, *master* it, appropriate it. This 'traditional form [which]... has as its ideal, with exhaustive translatability, the effacement of language' (Derrida 1979: 93-4), may well have been named a hermeneutics. This effacement of language, of writing, of all that buzzes in disorderly ways, is nothing other than the quest for a manageable, total understanding. Instead of this 're-creation', this kind of equivalence which Gadamer yearns for, but which always ends up as an impossible task, despite all the good will that is then exposed as a will to a mastery, we reiterate with Derrida that the original, rather than as this complete and unified (hermeneutic) construct, 'begins by lacking and by pleading for translation' (1985: 184). As such then, 'if the original calls for a complement, it is because at the origin it was not there without fault, complete, total, identical to itself' (188), and its growth in the after-life of translation (this after-life which assures its survival), is then also its 'growth' as an original (Derrida 1985a: 122). Derrida reminds us though, that '[a]s this growth... it does not reproduce: it adjoins by adding' (1985: 189), and as such translation operates according to the logic of the *supplément*, rather than according to the order of 'representation', 'reproduction' or 'communication'. Here Derrida, following Benjamin:

> Translation augments and modifies the original, which, insofar as it is living on, never ceases to be transformed and to grow. It modifies

the original even as it also modifies the translating language. This process – transforming the original as well as the translation – is the translation contract between the original and the translating text. In this contract, it is a question of neither representation nor reproduction nor communication; rather, the contract is destined to assure a survival... (1985a: 122)

If translation in deconstructive terms figures the 'tower of Babel' as 'the irreducible multiplicity of tongues' and as such 'exhibits an incompletion, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification...' (1985: 165) as Derrida writes in 'Des Tours de Babel', we might well argue that Gadamer not merely laments the fall, the post-Babylonian confusion, but lives in hope of reconciliation. Furthermore, within the context of our foregoing discussions of both Gadamer and Derrida, we might summarize their differences in the following terms: whilst a hermeneutics seeks to mediate a meaning, deconstruction negotiates the very instability of significations; while a hermeneutics seeks to complete an understanding of and with the text to be translated, deconstruction suggests the necessary distance, rupture to the other, for this other to remain other, foreign. To put this differently, if a hermeneutic practice seeks to secure an understanding of the text, striving towards the recovery of a meaningful content, a deconstructive practice will highlight the very indeterminacy of the communicative process. A hermeneutics will work towards a solution of a text's "truth" and its acceptable meanings, seeking to overcome the differences between original and the new context, and deconstruction will perform the plurality of its discursive possibilities, foregrounding the (con)text as a site of inexhaustible productivity. If hermeneutics gives understanding the central role in our engagements with texts,

deconstruction marks the very limits to any total understanding; and if hermeneutics seeks to come to an agreement with the other, deconstruction practices the difference between them.

When Gadamer and Derrida theorize translation, what is posed resepectively by them, is the question of translatability and untranslatability. Having said this, we also have come back to our initial question: what is the relation between hermeneutics and deconstruction, and are their different idioms translatable, or not translatable, into each other. If translation has been singled out here as a site of conflict between their 'two readings of the world' (Deleuze 1984: 52), this site becomes both a stage where these 'two interpretations of interpretation' may be played out, but also a specific stage of their in/commensurability, depending of course, whether one adopts a hermeneutic view of the world (the difference of/ distance from the other can be bridged), or takes a deconstructive stance (the distance, from/ difference of the other must be maintained). Since, according to Derrida, a text (or a discourse) must be translatable, transferrable - for otherwise, as he puts it in 'Living On Border Lines',   'totally untranslatable... the text dies immediately' (Derrida 1979: 98), it would not live on, not survive; and since a text (equally a discourse) is also untranslatable for if it were 'totally translatable... it disappears as a text' (98), [7] we can argue, that translation lives on in precisely this double-bind. It survives because it practices both: translatability and untranslatability. With reference then to our discourses, we must argue that their different idioms are not translatable into each other, nor are their idioms untranslatable, but both - hermeneutics and deconstruction - live on in translation, and as such

they also live on in a double-bind. Neither are these disparate, contradictory discursive frames fused (hermeneutically), nor ruptured (deconstructively), but - as in translation - they are *necessarily* and *impossibly* brought together, transformed, exploded. In translation then might be reflected the *mise-en-abîme* of textuality, might also be refracted the pluralisation of theory "itself".

The 'necessary and impossible' task of our thesis to bring together two contradictory discourses. This bind has been the subtext of our writing throughout, and in consequence we must ask what the purpose has been in bringing together a fellowship of unitarian critics (Iser, Culler, Fish) and a brotherhood of disseminating critics (Hartman, Bloom, Miller, de Man), and finally bringing them face to face in the encounter between Gadamer and Derrida, at the Goethe Institute, in Paris, in 1981. For it could be argued that we have brought into play here two unconnected theoretical frameworks, have caused them to collide in this aporia between discourses; and only in translation, have we connected these two disparate discourses, have performed an "unhappy" (positive) hermeneutics of faith together with a "happy" (negative) hermeneutics of suspicion/deconstruction? Could it not therefore be the case, that translation has served here as that hybrid space, that space in-between, which could accommodate two disparate discourses, that para-site that can/has both separate/d and join/ed these two incommensurable discourses? That is to say, does the site of translation not both separate and join a hermeneutic and a deconstructive discourse? A space, indeed, that,

> has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle from which it grows and overspills... [it] operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoot... it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 25)

Such is Deleuze and Guattari's description of a rhizomatic space. The rhizome, they write, is: 'unlike a structure [...] defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points... [but] the rhizome is made only of lines' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 21). Indeed, 'any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be'. It thus 'ceaselessly establishes connections' (1988: 7). This then is the connection which this thesis seeks to establish between a hermeneutic discourse and a deconstructionist discourse: translation has been the very hybrid, that in-between (para)-site which grafts the tensions between these disparate discourses, hybridizing and supplementing each (as though "one" were original). It thus draws a connective line between the disparate discourses; it does so via 'the logic of the AND' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 25) to return to the rhizome. And we must add that it is not even that the AND is neither a fusion nor re-*fused* nor an either/or; but rather an and-and-and-... It is the middle where hermeneutic understandings are fused and worked towards a synthesis and where deconstruction interrupts and returns marginality. It is where both separate - AND (with capital letters) - clash...

Translation as a terrain where conflicting discourses vie for performative superiority, becomes a kind of Lyotardian 'agonistic field', within which we no longer ask whether something is true, but how it works. Here, translation is no longer governed by meta-prescriptions such as truth, authenticity, universality; nor is the theory by which we articulate translation bound by those rules. External forms of verification and legitimation have been usurped and deposed, and we are therefore left with an agonistic terrain where each discourse sets its own stakes, sets its own

strategic and tactical aims in direct conflict with every other discourse. No longer a question whether discourses find legitimation or not, it becomes a question of their performativity. Translation here becomes a kind of post-modern enterprise, which entertains the competition and the toil of a struggle between conflicting, incommensurable discourses. The goal is not 'truth but performativity'. Since performativity is equated by Lyotard with the goal of power, '[t]he question [then] is to determine what the discourse of power consists of...' (Lyotard 1986: 46). We should like to rephrase this question slightly differently and ask, what kind of power relation does a hermeneutic and a deconstructionist discourse consist of, what powers do they exercise or possess? To map Foucault's notion of micro- and macro-physics onto a deconstructionist and a hermeneutic discourses, allows us to make this tactical move:

> Now the study of this micro-physics presupposes that the power exercised on the body is conceived not as a property, but as a strategy, that its effects of domination are attributed not to 'appropriation', but to dispositions, manoevres, tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it a network of relations, always in tension, always in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess... acquired and preserved (Foucault 1977: 26).

While deconstruction performs power strategically and its effects are attributed to manoevres, techniques, and so on, it can be seen as a micro- power — a power from below; hermeneutics on the other hand, exercises a power which is conceived as a property, a privilege that is acquired and preserved, and whose effects are attributed to appropriation, so that it could be seen as a macro-physics — a power from above. This then is our argument: if deconstruction is a strategic, subversive power, hermeneutics is a tradition-bound, imposing power. So far though, in our argument, we have not suggested the fusion, complementarity or balance of power between these two disourses. Instead, we have pointed to the logic of the AND to

out-maneuver the aporia between unconnected discourses. And Why? (At this precise juncture, our subtext moves into the main corpus of our thesis): to avoid totalization and aggravate the power to be dispersed. This is to say, for Foucault, as for us, power is never overcome, but redistributed through its conflict with other powers. This is why the two theoretical discursive frameworks of this thesis do not merge in an overarching totality but activate a multiplication via the logic of the AND. Here, we also finally return to our much quoted snippet of this conversation between Deleuze and Foucault. As Deleuze says,

> A theory does not totalize, it is an instrument for multiplication and it multiplies itself. It is in the nature of power to totalize and it is your position, and one I fully agree with, that theory is by nature opposed to power. As soon as a theory is enmeshed in a particular point, we realize that it will never possess the slightest practical importance unless it can erupt in other areas. (Foucault 1977a: 208)

And we would like to add, here the double writing of reading and "its" theory erupted in the domain of translation, without making recourse to a singular overarching and totalizing description. This is to say, we have kept the critical process open, have not used theory to master the object of our enquiry, but have allowed it to multiply. In short, we have allowed postmodernism into the realm of theory. And it is this passage which we shall explore in the following sections.

5.2 Babelian *déTour*: about Theory

If hermeneutics and deconstruction thus 'stand in a relation of alterity to each other, of non-oppositional difference' (Palmer 1989: 9), and if 'we cannot choose between them' (1978: 292), as Derrida clearly suggests in 'Structure, Sign and Play', then we may say with Richard Palmer that 'one must practice both, speaking more than one language at once' (1989: 10). The playfulness of plus d'une langue already adumbrates this pluralization of theory. For as Derrida puts it in '*Des Tours de Babel*' ' 'no theorization, inasmuch as it is produced in a language, will be able to dominate the Babelian performance' (Derrida 1985: 175), which is to say, that no one, single reading or singular theory will be able to dominate, let alone totalize that which it attempts to read/theorize. And, translation, "itself" this inbetween-ness - what we shall from now on call the *para-site* - of a Babelonian performance, practices this performativity of theory, its pluralisation. In this sense also, 'theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice, it is practice' (Foucault 1977a: 208), for, we can add with a slight twist, and pertinent to our discussion, since the para-site of translation reveals the very limits of the applicability of one theory, it highlights the pluralisation of theory, and it makes visible that

> from the moment a theory moves into its proper domain, it begins to
> encounter obstacles, walls, blockages which require its relay by
> another type of discourse (it is through this other discourse that it
> eventually passes to a different domain). Practice is a set of relays
> from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one
> practice to another. (Deleuze 1977: 206)

In this account, theory is not applied to a practice, from an above, nor does practice in any way 'inspire theory' (Deleuze 1977: 205). The

relation between theory and practice is no longer to be 'understood in terms of [such] a process of totalization' (205), precisely because that relation is 'far more partial and fragmentary' (205) than we may hitherto have thought. Which is precisely why Deleuze has argued that 'a theory is always local and related to a limited field' (205), [2] rather than imposed from an omnicient, global perspective. Theory is both local and site-specific; etymologically then we have returned to its roots, that of theatai, which means to watch, contemplate, look at, etc, and which in Greek is also related to theatron, the word for theatre. The link between *theatai* and *theoria* is therefore, according to Herbert Blau, that 'in the act of seeing, there is already theory' (1982: 1). Seeing, spectating, speculating are also acts of judgment, which means that the final verdict lies with the spectator, in his/her judgments upon events, rather than in the articulation of 'ahistorical truths' (Birmingham 1989: 206). Since spectators are part of events, participate in events, it follows that their judgments and speculations are also tied to a very specific, we may say, localised particular event, production.

This is clearly related to Foucault's notion of 'local criticism' (as we discussed in the final part of 4.4). In Foucault's terms, 'the local character of criticism indicates in reality... an autonomous, non-centralised kind of theoretical production, one that is to say, whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established régimes of thought' (1980: 81). As such, this noncentralised production gives onto a multiplicity of speculations and readings, a profusion of perspectives. Rather than taking these perspectives as at least potentially constituted in advance by the avowed presence of a collection of individuated

consciousnesses, these multiplicitous theoretical-theatrical productions do not, in Foucault's words, constitute a 'soggy eclecticism' (81) through the reduction of production to individuals, but rather an additional multiplication of theoretical-theatrical production through other channels. Every perspective, rather than being the location for a free and autonomous point of view on an equally free and autonomous object, is precisely a local production, a relay in a generalized network of other productions.

Theory should no longer be thought of as a kind of total vision, '[demanding] of itself that it should provide a comprehensive description' (Gruber 1989: 194); but rather in Foucauldian 'local criticism', theorizing, criticizing, reading or seeing, spectating and speculating are always partial, fragmentary, refracted. Local theory then undertakes to break apart, break open the very object under scrutiny as well as that totalizing comprehensive vision implied by "Theory" (with a capital T). Theory becomes hybrid by the partiality of its visions, by the partiality of its speculations, just as the object, that unified entity, which theory sought to reveal, or at least sought to construct, becomes a re-source for competing theoretical productions. [3] It is in this light that Foucault writes: 'theory... is local and regional [...] and not totalizing' (1977a: 208).

Foucault's avoidance of the word theory is also de Man's resistance to theory. As we saw in section 3.5, for de Man, 'theory is strictly impossible', that is, according to Norris, 'in so far as it aims – as most theories do, to achieve a sense of having thoroughly mastered the relevant problems and issues' (1988a: 42). When de Man therefore writes in *The*

Resistance to Theory, that '[n]othing can overcome the resistance to theory since theory *is* itself this resistance' (1986: 19), we can begin to read de Man's own aporetic discourse, the undecidability between his blindness or his insight, as this precise resistance to "Theory" (with the captial T). De Man's own discourse performs the aporia of theory, the aporia between theorems, in an attempt to undermine the solidity of Theory, and to undo this unified perspective which theory, by its very definition, had thought to furnish. 'To de Man, such illusions', in Norris's words, 'are precisely what criticism has to give up as it comes to recognize those deviant linguistic structures, or elements of rhetorical "undecidabilities", that work to undermine any form of self-assured hermeneutic understanding' (1988a: 42). The linguistic undecidabilities, be it in a literary or a theoretical text, are what is at work in language, are at work in phrases such as *plus d'une langue* and *Sprache verspricht sich*.

Once again, theory is as much part of language, as it is 'another text in an unstable network of texts' (Bennington 1993: 92), part of the Babel of textuality. Barthes's essay 'The Death of an Author' (see section 2.4), exemplifies this point, not only because 'the structure of the essay is fragmentary, discontinuous paragraphs articulated by no linear logic' (Moriarity 1991: 101), but also because it plays out the very contradiction between a positive and a negative hermeneutics. When Michael Moriarty therefore points out that '[t]heory here is itself implicated in this process: it assumes the status of a word-hoard, a store of signifiers used to produce further signifiers (writing)' (102), and thus draws attention to the 'fragmentation of discourse' and the consequent 'multiplicity of discourses' in 'The Death of the Author', it is to argue that this

'plurality of discourse' is one of 'the indispensable conditions in which writing about writing can be true to its object, to itself' (102).

Moriarty's notion of the 'inexhaustability of discourse' (102), is not unlike David Carroll's call for the openness of critical practice. Carroll, however, does not follow through the implications of this rethinking of theory in terms of a writing practice, does not deal with the 'plurality of discourses' within a particular theoretical text, as Moriarty does, but turns to the question of the "state" of "theory" ◄ in more general terms. Examining "theory's state/s" in the light of the increasing pluralisation of theory within various disciplines, Carroll writes in his introduction to *The States of "Theory"*:

> The best forms of theory could be said to imply a critical practice that does not seek to institute itself and its way of doing theory and thus exclude or dominate all others... [These forms of theory] seek to ask different kinds of questions or to ask questions in a different way, to make possible other forms of critical practice. Theory in this sense has the goal to keep the critical process open, of undermining and exceeding the state of theory at any particular moment, as well as the states of the various fields and disciplines with which it intersects. [/] In its critical form at least, theory may be best described as the hybrid and open field in which the possibilities of the various disciplines and fields it crosses through and which cross through it are persued and experimented with, where alternate critical practices are developed and tried out. It is where the assumptions, presuppositions, and limitations of the various fields and disciplines are analyzed, confronted, and exceeded, where "the given" or "the unquestioned" is never taken as determining. (1990: 3)

Theory in Carroll's terms must both exceed its own, proper state, and constitute the site where assumptions of various fields, disciplines are exceeded; theory, for Carroll must both be capable of transforming "itself" and the fields it irrigates. As he explains only a few pages later, all disciplines or fields 'come to be involved in the same critical-theoretical task of transforming not only their own *state* but the *state* of theory as

well' (5). [5] We have already seen in the context of our own discussion of translation, how it came to be involved in the same critical-theoretical task of transforming not only its own state (it became marked by both a reading and a writing, an interpretation and *écriture*, a hermeneutic and a deconstructive discourse) but also in transforming the "state" of theory "itself", insofar as theory ceased to be the singular totalizing description of a field and became instead irreducibly plural. In short, 'no theorization, inasmuch as it is produced in a language, will be able to dominate the Babelian performance' (Derrida 1985: 175), will be able to dominate a field or discipline, or more to the point here, the site of translation. [6]

The double movement which has emerged for us so far, is both the transformation of the state of translation and the transformation of the state of theory from cyclops to Babel. Each movement has an effect on the other. Translation as the very site which highlights this plural of theory, simultaneously makes visible its own re-formation(s) at the hands of this theorization. Before we consider this re-formation of the "state" (and status) of translation though, we need to examine the implications of this pluralization of theory further. In an essay entitled 'Some Statements and Truisms about Neologisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and other small Seismisms' (which also forms part of the book *The States of 'Theory'*) Derrida, by addressing the state/s of "theory", directly concerns himself with the question of the 'pluralization of the "states" of theory' (1990: 71). He writes,

> There are two interpretations possible for this plurality which cannot be reduced to any form of eclecticism or conceivable dialectic. Those two interpretations of this *convergent competition* are themselves engaged in a nonsymmetrical... *competition*. (71-72)

Derrida describes one of these interpretations as being interpretive 'through and through'; the other he describes as merely including an 'interpretive moment'. Interpretation proper, as we might therefore call it, is that interpretation, according to Derrida, which 'lends meaning to this *convergent competition*' (72). As he puts it, '[i]t is enough for this interpretation to say that conflicts of theories are conflicts of interpretation, competitions aiming at the hegemony of one interpretation and of what an institution of a community of interpreters represents' (72). Derrida consequently sees this kind of interpretation as operating on the principle of the 'will to power', and as such we might easily see how, though unnamed, a hermeneutics might fit this description. The 'other relationship to competitive plurality' operates on the principle of nonclosure, operates according to 'disseminal alterity or alteration, which would make impossible the pure identity, the pure identification of what it simultaneously makes possible' (72), and 'which would thus *de*limit and *de*stabilize the state... to which it gives rise in order for this state... to take place' (72). Furthermore, 'that which thus allows them to take place has no stable or theorizable place', and consequently, 'it is in this non-place that the appearance of the effects of deconstruction can be situated' (72).

These 'two general interpretations possible of this plurality', of the "states" of theory can also be mapped onto the 'two interpretations of interpretation' which Derrida outlines in 'Structure Sign and Play'. The interpretation which seeks 'to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth' (1978: 292), is precisely the one which is 'interpretive through and through', whereas the 'second interpretation', as that joyous

interpretation which 'affirms play' (292), merely includes an interpretive moment. This 'second interpretation' neither excludes the other interpretation, nor sets itself up against it in opposition, instead, Derrida writes, 'it would deal with this multiplicity as a law of the field, a clause of non-closure...' (1990: 72) This 'interpretation', which is 'neither a theory nor a philosophy... neither a school nor a method. It is not even a discourse, nor an act, nor a practice. It is what happens...' (85), he gives the name of deconstruction. Though these 'two interpretations of interpretation... are absolutely irreconcilable' (1978: 293), and 'although [he] do[es] not believe that today there is any question of *choosing*' (293) between them, these disparate, heterogenous interpretations are nevertheless not antagonistic.

The assertion that these 'absolutely irreconcilable', divergent interpretations of interpretation are nevertheless not antagonistic requires some clarification, to say the least – as Luce Irigaray puts it, '*[p]eaceful coexistence?* I don't know just what that means' (1985a: 130). Thus when Derrida writes that 'the conflict and competition' between theoretical 'jetties', as he calls them, is not 'a matter of an opposition', [7] nor a matter of 'an *antagonistic* confrontation', he gives two very specific reasons:

> The first reason is that each *jetty*... claims to comprehend itself by comprehending all others – by extending all its borders, exceeding them, inscribing them within itself. [...] The second reason which is closely related to the first... doesn't allow any jetty to give rise to the reading of a table ['chart','tree of theory' (64)], the reason of a table which would thus classify the totality of the theoretical potentialities – this second reason is that each *species* in this table constitutes its own identity – by contamination, parasitism, grafts, organ transplants, incorporation, etc... (1990: 66)

The first 'jetty' clearly moves according to the rules of a *macro-physics* (Foucault), moves in a totalizing gesture of appropriation. This is the 'stabilizing jetty' (84) which seeks to preserve itself by incorporating the other and as such, we can say, seeks to find a home for the other in itself, in which case, it acts as a kind of host, and is not antagonistic but rather accommodating; we may name this the hermeneutic 'jetty', on Derrida's behalf. The second 'jetty' manoeuvers according to the logic of a *micro-physics*, not from above but from below. It does not incorporate the other by subsumption, but inhabits the other, as a parasite might inhabit its host-system. This 'destabilising or devastating jetty' (Derrida's terms, not mine, 84) adapts to its host who adapts to it. It is where host and parasite inter-sect in that 'non-place' (72) of deconstructive 'parasitism'.

When Derrida therefore writes in *Of Grammatology* that '[t]he movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures' (1976: 24), we begin to see, not only why this theoretical 'jetty' cannot stand in an antagonistic relation with an/other 'jetty', for it inhabits the other from within, but also why it is not a matter of an opposition between two, conflicting jetties. 'Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure' (24), it becomes no longer possible to either distinguish, or as Derrida proceeds, 'to isolate their elements and atoms' (24), which is precisely why, of course, 'the very enterprise of deconstruction ["itself" also] always in a certain way falls prey to its work' (24). Both parasite and host fall prey to 'parasitism'.

The very borders between their "bodies" are thus deconstructed, as well as each body, "each" theoretical corpus.

Furthermore, since 'Derrida's philosopher knows', according to Spivak, 'that there is no tool that does not belong to the metaphysical box, and proceeds from there' (1976: xix), and thus 'makes do with things that were meant perhaps for other ends' (xix), as a *bricoleur* makes do', we have to realize just how much and despite 'the joyful yet laborious strategy of rewriting the old language... we are within the "clôture" of metaphysics, even as we attempt to undo it' (xx). For, as Robert Bernasconi put it, if '[o]ne of the readings remains *inside* metaphysics, while the other stands *outside*':

> To maintain only the one or the other ['jetty'] would be... to remain bound to the system of metaphysical oppositions. Only by maintaining both readings can one "displace" that logic'. The text is ultimately undecidable between the twin readings. (1989: 246)

Since we cannot therefore step outside of metaphysics, nor are able to devastate it from the outside, Derrida lays out a strategy to dismantle, or as he puts it in *Margins*, 'to deconstruct the metaphysical and rhetorical schema at work in [the other 'jetty']..., not in order to reject or discard them, but to reinscribe them otherwise' (1982: 215).

Whether we call this strategy a 'convergent competition' between a 'stabilizing' and a 'destabiling jetty' as Derrida does, or a 'double reading, a 'twin reading', a 'juxtaposition of readings', a 'unitary reading' against a 'disseminating reading' (1989: 248) as Bernasconi does, we can nevertheless see how it is part of the wider theme of 'parasitism';

precisely because parasitism works not by opposition, but infusion, intussusception: that which contaminates, grafts, transplants...

In a similar register, Hillis Miller develops deconstruction's parasitism. Miller rewrites the 'relation of a "deconstructive" interpretation to "the obvious or univocal reading"' (1979: 218). We remember that M. H. Abrams saw deconstructive readings as parasitical on the 'obvious and univocal reading' that is possible from a text. Miller proceeds to deconstruct this, by suggesting that the 'obvious and univocal reading' may itself be the parasite in this relation, may not at all be the natural reading per se, but may have imposed itself upon us, may have infested us like a virus, inhabited us, our thinking, just like a parasite might inhabit its host (Miller 1979: 222-223, my section 3.4).[1] Both readings, Miller argues, are linked, not in an oppositional relation to the other, nor in a 'dialectical synthesis' (224) but instead:

> On the one hand, the "obvious and univocal reading" always contains the "deconstructive reading" as a parasite encrypted within itself as part of itself. On the other hand, the "deconstructive" reading can by no means free itself from the metaphysical reading it means to contest. [A text] in itself, then, is neither the host nor the parasite but the food they both need... Both readings are at the same table together, bound by a strange relation of reciprocal obligation, of gift or food-giving and gift of food-receiving. (225) [2]

This is why Miller can argue that '[t]he two, logocentricsm and nihilism, are related to one another in a way which is not antithesis and which may not be synthesized in any dialectical *Aufhebung*' (228). Indeed, it is only in this 'tension between dialectic and undecidability' that 'this form of criticism remains open, in the ceaseless movement of an "in place of" without resting place' (250), resists totalization. This is also the

Derridian 'non-place where the effects of deconstruction can be situated' (Derrida 1990: 72), from which parasitism operates.

Is that 'non-place' also our para-site from which parasitism operates? (No, we may preemptively assert.) And despite our allegiancies to a deconstructive discourse, do we wish to remain parasitists with Derrida, 'make do' with deconstruction, as deconstruction 'made do' with the 'metaphysical box of tools'? Can we really not free ourselves from a 'metaphysical reading' as Miller has it, [9] despite all the 'devastating' tendencies that Derrida foresees for deconstruction? Can we really not 'reject and discard' metaphysical schema, are we condemned to merely 'reinscribe' them? Derrida may have displaced in Bernasconi's words the logic of oppositions, but as yet has not ob-literated it with a logic of profusion. Deconstruction is, forever, burdened by the weight of metaphysical closure, at once imminent and deferred. By concentrating on the problem of closure, deconstruction has a certain and inevitable limiting effect. The problem of closure, as such, builds in a mechanism that wards off 'off-the-wall interpretation[s]' (1980: 357), to use a Fishian phrase, and institutes an 'indispensable guardrail' (Derrida 1976: 158) as a safety measure to protect us from the "anything goes", protect us from a 'critical production [that] would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to almost anything' (158), i.e. the logic of profusion. [10] Could it therefore not be argued that Derrida's (or Miller's) parasitism, as a destabilising deconstructive strategy, whilst it is an "instrument for the pluralization of theory", is not, however, the Deleuzian 'instrument for multiplication' (1977: 208), which we applied to the deadlock formed by hermeneutics and deconstruction?

Let us answer this question by using the resources of the term parasite, that Miller made available to us, even further. Hermeneutics, for instance, from the moment it is confronted with two different sites (para: between), it feels compelled to get closer to this other (par: alongside, near, beside). Hermeneutics is very much a host, wanting to be a host-site (host merges with the (para) site, having overcome the between, the para). Different theories are thus cordially invited to share the food (sitos) of the host over some friendly conversation. Since this food though is to be thoroughly digested and utterly consumed, the para (between) site is overcome, and the parasite agrees with the host that both must reach a common ground; in other words the host-site. Deconstruction, on the other hand, practices parasitism, which is to say, it inhabits and by inhabiting it interferes (*le parasite*: interference). Once it has interfered, the host may well end up as the stranger (ghos-ti: stranger, guest, host), and the parasite may well turn out to be the socialite to this stranger. This move is deconstructive, of course. Our move is to take the parasite, parasitisim, deconstruction yet one more step "forward", and "through" (per).

And is the para, to use Miller's words, that 'double antithetical prefix signifying at once proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority' (1979: 219), also fusion and rupture, mediation and interruption (our para between hermeneutics and deconstruction) then? If the para, according to Miller, 'is not only simultaneously on both sides of the boundary line between inside and outside', but 'is also the boundary itself, the screen which is a permeable membrane connecting inside and outside', and if it thus 'confuses them with

one another, allowing the outside in, making the inside out, *dividing and joining* them' (219, emphasis added), then we may well ask at this juncture, is this our para also, that which divides and joins a hermeneutic and a deconstructive discourse? Or could we not go one step further here (per) and suggest that our para-site (with a hyphen) not merely divides and joins *two* sites, but perhaps is itself already further hyphenated into localised micro-sites? Our hyphen then between the para and its sites indeed further sub-divides and disjoins the parasite, further multiplies "its" sites; works according to the logic of the virus, that 'most frightening version of the parasite... who has... the strange capacity... to turn the host into multitudinous proliferating replications of itself' (Miller 1979: 222), to turn any site into multitudinous proliferating replications of fractal para-sites.

Whilst deconstructive parasitism claims a non-conflictual, non-antagonistic co-habitation, and its parasite merely inhabits to destabilize, to disrupt and interfere, our parasite proliferates and exhausts the available resources, multiplying the vectors of infection. Nevertheless though it is this deconstructive parasite, and its brand of parasitism which has given us the very germs of this logic of proliferation. Deconstructive parasitism might not work according to the logic of the AND, might not operate according to the logic of profusion, but at least provides the food (sitos) or nourishment on which our subsequent argument can feed further.

5.3 Making a Difference: Simulacra

The implications of Derrida's notion of the pluralization of theory (parasitism) as against Deleuze's multiplication of theory (para-sites) can be explored further via a consideration of Deleuze's essay on 'Plato and the Simulacrum'. The function of simulacrum is not unlike that of our parasite (with a hyphen), and might as such be used to draw to a conclusion not only our discussion of theory as a 'an instrument of multiplication', but draw together our observations so far on translation, as the very site of this multiplication.

The world Deleuze describes in 'Plato and the Simulacrum' is not the world of the 'two interpretations of interpretation' which Derrida describes in 'Structure Sign and Play'. For, the 'two readings of the world', which Deleuze outlines in his essay — 'one [which] bids us to think in terms of similarity, or a previous identity, while... the other invites us to think of similarity or even identity as the product of a basic disparity' (1984: 52) — multiply even further in the course of his argument. According to Deleuze '[t]he first one defines exactly the world of copies or of representations... The second, against the first, defines the world of simulacra'. ' The first one asks questions as to whether the copy is a good likeness of the model; if it is, then the difference between model and copy is bridged, indeed the difference between them becomes effaced. If the copy does not ressemble the model, if it is a bad likeness, it is a bad copy, precisely because it shows up the difference between original and copy. [2] The second reading assumes that the model "itself" is already constructed around disparity, and as such expects there to be a

difference between model and copy. As a result, it asks different kinds of questions as regards the copy. Rather than relating the copy to that which is already a disparity (i.e. the model), rather than negatively comparing the copy to *the* model, it examines 'the status or position' (52) of the copy "itself". To therefore assume "originary" disparity, [3] is no longer to to presuppose the copy as secondary, second-rate, as that bad imitation, that "parasite", which has failed to faithfully model that from which it apparently derives. Consequently, there is a shift of enquiry: it is less a question of the relation of model to copy, than one of the nexus-relays between copies. This constitutes a move away from a world of superior models/plentiful originals with its inferior copies/poor reproductions, to a world of endless simulacra/productions. This then is the world of *dispars*, where, as Deleuze has it, '[t]he simulacrum is not a degraded copy, rather it contains a positive power which negates *both original and copy*, *both model and reproduction*' (1984: 53). In short, the simulacrum's 'positive power' is that it is productive.

The Deleuzian simula crum   not only undermines or subverts hierarchies, but 'renders the notion of hierarchy impossible' (53), indeed, '[t]here is no possible hierarchy: neither second, nor third....' (53). Derrida also, of course, dismantles hierarchies, though he proceeds very differently. Whilst seeking out the privile ged term in an opposition, then reversing this opposition by demonstrating the play of *différance*, the tracery of relations which always already contaminates each element in an opposition, he undermines any notion of the stability between "two elements", and thus dislocates the (non)opposition. This renders untenable, for instance, the stable relation between a model on the one side, and its

copy on the other side. The Derridian strategy which is operative here, does not so much 'reject or discard' the model (i.e, metaphysics is the model as far as Derrida is concerned), but seeks 'to reinscribe [it] differently' (1982: 215). In deconstructive terms then, we might see how the model becomes contaminated by the trace of the copy, and how the play of *différance* between "model" and "copy" endlessly reinscribes their relation differently, reinstates their new non-hierarchical, non-oppositional non-relation. The model was always already a copy. Always and already. Still and forever. The future as an endless return of the model that is a copy; and thus, the difference between model and copy, is the undecidable movement of *différance*. Neither model nor copy, but *différance*, (neither host nor parasite, but parasitism) Neither/nor.

Since Derrida moreover, as we have seen, uses tools from a 'metaphysical box' (Spivak 1976: xix) to undermine and subvert metaphysics from within (the microphysics of Derridian parasitism), and if deconstruction is a reading strategy of 'infinite complexity', according to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, which draws within itself the 'outer limit of the closure' of metaphysics (1993: 39), then it remains simultaneously inside and outside of this (en)closure; it remains between and cannot make a choice between. This neither/nor – neither stasis, nor movement – this rather negative economy, is precisely the juncture at which it becomes impossible for deconstruction to choose between 'two interpretations of interpretation':

> For my part, although these two interpretations must acknowledge and accentuate their difference and define their irreducibility, I do not believe that 'today there is any question of *choosing* – in the first place because... the category of choice seems particularly trivial; and in the second, because we must first try to conceive of the commom

ground, and the *différance* of this irreducible difference. (Derrida 1978: 293)

In an attempt to defer his own binary totalization (the "either/or" of a 'common ground' between two interpretations), Derrida defers the very question of interpretation: *neither* a question of choice between the 'two interpretations', *nor* a question of choice at all. Neither/nor.

The question, which arises for us then, is this. Is the 'common ground' of the two interpretations different from *différance*? Does *différance* lie alongside the common ground or destroy it irrevocably? Does *différance* inhabit the common ground while somehow leaving the communality of this ground intact, still common? All these questions are resultant upon Derrida's refusal to choose between the two interpretations, since "either (one) or (the other)" would turn the common ground into the ground of the separation between the proper and the improper. If the common ground remains, however, then on it is established the impropriety of the proper, and this as a property of the proper. What difference does *différance* make, then? The common ground puts up (with) parasitic *différance* quite happily, it is not in the least troubled by it, not disturbed or uprooted. Derrida's replacement of the "either/or" of choice with the "neither/nor" of undecidability thus constitutes a prosponement of intervention. What this "indifferent difference" is then, is simply the refusal of choice, the defusing of any strategy that might make, might be productive of (a) difference. Where is productivity, the production of difference? Where is the politics of an in(ter)vention here?

To revise the relation between model and copy as an undecidable, differing and deferred movement, to reinsribe the model as a trace of 'copy', is merely to undermine the ground of the model, an intervention, rather than an invention of the model as a copy. If Derrida's world is marked by undecidability, Deleuze's world of the simulacra, on the other hand, as a copy of a copy of a copy is not the different reinscription of the model in its relation to the copy, but its rewriting as a copy. The model is not reinscribed differently, but rejected and discarded, re-written and re-invented altogether. When he therefore writes that '[t]he goal is the subversion of the world' (1984: 53) for, '[t]he simulacrum... negates *both original and copy, both model and reproduction*' and adds in the same breath that '[i]t doesn't even work to invoke the model of the Other, because no model resists the vertigo of the simulacrum' (53), then we can see how Deleuze 'sets up a world of nomadic distributions and consecrated anarchy' (53) where we no longer speak of n/either model n/or copy, but of simulacra.

Deleuze's simulacrum not only presumes that there is "disparity" in the model (as Derrida does, of course), but, more importantly, that there is little point in 'invok[ing] the model' in the first place. Deleuze thus bypasses the model, and chooses instead to concentrate on the production of the copy as copy. How does this come about? Paradoxically, the copy is produced by the return. This is a paradox insofar as we would assume that the return is always a return of something, and that this something would be what gives rise to the possibility of its copy. The copy then, we would assume, would be the copy of this something which somehow would remain the

same and constitute thereby the basis for its return, much like a xerox.

Deleuze writes that

> not *everything* constitutes a return. The Return is still selective,
> establishing differences... What is excluded, what *does not constitute*
> a return, are those things that presuppose the Same and the Like,
> those things that pretend to correct divergence, to recenter the
> circles or to make order out of chaos, to provide a model and make a
> copy. (55, translation modified)

The same then does not constitute a return: rather the return constitutes difference. This is to say, that for the same to return there would need to be a difference between the same as same and the numerically distinct same that would return to it. The return of the same then constitutes at least a repetition of numerically distinct "sameness". This "sameness" is then clearly an elision of the (at least numerical) distinctness, the difference constitutive of the possibility of repetition. Insofar then as the same does not constitute a return, since the return is only possible on the basis of (not merely numerical) difference, we can see that what returns is the copy, since the copy affirms its status as a product of difference.

Logically then it follows that the model must 'make[] of unlikeness the only resemblance' (55), for how otherwise could it make itself distinct from the copy? Since this is also however the very condition of the copy, as we have just seen, then the model is not unlike the copy, indeed it has the same qualities as the copy (thus far, we have only, following Deleuze, insisted on numerical or quantitative distinction), it is not different to it, but the same as it. In other words, it is a simulacrum. The model, here, is not merely marked by "copy", the model is not simply a copy also, but the copy becomes a model. Difference here is not reinscribed, in the Derridian sense, but conditions the becoming-copies of the copy per se.

Whereas difference is always reinscribed through *différance*, this Derridian deconstructive move must proceed from the presumption then, that difference is already inscribed before the possibility of any reinsription (Yale criticism's 'within'); [4] for Deleuze though, difference is not something that happens (as Derrida claimed for deconstruction: 'it is neither a theory nor a philosophy... neither a school nor a method... nor an act, nor a practice. It is what happens...' [1990: 85]), but something that is always in production and produced. The return is the production of the copy, and what is endlessly produced is the very logic of simulation, the simulacrum. As Deleuze sums up this point, the simulacrum 'does not presuppose the Same and the Like, but rather, sets up that which differs as the only Same and makes the unlikeness the only resemblance' (55). Which is also, of course, why Deleuze argues that 'not *everything* constitutes a return' as we have seen.

By insisting that '[t]he Return is still selective, establishing differences', and that '[w]hat it chooses [*selectionner*] are all the processes that oppose choice' (1984: 55), Deleuze turns the possibility of productive difference into a necessity (both strategic and otherwise). This is not therefore to say that there is always the possibility of further choice, but the return has usurped the possibility of the same and instituted the neccessity of productive difference. Undecidability (the Derriddian non-choice) will no longer do (silence will not do); re-inscription will no longer do (difference within will not do), precisely because it avoids the necessity of this choice, that transforms choice into neccessity. We might say then, if for Derrida there is only the (in)difference of *différance*, for Deleuze there is only the affirmation

(the neccessity) of becoming different (copies of copies, the 'eternal

return' of difference). To illustrate this point, we shall rewrite this

Deleuzian passage:

> For between the [re]construction which conserves and perpetuates the
> established order of representations, models, and copies, [and the
> deconstruction which reinscribes difference in identity, ascribes that
> there is no difference between (the old) model and (its) copy, because
> there is only (in)difference;] and the destruction of models and
> copies which sets up a creative chaos, there is a great difference;
> that chaos which sets in motion the simulacra, [is not something that
> happens, but has no option but be actively produced, it produces
> difference, makes a difference]. *

The difference is then, that Derrida's philosopher still uses the

tools of the metaphysical box, even though he subverts, revises and

reinscribes them by inhabiting them. For the Deleuzian theoretician though,

'a theory is exactly like a box of tools.[...] It must be useful. It must

function. And not for itself' (1977: 208). Thus Deleuze boldly asserts:

'[w]e don't revise a theory, but construct new ones, we have no choice but

to make others...' (Deleuze 1977: 208) We might therefore argue that if a

hermeneutics transforms a theory, then it is by subsuming it, if

deconstruction transforms theories, then it is by inhabiting them, the kind

of post-modern Deleuzian move though is to transform the "state" of

"theory". Theory is not a coherent structuration or framework, nor a

strategy for intervention, but it is a tactics, a 'box of tools', from

which we can take what is useful, what we need for the moment. We take what

is appropriate, not to appropriate or to inhabit, not to make it our

property or to borrow its properties, and not to add together with, fuse it

with "our own" to gain a greater vision, a more comprehensive all-

encompassing Theory, nor to supplement it, revise and deconstruct

an/other's theory, but to invent and construct with that which is useful,

new theoretical 'jetties'. Rather than retracing, remapping that which lies in the past, the Deleuzian theorist travels a new terrain. She neither reconstructs nor deconstructs, but she pillages from the rags of post-modernity, and adds to what she has already poached, multiplies her spoils. Above all else, "theory" must function, it must be productive, it must make a difference.

How then does this transformation of theory transform the field of translation (to return to the second part of our opening question for this section)? What difference can theory as this 'instrument for multiplication' make to translation? (Later, we shall also deal with the question of how this theoretical approach, which at least theoretically can make a difference to a field, can make a difference in practice to translation?) Translation, as we have seen, falls between multiple and conflicting demands. As this agonistic field, it sustains within it a multitude of discourses, and contains within it the struggle amongst these different discourses; an in-between site where disparate discourses 'meet, clash or exist in a modus vivendi' (Hoesterey 1991: x); not a 'non-place' (Derrida), but a heterotopic place (Foucault), a para-site, so to speak, where discourse connect rhizomatically. What we have been mapping then, is neither a hermeneutic unified, nor a deconstructive undecidable space, but a productive post-modern terrain for translation.

'Postmodernism', according to Ihab and Sally Hassan, 'has become a current and tenacious trope of tendencies in theatre, dance, music, art, and architecture; in literature and criticism; in philosophy, psychoanalysis, historiography, in mass communications, cybernetic

technologies, and sometimes even in the sciences...' (1983: 14), we can now add translation to this list. The *Zeitgeist* of post-modernism, as the very crossroads where a multitude of debates from different areas intersect, is, of course, unrepentantly babylonian: always at the crossroads with other disciplines, always between different disciplines, between cultures, contexts, texts, languages and theorems, always transgressing into other spheres. At precisely this juncture, translation crosses paths with post-modernism, and at this juncture also, it finds itself transformed. This is to say, if no single theorization can dominate the Babelian performance, *•* can master the *plus d'une langue* which manifests itself with such unrivalled force in (the field of) translation, then translation forces the very theories which articulate it to transform, and in turn, it transforms itself into that post-modern hybrid which calls all monism into question and gives birth to multiplicities. Henceforth, translation is not only the para-site for the Babel of theory, transforms/"babelizes" theory, but "itself" becomes transformed into a supremely post-modern product. Such is the transversal connection we have drawn between theory and translation

The post-modern mode, which characterizes (our approach to) theory (and in turn gives translation its transformed character) is, to use Wolfgang Welsch's words here, 'exoteric', i.e. open and capable of relating a multitude of discourses, and not 'esoteric' like the integrative unifying mechanisms of its traditional precursor modernism (Welsch 1988). We can gain an insight here of how post-modernism works: if modernism itself is marked by plurality, it nevertheless strives to regain the lost centre, if modernism is marked by fragmentation, it tries to recuperate the lost unity. In other words, if modernism has lamented this very fragmentation of

existence, post-modernism welcomes the loss of a totalizing coherence. Following Welsch, this constitutes an important shift of attitude: one is plagued by lament, the other celebrates and embraces the promise of multiplicity. Modernism and post-modernism are not in opposition to each other, rather, modernism has promised multiplicity (through its own plurality) but retracted, modernism has harboured within it the very promises which post-modernism then claims and produces. Post-modernism cashes in, so to speak, on modernism and it does this joyfully and without regret. This clearly relates to the shift which we have traced from a kind of hermeneutic either/or which seeks to overcome the very schism between either and or, to a deconstructive neither/nor which is suspended in the negative economy of the very undecidability between neither and nor, to the post-modern 'logic of the AND' which affirmatively produces differences. This is also then, why modernism and post-modernism do not stand in opposition to each other: hermeneutically that opposition is not overcome, deconstructively the trace or *différance* does not blur the boundaries, but in good post-modern fashion the post-modern virus turns the modern host into 'multitudinous proliferating replications of itself'. It is in this sense that post-modern theory can claim a potential which was part of modernism. It does not, however, incorporate, include, make a modernist discourse a part of its own, its own property, nor merely resist, subvert and reinsribe modernism, [7] but, in effect, it multiplies the sheer number of discourses at its disposal. In doing so, it clearly is capable of h- eotopia; it is open and conflictual, but never intergrative, unifying or totalizing.

Translation in accord with this post-modern mode, also undergoes a shift from 'the one to the many' (Calinescu 1991). No longer devalued as a bad copy, and measured against the superiority of the Great Original, no longer accused of betraying its source, attention is shifted to its many multivalent versions. ◦ No longer subject(ed) to the notion of a universal and timeless quality of the original model, one need no longer search on the bookshelves for the author-ized translation, the definitive version, verified and legitimated by the Author, but one may select amongst the many translated versions for as customers, which is as capital defines us, one may enjoy the consumer's choice. It is this positivity in attitude which post-modernism gives to translation, and as such there should also be a concomitant change of treatment: whereby translation is not regarded in terms of loss but gain. And here, it is not merely that the arrival of each and every newly translated version always already calls its original into question, nor that translation always already signals the failure of the closure of its original, in the face of the sheer plurality of translated versions, but, more importantly, in Deleuze's sense, that translation as simulacrum produces difference, and affirms its new status through making the interminable production of difference into a necessity.

5.4 Beyond (Two) Interpretation(s): Translation as (Re)Writing

Rather than *searching for a theory of translation* (Toury 1980), rather than postulating *an integrative approach for translation studies* (Snell-Hornby 1988), rather than prescribing a *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie* (Reiss & Vermeer 1984), and rather than deploring the lack of a 'coherent and consistent theory [which is still] required for translation' (Graham 1981: 23), we have signalled throughout this chapter (see particularly 5.2) that translation is precisely what pushes Theory (with a capital T) to its very limits. Repeatedly then, we have argued against the very notion of an omniscient theory which masters its objects; and to reiterate some of these points one more time, what we have taken issue with, are theories which set out to 'reduce the [text's] polysemantic possibilities to a single interpretation' (Iser 1988: 220); we have resisted a hermeneutics which seeks to 'fit everything together in a consistent pattern', 'impose[s] consistency' (219), as well as the 'drive for totality' (Culler 1975: 171), which compels the theorist to organize all multiplicity into a 'model of unity' (174), and urges that one should 'account for everything' in a text. In short, we have rejected the kind of theory which is 'logophobic' to use Foucault's word, that fears the 'disorderly buzzing of discourse' (1972: 229), and that 'cannot entertain the possiblity... that reading may at any time come up against "linguistic factors" that "interfere with the synthesizing powers of its... model [de Man 1986: 56]"' (Norris 1988a: 41).

A theory whose quest it is to comprehend the text as a totality, to reach a full understanding of it, and to establish the truth about the

text, is a theory, in Barthes's view, which champions 'the idea of a model transcendent to several texts (and thus, all the more so, of a model transcendent to every text)' (1971: 44). Such a theory yearns for the correct reading or understanding of the text, and, by implication, also stipulates the correct translation of a text. Indeed, many translation theories favour the concept of the kind of unitarian theory which we have taken to task. Statements such as: 'translatability of a text [can be] guaranteed by the existence of universal categories (Wilss 1982: 49), 'the received text must be coherent' (Reiss & Vermeer 1984: 114) ' exemplify just this. Despite of themselves, many of these translation theories often depend, according to Edwin Gentzler, on various notions of equivalence, such as 'linguistic structural/dynamic equivalences..., corresponding literary function,..., or similar formal correlation governed by... acceptability' (1993: 144); [2] Gentzler therefore finds, that 'despite the different approaches, each theory is unified by a conceptual framework which assumes original presence and re-presentation' (144). Texts are managed here, rendered manageable or tamed, which is also the very kind of approach to translation that Lawrence Venuti criticizes in his essay 'Simpatico'. As the translator of de Angelis, he points out that a de Angelis poem or 'text does not offer a coherent position from which to understand it' (1991: 7), and it is precisely this type of writerly text or 'difficult writing' which a 'transparent aesthetic... would try to domesticate... by demanding a fluent strategy' (10).

It follows for Venuti that what is needed is 'resistancy as a translation strategy' (15), to challenge this 'dominant [literary and translational] aesthetic in the target-language culture' (10). (He is in

particular referring to the tendencies at work in Anglo-American translatory conventions.) Consequently, he seeks to implement a strategy of translation (here of De Angelis's poetry) which: 'in effect opens up [the] contradiction in the poem, foregounds it, and perhaps reveals an aspect of De Angelis's thinking of which he himself was not conscious or which, at any rate, remains unresolved...' (14). Venuti's translational strategy of resistance is not unlike Miller or de Man's (un)readings of the undecidable structures contained within a text or even a word. Their 'deconstructive close readings', which pay attention to the irreducible heterogeneity *within* texts, constitute a kind of resistance to the totalizing tendencies which, in their view, reigns over the majority of criticism. Venuti's translator, like the Yale reader, seeks out the contradictions (bindspots) in a text. Venuti's translator, like Barthes's reader opens up the text (breaks the text up, interrupts it). This then is a strategy which,

> ... exceeds the source language text, supplementing it with research that indicates its contradictory origins and thereby puts into question its status as the original, the perfect and self-consistent expression of authorial meaning of which translation, is always a copy, ultimately imperfect in its failure to capture that self-consistency. (14)

In this statement, Venuti also pinpoints the plight that translation has suffered at the hands of theories which hail the original as a self-contained plentitude, and consequently inferiorize the translation, not only for not measuring up to this perfection, but more importantly in order to preserve the traditional privilege of the author as sole creator of meaning, and thus to serve a system of beliefs which derives a sense of security and certainty, if meaning remains contained in the benevolent hands of one originator, if the potential for the 'cancerious and

dangerous proliferation of significations' (Foucault 1986: 118) is halted safely at the very source. Foucault's author-function reminds us that to enshrine the author as the all powerful depositor of the riches of meanings, to endow the author with the control of meaning, is to constitute a guardrail against the 'disorderly buzzing of discourse' (1986: 229); specifically in the context of translation, this guardrail works to prevent meaning going out of the author's hands and into the hands of the translator(s). The insistence on loss in translation then, the concentration on its failures, is not only a way of reducing its status to a second-order product, to be measured against its first-order model, but constitutes the very attempt to reduce its potential for proliferation. This is to say, we inferiorize translation, devalue it, because we fear it, since it is the flaunting manifestation of textuality's most 'uncontrollable aspects' (Foucault 1972: 228). Foucault's thinking marks, of course, a significant departure from many of the very author-centred approaches which are still operative in translation studies circles, and the concomitant humbleness with which many translators describe the practice of translation, their craft as second-hand artists.

There is another important shift which Venuti begins to formulate in this essay: it is a shift from considering the original as a source to re-constituting the text as a resource. Again, both the work of Barthes and that of Foucault shine through here. When he therefore writes that 'resistancy as a translation strategy', 'far from proving more faithful to... texts, in fact abuse[s] them by exploiting their potential for different and incompatible meanings' (Venuti 1991: 16), he might be "unfaithful" to a text and "abuse" it, but does nevertheless not betray it,

at least in the sense of betraying its constitutive plurality. What is at stake for Venuti, as he points out, is the Derridean notion that 'there are, in one linguistic system, perhaps several languages, or tongues' (Derrida 1985a: 100, qu. in Venuti 1991: 20). *Plus d'une langue*, we may say, is the very point of departure for his approach to translation: 'I am arguing that the strategy of resistancy would go some way towards marking this difference in translation' (Venuti 1991: 20). When Venuti thus cites Deleuze & Guattari who have it that 'a language is open to intensive utilizations that make it take flight along creative lines of escape' (1986: 20, qu. in Venuti 1991: 17), it becomes quite evident that Venuti both utilizes and exploits the text as a resource rather than preserves it as a sacred origin/source. What the Venutian translator unleashes, in other words, is the polysemantic potential in textuality.

This exploitation of the flights of language, or the abuse of 'deviant linguistic structures' (1988a: 42), to evoke Norris's phrase once more, takes its impetus from Philip Lewis's strategy of 'abusive fidelity'. Indeed, Venuti quotes this very passage from Lewis:

> The translator's aim is to rearticulate analogically the abuse that occurs in the original text, thus to take on the force, the resistance, the densification, that this abuse occasions in its habitat, yet, at the same time, also to displace, remobilize, and extend this abuse in another milieu where, once again, it will have a dual function — on the one hand, that of forcing the linguistic and conceptual system of which it is a dependent, and on the other hand, of directing a critical thrust back toward the text that it translates and in relation to which it becomes a kind of unsettling aftermath (it is as if the translation sought to occupy the original's already unsettled home, and thereby, far from "domesticating" it, to turn it into a place still more foreign to itself). (1985: 43, qu. Venuti 1991: 10)

The kind of translation which Venuti (himself) produces, in accord with the Lewis strategy of abuse, is, in his words, 'an estranging translation'

(1991: 18). ⁴ This is to say, his own translations 'resist the hegemony of transparent discourse in English-language culture' which means that 'the foreign text also enjoys a momentary liberation from the target-language' (18). ⁵ When Venuti thus adds that '[his translations] do this from within, by deterritorializing the target language itself' (18), we can see clearly how Venuti resists the very 'imperialist tendencies' (18), as he calls them, which are at work in translational approaches which prefer (indeed impose) the fluency which is their own, the transparent readability which they see as proper to their target system.

To come back though to the strategy that Lewis outlines above, and that Venuti follows, we also come up against a double-bind. On the one hand, the translator is to 'rearticulate', reproduce the abuse that occurs in the "pre-text" (original), on the other hand, s/he is to 'remobilize', 'to extend this abuse', in other words, to transform and adapt this abuse in the translation ("post-text"). Lewis is well aware though that these formulations 'constitute an untenable contradiction' (1985: 43), and furthermore, that they are constitutive of 'the necessity of a double articulation', of 'the pressure for two interpretations':

> the one in compliance with the target language, the other in alignment with the original text. The response would consist in assuming the contradiction and making something of it... In terms of method, the question would predictably, focus on'a paradoxic imperative: how to say two things at once, how to enact two interpretations at once. Or in the framework of our inquiry here, how to translate in acquiescence to English while nonetheless resurrecting a certain fidelity to the original French. (44)

What does Lewis make of this contradiction then? When he writes that 'in this impasse, up against an apparent contradiction, one discovers the necessity of a double articulation, of that pluralized, dislocutory,

paralogical writing practice that Derrida has so often cultivated and explained [...] a double-edged writing as, precisely a response to the pressure for two interpretations...' (44) then what emerges here, is 'double writing' (37), as the very strategy which sets this contradiction into operation, puts it into practice as the very 'operator[] of undecidability' (44). Lewis proceeds to explain this writing as a

> strategy, [which] analytic as well as discursive, is grounded in the capacity of discourse to say and do many things at once and to make some of the relations among those things said and done indeterminate. [... this then is] my quite limited project of delineating the elements of a translation practice that devolves from a disruptive or deconstructive writing practice, so as to suggest that, in translation, the difficulty of an already complex performance of language is aggravated, and with that heightened difficulty the very abusiveness that is made more difficult becomes that much more necessary. (44-45)

'Double writing' (37), as a translational practice, as an operator or instrument of undecidability, is a translational strategy, which 'acknowledges the complications post-structuralism has brought to translation, particularly the concept of meaning as a differential plurality' (Venuti 1992: 12), and 'therefore shifts the translator's attention away from the signified "to the chain of signifiers" [Lewis 1985: 42]' (12).

When Venuti furthermore explains that 'the invention of analogous means of signification... supplement the foreign text by re-writing it' (1992: 12), then we begin to see a clear link emerging between invention and rewriting (i.e. translation is not merely an intervention and a reinscription, see also section 5.3). The question we need to pose here, however, is whether 'double writing', as a translational strategy, as the operator or mobilizor of undecidability merely reinscribes the "post-text"

poststructurally, or does indeed rewrite the "pre-text" following the logic of poststructuralism? Do Lewis and Venuti make a productive difference to translation in the Deleuzian sense? To put this differently, is the 'necessity of a double articulation', this 'pressure for two interpretations' which governs translation, adequately responded to by Lewis when he indicates that an indeterminate 'double-edged writing', can inscribe this undecidability between two interpretations in translation? Can 'double writing' as the very 'operator[] of undecidability' "translate" the 'paradoxic imperative' of having 'to say two things at once', of having 'to enact two interpretations at once', into translation? Is it not here that we come to the limits of undecidability once more; that we come up against the deadlock of the Derridian 'I do not believe that today there is any question of *choosing*' (1978: 293)?[6] Neither in compliance with the target, nor in realignment with the source, but undecidably between. And the neither/nor finally locates difference, isolates it from its proliferating potential, as a kind of *difference within*.[7] Does the concept of 'double writing' therefore not quickly shift the stakes from a profusion to a limiting function, continuing to police productive difference - not in the name of the same but in that of indifference.[8]

As a final step, how can we translate this "non-choice" into a necessary option. For this purpose, we add to our existing theoretical 'jetties', a Quebecois feminist 'jetty'. For here, shows itself in practice that which Lefevere sees as the power of rewriting.[9] Rewriting here, in alignment with our discussion, is the opened sluice that once served to buttress all those institutions for controlling the 'disorderly buzzing of discourse'. The translator, as Lefevere points out, is, of course, the most

obvious rewriter that intervenes in a given cultural system, but also, for our purposes, that is an inventor, bringing into operation all the devices of proliferating discourses available to her. Here, she makes a critical difference and takes Theo Hermans's translation as manipulation one step further. Translation à la Quebecois highlights, foregrounds, indeed 'flaunts' to use Barbara Godard's term, the unspeakable manipulation that occurs in translation, and that dared not speak its name until Hermans's collection of essays entitled *The Manipulation of Translation* (1985). When Susan Bassnett therefore argues that studying translation means 'being aware of the processes which shape a culture at a given time' (1989: 1), we can see, through the work of the Quebecois translator/theorists, how theory began to transform itself by adding to the kind of Derridean deconstruction which seeks to intervene, a Deleuzian feminist tack which seeks to invent. In short, Quebecois's in(ter)vention as a translational strategy is already an index how a given cultural climate is in the process of being transformed at this very point in time, how the theoretical account of the manipulation of translation has here "translated", multiplied itself into a deliberate strategic practice in Canada.

What the Feminist Quebecois translators do, is to produce texts in translation, rewrite texts in translation 'in other than received ways' (Lefevere 1985: 225). Feminism, and the translation strategy of the Quebecois is not merely though an alternative ideology and poetics [10] to the dominant patriarchial one; it is this, but it is also more. Thus we can take the notion of an alternative, implying as it does, an 'other' to the same' of the dominant, one step further and argue that whilst feminism is an alternative, an alternative amongst other alternatives, it presents itself

to the feminist as a necessity, in such a way as to effectively cancel the status of 'alternative': for "us", women, there is no option but to create new spaces, to rewrite, parasite, invent - to multiply. Here, of course, the work of the Quebecois takes on an even wider significance, it is of necessity that She institute new ways of constructing worlds.   Thus we cannot merely accept 'the existence of two language worlds, those of men and women', and consequently 'advocate[ ] that women use the language of the dominant to persuade and to transform it' (Gagnon 1977: 69, sum. by Godard 1990: 87), but must rather insist on re-inventing the world. 'As an emancipatory practice [then], feminist discourse is a political discourse directed towards the construction of new meanings and is focused on subjects creating themselves in/by language' (Elshtain 1982: 617, sum. by Godard 1990: 88). And it is precisely here, that the site of translation as a ground for feminist in(ter)vention, becomes irremediably and profusively parasitic, intervening not merely to inhabit, but also to replicate. This is because '[f]eminist discourse is translation in [at least, we should add] two ways: as notation... what has been hitherto "unheard of", a muted discourse [Irigaray 1985: 132], and as a repetition and consequent displacement of the dominant discourse' (Godard 1992: 90); '' our third way, of course, is the outright rejection of the dominant and the consequent unleashing of the viral, parasitic 'disorderly buzzing of discourse'. It is in this sense also, that Quebecois translators, such as Barbara Godard, Kathy Mezei, or Suzanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, insist not on the reproductive aspect of translation, but on the productive aspect in translation. Translation as production, as transformation, as invention. '²

Though traditionally a negative topos in translation, 'difference' becomes a positive one in feminist translation. [...] Meaning discerned and assigned by the translator becomes visible in the gap or the surplus which separates target from source text [Brisset 1986:

207]. The feminist translator, affirming her critical difference, her delight in interminable... re-writing, flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text. *Womanhandling* the text in translation would involve the replacement of the modest, self-effacing translator. (Godard 1990: 94) [13]

What with? The exuberant operator of multiplication, of course. Thus, '[d]o not ask me to remain the same: leave it to the bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order (Foucault 1972: 17)!

Rather than finalizing this thesis by bringing its questions to a conclusion, we shall re-iterate them as questions. What then, is the connection between reading and criticism? What then is the connection between criticism and translation? What then, is the connection between between translation and theory? What then is the connection between translation, feminism and theory? The connection which has been forged between them, is that where reading crosses indiscernably into writing, here, not only does the question between the secondary and the primary become irrelevant, but the purchase of this hierarchization becomes progressively weakened by the unleashing of the 'disorderly buzzing of discourse'. Here also, the question of the difference between "original" text and refraction, literature and criticism, or between this and that theory collapses; the attempt to contain difference within, as some kind of pluralistic concession to an inherent complexity of eternal signification which will keep us intellectuals in the business of generating interpretations, comes to be superceded by productive difference; and we must therefore move beyond that undecidable (in)difference that inhabits discourse, which not so much frees us from having to take up a position within discourse but imprisons us within it, forcing us to assume a non-position [14], and must parasite whatever lies at our disposal, and more, to

make a difference. In this way also, we can keep the rhizome proliferating, ceaselessly establishing connections, and forging new ones. We have thus charted a map of connections between those activities which 'do not resemble that from which they derive' (de Man 1986: 84), but are not unlike each other only in that, at each juncture where they cross with each other, they multiply: X.

This thesis has been 'a discourse about discourses', about (re)readings, (re)writings, criticisms, translations, theories:

> but it is not trying to find in them a hidden law, a concealed origin that it only remains to free; nor is it trying to establish by itself, taking itself as a starting-point, the general theory of which they would be the concrete models. It is trying to operate a decentring that leaves no privilege to any centre. The role of such a discourse is not to dissipate oblivion, to rediscover, in the depths of things said, at the very place in which they are silent, the moment of their birth (whether this is seen as their empirical creation, or the transcendental act that gives them origin); it does not set out to be a recollection of the original or a memory of the truth. On the contrary, its task is to *make differences...* (Foucault 1972: 205) [*]

Notes

Notes to Preliminary Remarks

1 See David Daiches (1960) *The Writer and the Modern World*, where he suggests a broad difference, between nineteeth and twentieth century literature, along these lines.

2 My explication follows Ann Jefferson & David Robey's 'Introduction' to *Modern Literary Theory* (1982).

3 Leavis goes on to say, '[u]pon this minority depends our profiting by the finest human experience of the past... Upon them depend the implicit standards that order the finer living of an age... ' (1930: 3-5).

4 More recent perspectives in literary theory, such as that of misreading or the notion of the limitations to intelligibility will be dealt with in Chapter 3 when we come to consider Yale Criticism.

5 This gradual evolutionary approach which has been characterized here, does not suggest a linear process of such historical continuity, but has been adopted to conveniently illustrate the broad historical backbone from which literary theory has arisen.

6 'In 1962 Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, writes Antony Easthope, showed that most of the time the scientific community sails along happily within a paradigm, a consensus about methods and ends. From time to time, however, new evidence or contradictions within the paradigm accumulate until the paradigm itself falls into doubt. At this point there is a crisis, a return to "first principles" and an intense interest in theory (for which there is no need while the paradigm rides high). Thereafter, a new paradigm is established, theoretical questions are put on the shelf and things return to normal' (1991: 3).

7 This Barthes quotation is an epigraph in Robert Scholes (1989: 1).

8 'Refraction' is *Sammelbegriff* used by André Lefevere to designate 'translation, criticism, historiography...' under a more general term. Moreover, a refraction is 'the adaptation of a work of literature to a different audience' (Lefevere 1982: 4). I am also using refraction as a *Sammelbegriff* in order to conveniently circumscribe all those "secondary" activities such as reading interpretation, criticism, commentary, and translation..., 'activities' which in Paul de Man's words, 'resemble each other in that they do not resemble that from which they derive' (1986: 84). Derived rather than orginal, secondary rather than primary, their status has also been 'second-rate'; this is the very point that Theo Hermans makes *vis-à-vis translation in particular* (1985: 8).

9 The underlying theme of this thesis throughout then is, that a refraction, be it a reading, an interpretation, a piece of criticism, commentary or 'translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text'. Moreover, as Bassnett & Lefevere point out, 'all rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society'. Whereas Bassnett & Lefevere also point out that 'rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain' (Preface in Lefevere 1992: vii), we shall argue that whilst certain (unified) theoretical

assumptions compel refractions to do just this, we shall suggest a different approach to Theory (with a capital T), which may open up the way for a more radical approach towards considering rewritings, not as distortions of their source text, but as an exploitation of a text as a resource, for multiple rewritings.

Notes to 1.1

1 The term 'initiator of discourse' is the translated version by Sherry Simon & Donald F, Bouchard (Foucault 1977). I have chosen this term rather than 'originator of discourse', as appeared in Josue V. Harari's translation of the essay 'What is an Author', which was reprinted in *The Foucault Reader* (1986). 'Originator' seems an ill-chosen term given the context of Foucault's argument, which is precisely to deconstruct any notion of source or origin.

Notes to 1.2

1 see Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences* (London: Routledge, 1990), on the range of Barthes's writing. She also makes the point that, '[t]he label of reader-response criticism is too narrow for Barthes's theory' (p. 63).
2 Susan Suleiman (1980: 32) uses the terms positive and negative hermeneutics to draw a distinction between those theorists who are concerned with issues of unity and those who are concerned with difference. In other words, she is marking the difference between "faithful" theorists (a term I have borrowed from Paul Ricoeur's writing) and poststructuralists. Though I find these terms ill-chosen for reasons which shall be discussed in the Gadamer/Derrida section, they, for the moment, serve the purposes of my argument adequately well. All subsequent references to Suleiman's introduction will appear in brackets after the quotation. See also footnote 1 of the following section 2.1, which deals with the terminology used, by suggesting that one strand of hermeneutics might be negative, and the other positive.

Notes to 2.1

1 We should point out here that Yale readings, i.e. "negative hermeneutics" are not marked by the 'happy endings', according to ELizabeth Freund, which characterize the narratives of Iser, Culler or Fish, whose readers are those would-be heroes, who 'successfully [overcome] the textual obstacles in the achievement of [their] quest for meaning and self-realization' (Freund 1987: 88). For, with 'the onset of deconstruction [was] generated an alternative plot in which the reader is the agonist or anti-hero... who puts in question his ill-starred quest for meaning' (89). But rather than assuming that the Yale hermeneut is negative (Suleiman), that his reader is the anti-hero of an unhappy ending (Freund), or even suggesting that reading might be considered a suspicious activity rather than one of trust, we would prefer to couch these terms of description slightly differently. 'Negative' as a word, does not by any means indicate that Yale Criticism as a negative

hermeneutics, is in any way devalorized vis-à-vis the work of the positive hermeneutic critics, indeed the very term, as we shall see in section 4.4 will be re-evaluated altogether, and 'negative' is not to be understood in terms of something that, per se, is bad; in other words, it bears little resemblance to what we might associate with the terms "negative", "happy" or "heroic" in everyday language.

Having said this though, we nevertheless feel that implicit in terms such as negative and positive, is still the question of value. And here, it is, of course, a differential comparison between two theoretical approaches, that of, as we shall refer to it, the 'unitarian criticism' of Iser, Culler and Fish, and that of Yale Criticism which champions 'difference within'. Since differential comparisions have the habit of inevitably subjugating a "lower" term to a "higher" term, it emerges that value is always implicitely hierarchical. And although, we have just said that Yale as a negative hermeneutics, by no means indicates that it therefore is to be understood as the underprivileged term, as the "lower", "inferior" term in this binary, and that instead there has already been a revaluation of these terms, we nevertheless are still operating within oppositions which necessarily foreground valorizations, hierarchies, etc. We shall therefore use a number of different terms to describe a (positive) hermeneutics and (negative) deconstructive approach. Thus, thoughout, we shall make use of the terms "positive" and "negative" hermeneutics, but we shall also use terms such as "unhappy" and "happy" hermeneutics, "unitarian" and a "disseminating" criticism, or a "fellowship of discourse" (advocates reading as a unified, consistent, regulated/ordered activity) and the "brotherhood of Yale" (advocating (mis)reading, as a dispersed, aporetic, disorderly 'buzzing' of activities).

Notes to 2.2

1 It should be pointed out that there is nothing particularly 'natural' about 'shared conventions'. Indeed, as Mary Louise Pratt points out, Culler's notion of an interpretive competence is not something that is given to all readers equally, but 'an elaborate shoring up of the dominant status quo, and of the interpretive authority of the academy' (1986: 42)
2 In this sense, readers are no longer autonomous, spontaneous individuals, but institutionalized products. As Culler writes, '[t]he meaning of a poem within the institution of literature is not, one might say, the immediate and spontaneous reaction of individual readers but the meanings which they are willing to accept as both plausible and justifiable when they are explained' (1975: 124)
3 To recall this earlier quotations from Jane Tompkins: 'When discourse is responsible for reality and not merely a reflection of it, then whose discourse prevails makes all the difference' (1980; xxv).

Notes to 2.3

1 Fish's note to 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics', reprinted in Jane Tompkins (ed.) (1980: 70).
2 This is a retrospective comment by Fish on the '*Interpreting the*

Variorum' essay, which he makes in *Is There a Text in this Class* which
is, of course, Fish's own edited version of his work (1980: 147)
3   Fish is quoted in Jane Tompkins (1980: xxiii).
4   op. cit.
5   As Jonathan Culler puts it, 'what Fish reports is not Stanley Fish
    reading but Stanley Fish imagining reading as a Fishian reader... his
    accouts of the reading experience are reports of Fish reading as a
    Fishian reader reading as a Fishian reader' (1982: 66-67).

Notes to 2.4

1   I have used A. M. Sheridan Smith's translation of *société de discours*
    here (1972), rather than Ian McLeod's translation 'societies of
    discourse' which appears in Robert Young (ed.) (1981).
2   Though Iser and Fish are influenced by phenomeneology, and Barthes as
    well as Culler by structuralism, we may nevertheless argue that what is
    common   to both   traditions of   thinking,   be it   phenomenology   or
    structuralism, is a concern with unities.
3   As Barthes puts it: '[i]n the multiplicity of writing, everything is to
    be *disentangled*, nothing *deciphered*...' (1977a: 147).
4   We must remember here, that for Iser '[t]he words of text are given, the
    interpretation of the words is determinate and the gaps between given
    elements and/or interpretations are the indeterminacies' (1981: 83), and
    it is these textual gaps/indeterminacies which 'stimulate the reader
    into filling the blancs with projections' (1989: 33-4). This is part of
    Iser's response to Fish in a debate from *Diacritics*. We can see very
    precisely here, why Fish does accuse Iser of '*something* that is
    determinately given', if not in the Iserian text, but by it. As Freund
    puts it, '[f]or Fish, nothing is given, and the reader supplies
    "*everything*: the stars in a literary text are not fixed; they are just
    as variable as the lines that join them" [Fish 1981: 7]' (Freund 1987:
    149). Fish is also, of course, rephrasing Iser's statement here, '[t]he
    "stars" in a literary text are fixed; the lines that join them are
    variable' (1984: 282).
5   Though Robert Holub (1984: 152) referring to Fish here, I am borrowing
    his words's since they can also apply to Culler.
6   These are the discourses which Moriarty sees at work in 'The Death of
    the Author': 'historical (the genealogy of the figure of the Author),
    literary historical (a survey of modernism), linguistic, political'
    (101). We also, however, see a hermeneutic and a poststructuralist
    discourse at work in this essay.
7   Though Derrida is in particular writing about the relation between
    structuralism and poststructuralism in 'Structure Sign and Play', the
    kind of points he makes about structuralism - i.e. the tendency to
    unify, to decipher a truth... - are points which may also be applied to
    hermeneutics. This is precisely also, what Diane Michelfelder & Richard
    Palmer also indicate in their introduction to the Gadamer/Derrida Debate
    (1989: 9).
8   This is a phrase by William Pritchard, to describe the Yale School of
    Criticism (qu. in Lenticchia 1983: 283).

Notes to 3. 1

1 Compare Barthes's unfolding of the readerly here: '*To depart/ to travel/ to arrive/ to stay*: the journey is saturated. *To end, to fill, to join, to unify* - one might say that this is the basic requirement of the *readerly* as though it were prey to some obsessive fear: that of omitting a connection. What would be the narrative of a journey in which it was said that one stays somewhere without having arrived, that one travels without having departed... ?' (1974: 105; my emphasis) This passage also echoes my Foucauldian critique of Iser, Culler and Fish.

2 Barbara Johnson is referring to Barthes's reading practice in *S/Z*, whilst I am using her words here to say something about Barthes's writing practice of *S/Z* (1980: 6-7).

3 Humanist feminists such as Showalter would not agree that it may be desirable to suspend the question "Qui parle" when dealing with texts, particulary when engaging with texts by women writers. Rather than preempt later discussion, I shall provide these two citations by Toril Moi at this point: 'What feminists such as Showalter... fail to grasp is that the traditional humanism they represent is in effect part of patriarchial ideology. At its centre is the seamlessly unified self - either individual or collective - which is commonly called 'Man'... In this humanist ideology the self is the *sole author* of history and of the literary text: the humanist creator is is potent, phallic amnd male - God in relation to the world, the author in relation to his text...' (1985: 8). Moi also writes: 'For if we are truly to reject the model of the author as God Father of the text, it is surely not enough to reject the patriarchial ideology implied in the paternal metaphor. It is equally necessary to reject the *critical practice* it leads to, a critical practice that relies on the author as the transcendental signified of his or her text. For the patriarchial critic, the author is the source, origin and meaning of the text. If we are to undo this patriarchial practice of *authority* we must take one further step and proclaim with Roland Barthes the death of the author' (62-63). We agree with Moi here, that Barthes' work can be used "fruitfully" for a feminist discourse. Indeed his very notion of a productive reading, which is really a writing, will resurface in our argument via the work of a number of Quebecois feminists, whose work we shall consider in 5. 4.

4 I reformulated Barthes's phrase: Reading, '[i]t is a form of work [...] since **I write my reading**' (1974: 10).

5 The author Barthes is referring to here, is Flaubert rather than Balzac.

6 The notion of 'reading here and now' ties the practice of reading to the contemporary. This is to say, we can not escape reading from the perspective and knowledge of the present.

7 My quotation of Culler's phrase (1981: 38) is taken from E. Freund (1987: 80).

Notes to 3.2

1   Geoffrey Hartman (1992, 1972) 'Preface', in Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Geoffrey Hartman, Hillis Miller (eds) *Deconstruction and Criticism*, New York: Continuum, ix.

2   Wallace Martin (1983) 'Introduction', in Jonathan Arac, Wlad Godzich, Wallace Martin (eds) *The Yale Critics: Deconstruction in America*, Minneapolis: Minnesota UP. xv. This book is an excellent, and the most comprehensive collection of essays on Yale to date.

3   Compare Roland Barthes's statement from *S/Z* '... the *author* is a god (his place of origin is the signified); as for the critic, he is the priest whose task is to decipher the Writing of god' (1974: 174).

4   Christopher Ricks (16 May 1981) 'In Theory', *The London Review of Books*, 3-6. Quoted in Christopher Norris (1988: 211).

5   As David Robey points out, '[t]he term 'New Criticism' is usually used for the literary theory that began with the work of I.A. Richards and T.S Eliot before the war in England, and was continued by figures such as Charles Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks and Allen Tate in the United States during the forties, fifties and sixties' (1982: 65).

6   Murry Krieger adds that, '[i]n the flurry of interpretations and reinterpretations - with the consequent evaluations and reevaluations - all mystery was to be discursively exposed in a burst of hermeneutic hubris such as criticism had probably never known. And it may well have been this excess which prepared the way for the inversion which the very concept of criticism as a serving art had undergone in recent years. I may in my turn have to suggest that the claim to critical autonomy - with its denial of priority to literature - is itself excessive' (1981: 284). With his final observation, Krieger, of course, aligns himself with critics such as Wayne C. Booth, who has it that the emancipation of criticism 'brings us to a final test: Does the critic *either* acknowledge the superiority of the texts he deconstructs over his own readings *or* genuinely earn his claim to superiority? I cannot argue the point here, but for me the presumption of superiority is always initially on the side of any classic as against the critic. It is extremely improbable, though of course possible, that any one modern critic will be as richly endowed as Homer, Sophocles, Molière, Racine, Shakespeare, George Eliot, or William Butler Yeats. A critic who denies the authority either of author or text is trying to fly away without a supporting medium. He thus subjects himself to a peculiarly dangerous test: he must prove his own equality or superiority' (1977: 422). Both statements comprise a particular reaction against Yale Criticism; whether Hartman, Bloom, Miller, or de Man, indeed wish to claim superiority over literary authors or their works, is quite a different question, and rather ill-conceived by Booth, as we shall see.

7   Hartman's decription of the "traditional" critic is in many respects reminicient of our own assessment of the Iser-Culler-Fish fellowship of the previous chapter. Busily engaged in curtailing the dangerous 'buzzing of discourse', the critic here can be seen to adhere to the established order of a logocentric universe; furthermore, this critic, even if only implicit ly, puts the author back into the picture, puts him centre-frame, thus necessarily contributing to his/her own marginalized position with literary history.

8   Though in the "context" of the Searle-Derrida debate, see Christopher Norris (1991: 110).

9 Or, as Hartman puts it in *The Fate of Reading*: 'Interpretation is a feast not a fast. It imposes an obligatory excess' (1975: 18).

10 See Peggy Kamuf's commentary on 'Living On Border Line' (1991: 255).

11 This passage (as well as many other passages that I am using here with regard to the relationship between criticism and literature) were written by Hartman with regard to Derrida's *Glas*. The specific chapter in *Criticism in the Wilderness* (1980), which thus deals with *Glas* as a paradigm of the 'contaminating' relation between "primary" and "secondary", is entitled 'Literary Commentary as Literature' (see 189–213).

12 It should be pointed out here that there is nevertheless a difference between Barthes's notion of reading as a 'form of work' and Hartman's notion of 'the work of reading'. If for Barthes texts are 'ready made dictionaries', and for Spivak/Derrida, a 'text belongs to language', for Hartman, as we shall see, texts, despite his references to intertextuality, belong to a 'master-spirit' (Hartman 1975: 255), in short belong to tradition. It is at this point that Hartman's American brand of deconstruction is a far cry from French thinking on intertextuality. His statement (which we will deal with in a moment), that '[r]eading is not a neutral technique; it is shaped by the classics it in turn supports' (1975: 304) is more akin to Eliot than to Derrida. As T. S. Eliot puts it: 'No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him for contrast and comparison, among the dead...' (from Frank Kermode (ed.) (1979) 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, London, 38.

13 This passage is based on Marvin Carlson's economic illustration of how Derrida's notion of the *supplément* may be used to describe the relation between text and performance within a theatrical context. As Carlson put it, 'A play on stage will inevitably display material lacking in the written text, quite likely not apparent as lacking until the performance takes place, but then revealed as significant and necessary. At the same time, the performance, by revealing this lack, reveals also a potentially infinite series of future performances providing further supplementations' (1985: 9-10).

14 The French word *propre* has the following meanings (amongst others): 'own', 'clean', 'pure', 'specific'. As Morag Shiach points out, though writing about Hélène Cixous, 'the violence of the propre' is 'a term suggesting propriety, property, and homogeneity, which is generally translated as "the selfsame"' (Shiach 1991: 16).

15 Burke argues furthermore: 'In his fervour to dissolve the distinction between primary and secondary, Hartman plays squarely back into its clutches. By writing so sensitively, so well, so explicatively about *Glas*, he makes of it a canonical text but only at the price of declaring his own work secondary, parasitic and sponsorial' (192: 161) Our argument takes a different point of departure from Burke's thesis, and does not arrive at the conclusion that Hartman deems his writing secondary and inferior to Derrida's, thus not falling into the trap of his own logic as Burke clearly suggests here, we, instead, wish to make the point that Hartman wishes to elevate his own work to the same primary status he bequeaths on Derrida's writing; in short, he (Hartman) wishes Hartman's work to be as canonical as Derrida's.

16 Hartman uses the term 'indecisiveness' when he assesses Maurice

Blanchot's work as a 'literary essayist': 'We all know that in England and America criticism enjoys a doubtful status. As a philosopher you are something even if you write on   Nothing. But as a literary essayist you remain a no-thing, a hybrid or borderer between philosophy and literature, indecisive, or making indecisiveness your speciality' (1981: x-xi). What this passage shows once more, is that Hartman hovers 'indecisively' between the post-structuralist condition of hybridity and its denial through an institution of borders and limits. Hartman sits on the fence, so to speak.

17 A 'poise of balance' is Vincent B. Leitch's term for the hesitation between 'a simplifying humanism versus an indefinitizing deconstruction'. As he puts it, '[t]he future of critical reading and writing hang in the balance. *Glas* is a forceful *summa*. While [Hillis] Miller chooses deconstruction, Hartman chances a poise of balance. [...] Wordsmith, worried, Hartman realizes that *Glas* is the moment when deconstruction turns on criticism and deconstructs its limits and its substance' (1983: 209-210). Compare this passage also with Leitch's later statement that Hartman 'both admires and dreads *Glas*, for it raises a fearful specter of unreadable critical texts and a hierarchized civilization, yet it holds out the alluring promise of a new and productive creative writing and reading for criticism' (229). Leitch is supporting our own claim that Hartman is 'indecisive', is hovering between the '"language" of inter-textuality' and the '"logic" of autonomy', is sitting on the fence between deconstruction and its denial, is not, in other words, pursuing the full implications of post-structuralist thought, but is concerned to *preserve* notions such as civilization and uphold notions such as tradition.

Notes to 3.3

1 Compare also Bloom's statement here that 'any poem... to make room for itself — it must force the previous poems to move over and so clear some space for it' (Bloom 1975a: 121).

2 Source studies are concerned with tracing the influence, that one poet may have exerted on another, thus reconstructing the origins of the influence. Bloom has it that his project is quite different. To illustrate his claim, let us consider the following quotations: '[o]nly weak poems, or the weaker elements in strong poems, immediately echo precursor poems, or directly allude to them. The fundamental phenomena of poetic influence have little to do with the borrowings of images or ideas, with sound-patterns, or with other verbal reminders of one poem by another.' And Bloom goes on to say, 'A poem is a deep misprision of a previous poem when we recognize the later poem as being absent rather than present on the surface of the earlier poem, implicit or hidden *in* it, not yet manifest, and yet *there*' (1975a: 66-67). The point of Bloom's notion of influence seems to be then, that the precursor poem ignites in the ephebe the sparks of innovation. The ephebe needs to free him/herself to be different. Since, however, as Jonathan Culler points out, there is 'a turning from text to persons' in Bloom's strand of "intertexuality", in other words, the subject has crept back into the Bloomian discourse. Culler raises this question: 'Is not Bloom's account of influence and misreading actually a theory of origins...?' (1981: 109) And we may therefore say, that the Bloomian 'inter-reading' may be

far closer to the notion of 'source studies', than it is to any notion of intertextuality. We merely wish to foreshadow this issue at this point.

3 'Inter-reading' is not only to be understood here in terms of one poet reading another, but extends to the readings of a poem by a critic. A point which we shall explore shortly.

4 See *The Pursuit of Signs*, for here Culler writes that Bloom's theory of influence is in 'radical opposition to the theory of his French predecessors' (1981: 108). If for Barthes textual production is 'generated by an infinite network of anonymous citations'... For Bloom, on the contrary, the intertextual is not a space of anonymity and banality but of heroic struggles between a sublime poet and his dominant predecessor'. Again, there occurs a shift from text to person, which leads Culler to conclude that intertextuality derives 'from [a] family romance, [a] cosy and murderous intertextuality of sublime poets' (109). Hence, '[t]here are origins after all; the precursor is the great original, the intertextual authority' (see ibid.)

5 The quotation from Adrienne Rich was cited by Kolodny, whose argument we have followed closely here. It should also be pointed out here that much of Bloom's work on "influence studies" has fed into the work of Feminist critics. Thus, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar use Bloom's critical revisionism for their book *The Madwomen in the Attic*, which puts forward a feminist transformation of the canon. Moreover, as Culler points out, Gilbert and Gubar, as feminist critics, 'have shown considerable interest in Bloom's model of poetic creation because it makes explicit the sexual connotations of authorship and authority. This oedipal scenario, in which one becomes a poet by struggling with a poetic father for possession of the muse, indicates the problematical situation of a women who would be a poet' (1983: 60). The question here is, of course, as Culler poses it, 'What relation can she have to tradition'. The question which should also be posed here though, is: Why have two feminist critics adopted the Bloomian approach, particularly since Bloom has expressed more than once his 'own deep-rooted sense of the inadequacy of the female tradition' and has, moreover, 'expressed anti-feminist sentiments' (de Bolla 1988: 12)? When de Bolla raises this question, the point he fails to make, is, not only that Gilbert and Gubar are very critical of Bloom's 'linear patriarchial fili ation' (see Johnson 1987: 36), but also, more importantly, that Gilbert and Gubar read Bloom also through a kind of 'revisionary impulse'. In short, it may be claimed that they reclaim Bloom for a feminist project, which, in itself, is, of course, a feminist move or strategy (see also below).

6 What we are alluding here to, is Bloom's patriarchial attitude to women, which may be illustrated via these citations. The first one is from a recent interview with Tom Moynihan, where he states: 'Most feminist poetry, of course, is like black poetry. It isn't poetry. It isn't even verse. It isn't prose. It is just... I have no term for it. May be it is the cultural equivalent on one level of the literary criticism, say, of Mr Hilton Kramer or Mr Joseph Epstein, or Mr Norman Podhoretz. These groups would not care for one another, but as demotic enterprises they have much in common. That is to say, they all all ideologues' (Moynihan 1986: 9, qu. in de Bolla 1988: 12). Bloom's sentiments may be countered here with his own words from *A Map of Misreading*, where the antipathy can actually be shown to be the result of a deep-rooted sense of fear, a threat Bloom perceives from feminism. Here, Bloom speaks of Western literary tradition in terms of a passing and a renewal (adopting Ernst

Robert Curtius's terms): 'The later Enlightenment, Romanticism, Modernism, Post-modernism: all these... are one phenomenon and we still cannot know precisely whether or not that phenomenon possesses continuity rather than primarily discontinuity in regard to the tradition between Homer and Goethe. Nor are there Muses, nymphs who *know*, still available to tell us the secrets of continuity, for the nymphs certainly are now departing. I prophesy though that the first true break with literary continuity will be brought about in generations to come, if the burgeoning religion of Liberated Women spreads from its clusters of enthusiasts to dominate the West. Homer will cease to be the inevitable precursor, and the rhetoric and forms of our literature then may break at last from tradition' (1975: 33). At this point we refer our reader once more to Barbara Johnson's chapter 'Gender Theory and the Yale School' (1987: 32-41), for a detailed critique of Yale from a feminist perspective.

7 Critics such as Murray Krieger, Gerald Graff, Wayne Booth, the German critic Ulrich Horstman, would level such charges not only at Bloom, but also at Yale criticism as a whole.

8 Compare Sean Burke's thesis that: 'This development', and here he is referring to Hartman, Bloom, Barthes, Derrida and Foucault, 'from strong reader to rewriter to writer has led many poststructuralists to suggest that criticism itself has become a primary discourse (Burke 1992: 159). Whilst Burke makes the point that this really institutes the notion of the author once more, brings in a rival Author through the back door, and though we agree with his point here to an extent, at least inasfar as this refers to Bloom (but also, to a lesser degree to the other Yale critics we are dealing with), we do not think that this extends to poststructuralist writing as a whole, which is also one of the precise reasons why we do not regard the Yale critics as poststructuralist (see also section 3.5 on Paul de Man, particularly footnote 11).

9 See Thomas Carlyle (1987) 'Heroes and Hero-worship from Lecture 5: The Hero as a Man of Letters', in *Selected Writings*, Hammondsworth: Penguin, 233-256. The heroes as men of letters, for Carlyle, are 'a perpetual priesthood, from age to age, teaching all men that a God is still present in their life... (237) [...] [i]f Men of Letters *are* so incalculably influential, actually performing such work for us from age to age, and even from day to day, then I think we may conclude that Men of Letters...' (245), to put this into our own words, are what Tradition with a capital T is made of.

10 Or should we rather say that 'isolated dialogue', that 'exclusive comparison' between father and son, that excludes, at least in Bloom's case, all mothers?

11 See Lentricchia point here: 'Bloom's warfare with his New-Critical father-figures is not so much given up in his later books as it is augmented by sibling rivalry... The threatening siblings turn out to be no other than the new French critics, the structuralists, and particularly poststructuralist figures like Jacques Lacan, and (most troublesome of Bloom's siblings) Jacques Derrida. Against the New-Critical precursors in America and the new rivals from the Continent, Bloom continues, with unfortunately misleading emphasis, to attempt to clear a space for himself in order to create his critical identity out of nothing. Despite his strenuous efforts, he remains a captive of the positions he opposes, a perfect illustration of his theory' (1983: 326).

Notes to 3.4

1 versprechen: to promise

jemandem/einander versprochen sein: to be betrothed

sich versprechen: to pronounce a word/words wrong(ly), to make a slip of the tongue

sich von jemandem etwas versprechen: to expect something from somebody/ to have certain hopes

The phrase '*Sprache verspricht (sich)*' is used by Paul de Man (1979a: 277), following Heidegger's '*Sprache spricht*', with reference to Rousseau. The more general point de Man is making here is, that language is by constitution misleading precisely insofar as the text *promises* "to tell the truth". Language, in other words, evades the control of its user, or in de Man's words: 'language itself dissociates the cognition from the act' (277). Whilst Hillis Miller explicates this phrase from de Man in '"Reading" Part of a Paragraph' (1989: 167), our use of it is to re-enact as readers of this phrase, *the failure to read which takes place in language itself* ['the failure to read takes place inexorably within the text itself' (Miller 1987: 53), the failure of language to signify 'an obvious or univocal reading' (see note 3 below). This phrase therefore serves us with the kind of play on words Miller often employs in order to highlight the undecidability and/or instability in language itself.

See also J. L. Austin *How to Do Things with Words*. For Austin has it that 'performatives are *contractual...* utterances' (7). The performative phrase 'I promise that' conveys that 'it is appropriate that the person uttering the promise should have a certain intention, viz. here keeping his word'. However, Austin asks, '[d]o we not actually when such an intention is absent, speak of a "false" promise? Yet so to speak is *not* to say that the utterance "I promised that..." is false, in the sense that though he states that he does, he doesn't... [f]or he *does* promise: the promise here... is given *in bad faith*. His utterance is perhaps misleading, probably deceitful and doubtless wrong, but it is not a lie or a misstatement. At most we might make out a case for saying that it implies or insinuates a falsehood or a misstatement (to the effect that he does intend to do something): but that is a very different matter.' (1962: 11)

The point about Austin's performative 'I promise that', is of course, that he sees any performative utterance firmly associated with its speaker and his intention; but there is no instance in which the utterance 'I promise that' could be said to be either true or false. However, the actions that ensue from such a statement may be in flagrant apparent contradition with the promise. Thus Austin opens the way for our double performative of *Sprache verspricht (sich) which* reveals that the very structure of language is undecidable, for 'language promises' already contains within it the trace of 'language makes a slip of the tongue'.

2   Words strain,

Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,

Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,

Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,

Will not stay still.

(T.S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets*)

3   Although this sentence from Miller's essay entitled '"Reading" Part of a Paragraph in *Allegories of Reading*' was written with reference to Paul de Man, and as such is an explication of one of the main tenets of de Man's work, we may nevertheless say that what is expressed here, is also true for Miller's own work. As has often been pointed out, Miller and de Man's writings display many affinities; which is also precisely why Hartman sees both Miller and de Man as 'boa-deconstructors', whilst aligning himself with Bloom as being 'barely deconstructionist' (Hartman (1979: ix). It should therefore be noted that all subsequent quotations in our text from the Miller essay on de Man, serve to explain de Man's work just as much as they explicate Miller's own work, which will become quite evident. And on a more important note, we should also point out here that whilst we will deal with Hartman's, Bloom's and Miller's work in separate sections, we will deal with the de Manian project as part of our summary section on Hartman, Bloom and Miller entitled 'Brotherhood of Yale: Disorderly Readings'; for these critics are so indebted to de Man's work that his writings may sum up, or indeed may be used to sum up the Yale project as a whole. To support our claim, we refer our reader to Frank Lentricchia. As he puts it: 'Reading the prefaces and acknowledgements of Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman and J. Hillis Miller, one is struck by the tone of respect, even reverence, with which the name of Paul de Man is mentioned. It is not difficult to locate reasons. Bloom's latest thesis about literary history was announced by de Man three years before the appearance of *The Anxiety of Influence*; Hartman's thesis in his book on Wordsworth was anticipated by de Man in an obscure essay; Miller's turn from Poulet was not much more than a repetititon of de Man's earlier essay on Poulet.' (1983: 283)

4   This phrase is quoted in Miller (1979, 217) from M. H. Abrams (1976) *Critical Inquiry* II: 3 (Fall): 457-58.

5   Ibid. The point here is, of course, that Abrams's assertion is itself a citation from Wayne Booth (1976) 'M. H. Abrams: Historian as Critic, Critic as Pluralist', *Critical Inquiry* II: 3 (Sprong): 441. As Miller (1979) puts it, 'M.H. Abrams cites Wayne Booth's assertion, that the "deconstructionist" reading of a given work "is plainly and simply parasitical" on the "obvious or univocal reading". The latter is Abrams' phrase, the former Booth's' (217).

6   See M. H. Abrams (1977) 'The Deconstructive Angel', *Critical Inquiry* 3: 425-38 (431). Abram's critique of Miller in this essay, is responded to by Miller (1977) in the essay 'The Critic as Host', *Critical Inquiry* 3, which is the early version of the revised and expanded contribution in *Deconstruction and Criticism*.

7   We wish to note the patriarchial overtones of this statement and also draw attention to either the absence of women in Yale writing, or the negative treatment of women. The latter is particularly clear in Hartman's statement that '[m]uch reading, is indeed, like girlwatching, a simple expense of spirit' (1978: 248); and also '[i]nterpretation is like playing a football game. You spot a hole and you go through it. But first you may have to induce an opening' (1970: 351). We will return to critique this phallogocentric discourse which is very much part of the "Yale Brotherhood (of men)" in a later chapter. Barbara Johnson (1987) has also dealt with this in *A World of Difference*, particularly in chapter 4, entitled 'Gender Theory and the Yale School' (32-42).

8   Miller's etymological tracings of the words "parasite" and "host" are too intricate and too performative to do justice to in an exposition

here; the reader is therefore referred to 'The Critic as Host' itself. It suffices to say here that '"parasite comes from the Greek *parasitos*, "beside the grain", *para*, beside (in this case) plus *sitos*, grain, food' (1979: 220). Thus '[a] parasite was originally something positive, a fellow guest, someone sharing the food with you, there with you beside the grain'; rather than later on when, '"parasite" came to mean a professional dinner guest, someone expert at cadging invitations without ever giving dinners in return' (220).

9 For this citation I have replaced Miller's word "poem" for "literary text". See 'The Critic as Host' (1979: 224).

10 Michel Serres offers three readings of "parasite": 'The three meanings of the word *parasite* – physical noise (static), living animal, and human relation – suddenly beat time together to the same rhythm and with the same sounds' (203). As the translator, Lawrence R. Scher, explains in the introduction: 'The parasite is a microbe, an insidious infection that takes without giving and weakens without killing. The parasite is also a guest, who exchanges his talk, praise, and flattery for food. The parasite is noise as well, the static in a system or the interference in a channel. These seemingly dissimilar activities are, according to Michel Serres, not merely coincidentally expressed by the same word (in French). Rather they are intrinsically related and, in fact, they are the same basic function in a system. Whether it produces a fever or just hot air, the parasite is a thermal exiter. And as such, it is both the atom of a relation and the production of a change in that relation.' (1982: x)

Although there are clearly certain overlaps here between Miller and Serres, the "parasite" in Serres's account is a static, an interference which renders this parasite far more active, subversively interventionist than a parasite that is merely a manifestation of the difference within structures. It is this latter point·which we shall explore more fully in 5.2.

11 This quotation is taken from the early version (1977) 'The Critic as Host', *Critical Inquiry* 3.

12 Compare Jacques Derrida: 'The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work. This is what the person who has begun the same work in another area of the same habitation does not fail to point out with zeal. No exercise is more widespread today and one should be able to formalize its rules.' (1974: 24) We shall return to the full implications of this 'parasitism' as Derrida also calls it in 5.2.

13 See also Vincent B. Leitch who states that 'the project of deconstruction for Miller is to redefine Tradition by putting the "tradition of difference" in place of the dominant "tradition of metaphysics" (1983: 196).

14 Miller's phrase 'theories of unity' (1982: 5) can be well applied to the work of Iser, Culler and to an extent also to Fish's work. Miller's own "*difference within*", be it within a word or texts, rather than that of

harmonious unity or univocality in literary works, or at least imposed
on literary texts by "theorists of unity", has of course, become the
hall-mark of Yale. It is in this sense that Yale distinguishes itself
most clearly from the work done by 'theorists of unity' with their
emphasis on unity, consensus, etc. In other words, this is the crucial
juncture where the Yale brotherhood of 'negative hermeneuts' departs
most stridently from the Iser-Culler-Fish fellowship with their
'positive hermeneutic' stance.

Notes to 3.5

1 See Wlad Gozich's essay entitled 'The Domestication of Derrida' (1983:
    20-43) which raises precisely this issue.
2 Compare Murray Krieger's point, that '[f]or the first time, I believe,
    criticism has gone beyond rearranging the canon: in its recent
    revolutionary mode, criticism has undermined the very principle on which
    the canon – as a collection of primary works – exists, reconstructing it
    precisely in order to make place for itself within' (1981: 287). Though
    Krieger is right to suggest that recent criticism (and here he is
    clearly referring to Yale Criticism) has reconstructed the canon in
    order 'to make a place for itself', his prior point that this same
    revolutionary critical zest has also gone 'beyond rearranging the canon'
    is hardly true for the case at Yale (as we have seen
    discussions). However, Krieger's point might be better applied to the
    projects of Feminist criticisms which have sought to expose the canon
    for its partiarchal basis/bias (see Judith Fetterly, for instance), or
    have sought to re-write the canon (Kate Millet), and have, moreover,
    questioned the very idea of a canon. As our observations show, Yale very
    much colludes with the great tradition.
3 We would like to remind our reader, that Miller insisted on the notion
    of 'great works of literature'·, that for Hartman, the 'great work of
    art is more than a text. It is the "life-blood" of the "master-spirit"',
    and for Bloom, the great influential master, as always, stands before
    the anxious ephebe. Thus the critic here does not 'draw from an immense
    dictionary' or 'mix writings' à la Barthes, but serves his primary well,
    even to the point of seeking to measure up to its grandeur. Thus, unlike
    the Barthesian "scriptor-reader" who belongs to language, the great
    critic of Yale firmly belongs to literature. This is to say, he (there
    being very little doubt about *his* gender), he does trace a field with an
    origin, and that origin is always the great tradition of literary
    writing – literature with a capital L. Here, textuality is barely
    intertextual, at least not in Barthes's sense of the term (as we
    indicated earlier), and the text is hardly that Barthesian
    'multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them
    original, blend and clash'. Rather, the texts that Yale critics prefer,
    are the great canonical texts of "our" tradition.
4 In *Dissemination* (1981: 85), according to Donald G. Marshall, 'Derrida
    sees Plato as defending the "living" oral word against "dead" writing,
    severed from its "father" and available to a promiscuous audience,
    unstitching the unity of the *logos* in its endless texture and
    ramifications' (1989: 203). Binary oppositions such as speech and (over)

writing have dominated metaphysics since 'Egyptian, Babylonian and Abyssian mythology'. Other binaries Derrida cited are: 'legitimate son/orphan bastard, soul/body, inside/outside, good/evil, seriousness/play, day/nigh, sun/moon ect...' One term has always, of course, been privileged over the other according to the logic of logocentricsm. Also, compare Hélène Cixous's deconstruction of these terms in an essay entitled 'Sortie' which was first published in English by Elaine Marks, Isabelle de Courtivron, eds, (1980). *New French Feminisms*.

5   This passage from Derrida's *Positions* (1981a: 41) is translated from the French (1972: 56-57) by Jonathan Culler and quoted in *On Deconstruction* (1982: 165). We have used Culler's translation for our text.

6   Compare also J. Hillis Miller's statement that 'understanding contains a residue of misunderstanding' (1989: 167).

7   This quotation from de Man's foreword to Carol Jabob's *The Dissimulating Harmony* (1978) is cited in Robert Young (1981: 265). Also compare de Man's elaboration of these points in *Allegories of Reading* (1979, 9-12). Here, he give the example of Yeats's poem 'Among School Children' which, of course, ends with the line: 'How can we know the dancer from the dance?' The point de Man makes here, is that the this last line can be read both literally and figuratively (11). Figuratively the line ususally suggests the union, 'the potential unity between form and experience, between creator and creation', it can also be read literally thus leaving us not with a rhetorical question , but with the questioning, of 'how... we [could] possibly make the distinctions that would shelter us from the error of identifying what cannot be identified'. As de Man concludes this point: '...two entirely coherent but entirely incompatible readings can be made to hinge on one line, whose grammatical structure is devoid of ambiguity, but whose rhetorical mode turns the mood as well as the mode of the entire poem upside down. Neither can we say... that the poem simply has two meanings that exist side by side. The two readings have to engage each other in direct confrontation, for the one reading is precisely the error of the other and has to be undone by it. Nor can we in any way make a valid decision as to which of the readings can be given priority over the other, none can exist in the other's absence...' (12) De Man's point here is, of course, that language is unstable, unreliable, indeed that the poem 'Among School Children' deconstructs itself, which is precisely why we are faced with this undecidability.

We would also like to draw attention to Stanley Fish's essay 'Interpreting the Variorum' (1980) which focuses on Milton's twentieth sonnet 'Lawrence of virtuous father virtuous son'. Here, the controversy over the different readings of the final lines, 'He who of those delights can judge, and spare/ To interpose them oft, is not unwise', springs from the word 'spare', for which there are two possible readings: 'leave time for, refrain from'. As Fish points out, 'Obviously the point is crucial if one is to resolve the sense of these lines. In one reading 'those delights' are being recommended - he who can leave time for them is not unwise; in the other, they are the subject of a warning - he who knows when to refrain from them is not unwise.' (150) Fish, as we know, rejects, that meaning is embedded in the artifact, and proposes instead that meaning is to be experienced by the reader. Since textual evidence proves inconclusive here to reach any decision as regards the meaning of these lines, Fish nevertheless draws this

conclusion: 'But what if that controversy is *itself* regarded as evidence, not of ambiguity that must be removed, but of an ambiguity that readers have always experienced? What, in other words, if for the question 'what does "spare" mean?' we substitute the question 'what does the fact that the meaning of "spare" has always been an issue mean'? (150) This according to Fish can be answered. For the reader's participation in these 'contradictory readings'... 'becomes evidence of the equal availability of both interpretations'. 'In other words', 'the lines first generate a pressure for judgement – 'he who of those delights can judge' – and then decline to deliver it; the pressure, however still exists, and is transferred from the words on the page to the reader (the reader is 'he who'), who comes away from the poem not with a statement but with a responsibility, the resposibility of deciding when and how often – if at all – to indulge in 'those delights' (they remain delights in either case). This transferring of responsibility from the text to its readers is what the lines ask us to do – it is the esence of their experience – and in my terms it is therefore what the lines *mean*' (151).

Both examples thus illustrate how de Man and Fish operate their readings; moreover though, these examples also highlight their similarilties and differences. If de Man suggests an inevitable aporia, unresolvability, which constitutes what the poem is about (literature is about deconstruction), Fish decides for us that the decision we have to take is, precisely, what the poem means. Although their assertions are very similar here, both propose to know what the poem *is* about (undecidability within all liguistic structures [de Man]; undecidability transferred to the reader [Fish]), their overall aims differ. If de Man 'canonizes' undecidability (in true Yale-ian spirit), celebrates the undecidability in reading, the *disorderliness of reading*, Fish brings a certain *order* to the reader's decisions, he orders undecidablity out of the text's existence, and makes the reader the regulator of decisions.

8 Norris is adamant here that this does not suggest that there is a blurring of the distinction between the reading of a literary and a philosophical text. Indeed, such a conclusion about de Man's reading "technique" is far too simplistic according to Norris. When Norris therefore writes 'that philosophy when analyzed in terms of its textual or rhetorical constitution will always turn out to be "an endless reflection on its own destruction at the hands of literature" [de Man 1979, 115]' (Norris 1988a: xii–xiii), thus making the point that 'literature' is a very 'different kind of writing... from philosphy', we prefer to make the point here, that rather than suggesting that there is no blurring between literature and philosophy in de Man's thesis, that there is a "blurring into the distance" of the critical/philosophical in de Man: for, as also in Miller, de Man subsumes all (great) writing under the aegis of the literary. It is, in other words, the literary which is most prone to the kinds of deconstructive readings, de Man engages in. And since he reads the works of critics for their auto-deconstructive moments, we may well say that only the great critics/philosophers (such as Rousseau, or Derrida, or Derrida on Rousseau, but more to that later) yield for de Man the kinds of deconstructive readings which he sees implicit in the literary. It is in precisely this sense, that de Man can conclude in his essay 'The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau' (1983: 102–141), that 'Derrida can be "right" 'on the nature of literary

language and consistent in the application of this insight in his own text, he remains unwilling or unable to read Rousseau as literature' (138). Hence, 'Derrida's text is less radical, less mature than Rousseau's, though not less literary' (140). We also wish to note de Man's tone of rhetoric here.

9   This quotation from de Man's foreword to Carol Jabob's *The Dissimulating Harmony* (1978) is also cited by Robert Young (1981: 265).

10 De Man also suggests that, he as a reader, was 'only trying to come closer to being as rigorous a reader as the author had been...' (see subsequent long quotation in my text). This "author-centeredness" also comes out when de Man writes, here with reference to Derrida on Rousseau, that 'Derrida [was] deconstructing a *pseudo-Rousseau* by means of insights that he could have gained from *the "real" Rousseau*' (1983: 140, my emphasis).

11 The author-god and the great author-ized critic go together, of course. And although we are not suggesting that de Man is treading the path that Barthes maps out in 'The Death of the Author', there are nevertheless certain instances in de Man, where Barthes's descriptions of the author-god and his great critic come dangerously close to de Man. When Barthes writes, for instance, that 'such a conception suits criticism very well, the latter then alotting itself the important task of discovering the Author... beneath the work: when the Author has been found, the text is 'explained - victory to the critic' (1977a: 147), we become alert to the implications of de Man's claim that he is 'only trying to come closer to being as rigorous a reader as the author had been' (ibid), and we become sympathetic to Lentricchia's insinuation that de Man's 'analyses are marred at every point by the suggestion that he is in undisputed, authorative, and truthful possession of the texts he reads'.

    We should also point out here, that the major difference between Yale criticism and Barthes's writing which has slowly been emerging (and we are not denying that there are many shared concerns, as we have, indeed, seen) is, that whilst Yale institutes a Great Critic, for Barthes '[t]here are no more critics, only writers... the theory of the text can produce only theoreticians or practioners (writers), but absolutely not "specialists" (critics or teachers)' (1981: 44). Flippantly, we may say then, this is more poststructuralist than de Man *et al.* could ever hope to be, this is, in many inverted commas, "proper" poststructuralism; and here, we could be presumptuous enough to state, that Lentricchia might even agree with us on this!

12 We may ask here whether this phrase illustrates that language deconstructs itself, or whether de Man deconstructs his text here, for how can 'randomness' be 'absolute'?

13 As Lentricchia aptly points out: 'The Yale Derridians will not in the long run threaten every partisan of traditionalism, because they will turn out to be traditionalism's last *formalist* buttress' (1983: 169, my emphasis).

14 This phrase is from Derrida (1987: 89). We should point out though that not only have we taken this citation out of context, there is also no relation between our own methodology and Derrida's claim in the sentence which follows our citation of him, that our reader should '[g]uess the number of false citations in my publications...' However, the point that we took his citation out of context, together with the playfulness of Derrida's remark poses important theoretical questions (which we will turn to in a subsequent chapter). The issue, at hand, is that

'plagiarism', in Kathy Acker's sense of the word/practice 'call[s] attention to a post-modern understanding of "reproductive rights" (certainly a feminist concern)' according to Diane Elam (1992: 161), and in this respect, the issue - though it is a digression here - links with our notion that a reading is always a re-writing, and that this is our 'reproductive right' as women readers.

15 We should merely like to point out that we are following Norris's exposition in this instance closely; and that this passage by de Man is also quoted in Norris (1988a: 42).

16 The context of this citation in Norris (1988a) is as follows: 'Thus Miller can enlist de Man on the side of a readerly ethics whose imperative is that of cleaving always the letter of the text and *holding out against the premature seductions of coherent sense*. Compare also to Norris's summary in *Deconstruction and the Interests of Theory*, where 'ethical reading' is a 'moment [which] occurs when reading comes up against stubborn, resistant, or problematic details in the text, details one is tempted to ignore of reinterpret in the interests of maintaining coherence and sense' (Norris 1988: 165, referring to Miller 1987).

17 In section 4.1 we will deal with hermeneutics in detail. Though we should say here that the Reception Theory which Hans-Robert Jauss advocates, and which seeks a union of hermeneutics and poetics, and which, furthermore, has come out of the work of the Constance School, shares many features, particularly with Wolfgang Iser.

18 We have to remember that hermeneuts, such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, believe in 'the universality of the hermeneutical experience' (Gadamer 1989: 95).

19 On Michel Foucault's distrust of theory, see Peg Birmingham's excellent essay entitled 'Local Theory' (1989: 205-212, 205).

20 The sense of grandeur which we have previously pointed out in the other Yale critics, emerges here very clearly also in de Man. Another claim to greatness may also be illustrated through de Man's statement that '... if you have a *poor* text, you cannot make up a very rewarding construction' (1983: 185, my emphasis). Presumably, only a rich text will yield readings of the de Manian calibre, It is in this sense that this particular statement is linked to his point that there are 'good' misreadings of a text. As he puts it: 'by a good misreading, I mean a text which can itself be shown to be an interesting misreading, a text which engenders additional texts. If you have a poor text...' (1974: 51). This begs the question, according to Lentricchia, '[w]hat purpose such traditionalist terms can serve in a poststructuralist context...' (1983: 185).

Notes to 4.1

1 If we have suddenly shifted our explorations away from a positive and a negative hermeneutics to hermeneutics and deconstruction, then it is because to put a "positive fellowship" and a "negative brotherhood" under the grand umbrella of a hermeneutics is itself a hermeneutic move. This is to say, hermeneutics will always claim a universal status for its interpretive approach, a grand metaphysical move, which is, has been the aim of deconstruction to undo. Therefore, we wish to keep both quite separate (contrary to the claim of many critics who see deconstruction as a branch of hermeneutics, which is in itself, precisely, a grand,

trancendental hermeneutic gesture). Thus we shall herewith revise the terms which we have used thus far to describe what are in effect the unifying hermeneutic tendencies of the "fellowship" and the disseminations of the "brotherhood". In short, a positive hermeneutics is a hermeneutics and a negative hermeneutics, far removed from a hermeneutic spirit, and is thus part of deconstruction. Again, the inadequacies of the terms "positive" and "negative" hermeneutics becomes visible here.

2   David Wood (1990) suggests that they are 'often seen to occupy opposite poles within continental philosophy', rather than as I have suggested that they must be seen to do so. Wood's article seems to be suggesting that Gadamer is far closer to Derrida, far more deconstructionist, than we are willing to suggest here. Wood may, indeed, almost be accused of making a hermeneutic gesture in terms of claiming Gadamer for a deconstructive project; we wish to make a more Derridan move and suggest that their relation is a non-relation, in other words, that their relation is marked by radical alterity, that their respective discourses are radically incommensurable (which is a point which will emerge through our subsequent discussions).

Notes to 4.2

1   Gadamer adds here that he shares this view with Derrida: '[c]ertainly I share with Derrida the conviction that a text is no longer dependent on an author...' (1989: 96).
2   There is a clear parallel with Iser's approach here: 'meaning must clearly be the product of an interaction between the textual signal and the reader's acts of comprehension' (1978: 9).
3   As Gadamer puts it, 'in living conversation one tries to reach understanding through the give-and-take of discussion, which means that one searches for those words – and accompanies them with intonation and gesture – that one will get through to the other [...] everything that is fixed in writing refers back to what was originally said, but must equally as much look forward; for all that is said is always already directed towards understanding and includes the other in itself.' (1989: 34).
4   Michelfelder and Palmer add: '[w]hile Derrida would agree that the meanings generated by language always exceed our intentions, he proceeds from a view of language where language is presumed to be always already writing, where the spoken word is seen as an already disrupted sign, infiltrated by absence. So he remains continually on the alert as to how otherness lurks within meaning, and how, for a particular concept at issue, there may be no possibility of deciding, from among its competing meanings, one that is true or authentic' (1989: 1). Here is summarized one of the crucial differences between Gadamer and Derrida, which we shall consider in detail in subsequent sections.
5   Jürgen Habermas criticizes Gadamer on precisely this point: the power relations that might be involved in a speech situation. What Habermas and Gadamer share though, is a faith in the possibility of reaching consensus.
6   Despite all the openness to the other is there not the risk of appropriation, is there not a risk of misusing one's power, if for a moment we assumed that one partner in this dialogic event was actually

stronger than the other? This is precisely the kind of critique that Derrida levels at Gadamer, and which we shall examine in section 4.4, when we bring Gadamer and Derrida into direct play with each other.

7   As Paul de Man has pointed out, 'the ultimate aim of a hermeneutically successful reading is to do away with reading altogether' (1986: 56).

8   Gadamer does draw a distinction between literary texts and non-literary texts. When he therefore argues that 'a literary text is   not just the rendering of spoken language into a fixed form...' (1989: 42), we can presume that it is more "complicated", "complex" than spoken language. In other words, contrary to a deconstructive practice, which sees language as something inherently ambiguous, unstable, indeterminate, and thus blurrs the distinctions between literary and non-literary text, Gadamer is firmly holding on to the specifics of generic boundaries.

9   *Kommunikationsverzerrung* is a Habermasian term.

10 Since 'every reading that attempts to understand is only a first step and never comes to an end' (Risser 1989: 185), and since hermeneutics sees its task in terms of developing a procedure of understanding in order to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place (Gadamer 1975:   263), we may well say that hermeneutics is concerned with the terms of understanding rather than with understanding a particular text. This is precisely a point which we raised in our Preliminary Remarks. Though when we discerned a shift in literary theory precisely from the particulars of understanding a text to the more general terms of understanding, we may now see yet another turn: one that promotes a kind of Foucauldian local criticism which rejcts the comprehensivenmess of Theory (with a capital T); this remains an issue which we shall return to in 5.2.

12 We have quoted Gadamer selectively here in order to get our point across more clearly. Gadamer's argument is thus more intricate than we may have suggested. For further details please see *Truth and Method*,   259.

11 We must add here, that misunderstanding, whilst possible, occurs mostly with regard to the written word. This is to say, because 'written words' are 'cut loose from any specific situation of commuication... [they] risk misuse and misunderstanding because they dispense with the obvious corrections resident within living conversation' (Gadamer 1989:   34). Furthermore, '[a] misunderstanding will arise if the reader is not experienced and does not hold him or herself open to the voice of tradition' (1991: 111) according to Deborah Cook. This is, of course, as Cook also points out not the case for poststructuralists.

13 Bernasconi is really referring to Gadamer's 'unitary understanding of Nietzsche' (1989: 244) here. This is precisely the point, of course, at which Gadamer and Derrida's readings of Heidegger reading Nietzsche also differ.

14 Derrida's refusal to "communicate", converse with Gadamer altogether, shall be our theme in 4.4.

Notes to 4.3

1   As Jefferson explains, '[t]he function or meaning of an element is never fully present because it depends on its association with other elements to which it harks back and refers forward. [Thus meaning is always deferred.] At the same time its existence as an element depends on its being distinct from other elements' (1982:   105). We will explain

différance in further detail in section 4.4.

2   Here, of course, we are thinking of Derrida's treatment of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology*.

3   Compare Barthes's statement *vis-à-vis* the author here: 'Did he wish to *express himself*, he ought to at least know that the inner "thing" he thinks to "translate" is itself only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely' (1977a: 146)

4   These fragment citations from Derrida's 'Limited Inc abc' *Glyph 2* (1977) 200, are quoted in this precise sequence by Knapp and Michael (1987: 62).

5   This constituted Derrida's response to Paul Ricoeur at a round table discussion, in *La Communication*, vol II, 413-414, quoted by Gary Madison (1989: 293).

6   Compare Derrida's statement on "the chance of other interpretations" from *Dissemination* here: 'And yet these links go on working of themselves. In spite of him? thanks to him? in *his* text? *outside* his text? but then where? between his text and the language? for what reader?' (1981: 96)

Notes to 4.4

1   This quotation is taken from an unpublished seminar paper by John O'Reilly, Department of Philosophy, University of Warwick, which he kindly gave me to read.

2   The *Other* is also an important pointer here: not only does the other always stands in a relation, be it to oneself, to others, to itself, but more crucially for our argument, it may also be used to describe the relations such as that between author and critic, writer and reader, literature and criticism. Since one term tends to be hierarchized (in this "equation", "opposition"), the other becomes denigrated, or repressed (this is of course the logic of a binary system, which Derrida has sought to expose). The other term therefore tends to be "outside", "off-centre", "marginal". To relate this back to our argument then, it becomes crucial to see what Gadamer and Derrida have to say about the other, about each other, for it has a bearing not only on their relation to each other, but also how they define relations; in other words, we, may use their "definitions" also to make certain points (as we shall see) about the relations such as that between author and reader, literature and criticism, etc.

3   We might recall Richard Shusterman's statement here: 'But what for him ensures the possibility that these different horizons can be fused? The answer is that they are already implicitly joined (hence not fully distinct) "in the depth of tradition" [Gadamer 1975: 273]; for tradition is portrayed as all-encompassing and ever-developing, continuous and unified totality: "A single horizon that embraces everything contained in historical consciousness" [Gadamer 1975: 271]' (1989: 217).

4   Gadamer indeed voices 'Derrida's qualms' as he puts it, 'about [his] venture of thought: Is there not in hermeneutics – for all its efforts to recognize otherness as otherness, the other as other [...] – too much conceded to reciprocal understanding and mutual agreement?' (1989: 97) And he also writes, 'Derrida would object by saying that understanding always turns into appropriation and so involves a covering-up of otherness' (1989: 119).

5   I have quoted Herman Rappaport's translation of this Gadamer passage
    here (1989: 199).
6   The point that the one annexes the other in the Gadamerian discourse is
    also made by Joseph Simon (1989: 165); whilst David Wood also has it
    that Gadamerian dialogue works as a kind of 'extension[] of ourselves'
    (1990: 125).
7   David Wood's (1990: 118-131) translation of these sections of *Altérités*
    (1986) have formed the basis of my citations.
8   David Wood's essay 'Vigilance and Interruption: Derrida, Gadamer and the
    Limits of Dialogue' (1990) has proven invaluable to my argument for this
    particular section of my thesis; though we must point out that we do not
    share Wood's discursive move by which he makes Gadamer a
    "(semi)deconstructionist", in other words, his move to appropriate
    hermeneutics for a deconstructive project!

Notes to 5.1

1   It is precisely the Derridian notion of 'undecidability' which we will
    come to criticize in 5.3 and 5.4.
2   This quotation is taken from a different context, Gentzler is refering
    to Foucault, not Irigaray (1993: 152).
3   We can make a link here between woman as other and translation as
    other: both have been marginalised. Indeed, in 5.4, we will turn to the
    question of translation and feminism..
4   This is how Derrida elaborates on the phrase *plus d'une langue*: 'But is
    there a proper place, is there a proper story for this thing
    (deconstruction)? I think it consists only of transference, and a
    thinking through of transference, in all the senses that this word
    acquires in more than one language, and first of all that of the
    transference between languages. If I had to risk a single definition of
    deconstruction, one as brief, elliptical, and economical as a password,
    I would say simply and without overstatement: *plus d'une langue* - more
    than one language, no more of one language.' (1986: 14-15)
5   I have rewritten this quotation from Marvin Carlson (1985: 10). For
    precise quotation see Notes to 3.2.
6   Compare Christie V. McDonald's point, addressed to Derrida, in the
    Roundtable Discussion on Translation in *The Ear of the Other*, that 'the
    relationship between reading and writing... seems to have been taking
    shape in your work for a long time now in terms of translation
    considered as an enterprise that is at once possible and impossible',
    and she adds that 'any question of translation becomes right away a
    problem of reading' (1985: 117).
7   Derrida's point that a text, if 'totally translatable... disappears as
    a text', seems to echo Gadamer in that for the latter, 'the text as
    intermediate product dissappear[s] in the communicative event'.

Notes to 5.2

1   '*Des Tours de Babel*' is itself a pluralized phrase. As Gentzler
    explains: '"Des" resonates... with "some", with "of the", with "from
    the", with "about"... it carries the connotation of "on" in the sense of
    "living on" or "survival"... "Tours" conjures up notions of towers,

twists, ticks, and turns... Together, "Des" and "Tour" form *détour*, which recalls the defer/delay connotations important to the neologism of *différance*... "Babel" is even more complex, containing a reference to "father" (*Ba* in oriental tongue) and "God" (*Bel* in the same), father in this case of Babylonia', in short, each term 'resonates polysemantically"... (1993: 163-164). We have borrowed some of Derrida's phrase for our title to doubly indicate that whilst we are still involved in a discussion of translation, we need to make a "detour" around theory at this juncture. This is because we need to lay the basis for our subsequent discussion of productive theory against a theory of undecidability. In 5.4 we shall finally then explore the implications for translation, of a theory of undecidability as a against a theory which seeks to make a difference.

2 For Deleuze, 'to practice theory, is to use it like a 'box of tools [...] It must be useful. It must function' (1977: 208). We shall come back to the point more precisely in 5.3.

3 We may well say at this point, that her gaze is not inscribed in the event here, nor prescribed by its positioning, but the (male) gaze becomes fractured *ad infinitum*

4 "State" is put into inverted commas because it does not indicate a stable condition; and "theory" is put into inverted commas, because it does not designate Theory (with a capital T), in other words one all-embracing Theory.

5 We have recontextualized Carroll's quotation for our own purposes here. Carroll is, of course, not referring to translation here, but, within the context of his own argument, he is talking about '[h]istory and art [which] thus come to be involved in the same critical-theoretical task of...' (1990: 5)

6 Compare Peggy Kamuf's point here: when Derrida has it, with reference to his reading of Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator', that he is 'translating "in [his] own way the translation of another text on translation' [1985: 175]', Kamuf writes, that '[t]his description not only recalls that reading and writing are first of all versions of translation, but it signals as well the limits on any theory of translation. "No theorization", writes Derrida, "inasmuch as it is produced in a language, will... be able to dominate the Babelian performance"' (Kamuf 1991: 243).

7 We recall Miller's statement from 'The Critic as Host', '[t]he uncanny antithetical relation exists not only between pairs of words in this system, host and parasite, host and guest, but within each word in itself' (1979: 221).

8 Where we have inserted "text" in this quote, Miller writes "poem".

9 Miller's insistence that we cannot free ourselves from a metaphysical reading, can also be related to the question of the Yale Critics' adherence to the tradition of a/the canon (as we stressed throughout Chapter 3.

10 Surely, we must add here, neither Gadamer nor for that matter Derrida need to fear the Foucauldian 'disorderly buzzing of discourse'. For, the institution will not merely tame deconstruction into deconstructionism, but has already accounted for, categorized, made recognizable the shapes of even the most radical 'jetties' it may have encountered (1990: 84), as Derrida has indeed pointed out. The institution knows how to accommodate, even the most anarchic relativists, find a cosy home for them in this or that interpretive community, select this or that label

for this or that relativism, file and photocopy each and every, distribute, dilute... There is little doubt, interpretive communities have a certain way with competitive discourses, have a sure way of handling any conflict; just as Stanley Fish has a certain way with words. Thus when 'Abrams, Hirsch and company spend a great deal of time in search for ways to limit and constrain interpretation', Fish tells us, we can send this brief, sharp and to the point 'message' to them: 'not to worry' (Fish 1980: 321), after all everything will sooner or later find its (proper) place.

Notes to 5.3

1   On occasions we have used segements form John Johnston's translation of Deleuze's essay rather than Rosalind Krauss' (Johnston 1992: 48); we have also used our own translations.
2   Simulacrum, in Plato's terms, is, of course, a bad copy. See Johnston's essay entitled 'Translation as Simulacra' (1992: 42-56, particularly 48).
3   Deleuze quotes Blanchot here: 'A universe where the image ceases to be second in relation to the model, where imposture pretends to the truth, or, finally, where there is no more original, but an eternal sparkle where, in the glitter of detour and return, the absence of the origin is dispersed' (Blanchot 1965: 103, Deleuze 1984: 53).
4   To do justice to Derrida though, rather than relating him to the Yale Critics in this instance, we may recall Derrida's *Il n'y a pas de hors texte*, which dismantles the very notion between inside and outside (see 1974: 158-159 in particular).
5   This is the "original" Deleuze passage: 'For between the destruction which conserves and perpetuates the established order of representations, models, and copies which sets up a creative chaos, there is a great difference; that chaos, which sets in motion the simulacra and raises a phantasm, is the most innocent of all destructions, that of Platonism' (1984: 56).
6   We can recall Derrida's sentence once more, that '[n]o theorization inasmuch as it is produced in a language, will it be able to dominate the Babelian performance' (1985: 175).
7   Hal Foster, for instance, suggests that post-modernism does not simply 'react' to modernism, but 'resists' modernism and in that, it subverts its very basis (1983: vii-xiv).
8   Equally in the field of Translation Studies, there has occurred a shift of enquiry from source-centred approaches to target-oriented approaches.

Notes to 5.4

1   Edwin Gentzler, in his book *Contemporary Translation Theories*, deals with the shortcomings of translational approaches that concentrate on notions such as unity and wholeness. The titles that I have been citing as instances of unified translation theories, are covered in considerable depth in his book.
2   The very notion of 'acceptability' echoes Culler's conventions of acceptability which we took issue with in 2.2, as a constraining mechanism. In Translation Studies this notion though, has been used to

free translation from the more traditional assumptions such as that of equivalence. Nevertheless though, since the very notion of acceptability is dependent upon institutional consensus, we might see at work here mechanisms of constraint and power which remain unacknowledged as such.

3   We can make another link with de Man here, for if language, in de Man's words, is not 'made by us as historical beings, it is perhaps not even made by humans at all' (1985: 39), then 'meaning', Norris explains, 'depends upon... "linguistic properties" which belong not to *us* as individual speakers but to language' (1988a: xvii). What is undermined, is, of course, the expressivity of the coherent subject, and the control of this subject over his/her utterance. This Barthes citation sums up the problematic well: 'Did he wish to *express himself*, he ought at least to know that the inner thing he seeks to "translate" is itself a ready-formed dictionary...' (1977a: 146). At this point, also, we have come back to both Barthes's proclamation of the death of the author, and Foucault's author-function.

4   Lewis and Venuti reject the principle of fluency in translation because it domesticates the foreign text, and favour a kind of is Benjaminian approach, which calls for the estranging translation, introducing the foreign text as other. This dichotomy between a fluent translation and a resistant translation, echoes the dichotomy which Goethe formulated in 1824. One demands 'that the author should be brought over to us, so that we can regard him as our own; the other demands of us that we should go across to the stranger and accustom ourselves to his circumstances, his manner of speaking, his peculiarities' (qu. in Prawer 1973: 75).

   Carol Jacobs may be said to represent the most exteme pole of Lewis's proposition for abuse in translation. When Jacobs writes that translation 'renders radically foreign that language we believe is ours' (Jacobs 1975: 756, qu. in Gentzler 1993: 174), what this leads to, according to Gentzler, 'will not be natural, whole, and unified re-productions; instead the "monstrosity" of translation will rear its head', which is to say, '[a] heterogeneity emerges which "dismantles" all syntax and "dismembers" conventional, natural forms' (174). In short, 'word-for-word translations are preferred to those which synthesize and unify' (174).

   When Jacobs thus analyses Harry Zohn's translation of Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator', she finds, in Gentzler's words, that 'Zohn's desire for unity, coherence, and logical connections causes him to suggest that the simile [the fragments of the amphora] be read as follows: as fragments of a vessel can "be *glued* together must *match* in the smallest details" to form a larger, whole vessel, so too can translations be seen as fragments of a larger language [emphasis Gentler's, Benjamin trans. Zohn 1969: 78]' (175). Gentzler explains further, that what Jacob's alternative translation suggests is, 'that as fragments, as the "*broken* parts" of a vessel "in order to be *articulated* together, must *follow* one another in the smallest details", so too does translation make recognizable the *broken part* of a greater language [emphasis Gentzler's, Jacobs 1975: 762]' (175). Summing up Jacob's point then, Gentzler writes: '[n]ot tempted by the urge for a consistent, whole "text", Jacobs translates literally, word for word, and thus her rendering leaves the passage incomplete in a Western sense. She does not join the translation and original, and instead offers the translation as a *Bruchstück*, consistent with not just Benjamin's metaphor, but also

with what she sees as Benjamin's "strange" and "monstrous" mode of articulation. (175)

5   Venuti also points out here, that even though 'the foreign text... enjoys a momentary liberation form the target-language culture', it is merely momentary, because the target reader 'reterritorializes' the text, makes it 'recognizable, transparent', or makes of it 'some reading amenable to the major aesthetic in English' (18). It should be added though that there are also practices of reading, which are resistant to what they see as the dominant aesthetic. A deconstructive reading of a text would indeed deterritorialize the translated text even further, and as such would not wish to render a text transparent, but would seize precisely on those points in the text which are foreign to themselves and consequently resist the totalizing gesture of a reterritorializing/appropriating reading.

6   We have so far argued that undecidability, as that which defers the question of choice, leaves us in a state of critical limbo, whereas the Deleuzian route, leaves us no option but to choose to make a critical difference. Our turn to Deleuze at this point, was of strategic necessity within the terms of a feminist argument, which is precisely where we shall turn to in the remainder of this section, as but one example where theory can make a critical difference (be it to translation, literature, language...). As such it is interesting to consider Derrida's own revision of the implications of the notion of undecidability. In a recent interview (1987) about the question of feminism, he makes this point: 'In a given situation... which is the European phallogocentric structure, the side of women is the side from which you start to dismantle the structure. So you can put undecidability and all the other concepts which go with it on the side of femininity, writing and so on. But as soon as you have reached the first stage of deconstruction, then the opposition between women and men stops being pertinent. The you cannot say that women is another name, or a good trope for writing, undecidability and so on. We need to find some way to progress strategically. Starting with deconstruction of phallogocentricsm, and using the feminine force, so to speak, in this move then – and this would be the second stage or second level – to give up the opposition between men and women. At this second stage "women" is clearly not the best trope to refer to all those things: undecidability and so on. The same could be said for undecidability! Undecidability is not a point of arrival. It is also a letter, a misconceived letter, because undecidability – the theme, the motive of undecidability – has to do with a given situation in which you have an opposition or a dialectical logic' (194-195, I am grateful to David Spooner for having pointed out this quote to me in conversation). Is this then a turning away from *différance*? As we have seen in 5.3, Derrida merely reinsribes the opposition in terms of the non-opposition – *différance* – rather than discarding the very notion of an opposition, thus still remaining, even whilst inhabiting and subverting from within (inside and outside also of course become undecidable for Derrida, as is performed in the phrase *il n'y a pas dehors texte*), caught up by the webs of logocentri sm. Is this then Derrida's admission that this is the inevitability of the notion of undecidability, to always remain neither quite within logocentric thinking, nor quite within its alternative, *différance*, and as such then to remain imbricated within that which ought to be dismantled altogether, i.e. the dialectics of logocentricsm?

7   We may point out here, that this is not at all unlike the kinds of moves, we have have come to associate with Yale Criticism.

8   Let us unfold Lewis a little further. Rather than adhering to the more 'conventional view of translation', which itself is also, of course, plagued by contradiction, for here, 'a good translation should be also a double interpretation, faithful both to the language/message of the original and to the message-orienting cast of its own language' (Lewis 1985: 37), Lewis begins to shift the stakes. Whilst a good translation, in conventional terms, is meant to be faithful, be it to source or the target, it never can though get beyond the 'insurmountable fact that these two interpretations are mutually exclusive' which has the effect of 'consign[ing] every translation to inadequacy' (37); for how could a translation be faithful to two things at once, since to be faithful to the one must necessarily be the betrayal of the other, and vice versa. A good or strong translation on Lewis's terms (a kind of strong Bloomian misprision as a writing?) does not betray the abuse in the "original", but reproduces the abuse 'analogically' (similar by analogy, but not the same, alike in key respects, but not the same), and, more to the point, remobilizes and exceeds this abuse, which has the effect of highlighting the difference between languages. This leads to a 'new axiomatic of fidelity' (42), an 'ab-imitative fidelity' (42) that displaces the traditional 'logic of identity or equivalence' (42) with the logic of the supplement (replacement and addition), i.e. the logic of excess. The method here, is, of course, double writing, for in double writing, both that which replaces what was produced in the original and that which adds what cannot be reproduced, comes to be articulated. Hence we are left with the undecidable movement in the translation, according to Lewis, between that which is 'in realignment with the original text' and that which is 'in compliance with the target language'. This undecidability, we already know, 'is grounded in the capacity of discourse to say and do many things at once and to make some of those things done and said indeterminate' (44). Having said all this, we nevertheless should pose the question whether Lewis's 'ab-imitative fidelity' is not merely fidelity in another guise. For when we consider his statement that 'the strong forceful translation [against the 'weak servile translation'] that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks *to match* the polyvalencies or plurivocities... of the original by *producing its own*' (41, my emphasis), then we must ask whether this 'strength of translation [which] lies in its abuses – in 'productive difference' (41) according to Lewis, really also makes the productive difference, he claims for it; for 'to match' is not 'to produce'!

9   As Lefevere explains: '... the term rewriting absolves us of the necessity of drawing borderlines between various forms of rewriting, such as "translation", "adaptation", "emulation"' (1992: 47). Other rewritings are therefore also included: 'Whether we produce translations, literary histories or their more compact spin-offs, reference works, anthologies, criticism, or editions, rewriters adapt, manipulate the original they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant, or one of the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time' (8). There are also instances though when rewriters 'go agaist the system' (Lefevere 1985: 225), which is of course the juncture at which we shall situate the work of Quebecois translators.

10 As Lefevere puts it with regard to the rewriter, which may also be

applied to the Quebecois: 'He or she may choose to go against the system, to try and operate outside the constraints of his or her time, by reading works of literature in other than received ways, by writing them in ways different from those considered great at a particular time and in a particular place, by rewriting them in such a manner that they tend not to fit in with the dominant poetics or ideology of his or her time and place, but with an alternative ideology, an alternative poetics' (1985: 225).

11 On a slightly different note, we may also say here, that woman is always translating herself, onto the page, into the world, into a void. Thus we can assume that through translating herself she also becomes visible, on the page, in the world. As Marguarite Duras writes: 'I think "feminine literature" is... translated writing... translated from blackness, from darkness. Women have been in darkness for centuries. They don't know themselves. Or only poorly. And when women write they translate this darkness... Men don't translate. They begin from a theoretical platform that is already in place, already elaborated. The writing of women is really translated from the unknown, like a new way of communicating rather than an already formed language' (1975: 174). Indeed, it is precisely these observations on 'the writing of women' that Quebecois translators put into practice when they translate. In other words, they bring to light that which has been repressed, effaced, concealed; as Godard puts it, in a dominant 'theory of translation as equivalence', it is 'her manipulative work [which]... is rendered invisible' (1990: 91). For in this schema, the translator is 'understood as a servant, an invisible hand mechanically turning the words of one language into another. The translation is considered a mere copy and not a creative utterance' (91). It is in this very precise sense then, that the question of translation and the question of woman become intimately connected: both have been concealed by (the) *his*tory (of literature).

12 As Michel de Certeau also points out, 'translation smuggles in a thousand inventions which, before the author's dazzled eyes, transform his book into a new creation' (1984: x).

13 When David Hemel and Sherry Simon therefore define translation in terms of that which 'recreates the process of writing in the target language' and moreover add that this is precisely what is responsible for 'carrying the reader directly, actively, into the theories of writing and reading as practiced by feminist theorists' (Hemel & Simon 1988: 48), we can also, at this juncture, return to the theories of reading (as writing), which we discussed in chapter 3. For, '[t]ranslation is... a *reading* and a *writing* of a text' (Hemel and Simon 1988: 48), or as Mezei puts it: '[w]hen I translate I read the text... then I reread the text and reread the text, and then I write in my language, my words — I write my reading and the reading has rewritten my writing' (Mezei 1985, qu. in Bassnett 1993: 156). The translator is thus a reader/writer, that Barthesian scriptor who breaks open the text, (wo)manhandles the text, and multiplies the text. Moreover, the text here is never a source, but a resource from which we multiply our writings. And rather than saying that the scriptor's 'only power is to mix writings' (Barthes 1977....) we can translate this Barthesian fragment into a Quebecois context and (re)write: her power, very precisely, is to mix writings. And, power here is productive (not simply repressive) in the Foucauldian sense, 'it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse' (Foucault 1980: 119). This is the positive power

that Lefevere gives to rewriting (1992: 15), and the power which also produces the Quebecois discourse of translation as a multiplier of (re)reading and (re)writing.

14 As Eagleton writes with reference to deconstruction: 'it also frees you from having to assume a position...' (1983: 145).

15 This footnote is dedicated to Iain Hamilton Grant, that omniverous reader, who I live with, who shares my books, whose books I share, and who has the gift always to come up with the right quote, just at the right time.

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