Discipline After Deconstruction

A Defence of Conceptual Oppositions in the Humanities

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'Discipline After Deconstruction' is a critique of the application of deconstruction in the humanities. The thesis seeks to show that the recruitment of deconstruction to certain projects which seek to alter disciplinary practices betrays a false assumption of the material power of metaphysics. It challenges the literary theory which presents conceptual oppositions as pernicious ideological reifications and empirical methods of inquiry as naïve.

Part One examines the status of oppositions in metaphysical philosophy. While Derrida is unwilling to endorse the total collapse of conceptual oppositions, the disjunction between metaphysics and the real world means that actual cultural differences are impervious to deconstruction.

Part Two investigates the deconstruction of discursive and generic oppositions. Chapter two analyses some abuses of rhetoric by postmodern theorists which are validated by deconstruction and promotes classical categories as a corrective to this trend. In chapter three it is shown that although in formal terms the literature/philosophy opposition is susceptible to deconstruction, a historical analysis indicates the relative stability of generic identity. Chapter four shows that mimesis and metafiction co-exist in literary realism but refutes the claim made by certain postmodern theorists that metafiction confuses the ontological categories of word and world.

The third part addresses methodological, pedagogical and political issues in the humanities. Chapter four analyses the contemporary trend in university English for the application of literary theory and the practical problems that ensue. In chapter five it is shown that the historical opposition between English and cultural studies has been eroded by the introduction of literary theory. However, it is suggested that English should resist the encroachment of textualism because of its methodological inadequacy. Against the claims of contemporary poststructuralists the final chapter argues that deconstruction is fundamentally unfit for political application.
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Preface

The 'first generation' of poststructuralist theorists—the French who developed the synthesis of linguistics, literary criticism, psychoanalysis, and ideological critique in the late 1960s and the American and British academics who translated and disseminated their work—were enthusiasts. For intellectual and political radicals, poststructuralism provided a fillip for a literary studies which for decades had subsisted on a diet of close reading supplemented by pedestrian 'old' historicism. Poststructuralism was recruited in the critique of humanism, Enlightenment rationality, bourgeois liberalism, English literature and the discipline which endorsed and was endorsed by these values. On both sides of the Channel and the Atlantic it was envisaged that the new forms of criticism would not merely transform literary studies but would revolutionise Western society and politics.

In English, even at undergraduate level, the coherent New Critical methods have been replaced with a more diverse and often conflicting collection of approaches. The empiricist and positivist philosophies which underpinned the humanities have been supplanted by anti-foundational metaphysics. Humanism, liberalism, and Enlightenment rationality have taken a battering from which they are unlikely to recover. Poststructuralism has been destructive rather than constructive in effect; the foundations of the humanities have been undermined in the attempt to bring about a social revolution, but little has been offered by way of a positive alternative. Poststructuralist enthusiasts still cling to the esoteric forms of discourse which were designed to fulfil a project which is clearly untenable. Postmodern relativism has permeated outside the walls of the academy to the extent that there is an increased awareness that reports of historical events or scientific findings are partial and culturally constructed. But radical or postmodern relativism is neither practised nor practicable in the real world because it asks for a suspension of judgement. The enthusiasts were and are deluded; although concepts and practices in the humanities have been affected by poststructuralism, other social and political institutions have proved immune.

As one would expect, there was a strong reaction against theory from disciplinary traditionalists and there remains a sizeable and vocal anti-theory lobby today. There are still disciplinary traditionalists who reject Continental theory out of hand and cling desperately to a form of Leavisite criticism and some of those who were initially seduced by the novelty of theory have since returned to their first love, literature. On the other hand, the influence of poststructuralist enthusiasm is still strong and claims are still being made for the ethical and political force of esoteric theories. But that the old opposition between theorist and anti-theorist is beginning to collapse is apparent in the growth since the early 1990s in the number of publications which take a critical view of literary theory.
but engage seriously with the issues it raises. Since the 1980s it has been the norm, even for older universities, to provide a theory option on an English degree and it is not unusual for this component to be a required element. For students of literary studies, theory is now part of disciplinary convention and therefore no longer, or at least not to the same extent, represents an iconoclastic discourse. Such students ought (at least in theory) to be equipped to undertake an informed critique of theory. This thesis is of its time because it participates in the theoretical critique of theory which is currently being undertaken by the 'second generation' of literary theorists in Britain and America. It accepts the validity of deconstruction as a form of metaphysical inquiry and mode of textual analysis, but takes issue with many of the claims, implicit and explicit, still being made by the enthusiasts.

The thesis has a supplementary agenda in that it wishes to revive the fortunes of empiricism, the British philosophy which has been eclipsed in the humanities by Continental metaphysics. Metaphysics is a form of inquiry which is not limited to the physical world but inquires into the foundations of thought using deductive reasoning. Empirical forms of inquiry use inductive reasoning to form principles from physical evidence. Metaphysical inquiry is a perfectly valid form of philosophy, but one of the effects of the current rule of metaphysics in the humanities has been the attenuation and denigration of equally valid empirical methods of inquiry. Although metaphysics may analyse the philosophical assumptions of empirical inquiry, metaphysics is equally susceptible to realist, positivist, or empirical analyses of its own a priori truths. The thesis does not argue for the superiority of empirical research over metaphysical philosophy because although both describe reality, their respective objects of inquiry and spheres of operation are simply different.

The thesis focuses on the strand of poststructuralist theory known as deconstruction as developed by Jacques Derrida in the 1960s and practised today by Anglo-American theorists. Deconstruction is a metaphysical form of inquiry which is equipped to address philosophical problems but has little purchase on the world outside the text. Such ideas as différence, radical indeterminacy or polysemy, the constructed subject, the chaos of contemporary life, and suspicion of metanarratives such as history or truth, simply do not equate with the experience of the majority. Most of the population (and indeed most academics outside of working hours) continue to communicate meaning with apparent success, to construct coherent, linear narratives of their lives, to accept and make certain assertions as matters of fact, to exercise free will, to experience self-consciousness, a sense of coherent identity, and so on. These assertions and assumptions are of course founded on common sense, the Johnsonian stone-kicking or vernacular form of empiricism which is much maligned by poststructuralists. Scientific research—the gathering of physically verifiable data—may disprove many of the assertions made by

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theorists, which currently enjoy the status of received wisdom. However, this kind of research lies outside the scope of the thesis, whose empirical inquiry is confined to real textual and disciplinary differences within the humanities.

Deconstruction is considered as a metaphysical system, notwithstanding Derrida's qualifications, for several straightforward reasons. Derrida's philosophical lineage can be traced from Plato, through Hegel, Heidegger, Husserl, and Nietzsche. Although deconstruction has been effortlessly transformed into a method of criticism and claims to range across disciplinary boundaries, it is directed primarily at metaphysical problems, whether in the texts of philosophy, literature, history, or politics. The thesis attempts to redress some common misinterpretations of Derrida's work, particularly as these relate to the status of conceptual or metaphysical oppositions, and also to block the inference that is often explicitly or implicitly drawn between metaphysical oppositions and real, cultural differences. While conceptual binaries are susceptible to metaphysical deconstruction, this approach is fundamentally inadequate to real cultural differences. The thesis is particularly critical of the 'uses' to which deconstruction has been put since these often presume an untenable transition from metaphysics to the real world. Deconstruction is currently being recruited in the humanities to attempts to incorporate literary theory into critical practice, to read philosophy as literature (and vice versa), and to subsume the discipline of English within cultural studies. The attempt to 'collapse' or conflate certain cultural differences marks an unfeasible and detrimental attempt to translate metaphysical thought into practice. Against disciplinary and discursive collapse, therefore the thesis argues for the positive appreciation of cultural differences outside of metaphysics.

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first chapter investigates oppositions in the metaphysical systems of Plato, Hegel, Heidegger, and Nietzsche and the linguistic theory of Saussure as antecedents of Derrida's *différance*. Focusing on Derrida's analysis of Plato's *Phaedrus*, it is shown that deconstruction cannot be recruited even in the collapse of metaphysical oppositions because Derrida is fundamentally unwilling to posit the destruction of any metaphysical concept. In spite of his attempts to problematise binarism, it is argued that *différance* makes no 'quantum leap' in the metaphysical history of oppositions and that deconstruction comprises as schematic and reductive a form of analysis as structuralism.

Part two focuses on textual and discursive differences. Chapter two examines the relation between philosophical argumentation and literary rhetoric. Derrida and other poststructuralists have shown how philosophy, which has traditionally regarded its own language as neutral and non-literary, is reliant upon rhetorical devices. However, it is argued that the conceptual collapse of logic and rhetoric allows a different type of rhetorical exploitation by postmodern theorists who apparently feel justified in replacing rational argument with rhetorical performance. Classical rhetoric, which incorporates but distinguishes between logical argumentation and literary style, is presented as both an
analytic paradigm and a corrective to this tendency. Chapter three addresses the exchange between literature and philosophy. Although there are usually formal conventions which indicate the generic identity of a text, there also exist 'hybrid' or indeterminate texts which in formal terms defy classification. These texts, which include the 'literary' philosophy of Plato, Nietzsche, and Derrida, are seized upon by poststructuralists as indicative of radical generic indeterminacy. However, it is argued that in such cases generic identity re-emerges in context as disciplinary and other institutional conventions militate against confusion. The exchange between literature and philosophy is considered in the texts of Plato, Derrida, and Iris Murdoch. Chapter four analyses mimesis and metafiction in the novel and considers the current theoretical approaches which privilege the latter because of its putative confusion of word and world. It is argued that neither the sophisticated poststructuralist nor the 'naïve' realist reader experience any such ontological confusion. While mimesis and metafiction clearly indicate distinctive literary (textual) practices, it is argued that in the process of reading (context) these differences may be neutralised, allowing a realist reading of a metatfictive text.

Part three examines cultural oppositions in the context of university teaching, academic discipline, and academic politics. Chapter five first traces the philosophical treatment of the theory/practice opposition and then investigates the pedagogical problems posed by the assimilation of Continental theory. The chapter also undertakes a comparative evaluation of New Criticism and deconstruction. Against current trends for 'theory-in-practice', it is argued on practical grounds that literary theory cannot be collapsed into literary practice and on intellectual grounds that it should not be. Chapter six examines the current jostling for disciplinaiy supremacy between literary studies and cultural studies in British and American universities. Cultural studies, initially a radical discipline in both political and methodological terms, defined itself in opposition to English. However, in the last twenty years literary studies has assimilated much of the political and critical territory of cultural studies thus invalidating the opposition. Advocates of cultural studies nevertheless continue to employ a false opposition between radical interdisciplinary and monolithic discipline (English) in order to gain institutional support, but institutional support has paradoxically resulted in the formulation of coherent methods for cultural studies. It is argued that these methods are fundamentally inadequate to non-textual cultural forms. English, therefore, should resist assimilation but should also attend to its own debilitated values and methods. The final chapter examines politics in the humanities. In spite of the fact that the early optimism of the poststructuralist theorists was never justified, claims are still being made for the political efficacy and relevance of literary and cultural theory in the 1990s. It is argued that much of this theory is contained firmly within the academy by virtue of its inaccessibility and that empirical forms of inquiry, which poststructuralist theorists often eschew in favour of metaphysical analysis, have by far the greater purchase on contemporary social and political reality.
Part One
1
Philosophical Opposition

From the moment deconstruction exceeded its national boundaries it encountered resistance from philosophers in the Anglo-American academy. Derrida belongs to the Continental tradition of metaphysics which inquires into the world beyond the physical senses and can be traced back through Heidegger, Nietzsche, Hegel, and Kant. Anglo-American philosophy is associated with the analytic tradition and British philosophy in particular is heavily indebted to empiricism, the philosophy of Hobbes, Locke, and Hume, which rejects metaphysical inquiry and proposes that knowledge of facts is derived from experience. This philosophical opposition, like many others, can be traced back to the differences between Plato and Aristotle. In the Parmenides Socrates asserts that the forms are known not through reference to the physical world but through knowledge of the other world (133c–134c).

In the Theaetetus, he asserts that 'The soul acquires knowledge and is kept going and improved by learning and practice' (153b). This practice, which Socrates compares to the physical movement of the body, is philosophy, and he heartily despises 'the uninitiate . . . people who believe that nothing is real save what they can grasp with their hands and do not admit that actions or processes or anything indivisible can count as real' (155e).

In the Phaedo Socrates clearly prioritises abstract reason over concrete evidence: 'hypothesizing on each occasion the theory I judge strongest, I put down as true whatever things seem to me to accord with it, both about a reason and about everything else; and whatever do not, I put down as not true' (100a).

When you had to give an account of the hypothesis itself, you would give it in the same way, once again hypothesizing another hypothesis, whichever should seem the best of those above, till you came to something adequate; but you wouldn't jumble things as the contradiction-mongers do, by discussing the starting-point and its consequences at the same time (101d–e).

Although his Logic is concerned primarily with deductive inference, Aristotle maintained the primary importance of empirical research in his enquiries into the natural world. He criticised Plato for his reliance on first principles and for ignoring the disjunction between theory and reality. Aristotle endorsed reference to the physical world, arguing in the Movement of Animals that 'we must grasp this [principle] not only in theory, but also by reference to individuals in the world of sense; for with these in view we seek general theories, and with these we believe that general theories ought to harmonize' (698a).
the language of logic, the salient distinction between the methods of Plato and Aristotle is that between deduction and induction: the former refers to a purely logical argument which requires no external reference; the latter denotes the inference of a general law from particular observed circumstances.

There are British and American philosophers who have seized upon deconstruction: Richard Rorty, for example, who has himself been described as a 'post-analytical' philosopher. There have also been attempts at mediation between Continental metaphysics and the Anglo-American tradition. While the two are not mutually exclusive, deconstruction continues to be regarded with suspicion and hostility by many. One of the most notorious encounters between the two traditions took place in 1977 in the form of a published debate between Derrida and John Searle over the issue of intentionality in J. L. Austin's speech-act theory. This dialogue is remarkable for its antagonism—overt on Searle's part, explicitly denied by Derrida. Searle opens by berating Derrida for what he sees as a misreading of Austin in 'Signature Event Context':

It would be a mistake, I think, to regard Derrida's discussion of Austin as a confrontation between two prominent philosophical traditions. This is not so much because Derrida has failed to discuss the central theses in Austin's theory of language, but rather because he has misunderstood and misstated Austin's position . . . and thus the confrontation never quite takes place.°

Derrida responds: 'if there is only one sentence of the Reply to which I can subscribe, it is the first'. Against Searle, he claims 'to be in many respects quite close to Austin, both interested in and indebted to his problematic'. In addition to this debt, he also suggests that there are concealed links between Searle and the Continental tradition: 'isn’t Searl [sic] ultimately more continental and Parisian than I am? I shall try to show why. Searl’s premises are derived from continental philosophy, and in one form or another they are very present in France.° Derrida substantiates this claim by instancing the metaphysical structures and concepts that Searle has inherited:

The hierarchical axiology, the ethical-ontological distinctions which do not merely set up value-oppositions clustered around an ideal and unfindable limit, but moreover subordinate these values to each other (normal/abnormal, standard/parasite, fulfilled/void, serious/non-serious, literal/non-literal, briefly: positive/negative and ideal/non-ideal)[.]°
'All metaphysicians', continues Derrida, 'from Plato to Rousseau, Descartes to Husserl, have proceeded in this way.' Limited Inc' represents just one example of Derrida's persistent obsession with the conceptual oppositions and hierarchies which underpin Western philosophy. His primary concern is with the logocentrism of metaphysics, that is its assumption and privileging of 'presence': 'The formal essence of the signified is presence, and the privilege of its proximity to the logos as phoné is the privilege of presence.' The fundamental philosophical opposition for Derrida is therefore the presence/absence binary.

Although Derrida is keen to emphasise a shared metaphysical inheritance, the fact remains that he and Searle are profoundly at odds. Derrida's aggression is evident in his repeated references to 'Sari' instead of Searle. This misnomer is warranted by the fact that 'Limited Inc' discusses issues of copyright, authority, and signature, as well as intention, and the French 'SARL' is an acronym equivalent to the American 'Inc' (incorporated), or British 'Ltd' (limited company). Gerald Bruns points out that the rhetorical form of catachresis or abusio is typical of Derrida and such lexical manoeuvres cannot fail to be offensive to Searle. Derrida's claim that he is not in dispute with Searle is therefore unconvincing.

Another occasion when Derrida takes issue with a contemporary philosopher is in 'Cogito and the History of Madness'. The issue of contention is a binary opposition, but this time Derrida's opponent is a fellow French poststructuralist, Michel Foucault. Derrida critiques Foucault's analysis of the reason/madness opposition in Madness and Civilization. Foucault considers this to be foundational: 'the Reason-Madness nexus constitutes for Western culture one of the dimensions of its originality'. His investigation initially appears quite compatible with Derrida's project and, as one would expect of two eminent poststructuralists, Derrida and Foucault do share certain principles. One of these is apparent in Foucault's anti-foundational call to 'renounce the convenience of terminal truths'. However, an irreconcilable difference emerges with Foucault's proclaimed desire to 'return to that zero point in the course of madness at which madness is an undifferentiated experience, a not yet divided experience of division itself'. Derrida cannot countenance such nostalgia for origins and queries the validity of Foucault's whole inquiry. His primary misgiving is with Foucault's claim to be writing from the (in)side of the excluded other (madness), that is to be writing outside the history and discourse of reason: 'Foucault has attempted—and this is the greatest merit, but also the very
infeasibility of his book—to write a history of madness itself. He states, rather dismissively, that 'everything transpires as if Foucault knew what "madness" means.' It is arguable that Foucault did know what madness meant; he was, after all, treated for clinical depression, but what Derrida denies is the possibility of articulating this experience. He is deeply suspicious of Foucault's attempt to 'write . . . the archaeology of that silence', but suggests that it might be possible to access in one of two ways: 'Either do not mention a certain silence (a certain silence which, again, can be determined only within a language that will preserve this silence from contamination by any given muteness), or follow the madman down the road of his exile.' Derrida here relies on the principle of mutual exclusivity and appears to be reinforcing the reason/madness binary. However, as will be shown in chapter two, this apparent submission to the laws of classical logic cannot be accepted at face value.

Whereas in 'Limited Inc', Derrida dismisses the differences between himself and Searle, here he neglects clear points of similarity between himself and Foucault. Foucault's description of madness being 'interned' by reason, could easily be conscripted to the deconstructive co-implication of opposites. His analysis of power and sexuality apparently problematises the inside/outside opposition: 'we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse . . . but as a multiplicity of discursive elements.' When considered in conjunction with 'Limited Inc', the conjecture that, despite protestations to the contrary, professional aggression clearly fuels some of Derrida's intellectual encounters is lent some credence. Derrida's attack on Foucault may be explained with reference to a particular personal and professional agenda. As Derrida explains in his preamble to 'Cogito', he had studied with Foucault and claims to 'retain the consciousness of an admiring and grateful disciple.' He also maintains that 'the dialogue is in danger of being taken—incorrectly—as a challenge, the disciple knows that he alone finds himself already challenged by the master's voice within him that precedes his own.' Such disavowals are similar to those made in 'Limited Inc'; Derrida is denying any hostility towards Foucault prior to a critical onslaught. Opposition in Derrida's work exists where it is stridently denied. The following examination of deconstruction is designed to establish whether it can be recruited in the 'collapse' of conceptual oppositions, as some poststructuralist camp-followers believe, or whether it in fact works to reinforce these metaphysical structures.
It is *differance* which is most often conscripted in the deconstruction of oppositions: 'At the point where the concept of *differance* intervenes... all the conceptual oppositions of metaphysics, to the extent that they have for ultimate reference the presence of a present... (signifier/signified; sensible/intelligible; writing/speech; speech/language; diachrony/synchrony; space/time; passivity/activity etc.) become non-pertinent.'

*Differance*, although a 'quasi-concept' whose foundational status is always refuted by Derrida, is fundamental to poststructuralist thought, marking the revision of Saussure's *différence* (the principle by which linguistic signs acquire their value not by reference to objects outside the linguistic system but by difference within the linguistic system). *Differance*'s power to 'intervene' in the matter of metaphysical oppositions depends upon the assertion that the difference of *differance* (the a which distinguishes it from *différence*) is neither purely sensible nor purely intelligible. Derrida's argument proceeds as follows:
The *a* of *differance* can only function within the system of so-called 'phonetic writing' (a term which underlines the privileged status of speech over writing).

However, this *a* is not itself audible since it cannot be distinguished from the *e* that it replaces. For Derrida this illustrates the fact that there is no such thing as true phonetic writing (writing which contains the full 'presence' or meaning of speech), as does the fact that writing can only function by including 'nonphonetic signs', such as punctuation marks, which can 'barely tolerate the concept of the [referential] sign itself'.

Since the difference between the *e* and the *a* is non-phonetic (that is, phonetically identical), the differential value of *differance* is not audible. Derrida goes on to assert that 'It will be objected, for the same reasons that graphic difference itself vanishes into the night, can never be sensed as a full term'. The implication here is that while the meaning of *differance* does not inhere in the spoken word, neither is it contained in the graphic or written word. This message was reinforced in the context of the original lecture, where the graphic difference between the *e* and the *a* would have been literally invisible to the audience. For the listener, there is therefore an unobtrusive slide between the metaphorical 'vanishes' and this literal invisibility, although out of this original context it is possible to argue that the meaning of *differance* does inhere in the written word. For Derrida, however, meaning is context-bound but never fixed and he therefore concludes that full presence inheres neither in the graphic nor the phonetic sign so that *differance* 'must be permitted to belong to an order which no longer belongs to sensibility.'

He then proceeds to argue that simply because we cannot sense (see/hear) the full presence of *differance*, this does not imply that the difference is merely conceptual. As Alan Bass points out in a translator's note, Derrida's argument is also context-bound; the words used to denote intelligibility connote sensibility;

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27 Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 3.
28 Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 3.
29 Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 3.
Philosophical Opposition

the Greek word *theorein* (knowledge) originally included the sense of seeing, while the French *entendement* (understanding) also signifies hearing. Derrida's argument, although citing etymology and grammar as 'evidence', is pre-eminently metaphysical. *Différance* is a metaphysical term which, irrespective of its etymological origins, has a conceptual but no physical referent. Like one of Plato's forms, it occupies the realm of ideas not the world of things.

The power of *différance* to break out of metaphysics is therefore from the outset curtailed by its philosophical provenance. Derrida attempts to palliate this apparent drawback by citing as mitigating circumstances the ineluctable force of metaphysics itself. This is the principle of the 'double bind' which dictates that one is necessarily constrained by the terms of the discourse one critiques. *Différance* occupies an indeterminate and intermediate position between binary terms, but is ultimately confined within the metaphysical binary structure:

Here, therefore, we must let ourselves [sic] refer to an order that resists the opposition, one of the founding oppositions of philosophy, between the sensible and the intelligible. The order which resists this opposition, and resists it because it transports it, is announced in a movement of *différance* (with an *a*) between two differences or two letters, a *différance* which belongs neither to the voice nor to writing in the usual sense, and which is located, as the strange space that will keep us together here for an hour, between speech and writing.\(^5^0\)

However, according to Derrida, *différance* does have the potential to subvert metaphysics from within:

Our discourse irreducibly belongs to the system of metaphysical oppositions. The break with this structure of belonging can be announced only through a certain organization, a certain *strategic* arrangement which, within the field of metaphysical opposition, uses the strengths of the field to turn its own stratagems against it.\(^5^1\)

It is impossible to assess the subversive force of deconstruction and *différance* within the 'system of metaphysical opposites' without some knowledge of the history of that system. For Plato in the *Protagoras*, opposites were essential, that is, 'one thing can have only one opposite' (333a–b). Although *différance* is set against essential oppositions in metaphysical philosophy, an examination of some of the Dialogues indicates a certain unacknowledged affinity. Intimations of *différance* can already be identified in Plato's description of the soul, which moves between the sensible and intelligible realms, gaining knowledge of the eternal forms in heaven to be regained in the mortal world by the philosopher. Another example of Plato's relative flexibility in the treatment of oppositions occurs in the *Phaedo*, where Socrates claims that to establish the existence of the immortal soul it is necessary to prove that living people are born from the dead. In order to prove

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50 Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 5.
51 Derrida, Writing and Difference, p. 20.
this assertion, the subject of the enquiry is widened to include 'all things subject to coming-to-be' (70d). Of these, Socrates asserts that 'opposites come to be only from their opposites—in the case of all things that actually have an opposite' (70e). There is continual movement between such opposites: 'between the members of every pair of opposites, since they are two, aren’t there two processes of coming-to-be, from one to the other, and back again from the latter to the former?' (71a–b) Although Plato assumes essential opposites, the stress on movement between those opposites is accentuated in the supplementary proof:

If there were not perpetual reciprocity in coming to be, between one set of things and another, revolving in a circle, as it were—if, instead, coming-to-be were a linear process from one thing into its opposite only, without any bending back in the other direction, do you realize that all things would ultimately have the same form: the same fate would overtake them, and they would cease from coming to be? (72a–b)

The mobility and reciprocity between metaphysical oppositions clearly prefigures différence.

In the *Categories* Aristotle identifies four types of opposition: relative, contrary, possessive, and negative (11b) and negative opposition (A/not-A) is the essence of binarism. In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle asserts that something cannot hold contrary properties: 'the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect' (1005b). The law of identity dictates that 'it is impossible for anything at the same time to be and not to be' (1006a). Derrida's description of the 'arche-trace' (another quasi-concept), indicates his lack of respect for Aristotelian laws:

the value of the transcendental arche must make its necessity felt before letting itself be erased. The concept of arche-trace must comply with both that necessity and that erasure. It is in fact contradictory and not acceptable within the logic of identity.®

What Derrida says about the arche-trace is true of all the quasi-concepts, including différence. In compiling the attributes of différence Derrida instructs at the outset that 'différence is not, does not exist, is not a present-being (on) in any form; and we will be led to delineate also everything that it is not, that is, everything; and consequently that it has neither existence nor essence'. This appears to first to subscribe to the law of identity. (It is incidentally tautologous in the best tradition of philosophical logic: différence does not exist therefore it has no existence.) However, Derrida wishes to claim for différence that it hovers between existence and non-existence (presence and absence), thereby evading this law:

If the displaced presentation remains definitively and implacably postponed, it is not that a certain present remains absent or hidden. Rather, différence maintains our

A clear antecedent of *differance* was developed by Hegel, who repudiated the Aristotelian law of non-contradiction in scathing terms: 'Utterances after the fashion of this pretended law . . . are, as they deserve to be, reputed silly.' For Hegel, the principle of mutual exclusion or binary opposition was replaced with a principle of integral difference:

> Instead of speaking by the maxim of Excluded Middle (which is the maxim of abstract understanding) we should rather say: Everything is opposite. Neither in heaven nor in earth, neither in the world of mind nor of nature, is there anywhere such an abstract 'either—or' as the understanding maintains. Whatever exists is concrete, with difference and opposition in itself. (119)

This principle of integral difference was formalised in the dialectic, a triadic model in which the thesis contains its own opposite or negation, the antithesis; the antithesis is itself negated producing the synthesis. In argument this is the process, often referred to as 'sublation' or the *Aufhebung*, whereby that which is irrational is cancelled and that which is rational is preserved. Hegel also decries the Platonic concept of 'essential difference . . . according to which the different is not confronted by any other but by its other' (119), but acknowledges Plato as the father of the dialectic: 'Among the ancients Plato is termed the inventor of Dialectic; and his right to the name rests on the fact that the Platonic philosophy first gave the free scientific, and thus at the same time the objective, form to Dialectic' (81). Hegel's progress towards the co-implication of opposites can be gauged by comparing his analysis of the relation between life and death with that of Plato:

> We say, for instance, that man is mortal, and seem to think that the ground of his death is in external circumstances only; so that if this way of looking were correct, man would have two special properties, vitality and—as also—mortality. But the true view of the matter is that life, as life, involves the germ of death, and that the finite, being radically self-contradictory, involves its own self-suppression. (81)

Rather than suggesting a constant pendulum-like movement from one term to the other as in Plato's supplementary argument and *differance* (see below), the dialectic breaks out of the binary model.

Although Hegel's dialectic initially appears compatible with *differance* in its co-implication of opposites, Derrida takes issue with its final stage. Although the synthesis does not necessarily represent the termination of the dialectic, and may itself instigate a new dialectical movement, its eventual conclusion is the totalisation of pure spirit, a teleological notion which is uncongenial to Derrida. He sets the postmodern nihilism of...
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Georges Bataille against Hegel, claiming that 'Laughter alone exceeds dialectics and the dialectician: it bursts out only on the basis of an absolute renunciation of meaning, an absolute riskng of death'. Although this suggests an escape from the dialectic, it does so only by invoking an 'absolute' entity, something normally considered aberrant by Derrida.

The co-implication of opposites was further cultivated by Heidegger although, as Derrida notes, this also marked a return to binarism. In Sein und Zeit Heidegger focuses on man's unique enquiry into Being which constitutes him as an ontological Being and sets him apart from other animals. He distinguishes between the ontological (the world of Being) and the ontic (the [real] world of beings). However, he is concerned primarily with the existence of the former in the latter ('Being-in-the-world'), rather than the two as separate or separable, thus marking an apparent affinity with Derridean thought. There is a series of oppositions running through Sein und Zeit (not least the 'S/Z' of the title): Gerede (inauthentic discourse or 'chatter') and Rede (authentic discourse); Furcht (fear of the 'they' or the 'other') and Angst (the authentic fear of death). These are all related to the primary couple, Dasein (authentic Being-in-the world) and Verfall (inauthentic 'fallenness'). Derrida foregrounds the structural binarism of Sein und Zeit:

The extraordinary trembling to which classical ontology is subjected in Sein und Zeit still remains within the grammar and lexicon of metaphysics. And all the conceptual pairs of opposites which serve the destruction of ontology are ordered around one fundamental axis: that which separates the authentic from the inauthentic and, in the very last analysis, primordial from fallen temporality.

Heidegger, like Hegel, wished to surpass binarism but was actually less successful on this count as the ontic-ontological model appears to mark a regression to the binary from the triadic model. However, that Heidegger owed a debt to the dialectic is conspicuous in his account of the saving of Dasein from Verfall. Verfall is necessary to Dasein because it is through the inauthentic, through Furcht and Gerede, that Dasein becomes aware of the loss of authenticity and can struggle to rediscover itself. Inauthentic existence periodically produces dissatisfaction. This can in turn produce moments of revelation when Angst intrudes and Dasein realises that it is not only 'in' the world and 'with' others, but owes a responsibility to itself and must become Dasein-for. The resolution of this dialectic through which Dasein can repossess itself, the mediating entity in Heidegger's scheme, is by means of the ethical moment, Sorge. This term translates as 'concern', or 'apprehension' and denotes care for the mundane, for the material world, for 'others', and for Being itself as it exists in these things. Heidegger's terms are ostensibly neutral, rather than hierarchical and the fact that Verfall is a necessary condition of existence in the world and therefore of Dasein itself, means that it cannot be discriminated against. The whole tone

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36 Derrida, Writing and Difference, p. 256.
37 Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 63.
of Heidegger's philosophy, however, expresses a longing for Being (presence), and Sorge acts as a sort of midwife to Being.

Derrida finds this logocentrism more offensive than mere binarism; he stresses the connection between Being and presence and its susceptibility to deconstruction: 'it is the determination of Being as presence or as beingness that is interrogated by the thought of différance'[^36] Derrida frequently admits that différance is forced to encounter the ontological and dialectical philosophies of Heidegger and Hegel on their own ground (the double bind again): 'to prepare, beyond our logos, for a différance so violent that it can be interpellated neither as the epochality of Being nor as ontological difference, is not in any way to dispense with the passage through the truth of Being, or to "criticize", "contest", or misconstrue its insistent necessity'[^39] Even in this more moderate vein, however, he still hints at the possibility of the extra-metaphysical: 'From the vantage of this laughter and this dance, from the vantage of this affirmation foreign to all dialectics, the other side of nostalgia, what I will call Heideggerian hope, comes into question.'[^40] Derrida is at pains to stress at once the ineluctable force of binarism (the double bind) and différance's difference from it, but it is argued below that différance is in fact less forceful in its destabilisation of metaphysical oppositions than the dialectic.

Nietzsche mounted an attack on philosophical oppositions and on the entire system of metaphysics. Derrida is naturally sympathetic to this project and even attributes to it some degree of success, remarking that 'Nietzsche, far from remaining simply (with Hegel and as Heidegger wished) within metaphysics, contributed a great deal to the liberation of the signifier.'[^41] Derrida enlists Nietzsche in the deconstructive assault on oppositions: 'différance is the name we might give to the "active", moving discord of different forces, and of differences of forces, that Nietzsche sets up against the entire system of metaphysical grammar.'[^42] Nietzsche collapses oppositions by way of the 'will to power', a monistic doctrine which reduces all concepts to a single element: 'My desire is to show that absolute homogeneity of all phenomena, and to ascribe to moral differentiations but the value of perspective.'[^43] Derrida asks the rhetorical question: 'Is not all of Nietzsche's thought a critique of philosophy as an active indifference to difference . . . ?[^44] The appropriate answer would appear to be a resounding 'No!'; Nietzsche shows little respect for difference. However, like Derrida, he relies on the concept of opposition where expedient, stating that 'This age is possessed of the opposite instincts.'[^45] Derrida makes a desperate attempt to recruit Nietzsche to the cause by equating 'sameness' with différance and distinguishing both from any potentially reductive exercise: 'Which . . . according to

[^36]: Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 21.
[^39]: Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 27.
[^40]: Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 383.
[^41]: Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 21.
[^42]: Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 22.
[^43]: Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 27.
[^45]: Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 18.
logic itself, does not exclude that philosophy lives in and on difference, thereby blinding itself to the same, which is not the identical. The same, precisely, is différence. It seems unlikely, however, that 'absolute homogeneity' can properly be identified with différence and that Derrida's desire to align Nietzschean philosophy with deconstruction informs a wilful misreading.

Deconstruction's inheritance is not only metaphysical, but also linguistic; there is no doubt that Derrida's particular vision of Western philosophy is deeply coloured by the terms and techniques of structuralism as formulated by Saussure. Derrida asserts, for example, that 'The difference between signifier and signified is no doubt the governing pattern within which Platonism institutes itself and determines its opposition to sophistics.'* Derrida's obsession with oppositions may be in part a reaction against structuralism which had most recently elevated the principle of negative or binary opposition to a founding principle. According to Saussure, binary opposition is the means by which the units of language have value or meaning; each unit is defined against what it is not. Saussure presented such distinctions as fundamental to all language: 'in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms.' While structuralist linguistics makes extensive use of the binary paradigm in its model of language (langue and parole; synchronic and diachronic; signifier and signified), it should be remembered that binary oppositions within language are themselves functional rather than essential (Platonic) oppositions. This is obvious at the level of the phoneme, where any particular pairing is arbitrary. For Saussure, the terms 'opposition' and 'difference' are therefore interchangeable: 'la langue is a system of oppositions or differences, and the task of the analyst is to discover what are these functional differences.' The co-implication of opposites undertaken by deconstruction is already in place in Saussurean linguistics since each term in a binary opposition depends for its meaning on the other.

David Wood suggests that Derrida makes 'no attempt to evaluate this model of language. Instead he offers us a kind of deepening of the principle of difference on which it rests.' Derrida supplements Saussurean difference with deferral. Derrida points to the logocentrism of structuralist theory, asserting that 'The "formal essence" of the sign can only be determined in terms of presence.' One would expect Derrida to set about deconstructing the sign and Saussure's metaphors appear pre-eminently susceptible to deconstruction: 'Language can also be compared with a sheet of paper: thought is the front

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46 Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 17.
48 Reprint ed. of Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, trans. Wladimir Baskin, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye (London: Owen, 1959); first published as Cours de linguistique générale, 1915, p. 120.
51 Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 18.
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and the sound the back; one cannot cut the front without cutting the back at the same
time.® If Derrida were so minded, this 'sheet of paper' could function to co-implicate
the founding opposition of Saussure's theory: signifier/signified. However, Derrida elsewhere
asserts the necessity of the sign as an essential component of both differance and
metaphysics: 'we cannot do without the concept of the sign, for we cannot give up this
metaphysical complicity without also giving up . . . the risk of erasing difference in the self-
identity'.®

He is more explicitly critical of Saussure's phonocentrism. In Saussure's theory of
language binary oppositions are theoretically neutral. Derrida quotes Gilles Deleuze to
demonstrate his aversion to this notion: "The dream of two equal forces, even if they are
given an opposition of meaning, is an approximate and crude dream, a statistical dream,
plunged into the living but dispelled by chemistry."© In the Cours Saussure explicitly
prioritises speech by deprecating the invidious effects of the written word on pronunciation
and excluding writing as the proper object of linguistic enquiry. (Saussure did not write
the Cours but, like Socrates, 'dictated' it to his pupils through his lectures.) Derrida
responds to this by asking 'Where is the evil? . . . And what has been invested in the
"living word", that makes such "aggressions" of writing intolerable?® Saussure is quite
candid about his distaste for the written word. However, it is equally obvious that the
Derrida's preoccupation with writing has had the opposite effect of subordinating speech.

Differance has been set to work on metaphysical oppositions in a wide range of
canonical texts in linguistics, literature, and politics, as well as philosophy. As one of the
founding fathers of Western metaphysics, Plato comes under particularly intense scrutiny.
'Plato's Pharmacy' is one of the earlier texts in which differance is unleashed, in this case
against the Phaedrus, and it typifies both the formulaic nature of deconstruction and the
way differance supports rather than subverts binary structures. In this dialogue, Phaedrus
conceals under his cloak the transcription of a speech by the sophist Lysias. He is
eventually persuaded by Socrates to read out the speech, which in turn prompts Socrates'
reflections on the nature of the soul and divine love, rhetoric and knowledge and, in the
penultimate section, the superiority of speech over writing. Derrida emphasises the
'supplementarity' of this topic: 'All the subjects of the dialogue, both themes and speakers,
seem exhausted at the moment the supplement, writing, or the pharmakon, are
introduced'.® Derrida justifies his concern (as he does in 'Cogito'), by stressing the
connection in Plato's text between the discussion of writing and the preceding commentary
on truth, beauty, love, and knowledge.

Derrida maintains that the binary principle is essential to Plato's concept of writing:

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® Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, p. 113.
® Derrida, Writing and Difference, p. 281.
© Quoted in Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 17.
®® Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 41.
®® Derrida, Dissemination, p. 73. For a discussion of writing as supplement see Of Grammatology, pp. 141-64.
Plato thinks of writing, and tries to comprehend it, to dominate it, on the basis of opposition as such. In order for these contrary values (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside/outside, etc.) to be in opposition, each of the terms must be simply external to the other, which means that one of these oppositions (the opposition between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible opposition.®

Derrida attempts to undermine this classic binarism by focusing on etymology and semantic nuance as he does in 'Différance'. The deconstruction of the Phaedrus pivots on one word, pharmakon, a term signally appealing to Derrida because of its inherent 'double' meaning: This pharmakon, this "medicine", this philter, which acts as both remedy and poison, already introduces itself into the body of the discourse with all its ambivalence. This charm, this spellbinding virtue, this power of fascination, can be—alternately or simultaneously—beneficent or maleficent.® Derrida also foregrounds his exploitation of this semantic ambiguity when he states: 'we hope to display in the most striking manner the regular, ordered polysemy that has, through skewing, indetermination, or overdetermination, but without mistranslation, permitted the rendering of the same word by "remedy", "recipe", "poison", "drug", "philter", etc.'® He tests the limits of this strategy by citing words which are etymologically related to the pharmakon but absent from Plato's text. The implication is that if a term is dependent for its value on that which it is not (Saussure's principle), then that which it is not is somehow present in the sign, even by virtue of its absence:

there is another of these words that, to our knowledge, is never used by Plato. If we line it up with the series pharmakeia-pharmakon-pharmakeus, we will no longer be able to content ourselves with reconstituting a chain that, for all its hiddenness, for all it might escape Plato's notice, is nevertheless something that passes through certain discoverable points of presence that can be seen in the text. The word . . . seems strikingly absent from the Platonic text.
But what does absent or present mean here?®

The 'absent/present' word Derrida is referring to is pharmakos (scapegoat). Derrida rejects the logocentric idea that this term might provide a key with which to decipher the unitary meaning of Plato's text; his invocation should rather be seen rather as part of the perennial attempt to problematise the presence/absence opposition upon which, as he proceeds to argue, the speech/writing hierarchy is founded. R. Hackforth, a translator of the Phaedrus, notes that Plato himself was unconcerned with hidden meanings—since there was a diversity of potential meanings but no means to decide between them, he refused to expend much effort in arbitration. On the other hand, he was also in the habit of making 'etymological jests . . . sometimes rather pointlessly.'® Saussure undertook
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research into concealed anagrams in classical poetry, although he was doubtful of the validity of this study. Derrida's practice is to forcibly disinter contradictory, hidden, and absent terms from Plato's text and for these etymological excavations to bear a significant weight in the argument.

To return to the Phaedrus, the first explicit, if oblique, reference to the pharmakon occurs in the Boreas myth narrated by Socrates. According to this myth, a maiden is killed on the bank of the river Ilissus 'while at play with Pharmaceia' (229c). The relevance of this myth to the rest of the Phaedrus is not clear. Pharmaceia is the goddess of medicine and according to the French translator, there was a fountain dedicated to Pharmaceia near the river. Hackforth suggests that it may have some 'organic significance', or might simply be a dig 'at the allegorical school of poetical interpretation'. For Derrida, its significance lies in the paradoxical effects of Pharmaceia, who proves fatal thereby neatly emphasising the contradictory properties of the pharmakon: kill and cure: 'Through her games, Pharmaceia has dragged down to death a virginal purity and an unpenetrated interior.' For Derrida nothing is so inviolate, as his discussion of the hymen in 'The Double Session' (also published in Dissemination) makes clear:

To repeat: the hymen, the confusion between the present and the nonpresent, along with all the indifferences it entails within the whole series of opposites (perception and nonperception, memory and image, memory and desire, etc.), produces the effect of a medium (a medium as element enveloping both terms at once; a medium located between the two terms). It is an operation that both sows confusion between opposites and stands between the opposites at once.

The pharmakon itself is next mentioned by Socrates; when Phaedrus teases him for a disinclination to walk outside the city walls, he replies, 'you seem to have discovered a recipe [pharmakon] for getting me out' (230d). This 'recipe' is Lysias's (written) speech and its effects are described by Derrida (following Plato) as seductive: 'the pharmakon makes one stray from one's general, natural, habitual paths and laws'. Just as the (absent) pharmakos served in the deconstruction of the presence/absence opposition, here the pharmakon mediates between inside and outside, causing Socrates to cross the (city) boundaries. The 'unpenetrated interior' which Derrida associates with the Boreas myth is ironised by this subsequent exchange between Socrates and Phaedrus and revealed precisely as mythical. Derrida nevertheless states defensively that up to this point, the 'association between writing and the pharmakon still seems external; it could be judged artificial or purely coincidental.' However, it is already clear that for Derrida it is rather the binary opposition internal/external which is artificial.

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63 Derrida, Dissemination, p. 70.
64 Plato's Phaedrus, p. 76.
65 Derrida, Dissemination, p. 70.
66 Derrida, Dissemination, p. 212.
67 Derrida, Dissemination, p. 70.
68 Derrida, Dissemination, p. 72.
The explicit identification of writing with the *pharmakon* occurs with the relation by Socrates of the myth of Theuth, or the origin of writing. In this myth, Theuth is the inventor of calculation, geometry, astronomy, and writing. He presents this last invention to the king, Thamus, claiming that it is 'a recipe *pharmakon* for memory and wisdom' (274e) and here *pharmakon* is patently used in its positive or 'medicinal' sense. However, the king is unimpressed by the offering and declares that writing is in fact anti-mnemonic: 'If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls: they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks' (275a). The king therefore castigates Theuth and disparages his invention: 'you, by reason of your tender regard for the writing that is your offspring, have declared the very opposite of its true effect' (275a). The association of writing with the *pharmakon* is most propitious for Derrida since if the *pharmakon* itself is both good and bad, curative and fatal, it can be used to undermine the hierarchical opposition of speech and writing in Plato's philosophy and by extension the whole of Western metaphysics.

The fact that the king cannot write but nevertheless determines the value of writing is cited by Derrida as evidence that writing is the secondary term in the speech/writing hierarchy:

> God the king does not know how to write, but that ignorance or incapacity only testifies to his sovereign independence. He has no need to write. He speaks, he says, he dictates, and his word suffices. Whether a scribe from his secretarial staff then adds the supplement of a transcription or not, that consignment is always in essence secondary.\(^5\)

At this point the relation of speech and writing to the presence/absence hierarchy becomes clear. The king, both father figure and god, is the final arbiter of the value of writing. He represents the transcendental signified or guarantor of meaning (presence) in speech: 'The king or god . . . is thus the other name for the origin of value.'\(^6\) The logocentric hierarchy is identified as a constant feature: 'Even if we did not want to give in here to the easy passage uniting the figures of the king, the god, and the father, it would suffice to pay systematic attention . . . to the permanence of a Platonic schema that assigns the origin and power of speech, precisely of *logos*, to the paternal position.'\(^7\) The terms Derrida uses here: 'systematic', 'schema', indicate the nature of Western metaphysics, but can also be applied to deconstruction, whose methods of analysis are equally schematic.

There is some debate as to the provenance of the Theuth myth and Derrida disputes Plato's claim to originality by indicating its structural similarity with other ancient myths, such as the Egyptian myth of Thoth (not mentioned by Plato). Thoth is the son of the god-king, Ammon-Ra, and the vocal representative of Horus. In this myth, speech

\(^5\) Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 76.
\(^6\) Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 76.
\(^7\) Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 76.
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(Thoth) is secondary to a primary presence (Horus): 'The message itself is not, but only represents, the absolutely creative moment. It is a second and secondary word.'\textsuperscript{72} As Derrida describes it, this myth has precisely the same structure:

the figure of Thoth is opposed to its other (father, sun, life, speech, origin or orient, etc.), but as that which at once supplements and supplants it. Thoth extends or opposes by repeating or replacing. By the same token, the figure of Thoth takes shape and takes its shape from the very thing it resists and substitutes for. But it thereby opposes itself, passes into its other, and this messenger-god is truly a god of the absolute passage between opposites.\textsuperscript{73}

In order to undermine the principle of mutual exclusion and the speech/writing hierarchy, Derrida applies the dialectic as analytic paradigm.

Derrida cautions against reducing the \textit{Phaedrus} to a structural analysis, but immediately qualifies this admonition: 'No absolute privilege allows us absolutely to master its textual system. This limitation can and should nevertheless by displaced to a certain extent.'\textsuperscript{74} This is another evocation of the double bind, intended to excuse recourse to a position of scientific mastery outside the text and the confinement within its binary structures. That deconstruction as a method of analysis in any way surpasses structuralist analysis is highly debatable. The charge of reductiveness is more often levelled at structuralism. Jonathan Culler, for example, points out the pitfalls of blanket binarism:

binary oppositions can be very misleading precisely because they present factitious organization. The moral is quite simple: one must resist the temptation to use binary oppositions to devise elegant structures. If A is opposed to B and X is opposed to Y then one could, in seeking further unification, set these oppositions together in a four-term homology and say that A is to B as X is to Y (in that the relation is one of opposition in both cases). But the formal symmetry of such homologies does not guarantee that they are in any way pertinent.\textsuperscript{75}

The use of schematic letters, pioneered by Aristotle in his development of abstract logic, is appropriate. In a letter written prior to the series of lectures, later transcribed as the \textit{Cours de linguistique générale}, Saussure wrote: 'For a long time I have been above all preoccupied with the logical classification of linguistic facts'.\textsuperscript{76} The application of the 'abstract' principle of binary opposition or \textit{différance} onto the differences in literary or philosophical texts comprises a reductive process similar to that of syllogistic logic. Although difference and opposition are identical in structuralist theory, in a binary opposition and by extension in any structuralist analysis, differences are removed from context and thereby artificially polarised. As Culler admonishes, 'The advantage of binarism, but also its principal danger, lies in the fact that it permits one to classify

\textsuperscript{72} Derrida, \textit{Dissemination}, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{73} Derrida, \textit{Dissemination}, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{74} Derrida, \textit{Dissemination}, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{76} Quoted in Culler, Saussure, p. 14.
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anything. Given two items one can always find some respect in which they differ and hence place them in a relation of binary opposition. While the artificial polarisation of differences is something one might expect Derrida to take exception to, the same thing seems to happen, although in a different way, through the agency of différance in linking together inside/outside, good/bad, speech/writing, Thamus/Theuth, and so on.

The protocol of 'classic' deconstruction comprises three clear steps: (i) identification of the binary oppositions by which the text is structured; (ii) demonstration of the hierarchical organisation of these binaries; (iii) investigation into the ways that the rhetoric of the text subverts the binary oppositions its argument is predicated upon. But although, as Barbara Johnson suggests, deconstruction holds that binary oppositions are sustained at the cost of internal differences, the effect of deconstruction is to fortify these binaries. This is because the term utilised in the third step of deconstructive analysis, whether imposed upon the text (différance) or borrowed from the text (pharmakon), always remains within and reinforces pre-existing metaphysical structures. Furthermore, the repeated application of this paradigm also tends to reinforce the structural equivalence of different binaries.

The links between structuralist and poststructuralist analysis are foregrounded when Derrida asks, What then, are the pertinent traits for someone who is trying to reconstitute the structural resemblance between the Platonic and the other mythological figures of the origin of writing? He continues, 'What we wish to do here is simply to point to the internal structural necessity which alone has made possible such communication and any eventual contagion of mythemes.' This echoes Claude Lévi-Strauss's method of analysis in 'The Structural Study of Myth'. Lévi-Strauss had already identified a mythical figure who 'occupies a position halfway between two polar terms' and who 'must retain something of that duality—namely and ambiguous and equivocal character'. In addition, he notes that a mythical figure may be 'endowed with contradictory attributes—for instance, he may be good and bad at the same time'.

Derrida cites Lévi-Strauss as his methodological predecessor, quoting from *The Savage Mind*. "'The opposition between nature and culture to which I attached much importance at one time . . . now seems to be of primarily methodological importance," (Lévi-Strauss here employs the nature/culture opposition, whilst doubting the mutual exclusivity of the terms.) Derrida notes that 'Lévi-Strauss will always remain faithful to this double

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77 Collier, *Structuralist Poetics*, p. 15.
79 Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 85.
80 Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 85.
intention: to preserve as an instrument something whose truth value he criticizes. Such theoretical disclaimers, however, have little material effect on the textual analysis.

While poststructuralism is presented as a critique of structuralism's tendency to concentrate exclusively on the synchronic aspect of language and *différance* supplements Saussurean difference with deferral, in 'Plato's Pharmacy' Derrida cites particular myths (parole) to reveal the underlying structure (langue). At times his approach is deliberately ahistorical, 'bracketing off the problem of factual genealogy and of the empirical, effective communication among cultures and mythologies'. Of course Derrida typically oppugns the mutual exclusivity of the synchronic/diachronic opposition: 'If one had faith in the organization of a classical reading, one would perhaps say that I had just proposed a double grid: historical and systematic. Let us pretend to believe in this opposition. Let us do it for the sake of convenience.' This 'illusory' structure had already been deconstructed by Saussure in the *Cours*:

Speech always implies both an established system and an evolution; at every moment it is an existing institution and a product of the past. To distinguish between the system and its history, between what it is and what it was, seems very simple at first glance; actually the two things are so closely related that we can scarcely keep them apart.

Lévi-Strauss followed Saussure in describing myth as a 'double structure, altogether historical and ahistorical'. The ahistorical tendency of Saussurean linguistics and subsequent structuralist criticism is in fact legitimated by this theory. The implication is that the synchronic study of *langue* is necessarily historical and therefore that historical questions can effectively be ignored. Ironically, the co-implication of history and structure has had precisely the same consequence for deconstruction as Derrida tends to make token gestures to history in the form of perfunctory notes and asides but focuses overwhelmingly on structure.

Derrida tellingly vindicates Plato (and thus himself) as subject to certain 'structural laws':

> The most general of these, those that govern and articulate the oppositions speech/writing, life/death, father/son, master/servant, first/second, legitimate son/orphan-bastard, soul/body, inside/outside, good/evil, seriousness/play, day/night, sun/moon, etc., also govern and according to the same configurations, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian mythology.

The fact that Derrida also remains within the binary structures of Plato's text could also be ascribed to the double bind, but for the fact that what is presented as necessary subjection

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64 Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 284.
65 Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 85.
69 Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 85.
appears closer to voluntary subscription. The argument for subversion from within, deconstruction's primary justification, begins to wear thin. It becomes obvious that the methodological tools which Derrida inherits from structuralism and metaphysics have a similarly reductive effect. Derrida focuses on textual differences which then are artificially isolated by 'différance (with an a) as the displaced and equivocal passage of one different thing to another, from one term of an opposition to the other. He is less concerned with the actual or real differences between speech and writing than with the formal structure of the text in terms of its metaphysical oppositions and hierarchies.

Derrida has identified an energy at work within the *Phaedrus*, undermining the hierarchical structures upon which the argument—and the rest of metaphysics—is founded. This force is apparently so subversive that it has been suppressed by the author and ignored by subsequent commentators. Rarely does Derrida attribute anything approximating the mobility of différance to authorial intention. Recourse to intention arrests the play of différance and informs Derrida's remark in 'Plato's Pharmacy': 'on the supposition that the categories of the voluntary and the involuntary still have some absolute pertinence in a reading—which we don't for a minute believe, at least not on the textual level on which we are now advancing'. Derrida is more concerned with the unintended; the slips and aporia in texts which subvert their obvious meaning and he has a considerable professional investment in textual 'psychoanalysis', reading against the grain by reading between the lines. While many philosophical systems rely explicitly or implicitly upon binary oppositions, it is nevertheless often the obvious intention of their authors to co-implicate these binaries. With reference to 'Plato's Pharmacy', Arne Melberg suggests that 'The risk you take with thinking of Plato in terms of oppositions . . . is to become a Platonist which Plato is not'. Plato clearly does rely on oppositions but it is possible that Derrida deliberately neglects those texts which explicitly account for contradiction, mobility or supplementarity. He ignores the mobility of the soul and the co-implication of life and death in the Dialogues.

Deconstruction foregrounds binary oppositions but continues to subscribe to the binary model as a mode of description. Derrida identifies oppositions and hierarchies but promotes stasis rather than a radical overhaul of these structures; différance is not a particularly dynamic force and represents a synthesis of the various forms of metaphysical and linguistic opposition and difference. Différance's subversion of conceptual or metaphysical oppositions is limited to co-implication and in fact falls short of the Hegelian dialectic because it fails to break out of any binary structure. In 'Différance', Derrida explicitly states that différance is not designed to 'erase' oppositions but simply to co-implicate them: 'one could reconsider all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is

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Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 73.
constructed and on which our discourse lives, not in order to see opposition erase itself but to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as the différance of the other.\textsuperscript{94}

It is obvious that any faith in deconstruction's ability to collapse metaphysical oppositions is completely misplaced. Eve Tavor Bannet is quite wrong when she asserts: 'Derrida collapses all oppositions—and with them all the constructs of language, culture and rational thought—back into an originating unity which evokes that of the Jewish God: One, Sovereign, Incorporeal and wholly Other.'\textsuperscript{94} Rodolphe Gasché suggests that the collapse of oppositions is irreconcilable with an argumentative rigour he wishes to claim for deconstruction: 'As long as its goal is believed to promote the . . . licentious free play, nihilistic cancelling out of opposites, abolition of hierarchies, and demystification or deideologization of Western philosophemes, deconstruction's definite and logical procedure cannot be grasped in all its specificity.'\textsuperscript{95} Derrida does retain a certain commitment to logic, but although Gasché's interpretation has some validity, an equally plausible interpretation is that différance positively requires oppositions to show its 'mobility' off to the best advantage—the further apart (artificially isolated and therefore polarised) two differences are, the faster différance can be seen to move.

Although Derrida occasionally gestures towards the extra-metaphysical, if deconstruction fails to subvert radically metaphysical structures, it can hardly be expected to have much effect outside of metaphysics. Metaphysics operates only on the theoretical or conceptual level; it is not orientated towards application and tends to ignore the phenomenal world. Geoffrey Bennington contests the separation of empiricism and metaphysics and attacks Peter Dews for 'maintaining, through his stupefyingly banal dialectic, the distinction between the empirical and the transcendental which is shown in deconstruction both to have no ultimate transcendental validity and to resist over-hasty attempts to confuse the distinction.'\textsuperscript{96} He continues: 'deconstruction is . . . eminently describable (with Gasché) as a 'radical empiricism'.'\textsuperscript{97} While in metaphysical terms ('transcendental validity' is a metaphysical concept) the distinction can be deconstructed, metaphysics is confined to the conceptual and has no jurisdiction over empirical or historical enquiry which is concerned with verifiable fact, physical evidence and actual differences. Foucault responded to Derrida's attack by denouncing him for renouncing the world for the word and this is a reasonable objection since Derrida chooses to work within metaphysics. Although the conceptual opposition between word and world is a metaphysical structure, the world is also made up of physical structures. The realms of physics and metaphysics are clearly delineated and this thesis is predicated upon an irreducible difference between the noumenal and the phenomenal, the ideal and the real.

\textsuperscript{92} Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 17.


\textsuperscript{97} Bennington, Legislations, p. 103.
Stephen Yarbrough asserts that Derrida is preoccupied with the misapplication of metaphysical concepts:

One of Derrida's chief claims is that an entire class of concepts—'metaphysical' concepts—are intrinsically improper whenever they are applied to reality. In other words, it is always improper to take a metaphysical concept literally. Western thought, Derrida claims, relies upon the force of proprieties of usage (burton) masking improprieties of application.  

Yarbrough is correct in assuming that Derrida's concepts should not be taken literally; the hymen and the pharmakon, for example, are clearly convenient metaphors for metaphysical difference. However, Bennington's defence rests precisely on the conflation of reality and metaphysics and in 'Plato's Pharmacy' Derrida betrays not the slightest anxiety regarding the disjunction between metaphysical structures and actual differences and is concerned rather with metaphysical oppositions in the texts.

Given Derrida's enthusiasm for the possibilities of word play and his practice of foregrounding the slippage between metaphorical and literal meanings, it is curious that he nowhere explores the various meanings of 'opposition'. A slippage or confusion occurs in Derrida's writing, as well as in the philosophical texts he deconstructs, between the logical sense of opposition as contradictory property and actual differences. In literary criticism a certain structural binarism is innocuous and often justified, but in reality, oppositions are neither permanent binary structures nor structural equivalents but comprise more or less arbitrary braces of differences. Historically, some of these differences have been forcibly harnessed together, like Plato's winged horses, as conceptual binaries and presented as diametrically opposed. Once it is established, however, that there is no essential grounding for the particular pairs of differences or necessary structural equation between those pairs, then they can be reconsidered as specific differences in specific contexts without incurring the charge of essentialism or reductiveness.

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Part Two
For postmodern philosophers and literary theorists, rhetoric is in vogue and formal logic distinctly unfashionable. A number of factors have conspired to favour rhetoric throughout the twentieth century. Traditionally, philosophy was thought to transcend the vagaries of natural language, but in the most recent twist of the linguistic turn, deconstruction has cast suspicion over such pretensions. Enfeebled rational argument is now presented as leaning heavily on rhetoric and poststructuralists reveal and revel in the literary figures in 'neutral' philosophical texts. Postmodern anti-foundationalism and poststructuralist anti-logocentrism dictate that truth, the traditional objective of logic, is no longer a fitting goal for the philosopher. Formal logic aside, it is undeniable that reason and rhetoric are interdependent since philosophy is mediated through language. However, it is argued below that for the purposes of critical analysis the classical distinction between rational argument and literary style should be reinstated. The 'collapse' of the reason/rhetoric binary can function both to diminish the precision of critical analysis and to endorse logically faulty or specious argument. The following chapter re-examines the classical models of logic and rhetoric after their deconstruction in the twentieth century, and uses these classical distinctions to analyse some abuses of rhetoric in postmodern theory.

Michel Meyer asserts that metaphysics from Plato to Heidegger 'forgot rhetoric'.\(^1\) It is clear, however, that philosophy and rhetoric are entangled even in Plato's hierarchical scheme. For the Plato of the Gorgias rhetoric was vastly inferior to philosophy because while philosophy's purpose was to establish truth, rhetoric was concerned solely with persuasion and was therefore susceptible to political corruption. In the Phaedrus the state of contemporary rhetoric is epitomised by the Attic orator, Lysias; Socrates asserts that his discipline cannot be a true art since it has no respect for truth and good, but is concerned merely with effect \((260e)\). The Sophists, with whom Lysias is identified, were concerned with the art of persuasion (primarily the pleading of a case in court), irrespective of any moral dimension, and it was this amoral aspect which was particularly repugnant to Plato. Socrates ridicules rhetoric and the 'niceties of the art', but he is at the same time concerned

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to elevate rhetoric by infusing it with the ideals and methods of philosophy: the pursuit of the true and the good by means of the dialectic (266e).

The dialectic is presented in the *Republic* as a form of deductive reasoning by which metaphysical knowledge may be attained:

that which the reason itself lays hold of by the power of dialectic, treating its assumptions not as absolute beginnings but literally as hypotheses... to enable it to rise to that which requires no assumption and is the starting point of all, and after attaining to that again taking hold of the first dependencies from it, so to proceed downward to the conclusion, making no use whatever of any object of sense but only of pure ideas moving on through ideas to ideas and ending with ideas (511b–c).

In the *Phaedrus*, the dialectic is described as a method of classification: 'divisions and collections' (266b). The procedure is twofold: first, 'bring a dispersed plurality under a single form... and thus to make plain whatever may be chosen as the topic for exposition; second, 'divide into forms' (265d–e). The dialectic is designed to map and classify the objective structure of reality and in both the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus* represents the epitome of logocentrism. The primary object of both the dialectic and 'good' rhetoric is the soul: 'if we are to address people scientifically, we shall show them precisely what is the real and true nature of that object on which our discourse is brought to bear. And that object... is the soul.' (270e) With an understanding of the different types of soul, achieved by the application of the dialectic, the orator can then select the most suitable and influential mode of discourse. Socrates summarises:

The conditions to be fulfilled are these: first, you must know the truth about the subject that you speak or write about: that is to say, you must be able to isolate it in definition, and having so defined it you must next understand how to divide it into kinds, until you reach the limit of division; secondly, you must have a corresponding discernment of the nature of the soul, discover the type of speech appropriate to each nature, and order and arrange your discourse accordingly, addressing a variegated soul in a variegated style that ranges over the whole gamut of tones, and a simple soul in a simple style. (277b–c)

It was Aristotle, influenced by Plato's dialectical method, who formalised both logic and rhetoric. In the *Prior Analytics*, which is regarded as the first treatise on the science of formal logic, Aristotle defines deduction as a 'discourse in which, certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity from their being so' (24b). ³ In the language of formal logic, that which is stated is the premiss and that which follows is the conclusion. The simplest form of logical deduction formulated by Aristotle is the syllogism which can be illustrated as follows: all dogs smell (major premiss); Rex is a dog (minor premiss); therefore Rex smells (conclusion). The syllogism is governed by the law of non-contradiction: it is not possible to assert the premiss and deny the conclusion without contradicting oneself. If I deny the conclusion, that Rex smells, it then follows

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that I am also contradicting either the major premiss, that all dogs smell, or the minor premiss, that Rex is a dog.

The main criticism levelled at Aristotle's system of deductive inference by modern commentators is that it cannot account for all properties and relations. Michael Bybee, for example, suggests that Aristotle's exclusion of induction and his ignorance of abduction (form of syllogism of which the major premiss is true but the minor premiss is only probable) accounts for the paucity of his system. One irreconcilable difference between postmodern and classical philosopher appears to be their respective attitudes towards truth. For Plato, truth is the ultimate good and end of the dialectic, while for Derrida logocentrism is the object of deconstruction. For Aristotle, truth is desirable, but not the inevitable outcome of logical reasoning. In the Prior Analytics he states that in philosophy, 'We must look for the attributes and the subjects of both our terms ... in the pursuit of truth starting from an arrangement of the terms in accordance with truth ... while if we look for dialectical deductions we must start from plausible propositions.' (46a) However, the truth value of the logical conclusion is always contingent on the truth of the premisses: 'It is clear then that if the conclusion is false, the premisses of the argument must be false, either all or some of them; but when the conclusion is true, it is not necessary that the premisses should be true ... yet it is possible, though no part of the deduction is true, that the conclusion may none the less be true; but not necessarily.' (57a–b) So although logic theoretically represents an infallible means to establish the truth, valid reasoning provides only a conditional guarantee and depends ultimately on the truth of the stated premisses. Deductive reasoning is therefore technically 'absolved' from logocentrism by means of this truth-validity distinction.

Aristotelian logic continues to inform modern philosophical logic, however, its schematic, abstract, and mathematical form means that not only is it un congenial to literary theorists, as a highly complex and specialised branch of philosophy, it is also inaccessible to many. This is not true of rhetoric, which historically has comprised a part of English education, particularly in America. For Aristotle, the first part of rhetoric consisted of the finding of arguments or proofs and the second the arrangement of these arguments: 'the only necessary parts of a speech are the statement and the argument. These are the essential features of a speech; and it cannot in any case have more than introduction, statement, argument, and epilogue' (1414a). The third part of rhetoric is style and there are three levels: plain or low, middle or forcible, and high or florid. Each has appropriate choices of vocabulary, tropes, grammar, syntax, and rhythm. It is the third division of rhetoric which is closest to the literary or dramatic art discussed in the Poetics and in the Rhetoric Aristotle states, 'It was naturally the poets who first set the movement going; for words represent things' (1404a). This division is described as 'having a small but real importance' since 'speeches of the written kind owe more of their effect to their language

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than to their thought' (1404a). The fourth division of rhetoric is memoria—simply the memorising of speeches—and the fifth, regarded by Aristotle minor but necessary, is delivery (voice projection and gesture). Classical rhetoric includes an element of logic. In addition to the five divisions of rhetoric, there are three modes of persuasion considered to be properly rhetorical. The first of these is ethos (ethical appeal), which 'depends on the personal character of the speaker' (1358a). The second is pathos (emotional appeal), 'when the speech stirs their emotions' (1358a). It is the third mode of persuasion, logos (rational appeal), which most clearly draws on the Prior Analytics: 'through speech itself when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question' (1358a). The emphasis throughout is on propriety: the appropriate argument, form, devices and mode of persuasion should be chosen for the particular situation, subject, and audience.

Aristotle did not posit a rigid demarcation between logic and rhetoric, quite the reverse: 'rhetoric is a combination of the sciences of logic and of ethics; and it is partly like dialectic, partly like sophistical reasoning' (1359b). Logic is an essential component of rhetoric because to be in command of the three modes of rhetorical persuasion a man must 'be able to reason logically' (1358a). Like Plato, Aristotle is dismissive of empty rhetoric; according to Jonathan Barnes, one of Aristotle's main claims in the Gryllus [not extant] was that rhetoric should not excite the passions by fine language but should rather persuade the reason by fine argument. However, unlike Plato, Aristotle recommends incorporating logic in the service of persuasion rather than truth and in this sense his rhetoric approaches sophism or bad rhetoric. He advises in rhetorical discourse the substitution of the syllogism by the enthymeme, a form of partial syllogism where either one of the premisses or the conclusion is left unstated: 'he who is best able to see how and from what elements a deduction is produced will also be best skilled in the enthymeme, when he has further learnt what its subject-matter is and in what respects it differs from the deductions of logic' (1355a). It is significant that Aristotle also advises the logician on rhetorical strategies in the Prior Analytics:

In order to avoid being argued down, we must take care, whenever an opponent sets up an argument without disclosing the conclusions, not to grant him the same term twice over in his propositions, since we know that a deduction cannot be drawn without a middle term, and that a term which is stated more than once is the middle. (66a)

Not only does classical rhetoric incorporate logical reasoning, then, but logic is at times supplemented by rhetoric.

Aristotle refers frequently to both the Analytics and Poetics throughout the Rhetoric and between ancient and postmodern times rhetoric has shuttled between

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In the twentieth century, developments in philosophy have generally privileged rhetoric. But in English, the logical and rational element of classical rhetoric has been replaced with a postmodern 'literary' rhetoric. In the early twentieth century there was some attempt to reinstate classical rhetoric within (American) English. In the 1920s rhetoric enjoyed a revival at Cornell University and the New Critics, or 'new rhetoricians' including Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, followed this revival in seeking to reintroduce the rational element of rhetoric, following its near obliteration in literary studies. In The Philosophy of Rhetoric, a collection of lectures originally delivered at Harvard University, I. A. Richards referred to rhetoric as the 'dreariest and least profitable part of . . . freshman English.' Richards advocates a revised discipline which is 'a persistent, systematic, detailed inquiry into how words work'. This 'must be philosophic' in that it should 'take charge of the criticism of its own assumptions'. Richards draws on Plato's dialectic (without naming it): "The theorem holds that we begin with the general abstract anything, split it, as the world makes us, into sorts and then arrive at concrete particulars by the overlapping or common membership of these sorts." He continues, 'All thinking from the lowest to the highest . . . is sorting.' Richards not only salvaged classical rhetoric but modernised it by drawing on contemporary developments in psychology and linguistics.

In Britain rhetoric was not such an important element of university English, in spite of Richards's influence. But as classical rhetoric was being revived in America, British philosophy was undergoing its linguistic turn. This, at least in the early stages, did not mark a turn to rhetoric, but rather the persistence of a logical-mathematical ideal instituted by Descartes. Descartes had wished for a discipline which would provide a surety equivalent to that of mathematics: 'a form of "knowledge" which should "attain a certitude equal to that of the demonstrations of Arithmetic and Geometry".' Logic itself became increasingly mathematical in the nineteenth century with Gottlob Frege's attempt to establish the logical form of language and the development of predicate calculus, which turned logic into a form of algebra. In a professional relationship mimicking that of Plato and Aristotle, Frege's theories were then fully systematised by Bertrand Russell, who presented pure mathematics as a development from logic, most notably with A. N. Whitehead in Principia Mathematica. Russell was interested in the logical properties of

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6 In the Middle Ages, rhetoric was an essential component of education as part of the trivium: the university course of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. But because of this demarcation, rhetoric was confined mainly to epideictic display and letter-writing. In the Renaissance, the division of literature and philosophy. In the Renaissance, the division of literature and philosophy.


8 Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 23.

9 Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 31.

10 Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 20.


12 In the Middle Ages, rhetoric was an essential component of education as part of the trivium: the university course of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. But because of this demarcation, rhetoric was confined mainly to epideictic display and letter-writing. In the Renaissance, the division of literature and philosophy.
language and in the History of Western Philosophy affirmed that the methods of modern analytic empiricism, with 'its incorporation of mathematics and its development of a powerful logical technique', would render 'many ancient problems . . . completely soluble'. This faith in the ability of logic to solve philosophical problems without residue is very much in the classical vein. Wittgenstein, a pupil of Russell at Cambridge, regarded logic in a less rosy light and in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus chose instead to foreground its self-referential nature: 'The propositions of logic are tautologies. The propositions of logic therefore say nothing [about the world].'

Wittgenstein was preoccupied with the bounds of language and the implications of these limitations for the philosopher; in Philosophical Investigations he anticipated aspects of poststructuralist theory by rejecting the possibility of an all-encompassing philosophical metalanguage.

A more positive turn towards philosophical rhetoric has been taken by another set of New Rhetoricians, who share Wittgenstein's distaste for reductive formal logic but promote instead 'informal', 'non-formal' or 'fuzzy' logic (something like Aristotle's rhetorical logos or appeal to reason). Chaîn Perelman, a figurehead for this movement, favours informal logic (argumentation) over formal logic because of the essential limitations of the latter to the axioms and rules of deduction. Jean-Blaise Grize compares 'non-formal' arguments favourably with formal logic whose 'conclusion must contain nothing that was not already present in the premises. It is for this very reason that logic lays itself open to the criticism of sterility.'

Martin Warner follows Pascal's rejection of Descartes's 'geometric ideal' and suggests as an alternative 'philosophical finesse', which he defines as 'a term of art introduced, after the manner of Pascal, to designate a certain range of patterns of ratiocination which do not easily fit the geometric model'. In Rhetoric, Language, and Reason Meyer asserts that logic on its own 'works only with the answers and their links, while rhetoric concentrates on the relationship between questions and answers'. Meyer argues that rhetoric or 'argumentation' has the ethical edge over formal logic since it is required to argue its case rather than simply relying on the rules of deduction. He constructs a Platonic hierarchy by distinguishing between 'evil rhetoric' (persuasion), which suppresses questioning and is 'little more than manipulative discourse', and a positive, interrogative rhetoric—'problematology'—which foregrounds questioning. He proposes that this form of rhetoric will overcome the opposition of metaphysics and rhetoric and encourage a new rhetoric and a metaphysics which would no

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longer be ontological. Problematology is a modest scheme designed 'to integrate argumentation and logic, figurative and literal language, knowledge and literature, into one overall conception of thinking as it actually takes place, without favouring any a priori norm of reason.' Meyer claims that not only does problematological rhetoric transcend the opposition between metaphysics and rhetoric, it also 'transcends the classical opposition between the rhetoric of figures (or literary rhetoric) and the rhetoric of conflict (or argumentation, legal or not). These New Rhetoricians combine classic and poststructuralist traits, seeking to transcend classical oppositions but retaining a Platonic logocentrism. Meyer, for example, appeals to truth as the ultimate good: 'rhetoric has reemerged as a new form of truth of language and reasoning, the truth of man as an individual.' Jean Ladrière argues that the establishment of truth by means of deduction must always have recourse to argumentation in order to persuade of the truth of the propositions or premisses: 'Validity, in an axiomatized system, is precisely nothing more than a representation of the truth of the represented propositions. And, finally, it is this truth which counts. The discovery of truth is never entirely analytic.' Enlightenment notions such as truth and reason are not placed within the obligatory scare quotes of anti-foundational postmodernism and since the New Rhetoric suffers from that metaphysical complaint, nostalgia for truth, it cannot be classed as postmodernist.

The philosophical New Rhetoric of Perelman et al., with its commitment to truth and reason, should be distinguished from an equally 'serious' but ultimately specious postmodern rhetoric which substitutes argument for epideictic display. Ian Angus and Lenore Langsdorf, editors of Unsettled Borders: Envisioning Critique at the Postmodern Site, maintain that postmodernism has blurred the boundaries between rhetoric and philosophy, producing instead a (Hegelian) dialectic: 'Rather than each limiting and devaluing the other, both extend into and require the other. The very means for contemporalizing dualities of reason and speech, knowledge and persuasion, truth and opinion—in short, mind and body—are annulled.' Following Derrida, Angus asserts that postmodern discourse is neither local nor universal, neither internally nor externally legitimated, but hovers somewhere between the two. He sets rhetoric against metaphysics (rather than logic), the totalising discourse which attempts to incorporate ('translate') all other discourses. However, there is always an untranslatable remainder and the identification of this remainder is the job of rhetorical criticism, which 'operates at the moment of translation' to recover plurality. There is still an obstinate 'philosophical nodal

point that cannot be inscribed within rhetoric. This 'nodal point' is silence, which marks the traditional closure of philosophic discourse on a transcendental signified (truth) and thereby the escape from the condition of discourse. Such postmodern rhetorics have simply lost interest in logic, formal or otherwise, preferring to manufacture an endlessly proliferating 'discourse', which in this case leans heavily on an over-used metaphor (see below). It is perhaps significant that Perelman was a trained philosopher who wrote his doctoral thesis on Frege while Angus is a lecturer in communications.

Derrida also jettisons the logocentric ideal of both logic and rhetoric and co-implicates reason and rhetoric. Calvin Schrag and David Miller state that in 'White Mythologies' (see below), 'Derrida . . . appears ready to embrace the collapse of philosophy into rhetoric', but this is not quite true. Even Derrida concedes the extra-linguistic nature of formal logic and, rather uncharacteristically, categorically excludes mathematical logic and all 'purely formal' discourses from the rule of metaphor: 'Outside the mathematical text—which it is difficult to conceive as providing metaphors in the strict sense, since it is attached to no determined ontic region and has no empirical sensory content'. As has been increasingly owned by twentieth-century philosophers, there is no possibility of philosophy escaping rhetoric entirely. In Anatomy of Criticism Northrop Frye denounces 'conceptual rhetoric' which he construes as an attempt to avoid the emotive and the literary in order to achieve 'the direct union of grammar and logic'. He states that 'all structures in words are partly rhetorical, and hence literary, and . . . the notion of a scientific or philosophical verbal structure free of rhetorical elements is an illusion.' This is clearly not the case with formal logic; Aristotle's introduction of schematic letters enabled the formulation of a truly abstract system. Although the syllogism may be applied, it does not have to be and its 'algebraic' terms do not necessarily refer to anything outside the system. If the terms of logic are neither connotative nor denotative but self-referential, then logic can be said to escape rhetoric whereas 'ordinary-language' ontology, epistemology or metaphysics may not. Brooks and Warren distinguish between poetic and scientific language, upholding the possibility of 'strictly notational statement', such as mathematical or geometrical proposition, which does not require metaphor. Such statements, they claim 'are (or aspire to be) pure denotations'. However when abstract logic is applied, natural language and figurativity necessarily return. As Frye puts it, 'Anything which makes a functional use of words will always be involved in all...

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18 Angus, Learning to Stop, p. 184.
the technical problems of words, including rhetorical problems. Descartes's geometric ideal was doomed to failure since the transition from mathematical to natural language means that the self-referential quality of formal logic is lost. It is precisely the transcendence of formal language which explains its conspicuous failure as philosophy and its irrelevance for humanities intellectuals—not merely is it, technically speaking, tautologous, it is sterile and fails to 'speak' to the human condition.

Even though ordinary language philosophy is necessarily rhetorical, this does not mean it has formerly been granted a full poetic license. Good philosophy has always been expected to follow the rules of logic and the conventions of argumentation. Commentators are divided on Derrida's commitment to argumentative rigour, but most concede that there is a noticeable shift from the relatively conventional early work to the increasingly experimental texts such as *Glas*. Richard Rorty asserts that since 1975, Derrida's work 'has . . . become much less easy to interpret as argumentative', ascribing this change to a desire to evade the charge of 'negative theology'. This view, a relatively uncontentious one, is also propounded by Reed Way Dasenbrock:

> On the one hand, early works by Derrida such as *Speech and Phenomena* and *Of Grammatology* seem to me to be carefully argued, even scholarly in their mode of procedure . . . . On the other hand, later 'texts' of Derrida such as *Glas* or 'Living On/Border Lines' . . . clearly dispense with and want to deconstruct any recognizable modes of argumentation.

Peggy Kamuf likewise notes the difference between 'early' and 'late' Derrida, although she still claims a certain philosophical rigour for *Glas* and *The Post Card*:

> Although it would be misleading to understand these earlier works as in some simple way more systematic than his later work, Derrida himself recognizes in 'The Time of a Thesis' that they conform perhaps more readily to some standard expectations governing discursive exposition of a thesis. In subsequent writings, most notably *Glas* (1974), *The Truth In Painting* (1978), and *The Post Card* (1980), these constraints are greatly loosened as Derrida moves beyond thematic considerations of writing as formal spacing and attempts new, active determinations of the relation between theme and form.

Christopher Norris argues along the same lines that Derrida's work, particularly his early work, is rigorous and analytical by the strictest philosophical standards. Norris admits that later texts, such as *Glas* and *The Postcard*, are the most appealing for those who wish to maintain the textuality of philosophy. He states that although in recent work Derrida 'seems less concerned with arguments and more inclined to exploit the various possibilities of noncommunication and cross-purpose exchange. Even here . . . Derrida is resuming

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issues and problems that are worked over with meticulous care in his more "philosophical"
texts. Although this implies that the later texts lack this 'meticulous care', Norris still
wishes to claim such texts for the philosophical, rather than the literary-critical camp and
attacks those critics who cannot see past Derrida's rhetoric: 'Their mistake is to suppose
that first-rate philosophy—analytic work of the highest order—cannot be conducted in a
style that partakes of certain "literary" figures and devices, or which makes its point
through a skilful interweaving of constative and performative speech-act genres.'
Irene Harvey defends Derrida in exactly the same terms: 'This 'sense of illegitimacy' and the
general unwillingness to take his work seriously have been founded I believe more on his
stylistic manner of exposition than the actual content of his work.' Norris is in no doubt
that all Derrida's writing can sustain a rigorous philosophical critique. He attacks the idea,
propagated by certain Anglo-American detractors of poststructuralism such as John Ellis,
that deconstruction constitutes a hermeneutic license, and suggests that this idea is totally
refuted by an examination of Derrida's texts and suggests that Ellis's interpretation results
from an insufficient acquaintance with the actual texts. In summing up Derrida's 'three
greatest virtues', Norris remarks that he:

combines a quite extraordinary range and depth of philosophical thought with a keen
analytical intelligence and (by no means incompatible with these) a degree of stylistic
virtuosity that allows his writing to reflect at every point on its own performative aspect,
or on issues raised in and through the practice of an unanswerable literary style.'

Such defences of Derrida rely upon the separation of argument and performance, style and
content, rhetoric and logic. Although Norris asserts that logic, grammar, and rhetoric are
'co-implicated', he nevertheless retains clear lines of demarcation between these different
orders; the term 'interweaving' suggests that it is possible to 'unravel' these elements. In
fact this metaphor has already been worked extensively in a similar context by Derrida
himself. In a reading of Husserl's phenomenology Derrida uses one Husserl's own
metaphors to pick holes in his argument. Summarising Husserl, Derrida states: 'The
"strata" [form and meaning] are "woven", their intercomplication is such that the warp
cannot be distinguished from the woof.' Furthermore, 'what is woven as language is that
the discursive warp cannot be construed as warp and takes the place of a woof which has
not truly preceded it.' However, the phenomenologist's 'patience and scrupulousness

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40 Norris, What's Wrong with Postmodernism, p. 165.
41 Norris, What's Wrong with Postmodernism, p. 165.
42 Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 160.
43 Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 160.
must, in principle, undo the tangle. Derrida's own practice is to tangle 'warp' and 'woof', logic and rhetoric, literature and philosophy, in a distinctive way.

While it would be ridiculous to state that any of Derrida's texts comprise conventional models of philosophical argumentation, it is obvious that the later, more performative work moves further in the direction of rhetorical 'excess' and the unconventional philosophical style proves problematic for the critic. Lee Brown asserts that the 'Separation of important persuasive strategies from eccentricities and ornaments in Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, and Heidegger have posed well-known hermeneutic difficulties. In the case of Derrida it is necessary to address the concept of 'enactment' whereby the deconstructive style (elliptical, 'excessive', difficult to decipher) is designed to express certain principles of deconstruction such as the polysemic nature of language, anti-logocentrism, différance. Derrida appears to conflate the poles of applied deconstructive logic and rhetoric, leaving little space for conventional argumentation. But although it is necessary to appreciate the importance and function of Derrida's style and his deliberate transgression of classical logical and rhetorical conventions, since he declares his necessary subscription to metaphysics and its logical laws, it is not inappropriate to reapply these laws in the analysis of his writing.

\textit{Différance} obviously transgresses the Aristotelian law of contradiction, as formulated in the \textit{Metaphysics}, which dictates that it is impossible 'for the same thing to be and not to be' (1006a). For Aristotle, presence (existence) cannot be predicated of something, it is rather the condition of predication. Derrida quotes Benveniste to this effect in 'The Supplement of Copula': "Beyond the Aristotelian terms, above that categorization, there is the notion of 'being' which envelops everything. Without being a predicate itself, 'being' is the condition of all predicates". His assertion that \textit{différance} has no identity at all (no essence or existence) may therefore be designed to exempt it from Aristotelian law. If Derrida can remove \textit{différance} from the realm of being or existence then he can claim it as a non-logocentric (non-)concept. David Wood notes a contradiction in Derrida's work 'between different texts on the subject of the status of \textit{différance}' and compares Derrida's position on non-conceptuality in 'Différance' with that in \textit{Positions}. Paradox is, of course, the very essence of \textit{différance}: 'Here we are touching upon the point of greatest obscurity, on the very enigma of \textit{différance}, on precisely that which divides its very concept by means of a strange cleavage.' Gayatri Spivak leaps to the defence of contradiction in deconstruction in her preface to \textit{Of Grammatology}.

\begin{itemize}
\item Derrida, \textit{Margins of Philosophy}, p. 161.
\item Derrida, \textit{Margins of Philosophy}, p. 195.
\item Derrida, \textit{Margins of Philosophy}, p. 19.
\end{itemize}
The deconstructive reader exposes the grammatological structure of the text . . . by locating the moment in the text which harbors the unbalancing of the equation, the sleight of hand at the limit of a text which cannot be dismissed simply as a contradiction.  

In fact, for Spivak, the very 'word "Grammatology" thus appropriately keeps alive an unresolved contradiction. The imposition of a logical analysis upon the text of 'Différance' is likely to produce just such a dismissal and Derrida therefore discourages this type of analysis: 'If différance is unthinkable in this way, perhaps we should not hasten to make it evident, in the philosophical element of evidentiality which would make short work of dissipating the mirage and illogicalness of différance. In a defence of Nietzsche's self-contradictory metaphysical critique of metaphysics, Derrida advises, 'This is not an incoherence for which a logical solution is to be sought, but a textual strategy and stratification that must be analyzed in practice.' This allusion to Nietzschean 'enactment' proscribes the logical critique of Nietzsche and, by implication, of Derrida himself. In one sense, Derrida's logical reasoning is valid and internally coherent since it is founded on the principle of the paradox—the Derridean law of contradiction.

One of the textual strategies Derrida employs to give weight to his assertion regarding the ambiguous ontological status of différance is that of placing certain words under erasure (sous raturé). This is designed to indicate metaphysical concepts which are under suspicion but nevertheless inescapable: 'Now if différance is (and I also cross out the "is") what makes possible the presentation of the being-present, it is never presented as such.' However, différance's existence as a metaphysical concept is not really affected by this; as David Wood points out, placing metaphysical concepts under erasure does nothing to deprive them of their power. Derrida takes pains to state that his account of différance does not amount to the reification/deification of a negative concept, even though 'the detours, locutions, and syntax in which I will often have to take recourse will resemble those of negative theology, occasionally even to the point of being indistinguishable from negative theology.' However, negative theology comprises an argument for the existence of God through negation, since to negate a concept already implies its existence. This particular negation relates to the avowed non-conceptuality of différance: as différance has no signified, it cannot then be elevated to the status of transcendental signified. Derrida is obviously concerned to dissociate himself from this process since he wishes to avoid the necessary existence of différance. For Derrida, then, 'Différance' is not a counter-argument against an original assertion of the existence/essence of différance, but an (original!) assertion of the non-existence of a non-concept/entity—a
double negative seeking to evade the grammatically analogous logical positive. Richard Rorty in fact refuses to accept Derrida's assertion that although his account of différance may be 'indistinguishable' from 'negative theology' it is not the same thing. He asks, 'How can Derrida's "trace", "différance", and the rest of what Gasché calls "infrastructures" be more than the vacuous nonexplanations characteristic of a negative theology?' An apparently less exorbitant but equally unjustifiable claim made by Derrida is that différance is not a foundational metaphysical term, even in the negative sense: 'Reserving itself, not exposing itself, in regular fashion it exceeds the order of truth at a certain precise point, but without dissimulating itself as something, as a mysterious being, in the occult of a nonknowledge...'. The importance and function of différance in Derrida's scheme makes it very obviously foundational and Derrida's attempts to claim for it a peculiar ontological status makes of it precisely such 'a mysterious being'. It is indeed difficult to see how Derrida's negation can convince the reader that he avoids the deification or even conceptualisation of différance unless this is simply accepted as an a priori truth, act of faith, or the sort of founding concept which Derrida seeks to avoid. While Derrida rejects the idea that différance or any of his other 'quasi-concepts' have the status of a priori or transcendental concepts, these concepts function in exactly the same way. In a footnote Wood qualifies his criticism by saying that différance is not a concept but rather produces 'conceptual effects'. The fact that différance produces 'conceptual effects' means that logically one must infer its existence as a metaphysical concept.

To turn to rhetoric, in 'The Principle of Reason', Derrida describes a fictional university lecturer in order to mock notions of rhetorical propriety: 'People indulgently close their eyes to the schematic, drastically selective views he has to express in the rhetoric proper to an academic lecture about the academy. But they may be sorry that he spends so much time in a prolonged and awkward attempt to capture the benevolence of his listeners.' Although Derrida predictably baulks at Aristotle's notion of rhetorical propriety, his style of writing is nevertheless governed by a certain rhetorical protocol, albeit one which deliberately flouts classical rules. In the Rhetoric, Aristotle distinguishes between three kinds of oratory: the first is persuasive and deliberative and is associated with public affairs and politics; the second is forensic, and is used to condemn or defend a person's actions; the third is epideictic and is associated with performance. For Aristotle it is the epideictic (performative) which is 'most literary, for it is meant to be read' (1414a) and this term best describes Derrida's writing which tends to be ludic rather than lucid. However, classical rhetoric was primarily a verbal form and although Derrida consistently attacks the historical prioritising of speech over writing, many of his important
texts were originally lectures. For Aristotle, a different style suits oratory and written prose and failure to observe these distinctions will result in rhetorical failure:

the speeches of professional writers sound thin in actual contests. Those of the orators, on the other hand, look amateurish enough when they pass into the hands of a reader. This is just because they are so well suited for an actual tussle, and therefore contain many dramatic touches, which, being robbed of all dramatic rendering, fail to do their own proper work, and consequently look silly. Thus strings of unconnected words, and constant repetitions of words and phrases, are very properly condemned in written speeches: but not in spoken speeches—speakers use them freely, for they have a dramatic effect. (1413b)

Much of Derrida's work contains strings of words, connected only by semantic nuance, frequent repetition, and other 'dramatic touches' but he is evidently unworried by his speeches passing into the hands of the reader or about looking 'silly'.

Aristotle proclaims, 'It is a general rule that a written composition should be easy to read and therefore easy to deliver. This cannot be so where there are many connecting words or clauses, or where punctuation is hard' (1407b). He proceeds to outlaw a type of prose which appears to be the model for deconstruction:

'By 'free-running' style I mean the kind that has no natural stopping places, and comes to a stop only because there is no more to say of that subject. This style is unsatisfying just because it goes on indefinitely—one always likes to sight a stopping-place in front of one: it is only at the goal that men in a race faint and collapse; while they see the end of the course before them, they can keep going. Such, then, is the free-running kind of style; the compact is that which is in periods. By a period I mean a portion of speech that has in itself a beginning and an end, being at the same time not too big to be taken in at a glance. Language of this kind is satisfying and easy to follow. It is satisfying because it is just the reverse of indefinite; and moreover, the hearer always feels that he is grasping something and has reached some definite conclusion' (1409a–b).

Aristotle says of the free-running style that it is outmoded; whereas 'Every one used this method formerly; not many do so now.' (1409a) As Aristotle puts it, 'If . . . you go on too long, you make him [the listener] feel left behind, like people who pass beyond the boundary before turning back.' (1409b) Derrida uses the free-running style like it never went out of fashion but since he actively wishes to produce writing whose meaning is difficult to grasp and which enacts difference (the deferral of meaning), this style is entirely appropriate.

Aristotle advises that 'Strange words, compound words, and invented words must be used sparingly and on few occasions . . . . The reason for this restriction is . . . that they depart from what is suitable, in the direction of excess.' (1404b) In addition, 'Words of ambiguous meaning are chiefly useful to enable the sophist to mislead his hearers. Synonyms are useful to the poet' (1404b). At one point (following a semantic explanation) Derrida warns that in fact it is not possible to establish the meaning of
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**différance**, which is 'irreducibly polysemic'.

Compound words, such as *différance*, and verbal ambiguities are Derrida's stock-in-trade. Aristotle also advocates 'naturalness', suggesting that to be persuasive 'a writer must disguise his art and give the impression of speaking naturally and not artificially. Naturalness is persuasive, artificiality is the contrary; for our hearers are prejudiced and think we have some design against them, as if we were mixing their wines for them.' (1404b) Even Derrida's earlier essays such as 'Différance' flaunt their rhetoricity by means of punning, word-play and etymological excavation. By Aristotle's standards, Derrida is a conspicuous rhetorical failure since his prose is hardly natural; although that he wishes to incite the reader's prejudice seems less likely.

Aristotle dictates that appropriate language fits itself to its medium; prose should avoid both absurdity, or excess, and 'frigidity', since 'when the sense is plain, you only obscure and spoil its clearness by piling up words' (1406a). This is precisely what Derrida wants to do in order to demonstrate the fallacy of logocentrism. In a sense the question whether Derrida's rhetoric obscures his argument is irrelevant, for where the 'flowers of rhetoric' flourish so abundantly, the intent is not to appeal to reason but to enact a principle. Derrida makes explicit that it is *différance* itself which necessitates the elliptical mode of writing:

*In the delineation of différance everything is strategic and adventurous. Strategic because no transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not a simple strategy in the sense that strategy orients tactics according to a final goal, a telos or theme of domination, a mastery and ultimate reappropriation of the development of the field.*

The implication here, then, is that a conventional philosophical critique is not an appropriate response to the text. However, Derrida does not want it thought that his strategy should be identified with anything less worthy than philosophy: 'Finally, a strategy without finality, what might be called blind tactics, or empirical wandering if the value of empiricism did not itself acquire its entire meaning in its opposition to philosophical responsibility'. Derrida, then, accepts the onus of 'philosophical responsibility', while claiming that the writing of *différance* is something different to philosophy. There is a sort of rhetorical propriety to Derrida's work, which is classical in spirit, though not strictly classical.

In 'Différance' Derrida asserts: 'What I will propose here will not be elaborated simply as a philosophical discourse, operating according to principles, postulates, axioms or definitions, and proceeding along the discursive lines of a linear order of reasons'. He asserts that it is *différance* itself which requires this and at one point notes the significance:

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of the Latin origin of the word: 'this will not be without consequences for us, linking our discourse . . . to a language that passes as less philosophical, less originally philosophical than the other'.

Since Derrida admits that he is working within metaphysics, then his own discourse operates within its laws notwithstanding his attempts at transgression (the double bind). Derrida's claim to transgress Aristotelian law does not rest simply on an alternative logic, but on an argument which exploits etymological evidence and distinctive textual strategies. There is no reason why the concept of enactment should excuse deconstruction from more conventional philosophical critique. Logic or rhetoric alone would not be adequate explain Derrida's strategies but combined they provide the means to dissect deconstruction.

The idea that reason depends on rhetoric, reasonable and innocuous enough in itself, has lead to clear abuses of rhetoric, particularly by poststructuralist enthusiasts who lack philosophical training. The rhetorical trope which is most often exploited by these theorists is the metaphor. In 'The Statesman's Manual' Coleridge wrote that he regarded it as among the miseries of his time that it recognised no medium between the literal and the metaphorical.®® It is among the miseries of the postmodern age that it recognises little distinction between the two. Classical metaphor is defined by Aristotle in the Poetics as 'giving the thing a name that belongs to something else' (1457b). In the Rhetoric, metaphor is categorised as part of style, its function to present things in a fresh way or, in Russian Formalist idiom, to make the stone stony, and Aristotle makes a clear distinction between 'the proper or regular and the metaphorical use' (1404b). The current dictionary definition follows classical distinctions, the metaphorical or figurative is defined in opposition to literal language use, which is 'taking words in their usual or primary sense and applying the ordinary rules of grammar without mysticism or allegory or metaphor'.®® This distinction has been elided in some twentieth-century accounts. Against the classical opposition of metaphorical and ordinary language use goes the conception of metaphor as intrinsic to language. Richards writes in The Philosophy of Rhetoric that 'a word is normally a substitute for . . . not one discrete past impression but a combination of general aspects', and offers this as the general principle of metaphor.®® He thereby conflates metaphor, which forcibly yokes concepts together, with the connotation of ordinary language.

Another consequence of extended concept of metaphor is the denial of metaphorical mortality. The 'death' of metaphor occurs when a figure becomes conventional and leached of its metaphoricity. Other terms used to designate this process are 'literalisation' (Donald Davidson) and 'lexicalization' (Paul Ricoeur), but however

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65 Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 7.
68 Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 93.
labelled, it is flatly refuted by Derrida. In 'White Mythology', Derrida describes the
conventional understanding of metaphorisation as the transformation of the sensible to the
intelligible, but denies that original meaning can be entirely effaced. For Derrida, a spark
of life always 'remains active and stirring'. It is part of his crusade to revive etiolated
metaphors and this is achieved in several ways: by foregrounding the etymology of a word;
by listing its connotations; and most esoterically, by means of graphic illustration. These
procedures demonstrate Derrida's fondness for the pun, verbal and visual. While they
display the peculiar metaphysical logic of deconstruction, Derrida, like Richards, overlooks
the actual workings of language. Although ordinary language is always potentially
connotative, decisions between literal and figurative interpretation are nevertheless made.
The idea that philosophical terms (philosophemes) are necessarily still metaphorical arises
from a blindness to the literal meaning of dead metaphor and a refusal to recognise that the
etymon is often lost without a trace. Ricoeur argues, against Derrida, that 'dead
metaphors are no longer metaphors, but instead are associated with literal meaning,
extending its polysyem'. Ricoeur defines the 'literal' as current usage, thereby
incorporating connotation whilst excluding metaphor, and it is this pragmatic distinction
which informs the following reading of postmodernist texts.

The problem with 'universal' theories of metaphor is that they operate with too
wide a definition, suppressing significant differences which operate in ordinary language
use. The fact that non-formal language is necessarily rhetorical, does not mean that it is
necessarily metaphorical. The historical development of meaning can also be telescoped as
the often tenuous link between current usage and etymon is artificially reinforced.
However, there is a commonly perceived (common-sense) distinction between literal and
metaphorical use which is not simply illusory. Where these texts are metaphorical, it is
possible to abstract and analyse the metaphor qua metaphor, and to see exactly how it
works in conjunction with the chain of reason, a procedure endorsed by Aristotelian
rhetoric.

Thanks partly to Derrida, long-dead metaphors are now being disinterred to reveal
patriarchy, imperialism, and logocentrism. There is currently a prevalence of
topographical and cartographic imagery in postmodern narratives of centres and margins,
spaces, locations, positions, frames, edges, boundaries, and borders. Terms such as
'boundary' and 'margin' are not ordinarily metaphorical when used to refer to concepts
since they have passed into common usage. They differ from the philosophemes examined
by Derrida by virtue of the fact that their 'physical' origins are not lost but remain current.

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69 Donald Davidson, 'What Metaphors Mean', Critical Inquiry 5 (1978), p. 37; Paul Ricoeur, The Role of Metaphor: Multi-
1978); first published as La métaphore vive, 1975, p. 291.
70 Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, p. 213.
72 Philip Brian Harper, Framing the Margins: The Social Logic of Postmodern Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press,
1994); bell hooks [sic], Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre (Boston: South End, 1984); Donald Preziosi, 'Between
Power and Desire: The Margins of the City' in Demarcating the Disciplines: Philosophy Literature Art, ed. Samuel Weber
While extant parallel meaning makes for obvious connotative force, it does not entail metaphor. But in many postmodernist texts, the rhetorical weight accruing to 'dead' metaphors clearly indicates what Ricoeur defines as re-metaphorisation: 'The reanimation of a dead metaphor . . . is a positive operation of de-lexicalizing that amounts to a new production of metaphor and, therefore, of metaphorical meaning.' This rhetorical loading operates in contemporary narratives of liminal identities and literatures, transgressed boundaries, and blurred borders, but in these accounts metaphors are often used to buttress questionable logic.

Steven Connor notes the totalising effect of postmodern imagery and worries that 'the exploited and managed Other, may in a sense be programmed by the conceptual map of centre and margin.' In spite of this warning, the boundary lexicon continues to exert considerable appeal for postmodern theorists and is de rigueur for discourses such as post-colonialism which has a particular interest in geo-political boundaries. The ontological status of the geo-political boundary slides between the conceptual and the physical—it may be geologically indicated by a coastline or merely politically demarcated—and it is because of this indeterminacy that the slide between literal and metaphorical reference can appear seamless. A concealed slide between literal and metaphorical reference allows the postmodern theorist to implicate those who maintain disciplinary difference in an oppressive political programme. At the same time, spatial rhetoric can work in postmodernism's favour to consolidate implicit claims to political efficacy and professional competence.

The metaphor of the border is also employed in Angus's account of postmodern rhetoric (see above). The postmodern philosopher is obliged to qualify all absolute entities and Angus identifies a border or transition point (such liminal entities are familiar from Derrida's thought) at which translation (totalisation) succumbs to deconstruction and re-translation: 'In the postmodern condition, at the border, there is neither leave-taking from discourse nor a completion of discourse—only a moment of switching from silence to babble.' Along with a deconstructive logic, Angus employs a clichéd postmodernist rhetoric, leaning heavily on the deconstructive geographical motif of the transgressed boundary or border and eschewing rigorous argumentation.

The margin is a similarly potent metaphor for postmodern theorists. Although Gayatri Spivak refuses the label of marginal in favour of 'the institutional appellation, "teacher"', she regards herself as confined within the centre-margin model. The principle of the double bind dictates that the postcolonial is constituted by Western modes of

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73 Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, p. 291.
representation and must therefore critique the 'discursive system of marginality' from within. Spivak deconstructs the centre/margin binary, asserting that "postcoloniality", far from being marginal, can show the irreducible margin in the centre. The revised model functions to endorse Spivak's 'politically correct' identification with the 'radical academic', by suggesting that the marginalised can speak from the centre and retain her authentic voice. However, the rhetorical double bind is seriously compromised by alternative schemes to overhaul imperialist rhetoric. Bill Ashcroft, for example, rejects the literary categorisation of migrant and native writings which 'act as branches of the main tree of English literature and thus maintain its centrality and stature'. After Deleuze and Guattari, he discards the 'arborised paradigm' in favour of the 'rhizomatic'. 'Rhizomatic figures', as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, are 'acentered systems, networks of finite automats, chaos states'. According to Ashcroft, the rhizomatic figure 'allows us better to understand the problematic nature of categories of resistance, because it illuminates the fragmentary, intermittent and diffuse way in which subjectivity is located in discourse'. The rhizome is unambiguously metaphorical since it is a transference that has not yet become idiomatic or literalised. But in terms of descriptive propriety, it marks no progression from Foucault's network model and is problematic in postmodernist terms because of its point of origin. In fact, neither Spivak nor Ashcroft is trapped within spatial representation of any kind, as Spivak's initial rejection suggests.

In spite of the evident crudity of the centre-margin model and the existence of alternatives, there is a general disinclination to abandon it. Connor suggests that the margin is an ideal location from which would-be political subversives launch guerrilla-type attacks on the centre. This romantic view certainly informs Susan Sellers' suggestion that 'perhaps there is something positive—and perhaps something revolutionary—in the impetus a position on the margins can give'. Jane Marcus stakes a claim to this position, stating that 'feminism . . . in its explicit articulation of otherness . . . places the critic in the position of exile, aware of her own estrangement from the center of her discipline . . . edgily balancing on boundaries and testing limits—a claim severely compromised by her 'institutional appellation' of 'Distinguished Professor of English' at the City University of New York. In 'Sorties', Hélène Cixous vigorously rejects the implications of marginality but implicitly endorses the rhetoric, asserting that 'woman' should 'not have the margin . . .

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78 Spivak, 'Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value', p. 225.
79 Bill Ashcroft, abstract, 'Post-Colonial Literatures and the Contemporary', Literature and the Contemporary (University of Hull, 1994).
81 I am grateful to Ortwin de Graef for clarification of this matter.
The evident drawback of both the rhizome metaphor and network model is that they appear to decenter power and therefore immediately make it more difficult to attack. In political terms, therefore, the more concrete the margin can be made to seem the better.

Mary Mellor opens *Breaking the Boundaries*, an argument for eco-feminist socialism, with an anecdote about the barbed wire fences surrounding the nuclear base at Greenham Common. She concludes: 'We must transform both society and ourselves by breaking down the false boundaries within ourselves'. There is a concealed slide here between conceptual and physical boundaries which lends Mellor's eco-feminism an undeserved dynamism. Maggie Humm takes a different tack in *Border Traffic: Strategies of Contemporary Women Writers*, admitting at the outset that 'These borders are, in most cases, metaphoric.' This leaves Humm free to exploit the metaphor to its full potential: 'In solving the enigma of the woman writer who vaults over the boundaries of her literary landscape, criticism quickly contains literary athleticism inside a fence crosshatched from periods and genres and glued together with consistency.' But while she forestalls objection to a concealed slide between physical and metaphysical levels of discourse, her rhetoric still works to create a romantic picture of the heroic woman writer eluding the trap of repressive period and genre criticism.

Boundary rhetoric is also conscripted by those theorists wishing to deconstruct the high art/popular culture binary. Angela McRobbie adopts this vocabulary to ambiguous effect when summarising the achievements of Stuart Hall: 'Culture is a broad site of learning, and perhaps we learn best and are most open to ideas when the barriers between the discipline and the academy and the experiences of everyday life are broken down. There is a sense in which Stuart Hall is... speaking from the other side, from the space of difference.' If Hall, who incidentally favours the network model, is speaking from the 'other side', he can hardly be said to have broken down any barriers, but McRobbie's intention is clear enough—to invest his theories of culture with a concrete force by means of the boundary metaphor. And in spite of his criticism of the postmodern map, Connor uses the same metaphor when describing the hegemonic operation of power in the pop music business. He suggests that rather than 'decentring or undermining the structures of the rock industry, each eruption of cultural difference only serves to stabilize this culture, by spreading and diversifying its boundaries.' This expansionist tendency is presented as the paradigm of capitalism which is thereby rhetorically linked to the imperialist nation-

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state. The effect is to imply that capitalism is morally dubious without Connor having explicitly to argue this case. Mae Henderson, in a recent collection of essays in cultural studies entitled *Borders, Boundaries and Frames*, foregrounds the difference between what she calls 'intellectual border crossings' and the enforced transit of the dispossessed, but maintains that 'there are nonetheless professional risks incurred when one lives and works "on the borders"'.

As the publication of an increasing number of such texts indicates, these risks can pay dividends and boundary rhetoric can materially benefit those working in the field of cultural studies. Breaking down the metaphorical barriers between high art and popular culture expands the field of professional competence and works to consolidate professional power.

The current popularity of spatial representation may be a legacy of structuralism, with its predilection for schematic diagrams and neglect of history. The boundary is also a highly productive term for deconstruction, and its analogues—margin, border, tympanum, hymen, parergon—litter the Derridean corpus. It could be said that in examining the metaphors and etymology of philosophy, Derrida addresses its founding principles. While one must give credit to this as a serious scholarly exercise, 'Tympan' and *Glas* can also be interpreted as harmless rhetorical games. Something rather more sinister is going on in 'The Law of Genre', where Derrida engages with the politics of genre theory. He declares that 'as soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly or monstrosity'.

The consequences of crossing this 'line' are dirt, infection, and sexual transgression. The statement: 'if it should happen that they do intermix . . . then this should confirm . . . the essential purity of their identity', has discomfiting allusion to theories of racial purity and eugenics. By foregrounding the connotations of boundary rhetoric and aided by the fact that the French *genre* denotes grammatical gender, literary genre, and biological genus, Derrida manages to ascribe Nazi ideology to traditional genre theorists.

A similar procedure is followed by Robyn Ferrell in an essay entitled 'Xenophobia: At the Border of Philosophy and Literature'. Ferrell milks the metaphor of 'border' by reeling off lists: 'country, boundary, territory and field, state, empire, King and country, sovereignty, title, currency, trade, import, exchange and quarantine'; 'frontier, foreign, enemy state, border patrol, defence, smuggling, contraband, illicit dealing, espionage, treason.' She asserts of this tactic that,
It is not a literary flourish but a measuring out of the ground. If there can be said to be a border between philosophy and literature, then what territory/territories could be said to be defended in drawing the same. Borders are not natural but political occurrences, held in place by a tacit xenophobia, the logic of 'us-and-them'.

Very few people want to be called xenophobic, but if the reader is persuaded by this highly emotive language, then to distinguish between literature and philosophy equates with the worst kind of nationalism. However, that the linguistic connotation of jingoism should inculpate the genre theorist, or indeed anyone using the word 'boundary' in anything but its strictest literal sense, should be regarded with some scepticism. Ferrell quite deliberately foregoes logical cogency for rhetorical display, equating disciplinary boundaries with geopolitical borders simply by pointing out connotations. As suggested by Mae Henderson, distinguishing between literature and philosophy, high art and popular culture, or literal and figurative modes of discourse, does not have the same consequences as the forced expulsion of groups of people in the service of territorial expansion. It is as well to be aware of the links between power politics and cultural representation, but to suggest that the distinction between literature and philosophy is racist is crude in the extreme. It is understandable that those of a literary bent should lean so heavily on metaphor, but etymological excavations and rhetorical acrobatics should supplement rather than substitute for rational argumentation.

While rhetorical exposition does not justify the wholesale censure of English, philosophy, or any other traditional academic discipline, spatial terms undoubtedly do have a reifying effect, and this is true of rhizomes, networks and folds, no less than of centres, margins and edges. This effect is compounded by postmodernist re-metaphorisation and means that the term 'boundary' is fraught with rhetorical (rather than political) difficulty for those who wish to uphold disciplinary difference. In an essay entitled 'The Epistemology of Metaphor', Paul de Man considers Locke's promotion of the idea of regulated language and concludes that

We have no way of defining, of policing, the boundaries that separate the name of one entity from the name of another; tropes are not just travellers, they tend to be smugglers and probably smugglers of stolen goods at that. What makes matters even worse is that there is no way of finding out whether they do so with criminal intent or not.

De Man suggests that we turn Locke's rhetoric against his assertions and the deconstructive method can equally well be applied to 'The Epistemology of Metaphor'. De Man's ascription of 'intent' to the literary figure implies that the writer has no control over his language, but this abnegation is compromised by the deliberately extended metaphor which represents the trope as romantic outlaw and the classical rhetorician as policeman. It would be a fruitless task to attempt the scientific categorisation of literary language or to

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Ferrell, 'Xenophobia', p. 142.
expunge metaphor from theoretical or philosophical discourse, but 'classical' distinctions between the literal and the figurative, between current usage and etymon, provide the means to separate the ethical appeal (ethos) of postmodern rhetoric from its appeal to reason (logos). The common distinction made between reason and rhetoric may be metaphysically problematic, but should not be discarded for this reason alone. Without such distinctions, acquiescence to flawed argument may be extorted by a form of emotional blackmail and the appreciation of significant cultural differences, such as those between logic and rhetoric, or philosophy and literature, mistakenly cast beyond the (metaphorical) boundaries of intellectual good taste and political probity.
The poststructuralist tendency is to collapse literature and philosophy, like logic and rhetoric, by deconstructing the conceptual opposition and foregrounding a common textuality. A historical study of literature and philosophy clearly reveals the permeable and mobile nature of the (metaphorical) boundary between the two, while textual analysis exposes stylistic and structural similarities between literature and philosophy and foregrounds the existence of 'hybrid' or crossover texts. Such texts are seized upon by deconstructionists in order to destabilise the classical hierarchy of literature and philosophy and demonstrate the fallacy of their opposition. However, because the differences between literature and philosophy are not merely conceptual, but also contextual and textual, they resist metaphysical deconstruction. Contextual determinants include institution (discipline, publishing), intention and reception and an analysis which addresses these diverse factors is more adequate to literature and philosophy than systematic metaphysical deconstruction. This chapter examines the origins of the classical opposition between philosophy and literature, the deconstruction of this opposition, and the relation between literature and philosophy in the texts of Plato, Derrida, and Iris Murdoch.

The distinction between literature and philosophy is as old as philosophy itself which from the beginning declaimed its superior status. An often-cited example of the hierarchy in action is the expulsion of the poet from the commonwealth in Plato's Republic where the philosopher is king. The reason Socrates gives for this ostracism is that dramatic art involves identification with multiple fictional personae and is therefore potentially morally injurious. In spite of a grudging admiration for Homer, Socrates maintains that the tragedian, like all imitators, is 'in his nature three removes from the king and the truth' (597e). Taking a couch as an example, he explains that God creates the ideal (real) couch and the cabinet maker makes the particular couch, but the painter of the couch produces only an imitation of the appearance, or phantasm of the particular. In addition, poetry, with its adornments of rhythm, meter, and harmony (601a), appeals to the faculty 'that is remote from intelligence' (603b) and encourages womanly emotion rather than rational stoicism. In all parts poetry is the inferior of philosophy, which is concerned with truth and reality (knowledge of the Forms). The citizens of the ideal state will therefore expel the poet, 'crown him with fillets of wool, anoint his head with myrrh, and conduct him to the borders of some other country'. In the Phaedrus, the true philosopher Socrates is teased for 'never leaving town to cross the frontier nor even . . . so much as setting foot

outside the walls', although he is tempted outside by the seductive effects of the pharmakon \(230d\). Murdoch suggests that Plato's antagonism towards literature may have been a defensive mechanism designed to obscure the fact that philosophy was a relatively new discipline and to eclipse 'The poets ... who were the traditional purveyors of theological and cosmological information'. Although Plato always maintained the superiority of philosophy over literature, he did suggest a certain common ground in divine inspiration, the 'third form of possession or madness, of which the Muses are the source' \(245a\). This madness is a prerequisite for both poetry and philosophy and 'if any man come to the gates of poetry without the madness of the Muses, persuaded that skill alone will make him a good poet, then shall he and his works of sanity with him be brought to nought by the poetry of madness' \(245a\). The philosopher is also likened to a mad visionary and is taken by 'the best of all forms of divine possession' \(249d\). However, it is the philosopher who has unique access to the ideal realm while 'Of that place beyond the heavens none of our earthly poets has yet sung' \(247c\).

Aristotle agreed with Plato to the extent that poetry was primarily mimetic, but he denied its moral depravity. In the Poetics, he questions the separation of literature and philosophy, attributing the delight which men take in 'mimetic objects' to the faculty of reason: 'to be learning something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of mankind' \(1448b\). For Aristotle, literature is philosophical in the sense that it speaks of universals rather than the particulars which are the provenance of history \(1451b\). But in spite of this conciliatory attitude, the hierarchy is still at work since art is presented as the poor man's philosophy. The Aristotelian line was perpetuated by the neo-classicists such as Sir Philip Sidney, who claimed that poetry is primarily imitative and rebutted Plato's condemnation of the poet, asserting instead that 'for instructing, [the poet] is well nigh comparable to the philosopher'. Poetry is seen as an antidote to moral degeneracy and will 'draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of'. It is the Enlightenment, a period marked by the dominance of empiricism, which is commonly credited with strengthening the division and sustaining the hierarchy of philosophy and literature by confining literature to the subjective realm and affirming philosophy's scientific status.

Before postmodernism, the relative value of literature and philosophy was gauged by their imagined ability to access the truth. In Plato's philosophy, truth is literally a metaphysical concept because it rests in the eternal Forms, accessible to the soul outside the physical world, and recoverable only by the philosopher. The survival of Plato's hierarchy is apparent in Keats's judgement that poetry 'is not so fine a thing as

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5 Sir Philip Sidney, An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poetry, 2nd edn, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), first published 1595, p. 120.
philosophy—For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as truth. However, since Aristotle's association of literature with universals, the ideal of truth has been common to both literature and philosophy.

For postmodernist philosophers (metaphysicians to a man), however, the status of any kind of truth is at an all-time low. Lyotard passes over the scientific requirement that objects of knowledge 'must be available for repeated access, in other words, they must be accessible in explicit conditions of observation' and points instead to the dependence of science on narrative legitimation and the economic criterion of performativity. Such postmodern theories present all discourses as 'narratives', and suggest that none has privileged access to truth or fact. Richard Rorty asserts that philosophical truth-seekers, whom he labels 'metaphysical prigs', are a dying breed in this relativistic era. However, Derrida et al. do clearly indulge in their own brand of metaphysical truth-seeking.

The truth of literature is metaphorical rather than metaphysical, but shares with metaphysics a disinterest in scientific fact; as Muriel Spark puts it, 'Fiction ... is a kind of parable. You have to make up your mind it's not true. Some kind of truth emerges from it, but it's not fact.' The distinction between metaphorical truth and scientific fact is expressed by the narrator in Midnight's Children: "What's real and what's true aren't necessarily the same." True, for me, was from my earliest days something hidden inside the stories Mary Pereira told me ... True was a thing concealed just over the horizon. The deconstruction of logocentrism means that philosophy loses its claim of superiority in 'truth-getting' over literature while literature's metaphoricity and indirectness are seen as somehow more honest. But Robyn Ferrell suggests that literature is still unable to assert its superiority over philosophy because

The opposition of philosophy and literature is a philosophical one, and not the work of the literary. The literary, in living with the sovereign power of philosophy to designate the order of things, may make a virtue of necessity and celebrate its rich and unpredictable effects.

Deconstruction foregoes crude one-upmanship in favour of a two-pronged campaign against the Platonic hierarchy which involves a metaphysical critique of philosophy's logocentrism and a textual analysis which foregrounds a common textuality by means of rhetorical analysis. In 'Tympan', Derrida deconstructs the metaphysical claims by which philosophy has claimed superiority over all other discourses and promotes 'writing' as the

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ground of philosophy: "beyond the philosophical text there is not a blank, virgin, empty margin, but another text... the written text of philosophy... overflows and cracks its meaning." The piece plays on various puns: the French tympaniser is an archaic verb meaning to criticise or ridicule publicly, suggesting Plato's treatment of the poet in the Republic. 'Tympan' is a deconstruction of Aristotle in De Anima, for whom 'The air inside the ears has been walled up inside so as to be immovable' (420a). 'Tympanum' denotes the eardrum, a membrane which separates the outer and inner ear, but which mediates the sound which passes through it and, by analogy questions the traditional separation between discourse and metadiscourse. That which separates the internal from the external, and which traditionally underpins the claim of any metadiscourse, is presented as permeable, illustrating the point that discourse and metadiscourse, literature and philosophy, occupy the same metaphysical space.

Derrida's strategies include the typographic as well as the rhetorical. 'Tympan' is typeset in two columns: one comprises Derrida's critique of the metaphysical assumption of neutrality and exteriority; the other a quotation from the autobiography of Michel Leiris. There are also three epigraphs from Hegel and substantial footnoting. This is another device aimed at dispelling the philosophical myth by which criticism 'has believed that it controls the margin of volume and that it thinks its other', because what would normally be a blank margin is physically occupied by other texts. The typographic interventions of 'other' texts represent another type of deconstructive 'enactment', designed to illustrate the point that philosophy does not include and control literature, but that literature invades philosophy without its prior consent. However, it is significant that a narrow white margin remains between the two columns of discourse, thus indicating the continuing stand-off between the discourses. But true to form, Derrida also deconstructs literary logocentrism, that is realism (see chapter four). In The Double Session, he asks: 'what goes (on) or doesn't go (on) between literature and truth?' and presents Mallarmé's metafiction, Mimique, as an exemplary anti-logocentric text.

Richard Rorty disparages the idea of distinguishing between literature and philosophy: 'Only if one takes this genre to be more than an intriguing historical artefact will the contrast between philosophical closure and literary openness seem important.' He is also dismissive of any formal distinction, suggesting that 'The only form of the philosophy-literature distinction which we need is one drawn in terms of the (transitory and relative) contrast between the familiar and the unfamiliar'. The increasing awareness of the written constitution of philosophy in the twentieth century has encouraged the relatively uncontentious view that philosophy (or criticism) can have aesthetic qualities.
Donald Henze, for example, remarks that 'Traditionally, philosophical writing has been part of literature . . . and good philosophical writing . . . has been rightly regarded as good literature.' The distinction between form as essence and form as ornament was one of the conventional distinctions made between poetry and philosophy. Traditionally, philosophers regarded literary form or style as at best incidental. The New Critics, on the other hand, regarded the form and content of a literary work as inseparable, hence their indictment of the heresy of paraphrase. Derrida's concept of enactment suggests that philosophical meaning is also expressed via its form, an idea akin to the New Critics'. For Derrida this is designed to deconstruct the literature/philosophy distinction which is traditionally reinforced by the form/content opposition. It is undeniable that philosophy is a written form which employs rhetorical or even literary devices. It is also undeniable that the generic identification of some texts is unclear. In metaphysical terms, literature and philosophy are problematic categories and in purely formal terms distinctions can also be difficult to make.

Theories of genre are associated with literary study, but can equally well be applied to different modes of philosophical discourse and also to the distinctions between literature and philosophy. The formal rules of literary genre were established by Aristotle in the Poetics. As with the Rhetoric, there was an emphasis on propriety and suiting the style to the subject. The early moderns punctiliously followed these laws. Sidney, for example, maintains that the best poets are valued for 'peizing each syllable of each word by just proportion according to the dignity of the subject'. The noble form of tragedy was considered fitting for the noble subject and high-ranking character, low forms such as comedy suited low subjects and humble characters. Sidney therefore regards tragicomedy as a bastard genre which flouts this propriety:

all their plays be neither right tragedies, nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carries it, but thrust in clowns by head and shoulders, to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion, so as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragicomedy obtained.

However, at other times he looks more favourably upon the mixing of literary genres, 'for, if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful'. In the twentieth century, both Russian Formalism and Structuralism subscribed to formal rule-based theories of genre but dispensed with the emphasis on social propriety. Tzvetan Todorov writes that a 'particular type of discourse is . . . defined by the list of rules which it must obey'. There is currently a widespread prejudice against formal genre theory. Following the deflation of scientism, the current fashion is for context-based theories. Jonathan Culler's theory of

\[\text{\cite{sidney:1960}, An Apology for Poetry, p. 103.}\]
\[\text{\cite{sidney:1960}, An Apology for Poetry, p. 135.}\]
\[\text{\cite{sidney:1960}, An Apology for Poetry, p. 116.}\]
'literary competence' modifies the classic structuralist position by stressing the role of the reader. Thomas Beebee regards genre as differential (after Saussure) and subscribes to a version of Culler's theory of literary competence but supplements this with Marxist terminology, suggesting that genre is defined by its use-value. He asserts that 'what makes genre ideological is our practice of speaking of it as a "thing" [reification] rather than as the expression of a relationship between user and a text'. But as with metaphysical analysis of genre, ideological analysis can fail to address the full complex of generic determinants which include form as well as context.

Derrida is highly suspicious of both the metaphysical assumptions and ideological implications of formal genre theories which presume that 'There should be a trait upon which one could rely in order to decide that a given textual event, a given "work", corresponds to a given class (genre, type, mode, form etc.). And there should be a code enabling one to decide questions of class-membership on the basis of this trait.' Such a trait 'is absolutely necessary for and constitutive of what we call art, poetry or literature.' However, Derrida identifies the formal 'trait' as the entity which transgresses the conceptual boundary between text and context:

> In the code of set theories, if I may use it at least figuratively, I would speak of a sort of participation without belonging . . . . The trait that marks membership inevitably divides, the boundary of the set comes to form, by invagination, an internal pocket larger than the whole; and the consequences of this division and of this overflowing remain as singular as they are limitless.

The trait is therefore a somewhat slippery entity, which, contra formalism, does not belong inside the text but rather occupies an indeterminate position, like the parergon, both inside and outside: 'this supplementary and distinctive trait . . . . does not properly pertain to any genre or class. The re-mark of belonging does not belong.' Derrida also examines a particular text, Blanchot's La folie du jour, chosen for its genre-transgressive (metafictional) virtues. But because genre is a metaphysical concept the double bind operates: 'Even though I have launched an appeal against this law, it was she who turned my appeal into a confirmation of her own glory.' Derrida also has an ideological objection to genre theory and its vocabulary, suggesting that it is complicit with social oppression (see chapter two). The connection between scientific, particularly biological, classification and literary genre theory is one which has been exploited by traditional genre theorists and condemned by postmodernists. He deconstructs the nature/culture binary in 'The Law of Genre', pointing out that these

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orders were 'once held to be opposed'. Now they are deconstructed: 'the whole enigma of genre springs perhaps most closely from within this limit between the two genres of genre which, neither separable nor inseparable, form an odd couple of one without the other in which each evenly serves the other a citation to appear in the figure of the other. Derrida is aided by the fact that the French word, genre, denotes genre (literary), gender, and genus. Postmodernists argue that genre distinctions are arbitrary and culturally constructed impositions. Fowler criticises all those whose 'attempt is "to classify a phenomenon, namely literature, in terms of genus and species". While Plato developed no literary genre theory, this type of classification, reminiscent of the dialectic, would undoubtedly have been congenial. Aristotle makes much of the natural evolution of tragedy in the *Poetics* (1449α). Fowler, however, asks, rhetorically, 'Who now would wish to draw a Darwinian analogy?' This disapproval fits ill with his own recommendation that the genre critic adopt a 'family resemblance theory' which describes literary genre in terms of genetics and is itself suggestive of natural evolution:

Poems are made in part from older poems: each is the child (to use Keats' metaphor) of an earlier representative of the genre and may yet be the mother of a subsequent representative. Naturally the genetic make-up alters with slow time, so that we may find the genre's various historical states to be very different from one another.

Fowler notes Marvell's imitation of Carew and declares that it is by this kind of 'cross-imitation . . . [that] generic forms are rapidly enriched'. Expanding his 'family resemblance' theory, he describes the creation of genres by metaphors of miscegenation: 'Literary kinds are not always made out of other kinds in the same literary family. From time to time exogamy brings more exotic generic material into the repertoire. The influence of foreign models may broaden the concept of a genre. Using natural metaphors for cultural products is neat—Marvell's poems are produced through a sort of cross-fertilisation—but can be simplistic. There is a difference between the natural world which concerns zoologists and biologists and the cultural sphere which is the province of literary theorists. Foregrounding the link between the classification of nature and of culture is more legitimate in the sense that classification itself, going back to Plato's dialectic, is a form of cultural (intellectual) activity.

Genre categories are not essential in the sense that they are imposed from without, but what the poststructuralist metaphysicians tend to underplay is the fact that these categories are formulated in response to actual differences. Although differentiation appears to be a natural function, the perception of particular similarities or differences is

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conditioned by the viewer's own perspective and the learnt conventions of classification. Nevertheless, however much the criteria for divisions may be arbitrary, empirically verifiable differences exist in culture as well as nature. No one can deny that there are differences between a warm-blooded mammal and an egg-laying reptile, although the difficulty of distinction increases as one moves down the scale of classification. The same is true of the non-organic texts; that there are texts which transgress particular genre boundaries is not in dispute, but this does not entail the wholesale scrapping of formal categories. Genre is often decried as a reification, and it is true that although literature and philosophy perform perfectly well as concepts there exist no concrete entities which correspond to these terms. However, there do exist collections of texts which share certain formal traits and many individual texts can unproblematically be assigned a particular category because of their formal properties: Hamlet, for example, is a tragic drama; Lucky Jim a comic novel; Paradise Lost an epic poem. In such cases the existence of those features which determine classification is a verifiable fact. Even Raymond Williams, who advises that the job of Marxist theory is to analyse genre theory as social practice, admits the existence of 'particular literary forms'.

Genre distinction also operates in philosophy in the categories of metaphysics, phenomenology, logical positivism and so on in terms of subject matter, method of approach and mode of expression. Derrida of course deconstructs such distinctions in 'Limited Inc', but it nevertheless seems reasonable to suggest that there are certain styles associated with certain types of philosophy, not least his own. That Hegel's Logic is a work of philosophy and War and Peace a work of literature can be determined with reference to text alone. While formal genre theories may be inadequate to deal with maverick authors and their transgeneric texts, it should be remembered that such texts are the exception rather than the norm, and that the majority of literary and philosophical texts are written within formal generic conventions, albeit ones which change over time.

Although formal genre theory is not spurious, neither is it wholly adequate to the analysis of literature and philosophy because, as the Marxists stress, these categories operate within a specific cultural and historical context. But it in no way undermines the validity of generic distinctions to admit that they are supported and in part constructed by institutional determinants such as discipline. The formal establishment of English as a discipline required, for practical and professional purposes, a relatively discrete canon. Again, it in no way affects the practical distinctions made between literary and philosophical texts to admit that there has been exchange between their respective disciplines. This is something F. R. Leavis tried to forestall; in a debate with René Wellek, he emphatically demanded the separation of philosophy (theory) and criticism to prevent the 'consequences of queering one discipline with the habits of another'. Geoffrey Hartman, impatient with disciplinary separatism, appears to be responding directly to

Leavis's point when he states, 'Without the pressure of philosophy on literary texts, or the reciprocal pressure of literary analysis on philosophical writing, each discipline becomes impoverished. If there is the danger of a confusion of realms, it is a danger worth experiencing.' Norris decries 'the idea that philosophical arguments can migrate across disciplines (in this case from philosophy to literary criticism) without suffering a consequent loss of cogency and rigour', although Norris's own professional trajectory has taken him from the department of English to the department of Philosophy at the University of Cardiff. Yale school deconstruction, as practised by Hartman, becomes literary criticism in spite of itself, hence Derrida's public distaste (see chapter five). Derrida himself, as Norris notes, is not merely a trained philosopher but remains primarily interested in the philosophical questions of literature. It is indicative of the importance of discipline in deciding generic identity that philosophy clearly does mutate into something different when it crosses into literary studies. In an interview with Derrida, Norris gets him on his side against Rorty: 'philosophy is not simply a "kind of writing"; philosophy has a very rigorous specificity which has to be respected, and it is a very hard discipline with its own requirements, its own autonomy, so that you cannot simply mix philosophy with literature'. Rorty's thesis that philosophy is just a 'kind of writing' is not necessarily radical in implication, although hotly contested by Norris. Philosophy is a kind of writing but it is usually a different kind of writing from literature with, as Derrida suggests, distinct conventions and disciplinary history.

Gerald Bruns supports the collapse of 'Enlightenment' categories, defending Geoffrey Hartman both as philosopher and creative critic; he compares Derrida's writing to the work of modernist artist Marcel Duchamp, who called a pickaxe 'art', remarking that 'No universally reigning distinction . . . between one genre and another . . . can obtain.' This is true on the metaphysical level and such 'conceptual' art is a prime example of authorial intention working against genre conventions. However, although certain factors clearly militated against the reception of the pickaxe as art object (its original construction, intended function, and provenance), other contextual factors prevailed. Bruns refers to the significance of 'the local and historical situation', that is Duchamp's identity and authority as an artist, the placing of the pickaxe in his studio, and the reception of this as a work of art. By the same token, Derrida's professional identity and expertise as a philosopher and Hartman's as a literary critic work to contain their discourses.
A poststructuralist strategy designed to break down the barriers between literature and philosophy is to read 'against the grain'. This is defined by Culler as a situation 'where the work is read against the conventions of discourse'. It is a form of anti-intentionalism, which examines the way the language of a text may undermine its ostensible meaning. Reading against the disciplinary grain involves focusing on the way that philosophical argument is undermined by literary devices, in other words, a form of deconstruction. Clearly certain philosophical texts prove more rewarding than others for the deconstructionist and since formal logic contains no literary devices it is summarily dismissed by Derrida (see chapter two). On the other hand, deconstructive texts are already self-consciously literary and do not require a concerted rooting out of concealed metaphor. Derrida's 'literary' readings of philosophy therefore tend to focus on those philosophers, such as Plato, for whom the literary medium appears to subvert the message. Rorty puts the delayed birth of this practice down to disciplinary history, suggesting that formerly it simply did not occur to students of either literature or philosophy to read texts from the other discipline. While both poststructuralists and New Critics castigate reference to intention, the author usually writes for a specific purpose and within a set of generic conventions which are highly significant in determining the way a text is read, particularly on initial publication. Derrida casts aspersions on the concept of intentionality in 'Plato's Pharmacy': 'on the supposition that the categories of the voluntary and the involuntary still have some absolute pertinence in a reading—which we don't for a minute believe, at least not on the textual level on which we are now advancing'. The reader is of course at liberty to work against the original intention and reception, but the very act of reading against the grain recognises this original context and an oppositional discipline is a prerequisite. Culler suggests that deconstruction in fact needs the conceptual opposition of philosophy and literature as 'a distinction between literature and philosophy is essential to deconstruction's power of intervention: to the demonstration, for example, that the most truly philosophical reading of a philosophical work—a reading that puts in question its concepts and the foundations of its discourse—is one that treats the work as literature'. As argued in chapter one, this dependence on oppositions is generally true of deconstruction.

An example of a philosophical reading of a literary text is Paul de Man's deconstruction of Yeats's 'Among School Children'. De Man asserts that when we read the line, 'How can we tell the dancer from the dance?', we cannot decide between the

Tony Kaye at the British Design and Art Festival of Excellence at the Saatchi Gallery comprised a homeless person, Roger Powell (price £1,000). But the very fact that these gestures still provoke media attention and public outrage suggests that the more traditional genre conventions that he decries continue to operate. See Mike Ellison, 'No butts as Hirst is tipped for top art prize', The Guardian (13 July 1995), p. 3 and John Mullin, 'Homeless man becomes £1,000 work of art and joins fellow exhibits at top design festival', The Guardian (13 July 1995), p. 6.


Rorty, 'Deconstruction and Circumvention', p. 21, n. 4.

literal-grammatical (i.e. straightforward question) and the poetic (rhetorical) question. De Man asserts that, 'The couple grammar/rhetoric, certainly not a binary opposition since they in no way exclude each other, disrupts and confuses the neat antithesis of the inside/outside pattern.'® He also asserts that, 'Rhetoric radically suspends logic and opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration.'® Christopher Norris argues that 'Logic, grammar and rhetoric are not simply different aspects of language but disjunct dimensions which can enter into conflict and radically undermine each other's authority.'®

James Kirwan asserts that 'we read as literature when the truth of what is literally asserted does not matter to us'.® But this statement is misleading; we read as literature when text and/or context suggest this is the appropriate way to read. De Man's logical-grammatical reading of 'Among School Children' is not a philosophical critique but a piece of literary criticism because, amongst other things, it is undertaken in a department of English and has as its object a canonical work of literature. This work of literature, moreover, cannot be made into a work of philosophy by being read differently. Stanley Fish makes an important point in Professional Correctness when he argues that just because genre or disciplinary boundaries are culturally constructed this doesn't mean they don't exist.®

Literature and philosophy are metaphysical categories which are susceptible to deconstruction, literary and philosophical texts may share formal traits, but cultural convention means that the deconstruction of these categories and texts does not result in a generic 'free-for-all'.

There is no shortage of hybrid or genre-transgressive texts but a 'comprehensive' genre theory, that is one which examines both text and context, is able to account for the fact that the generic identity of such texts is usually relatively stable. A case in point is Plato, whose Dialogues privilege philosophy over literature and speech over writing, but are written in a literary (dramatic) form, and make extensive use of myth, allegory, and metaphor. This was an irony not lost on Sidney:

now Plato's name is laid upon me, whom, I must confess, of all philosophers I have ever esteemed most worthy of reverence, and with great reason: since of all philosophers he is the most poetical. Yet if he will defile the fountain out of which his flowing streams have proceeded, let us boldly examine with what reasons he did it.'®

Martin Warner argues that applying the modern literature/philosophy dichotomy to the Dialogues is inappropriate since classical philosophers made no such distinction. He substantiates this by reference to the Phaedo where philosophical argument and myth are 'brought together under the figure of music' (Apollo).® But this is a highly tendentious

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49 de Man, 'Semiology and Rhetoric', p. 132.
50 de Man, 'Semiology and Rhetoric', p. 129.
52 Kirwan, Literature, Rhetoric, Metaphysics, p. 74.
line to take when one considers the pronouncements against the poet and promotion of the philosopher in the Republic, which are not usually read as deliberately ironic, even by poststructuralists. Norris notes that 'Sir Philip Sidney scored a palpable hit when he remarked that Plato himself was not above using 'poetic' means—metaphor, allegory and myth—in the service of his philosophic arguments. What Sidney actually says is that 'though the inside and strength were Philosophy, the skin as it were and beauty depended most of Poetry', thus endorsing the form/content/literature/philosophy distinction. The niceties of intention are not easy to establish but whether the literary devices are regarded as ornamental or indispensable to the argument, the Dialogues present no real problem of classification because of their disciplinary position and history. That they are written in dramatic form and use literary devices in no way compromises their status as seminal philosophical texts.

Warner rightly argues that the dramatic form, characterisation, and mythical 'digressions' are not merely peripheral to, but constitutive of, the philosophical import of the Phaedo (and the Phaedrus). Charles Griswold argues that 'use of a dialogue form could inhibit the author from simply expounding a doctrine in a dogmatic way, accompanied by impressive declarations and polemics meant to establish the truth of the doctrine—a rhetorical device par excellence. Warner suggests that, 'For the defence to be convincing it must not be a walk-over; thus neither Simmias nor Cebes are mere "yes-men"'. It could be argued, however, that the Dialogues are as dogmatic as any philosophical treatise and command assent in a no less peremptory fashion. While Socrates' interlocutors put up a token resistance they always accede pretty quickly. In the Phaedo, Simmias' responses to Socrates run consecutively: 'Certainly'; 'Quite so'; 'Yes'; 'That is so'; 'It seems so'; 'Indeed we do'; 'Of course'; 'Certainly not' [in agreement with Socrates]; 'Certainly'; 'What you say is absolutely true, Socrates' 656-66a), and so on.

Arthur Danto suggests 'That plain prose has a better chance of being received as true is a stylistic maxim not unknown in adopting a philosophical diction'. The rhetorical and literary devices in Plato's text are foregrounded rather than concealed and Warner reads the Phaedo as exemplary good 'or "noble" rhetoric, guided by dialectic but going beyond it in order to persuade the reader of the nature and value of the philosophic enterprise'. But rhetoric, however good, is the inferior of philosophy and Warner therefore suggests since the Dialogues are written, not living, speech, they are not meant to be wholly persuasive. Arne Melberg subscribes to this theory, arguing for a deliberate (literary) irony: 'All these discreetly ironic reminders of the different levels and possibilities

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57 Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, p. 77.
59 Warner, Philosophical Finesse, p. 87.
61 Warner, Philosophical Finesse, p. 102.
62 Warner, Philosophical Finesse, p. 89.
of the text, and of the tensions between the story told and the telling of the story' are there because 'Plato cannot resist making us suspicious'. These analyses posit a disjunction between the overt argument in the Dialogues and Plato's use of rhetorical and literary devices (see chapter two), and also make the (literary) assumption that Socrates does not represent Plato's unmediated voice. But a 'literary' reading does not make a literary text; Derrida's reading of the Phaedrus reinforces rather than subverts its generic identity. The literary devices in the text should be acknowledged, but so should the historical and disciplinary context of the text.

While Plato's literariness is conventionally regarded as something of an embarrassment, Derrida's philosophical style is deliberately flamboyant and literary, representing part of his strategy to confuse metaphysical categories. Kirwan compares Derrida with Heidegger as the sort of writer who manages to confuse genres: 'the question of denotational sense is even more confused, and in this confusion often lies the problem of whether they are philosophy or literature'. But, as with Plato, the difficulty of establishing genre is in reality negligible. Although Derrida's objects of inquiry are diverse (literature, art, politics), like Plato he remains within, or at least at the edges of, the metaphysical tradition.

As Kirwan suggests, Derrida is only the latest in a line of self-consciously 'poetic' philosophers from whom he draws inspiration. Hegel, subject of Derrida's most conventional philosophical work, had a predilection for the pun, while for Heidegger, an aesthetic turn was consequent on the insight that art accesses truth in the way that philosophy cannot. Nietzsche saw all language as metaphor and truth or Being as both metaphor and illusion. He consequently lauded the artist over the philosopher and turned to a metaphorical style of philosophy. According to James Winchester, Nietzsche believed that 'The world itself admits of no ordering principles, not even principles of process. It is purely contingent. Human existence however requires order and therefore, to survive, humans create artificial orders'. These artificial orders included philosophy which was consequently described as a fiction: 'Whereas necessary fictions are constraints imposed by life, style is a self-imposed constraint.' Nietzsche turned to 'fiction' with Thus Spake Zarathustra. This work certainly cannot be classified as a novel; it is rather one of those 'liminal' texts, whose form transgresses traditional genre categories. Its literary qualities are primarily poetic—metaphor, exalted language—but the narrative structure follows the form of the dialectic and the style evokes Biblical parable. A recent book on Nietzsche was advertised as rendering 'the question "Is it philosophy or is it literature" no longer relevant'. Its authors describe Thus Spake Zarathustra as a 'peerless fiction', but in spite

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65 Wincheater, Nietzsche's Aesthetic Turn, p. 121.
66 James J. Wincheater, Nietzsche's Aesthetic Turn, p. 121.
of the radical anti-genre claims, admit that 'like other poets and critics before him—and not
withstanding his revolutionary protestations—Nietzsche is a captive of generic limitations
as much as he is of history.' In this case context is more significant than form since in
spite of its hybrid nature *Thus Spake Zarathustra* is read as philosophy, that is by
philosophers in philosophy departments or as part of a philosophical oeuvre.

In spite of Derrida's acceptance of disciplinary constraints, he attempts to reach for
a form which defies categorisation. Of *Glas* he affirms: 'It is neither philosophy nor
poetry. It is in fact a reciprocal contamination of one by the other, from which neither can
emerge intact. This notion of contamination is, however, inadequate . . . One is trying to
reach an additional or alternative dimension beyond philosophy and literature.' This
attempt is marked by a typography similar to that in 'Tympan'; Derrida analyses Hegel's
philosophy in the left-hand column and the work of Jean Genet in the right. Quotations
are inset but no references given. According to Camuf, this 'demonstrates the borderless
condition of texts', and *Glas* tortuously co-implicates the work of Hegel and Genet. The
analysis of Hegel is conventional in Derridean terms, but the analysis of Genet is something
different:

> The phallic flower is cuttable-culpable. It is cut, castrated, guillotined, decollated,
> unglued. Soon: it *appears* only on the scaffold is what is defalcated there, what is
> removed and left to fall. This appearing, this luminous phenomenon decorporated—of
> the flower, was glory. 

This is a kind of writing which does surpass philosophy because it approaches the creative
criticism of Hartman and is reminiscent of Hélène Cixous's literary appreciation (see
chapter seven). However, as in 'Tympan', the margins which physically separate the
various discourses (primary text/quotation; literature/philosophy) remain to evoke generic
and disciplinary boundaries

In *The Post Card* Derrida tries an alternative strategy, that of writing in a distinctly
literary mode, the epistolary. *The Post Card* has a first person narrator and Camuf warns
against identifying the narrator with Derrida, one of the first principles of literary criticism:

> Although the principal correspondent seems identifiable in almost every way with
> Jacques Derrida, the signatory of 'Envois', at the same time nothing could be less certain
> than this sort of identification. In accordance with the postal principle . . . 'identity' is
> but the spacing of a self-address, analogous therefore to the distance between addresser
> and addressee. There is no telling where that gap widens sufficiently to accommodate
> the conventions of a fictional first-person narrator.

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68 Magnus et al., Nietzsche's Case, p. 99.
70 A Derrida Reader, p. 314.
72 A Derrida Reader, p. 485.
This echoes Gallop's advice that we should not necessarily identify Plato with Socrates in the Dialogues. However the 'narrative voice' is nevertheless typically Derridean and there is no reason not to identify narrator with author. Rorty asserts that at this point in his career Derrida 's no longer warning us that the "discourse of philosophy" will get us if we don't watch out'. It appears, however, that Derrida is warning us of precisely this:

Do people (I am not speaking of 'philosophers' or of those who read Plato) realize to what extent this old couple has invaded our most private domesticity, mixing themselves up in everything, and making us attend for centuries their colossal and indefatigable anaparalyses?

The Post Card addresses the peregrinations of meaning: 'Once intercepted . . . the message no longer has any chance of reaching any determinable person, in any (determinable) place whatever. This has to be accepted, and j'accepte. But I recognize that such a certainty is unbearable, for anyone'. The Post Card is neither marketed nor read as a work of fiction, but rather as a reworking of Derrida's perennial philosophical preoccupations with the assumptions of metaphysical discourse.

Danto suggests that 'philosophers with really new thoughts have simply had to invent new forms with which to convey them' and Derrida can be categorised as such a philosopher although his techniques are not entirely novel. However, such techniques fail to reach the 'alternative dimension beyond literature and philosophy' because of the weight of disciplinary and generic convention. While the novelty of deconstruction meant that it did confuse traditional Anglo-American philosophers and literary critics, on one hand the flexibility of generic boundaries and on another their institutional reinforcement explains the fact that deconstruction has now been incorporated into both disciplines rather than floating free of either in some inter- or post-disciplinary void. In fact there is very little of literature in Derrida's writing; at times it approaches the 'creative criticism' diligently practised by Hartman but in the main it must be classified as pure metaphysics.

Iris Murdoch trained in philosophy and is the author of several philosophical monographs. Unlike Derrida, she is also a commercially successful and well-received 'middle-brow' novelist. She takes a diametrically opposed view to that of Derrida in her desire to keep separate literature and philosophy: 'As soon as philosophy gets into a novel, a work of literature, it ceases to be philosophy. It becomes something else . . . . The harder the writer works to present his ideas in abstract form, the less good his work of art is likely to become.' However, she does concede the creative nature of philosophy: 'Of course, philosophy is an imaginative activity, and if one thinks of the great philosophers,

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76 Danto, Philosophy as/and/or Literature', p. 9; see also Murdoch, 'Vision and Choice in Morality', PASS 30 (1956), 32-58.
they are very often picture-malcers—people who produce enormous metaphors and pictures to explain things. Philosophy aims to clarify: it is essential to philosophy that it should, in some sense, be clarification. Literature is, very often, mystification—and, besides, literature is for fun, literature entertains. Her novels have often been categorised as 'philosophical', a term she rejects, and as a novelist she declares that she 'would rather know about sailing ships and hospitals than about philosophy'. Murdoch's separatist sentiments are sometimes voiced by her fictional characters. In Jackson's Dilemma, Benet, an amateur philosopher researching Heidegger, is described as feeling a similar sentiment: 'Later Heidegger he detested . . . his poeticisation of philosophy, discarding truth, goodness, freedom, love, the individual, anything the philosopher ought to explain and defend.' In spite of her avowed separatism, there are clearly connections between Murdoch's philosophy and fiction but they just as clearly do not work to collapse the literature/philosophy distinction.

Early in her career Murdoch was influenced by the existentialist philosophy of Sartre, whose works include the novel La Nausée. However, in her preface to Sartre: Romantic Rationalist, she distinguishes between 'the novel proper', 'the novel of ideas' and the 'modern metaphysical tale', placing the 'novelist proper' above the philosopher for the reason that:

He has always implicitly understood, what the philosopher has grasped less clearly, that human reason is not a single unitary gadget the nature of which could be discovered once for all. [. . .] He has always been, what the very latest philosophers claim to be, a describer rather than an explainer; and in consequence he has often anticipated the philosophers' discoveries.

The novel proper is about people's treatment of each other, and so it is about human values. She concludes that Sartre, symptomatically, is unable to write a great novel because metaphysical abstraction gets in the way: La Nausée succeeds primarily in presenting Sartre's metaphysical outlook, but fails to clothe this with 'any form of normal human project, sexual political, or religious'. Elsewhere, however, she states that La Nausée 'is the one really good philosophical novel . . . which might be said to be a novel demonstrating something about contingency.' This may be, she thinks, because
existentialism is already 'a rather literary philosophy. It emphasises all sorts of things to do with the human predicament'.

Murdoch's philosophy is moral and highly unfashionable; she quickly became disenchanted with existentialism and has subsequently drawn most heavily on Plato. She refers approvingly to 'Plato's Pharmacy' in The Fire and the Sun and makes frequent reference to veils over reality—but remains much closer to Plato in her explicit pursuit of the true and the good. In The Sovereignty of Good Murdoch critiques existentialist, deterministic and analytic philosophies, formulating an idea of the good as the unattainable, unknowable but ultimate goal. She also plunders Platonic philosophy for an ethical literary theory. In the Republic Socrates remarks that 'all this procedure of the arts and sciences [technai] that we have described indicates their power to lead the best part of our soul up to the contemplation of what is best among realities' (532c). For Murdoch, 'This well describes the role of great art as educator and revealer.' She asserts that 'Art is far and away the most educational thing we have, far more so than its rivals, philosophy and theology and science.' The common ground between philosophy and literature, for Murdoch, is their pursuit of truth: 'They are both truth-seeking, truth-revealing activities in some sense.'

Critics have often judged Murdoch's novels by her own criteria and a common criticism of her early work is that philosophical ideas occlude literary realism and produce a theory-ridden fiction. Under the Net (1954) certainly makes a rather heavy-handed use of a metaphor from Wittgenstein's Tractatus. Wittgenstein describes language as a net which is cast over a formless and disordered reality. In Under the Net, the hero Jake writes in a neo-Platonic dialogue:

> the movement away from theory and generality is the movement toward truth. All theorizing is flight. We must be ruled by the situation itself and this is unutterably particular. Indeed it is something to which we can never get close enough, however hard we may try as it were to crawl under the net.

Elizabeth Dipple respects Murdoch's wishes by refusing to call her a 'philosophical novelist', but concedes that Under the Net includes 'large swatches of ironic philosophical dialogue—an unabashed philosophic content.' What saves it as a novel is that it is absolutely unnecessary to know the philosophical reference. A. S. Byatt concludes that 'the novel could be described as a philosophical novel very precisely, since there is clearly a very conscious attempt to pattern the events in Jake's story in terms of ideas of freedom, of philosophical approaches to reality . . . . But it is nevertheless a novel, and not simply a

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86 Murdoch, interview by Bryan Magee, p. 535.
88 Murdoch, The Fire and the Sun, p. 65.
89 Murdoch, interview by Bryan Magee, p. 535.
90 Iris Murdoch, Under the Net, p. 91.
91 Dipple, Iris Murdoch, pp. 153, 155.
92 Dipple, Iris Murdoch, p. 135.
Peter Conradi argues that 'There is always more event, story, incident than the idea-play can use up, here as everywhere in her work'. Although Dipple describes Murdoch's early novels as contrived, Murdoch's champions often refuse to admit that the first novel appears mannered and dated, partly due to its reliance on a démodé philosophy, and partly due to the fact that the philosophical 'dialogue' is awkward and incidental.  

Another philosophical influence on Murdoch's literary theory and practice was the 'mystic' Simone Weil. Murdoch recounts Weil as having 'said that morality was a matter of attention not of will' and concludes that 'We need a new vocabulary of attention.' Murdoch asserts that 'there is a moral challenge involved in art: in the self-discipline of the artist, expelling fantasy and really looking at things other than himself.' This preoccupation with things other than oneself is already apparent in Under the Net; at the opening of the novel, Jake has little sense of the independent existence of his lackey, Finn: 'I count Finn as an inhabitant of my universe, and cannot conceive that he has one containing me.' By the close of the novel, however, he begins to perceive Finn as a separate entity: 'I felt ashamed of being parted from Finn, of having known so little about Finn, of having conceived things as I pleased and not as they were.' This awareness of another is indicative of authenticity in existentialist philosophy and of a related moral growth in the novel. The concept of attention also influences Murdoch's chosen mode of fictional representation, that is realism, the bourgeois literary form which is currently regarded with great suspicion by postmodern theorists (see chapter four). In the Sovereignty of Good, she asserts that 'morality, goodness, is a form of realism.' As Murdoch moves from the stylised existentialism of her first novel to a more conventional realism, the symbolic awareness of other people and things is combined with realistic description. In the later novels there is also a distinction between different types of attention. The epiphanic vision is symptomatic of self-delusion and fantasy, while attention to the mundane is the mark of ethical awareness and maturity. An example of the latter type of attention occurs in Bruno's Dream (1969) where Diana, whose husband has left her for her sister, is caring for the dying Bruno:

And she saw the ivy leaves and the puckered door knob, and the tear in the pocket of Bruno's old dressing-gown with a clarity and a closeness which she had never experienced before. The familiar roads between Kemptso Gardens and Stadium Street seemed like those of an unknown city, so many were the new things which she now began to notice in them: potted plants in windows, irregular stains upon walls, moist

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94 See Dipple, Iris Murdoch, ch. 5.
95 Murdoch, interview by Bryan Magee, p. 535.
97 Murdoch, Under the Net, p. 279.
green moss between paving stones. Even little piles of dust and screwed-up paper seemed to claim and deserve her attention.100

In *The Sovereignty of Good*, she remarks on the human 'tendency to conceal death and chance by the invention of forms' and asserts that the function of tragedy, comedy, and painting is 'to show us suffering without a thrill and death without a consolation'.101

Diana's contemplative attention to both people and things in *Bruno's Dream* can be compared with Morgan's vision in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970) which begins with the heightened perception of the natural world ('The flowers were beginning to quiver in front of her eyes. How extraordinary flowers are, she thought. Out of these dry cardboardy rods these complex fragile heads come out, skin-thin and moist ... '102), and develops into a sort of existentialist sick fit: 'Was it giddiness she was feeling now, a dazzled sensation of spinning drunkenness, or was it something else, disgust, fear, horror as at some unspeakable filth of the universe'?103 Throughout the novel Morgan, Hilda's bohemian sister, spouts morally vacuous, quasi-philosophical rubbish. Speaking to her husband, Tallis, from whom she is separated, she remarks: 'I'm going to love people. That's what I mean by living differently. That'll be my new way of life. I'm going to be free and love people.'104 Tallis, a rather pathetic but perceptive character, correctly identifies this self-expression as 'sickening rot', calling Morgan 'hopelessly theory-ridden' (a serious crime in Murdoch's book). In this novel Murdoch is still influenced by existentialist concepts; Morgan is unable to recognise and communicate with other individuals and is therefore 'inauthentic'.

Murdoch often uses stones as a means of expressing her concerns with individuality and attention and also to indicate the moral stature and emotional health of her characters. In *The Nice and the Good* (1968) pebbles on a beach are first described by the narrator:

The pebbles gave a general impression of being either white or mauve, but looked at closely they exhibited almost every intermediate colour and also varied considerably in size and shape. All were rounded, but some were flatish, some oblong, some spherical; some were almost transparent, others more or less copiously speckled, others close-textured and nearly black, a few of a brownish-red, some of a pale grey, others of a purple which was almost blue.105

These pebbles are collected by twins, Henrietta and Edward Biranne, who are enlightened beings and therefore delight in the particularity of each stone. Uncle Theo, a deeply troubled homosexual, is rather appalled by the 'multiplicity and randomness' of the stones:

100 Iris Murdoch, *Bruno's Dream* (St Albans: Triad, 1977); first published 1969, p. 268.
The intention of God could reach only a little way through the opacity of matter, and where it failed to penetrate there was just jumble and desolation. So Theo saw it, and what was for the twins a treasury of lovable individuals (it grieved the twins that they could not distinguish every stone with their attentions and carry it into the house) was for Theo an expanse of abomination where the spirit had never come.\(^6\)

Murdoch has proclaimed it her intention to render the opacity of life in her fiction; Theo's desire to reach beneath this surface is doomed to failure.

Philosophy does not merely inform the ideas in Murdoch's novels, but also the imagery. The texts of Plato and Sartre are of course pre-eminently suitable for such literary borrowings. The most well-worn philosophical image in the later novels is lifted from Plato's parable of the cave in the *Republic*, an allegory in which Socrates describes how prisoners in a cave would take shadows from the fire to be real objects and if released be dazzled by the sun and would regard real objects as chimerical (514a–515e). In *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* Platonic imagery and existentialist philosophy combine. Preceding Morgan's vision, 'there was a great deal too much light. Light was vibrating inside her eyes and she could see nothing but dazzling and pale shadows as if the whole scene had been bleached and then half blotted out by a deluge of light.'\(^7\) Afterwards, 'She felt the sun burning into the back of her neck as if it was directed thorough a prism.' In *The Sea, The Sea* the unenlightened hero, Charles Arrowby, keeps a diary:

> Since I started writing this 'book' or whatever it is I have felt as if I were walking about in a dark cavern where there are various 'lights', made perhaps by shafts or apertures which reach the outside world. (What a gloomy image of my mind, but I do not mean it in a gloomy sense.) There is among those lights one great light towards which I have been half consciously wending my way. It may be a great 'mouth' opening to the daylight, or it may be a hole through which fires emerge from the centre of the earth. And am I still unsure which it is, and must I now approach in order to find out?

Charles is dedicated to winning back his childhood sweetheart, now an emotionally unstable middle-aged woman: 'now I find that, wandering in my cavern, I have in fact come near to the great light-source and am ready to speak about my first love'.\(^8\) He muses: 'This image has come to me so suddenly, I am not sure what to make of it.'\(^9\) The informed reader is not left in the dark, however, and can turn to Murdoch's discussion of the Platonic myth in *The Fire and the Sun* (first published one year before *The Sea, The Sea*), or to Plato's original text.\(^10\) However, while the parable of the cave provides a hermeneutic key—Morgan and Charles Arrowby cannot bear to look at the sun therefore they are deluded—it is possible to reach this conclusion through internal evidence alone. Both are self-regarding unsympathetic characters whose self-obsessions and misperceptions lead to a great deal of destruction and pain; Charles Arrowby steadfastly...

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\(^7\) Murdoch, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, p. 186.


\(^10\) Iris Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun*, p. 4.
refuses to admit the fact that his first love is no longer available and indirectly causes the
death of her adopted son; Morgan, also indirectly, causes the death of Hilda's husband, Rupert.

Any literary text will contain a philosophy in the general sense of the word as
world-view or moral outlook and the general philosophical stance which can be
extrapolated from Murdoch's novels is quite different from that articulated in *The
Sovereignty of Good*. In *Nuns and Soldiers* the morally scrupulous characters are Anne
Cavidge, ex-nun, and Peter, 'the Count', a Polish exile. Anne is in love with the Count, the
Count with Gertrude, another selfish petty-bourgeoise, who seeks to hold both the Count
and Anne in a retinue of admirers following her husband's death. Because Anne and the
Count are unwilling to compromise their personal integrity they both lose their chance of
happiness while Gertrude triumphs, finally pairing off with another morally flimsy
character. Anne perceives the situation correctly:

> It was, for Gertrude, easy. She had fielded him casually, as if in passing. She had only
to stretch out her hand, she had only to whistle ever so softly.... And Anne could guess
that this was not just a benevolent act. Gertrude needed his esteem to support her. She
had always valued his love and saw no reason why she should not go on enjoying it
forever.111

Gertrude and her second husband are equally selfish but neither appears to be condemned
by the narrative tone. Murdoch refuses to arbitrate between the ascetic and the bourgeois,
because to present a clear-cut moral would go contrary to her intention to produce
realistic fiction.

Pearl Bell criticises Murdoch for the failure to either philosophise or fictionalise
successfully. She criticises in particular Murdoch's representation of the Anglo-Jewish
family in *Nuns and Soldiers*—not enough, she says, is explained and 'Though she is called
a philosophical novelist, it is difficult to get any idea from her novels of what she thinks
about contemporary culture, society, politics, what judgments she has arrived at about the
issues that confront us all.'112 Bell states that Murdoch makes no 'effort to dramatize
abstract ideas in her fiction' and that 'what is particularly ironic about Iris Murdoch the
"philosophical novelist" is that her novels seem so wilfully unreflective and devoid of
ethical and metaphysical scrupulousness.'113 Peter Conradi considers it inappropriate to
apply Murdoch's own literary theory to her novels, but Bell's ignorance of Murdoch's
proclaimed intentions is indefensible. Murdoch has stated that she does not wish to
'dramatize abstract ideas' and asserted that it is not the business of literature to clarify but
to mystify. What Bell calls 'ethical and metaphysical scrupulousness' is the sort of
philosophical 'dryness' which Murdoch considers does not translate well into fiction.

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112 Pearl K. Bell, 'Games Writers Play', *Commentary* 71, 2 (1981), p. 71
113 Bell, 'Games Writers Play', p. 70.
In *Mémoires for Paul de Man* Derrida remarks 'I have never known how to tell a story. And since I love nothing better than remembering . . . I have always felt this inability to be a sad infirmity.' The *Post Card* confirms the validity of this self-criticism, although it would be unwise to take Derrida’s remarks at face value and he has never made a ‘serious’ attempt at fiction. It is precisely the separation of the techniques of philosophy from those of fiction and the submersion of philosophical concepts in the fictional world which enable Murdoch to tell stories. Writers of fiction use literary devices to persuade the reader to suspend disbelief and enter a fictional world. Assent to a particular philosophical or ethical position therein depends not on argumentation but imagination and identification, so while a literary text may convey a moral or imply a philosophical stance, it must entertain before it can instruct. Philosophy, even performative deconstruction, is required to make, or even ‘enact’ a particular philosophical point; something which Derrida never fails to do. The terms ‘literature’ and ‘philosophy’, admittedly reifications and concepts without physical referents, nevertheless refer to a nexus of cultural and textual differences which again resist metaphysical deconstruction.

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Mimesis and Metafiction

What a duce, do you think I am writing a Romance?
Don't you see that I am copying Nature . . .? 1

As shown in the last chapter, Plato and Aristotle typically disagreed over the value of mimetic art. In the Republic Socrates argues that imitation in all forms of art is potentially immoral, and that representation is always inferior to the thing represented; Aristotle proposes that artistic imitation is an inherently philosophical activity. Mimesis or literary realism is currently regarded with some distaste in the academy, particularly by poststructuralist theorists; ever since Saussure wrenched apart signifier and signified, the attempt to mirror the world in fiction has been presented as a naïve and bourgeois project. In Structuralist Poetics, Jonathan Culler insists that 'literature is something other than a statement about the world' and cautions the critic against making 'the unseemly rush from word to world'. 2 For Derrida, the prime offence of literary realism is its claim to hold up a mirror to reality, to make language itself transparent, he appears sceptical of the extratextual—'il n'y a pas de hors texte'—and is directly critical of Plato's logocentric ideal. 3 Paul de Man believes in the 'autonomous potential of language' and suggests that literariness is 'not primarily mimetic'. 4 The literary forms favoured by the anti-realists are the linguistic self-consciousness of modernism and the literary self-consciousness of postmodernism, both of which apparently subvert the conventions of traditional nineteenth-century realism. Poststructuralist anti-realists believe in the capacity of metafiction to confuse the ontological categories of word and world, fact and fiction. Realism still has its champions; Raymond Tallis, for example, undertakes a wide-ranging logical and empirical critique of post-Saussurean theory in Not Saussure and In Defence of Realism. 5 Tallis's willingness to address both philosophical argument and empirical evidence means that his account of literary realism is more convincing than a formal metaphysical analysis. Philosophical postmodern anti-realism is an inadequate response to

5 Raymond Tallis, Not Saussure: A Critique of Post-Saussurean Literary Theory (London: Macmillan, 1983); In Defence of Realism (London: Edward Arnold, 1988). Tallis is a scientist as well as a literary theorist and is therefore well qualified to adduce scientific evidence against postmodern theories.
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a complex genre and reading process. An examination of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels indicates that mimesis and metafiction were rarely mutually exclusive in the text. The opposition between mimesis and metafiction can be shown to collapse where the reader's familiarisation with metafictive devices allows a 'realist' reading of an anti-realist novel. Even the most esoteric postmodern fictions which successfully frustrate a realist reading will not necessarily confuse the reader's ontological categories.

Orthodox accounts of the birth of the British novel stress its difference from the Romance, a difference which lay in its attempt to represent a recognisable secular world. It is clear that the novelists themselves were convinced that they were establishing a new literary form which was true to life and superior to the Romance (see epigraph). The early novel also prioritised the individual over the type, a tendency attributed to Ian Watt to the rise of mercantilism and bourgeois ideology. In The Rise of the Novel, Watt also asserts that the defining characteristic of the novel is its 'formal realism'; formal, because the term realism does not here refer to any special literary doctrine or purpose, but only to a set of narrative procedures. These procedures comprise the presentation of details and particulars through 'a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms'. Culler suggests that realism is achieved through the depiction of items whose only apparent role in the text is that of denoting a concrete reality (trivial gestures, insignificant objects, superfuous dialogue). In a description of a room items which are not picked up and integrated by symbolic or thematic codes...and which do not have a function in the plot produce what Barthes calls a 'reality effect' (l'effet de réel)...The pure representation of reality thus becomes, as Barthes says, a resistance to meaning, an instance of the 'referential illusion', according to which the meaning of a sign is nothing other than its referent.

Although it is inappropriate to separate the purely referential from the symbolic in a work of fiction, there is certainly an attention to detail in Richardson's Pamela where the heroine writes home with detailed itineraries of her clothes: 'he gave me two suits of fine Flanders laced head-clothes; three pair of fine silk shoes, two hardly the worse, and just fit for me (for my lady had a very little foot,) and the other with wrought silver buckles in them, and several ribbands and top-knots of all colours; four pair of white cotton stockings...."
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is the presumption of referentiality that poststructuralists find hard to stomach; Culler
endorses Barthe's implication that reference is an illusion.

At this formative stage in the novel's history, realism sometimes masqueraded as
reality; Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was originally presented and often accepted for a
historical account of a real man's adventure, edited rather than authored by Defoe. That
metafiction was not a feature of early novels can be ascribed to the authors' desire to
convince readers of the literal truth of the text. Lennard Davis describes how the
relatively primitive state of communications meant that 'News' was often neither
particularly new nor easily authenticated. Davis asserts that 'The readers of these novels,
ballads, *news*, and so on clearly valued the idea that a narrative *might* have been true, but
they bought the narratives whether true or false.' However, as communications
improved and the news/novels distinction began to be more sharply delineated, the
novelists had to modify their claims to literal truth. In the prefaces to *Roxana* and
*Pamela*, Defoe and Richardson made only qualified assertions of historical veracity but in
the body of the novels still eschewed self-conscious metafiction.

Metafiction, which had established itself in the literary canon with Cervantes' *Don
Quijote*, was not long in reasserting itself. Offended both by what he saw as the moral
hypocrisy of *Pamela* and its failure to observe classical proprieties, Henry Fielding
published his parody *Joseph Andrews*. In the preface this work is distinguished 'from the
productions of romance writers' and a debt to Cervantes is owned. The text contains
lengthy asides which foreground the mechanics of the reading process and the narrative
techniques:

> It is an observation sometimes made, that to indicate our idea of a simple fellow, we say,
> *He is easily to be seen through*; Nor do I believe it a more improper denotation for a
> simple book. Instead of applying this to any particular performance, we choose rather to
> remark the contrary in this history, where the scene opens itself by small degrees, and he
> is a sagacious reader who can see two chapters before him.

Metafiction reached new heights with Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. This novel,
which was also designed to mock the new realism, flamboyantly foregrounds its fictional
status and literary techniques. The Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky later gave
*Tristram Shandy* his stamp of approval when he called it 'the most typical novel in world

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Mimesis and Metafiction

That the contemporary reading public were well able to digest such an extreme metafiction can be deduced from the fact that along with the opprobrium of Dr Johnson, the book achieved considerable popular success.

The metafictional tradition was perpetuated in the nineteenth century by Thackeray and Dickens. For a significant number of authors, the attempt at verisimilitude appeared to require a more self-effacing narrator. However this period also marked the convergence of these previously oppositional literary modes as metafiction was assimilated by the dominant realism. The most common metafictional device used in Victorian fiction is the intrusive narrator. In Jane Austen's novels the narrator can be quite officious. In *Mansfield Park* realistic illusion is temporarily suspended when the narrator remarks: 'I purposely abstain from dates on this occasion, that every one may be at liberty to fix their own, aware that the cure of unconquerable passions, and the transfer of unchanging attachments, must vary much as to time in different people.' This brings to mind the 'description' of the desirable widow Wadman in *Tristram Shandy*: 'Sit down, sir, paint her to your own mind—as like your mistress as you can—as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you—tis all one to me—please but your own fancy in it.'

George Eliot uses the introduction of the 'low' character Joshua Rigg in *Middlemarch* as an occasion for a digression on the craft of writing:

> And here I am naturally led to reflect on the means of elevating a low subject. Historical parallels are remarkably efficient in this way. The chief objection to them is, that the diligent narrator may lack space, or (what is often the same thing) may not be able to think of them with any degree of particularity, though he may have a philosophical confidence that if known they would be illustrative. It seems an easier and shorter way to dignity, to observe that—since there never was a true story which could not be told in parables where you might put a monkey for a margrave, and vice versa—whatever has been or is to be narrated by me about low people, may be ennobled by being considered a parable; so that if any bad habits and ugly consequences are brought into view, the reader may have the relief of regarding them as not more than figuratively ungenteel, and may feel himself virtually in company with persons of some style.

Here one of the virtues of realism, 'particularity', is ironically promoted by means of a narrative aside. David Lodge asserts that Eliot's 'diegetic style' forces the reader to 'think for himself'.

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from the action. But significant lapses of attention are also permitted when the omniscient narrator tactfully withdraws from the action. The difference between these nineteenth-century novels and *Tristram Shandy* is quantitative as well as qualitative. While Sterne's extravagant and sustained metafiction does appear to violate the conventions of realism, the occasional digressions in *Middlemarch* or *Mansfield Park* pose no threat to readerly equanimity, especially in the case of readers already familiar with the convention of metafiction itself. The role of the reader was ignored by Watt in *The Rise of the Novel*, but in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), Wayne Booth attacks the equation of the novel with formal realism as narrow and inappropriate genre criticism. He cites Jean-Louis Curtis's argument that reading is based on a 'tacit contract with the novelist' and points out that if the use of the intrusive omniscient narrator is an established and widespread convention it is likely to be naturalised by the reader and hence will not detract from the reality effect, thus anticipating Culler's theory of literary competence. There would have been 'incompetent' contemporary readers of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels who were unable to naturalise their metafictive devices, but there is no reason to believe that such readers would have experienced a blurring of ontological boundaries.

Modernist novelists and critics upheld the mimetic ideal, but excoriated the methods of classic realism. According to Woolf in 'Modern Fiction', Victorian and Edwardian literature was a manifest failure of both perception and representation:

> Look within and life, it seems, is very far from 'like this'. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions . . . . From all sides they come, an incessant shower of immeasurable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old . . . . Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from beginning of consciousness to the end.

Henry James describes consciousness in the same terms: 'Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every airborne particle in its tissue.' Woolf criticises Mr Bennett and his ilk for writing 'of unimportant things . . . making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring.' She was clearly convinced that the significant matter of fiction lay beneath the trivial and mundane surface of the quotidien which for Culler and Barthes is the essence of realism:

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22 Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, pp. 52, 42.
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life is forever pleading that she is the proper end of fiction and that the more he sees of her the better his book will be. She does not add, however, that she is grossly impure; and that the side she flaunts uppermost is often, for the novelist, of no value whatever. Appearance and movement are the lures she trails to entice him after her, as if these were her essence, and by catching them he gained her goal. Woolf praised Ulysses in terms which indicate the modernist disregard for realist conventions and attention to subjective consciousness: 'Mr. Joyce is spiritual; he is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain, and it order to preserve it he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious, whether it be probability, or coherence, or any other of these signposts which for generations have served to support the imagination of a reader.' The modernists completely overhauled classic realist conventions, developing techniques such as stream-of-consciousness and interior monologue to deal with envelope and spider web.

It is clear that neither James nor Woolf rejects realism per se since, 'The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life.' However, modernist writers were no longer inclined to pander to the expectations of the realist reader. While Mrs Dalloway observes Aristotle's classic unity—the events take place in one day—a linear diagram of its plot would rival that of Tristram Shandy for digressions because of Woolf's analeptic 'tunnelling' method (Watt sees Sterne's preoccupation with narrative time as prefiguring Woolf and Joyce). Classic realist texts commonly close on marriage, thus indicating their indebtedness to Romance and comedy, but the happy ending offended ascetic modernist sensibilities (see chapter six). James satirised the nineteenth-century tradition: 'The "ending" of a novel is, for many persons, like that of a good dinner, a course of dessert and ices, and the artist in fiction is regarded as a sort of meddlesome doctor who forbids agreeable aftertastes.' The modernist novel prefigures postmodernism with its taste for more ambiguous and open-ended conclusions.

Not merely did the modernists demolish the structure of the classic realist text, they revised its language, replacing prose with poetry:

But she feared time itself, and read on Lady Bruton's face, as if it had been a dial cut in impassive stone, the dwindling of life; how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable any longer of stretching, of absorbing, as in the youthful years, the colours, salts, tones of existence, so that she filled the room she entered, and felt often, as she stood hesitating one moment on the threshold of her drawing-room, an exquisite suspense, such as might stay a diver before plunging while

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38 James, Partial Portraits, p. 576.
40 James, Partial Portraits, p. 382.
the sea darkens and brightens beneath him, and the waves which threaten to break, but only gently split their surface, roll and conceal and encrust as they just turn over the weeds with pearl.\(^{31}\)

This passage is typical in its evocative and sensual imagery: the metaphorical (spatial) treatment of time: 'cut', 'sliced'/'stretching', 'absorbing'; the lyrical, lilting flow of its language: 'roll and conceal and encrust', which mimics the sound and motion of the sea. David Lodge's account of one of the epiphanies in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* emphasises the same aspect of language: 'The language in which the vision is described is intricately wrought, with meticulous attention to sound and cadence, as well as to imagery and diction. The moment is sublime, and the language is correspondingly heightened above the level of ordinary prose by "poetic" devices of repetition and inversion.\(^{32}\) Lodge's quotation marks are redundant; repetitive, rhythmic, euphonic language is the hallmark of modernism. Modernism marked a downturn for metafiction. Notable in his absence is the intrusive narrator; in general, the fragile structure of subjective realism could not be expected to sustain such rude interruptions.

Modernism has profoundly affected critical standards; Ian Watt regarded modernist techniques as coherent with his formal realism, seeing subjective realism as a development from the eighteenth-century interest in 'private experience'.\(^{33}\) Georg Lukács, however, regarded modernism's rejection of the 'selective principle' in favour of 'naturalistic arbitrariness' as a failure, maintaining that in reality perception was not chaotic but hierarchically ordered.\(^{34}\) Hostility to metafiction was also prevalent in early twentieth-century criticism; E. M. Forster, for example, criticises Fielding's and Thackeray's tendency to narrative digression: 'it is devastating, it is bar-parlour chattiness, and nothing has been more harmful to novels of the past.\(^{35}\) These critics fail to realise the significance of context in determining Barthes's *l'effet de réel*. The reader is not infinitely accommodating and nor is realism infinitely flexible. Although the modernists were driven by the desire to represent the 'true' reality of contemporary life, the fact that they rejected previous literary conventions meant that their innovative literary devices would be foregrounded and the reality effect proportionately diminished, whereas the odd narrative digression would have left this effect relatively unscathed.

Contemporary alternatives to lyrical modernism existed in the historical fiction of Robert Graves, Aldous Huxley's science fiction, P. G. Wodehouse's comedies of upper

class life, and the darker visions of Evelyn Waugh, but it was not until the 1950s that there was a concerted attack on modernism by the 'Movement' and its 'Angry Young Men'.

The novelists associated with these labels promoted a mode of realism which looked back to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century models. In 1958 Amis vented his spleen against modernist experimentalism in *The Spectator*:

>'Experiment', in this context, boils down pretty regularly to 'obtruded oddity', whether in construction—multiple viewpoints and such—or in style; it is not felt that adventurousness in subject matter or attitude or tone really counts. Shift from one scene to the next in mid-sentence, cut down on verbs or definite articles, and you are putting yourself right up in the forefront, at any rate in the eyes of those who were reared on Joyce and Virginia Woolf and take a jaundiced view of more recent developments.

In *That Uncertain Feeling* Amis lampoons Dylan Thomas in the figure of odious Welsh playwright Gareth Probert, whose work is summarised by the narrator:

*I felt myself on safe ground in inferring that the whole business was rather on the symbolic side. Words like 'death' and 'life' and 'love' and 'man' cropped up every few lines, but were never attached to anything concrete or specific. 'Death', for example, wasn't my death or your death, or his death or her death or our death or their death or my Aunt Fanny's death, but just death, and in the same way 'love' wasn't my etc., love and wasn't love of one person for another or love of God or love of blackcurrant purée either, but just love.*

Amis's abhorrence of what he saw as literary pretension resulted in his own fiction in a peculiarly pedantic style, but the anti-modernist invective is correct in its assumptions; though 'concrete' in its highly evocative sensual imagery and notwithstanding the earthier moments in *Portrait* or *Ulysses*, modernism clearly privileges the sublime over the ordinary and the poetic over the prosaic.

The revival of classic realism was short-lived and in the 1970s realism once again lost ground to 'obtruded oddity', this time in the form of postmodernism. Postmodernist fiction tends to jettison the poetic lyricism of modernism in favour of an even more self-conscious linguistic play. Randall Stevenson argues that the tensions of writing in a 'foreign' language inform the suspicion of referentiality evident in the work of Joyce and Nabokov. These authors in fact operate on the cusp of modernism/postmodernism with *Finnegans Wake* and *Ada*, instigating the polyglottal obsession with language which has

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been inherited by Salman Rushdie and Umberto Eco. Postmodernist fiction also follows modernism in certain thematic concerns: alienation and loss of faith, subjectivity, the relation between word and the world, time and space and there are certain continuities in literary form, such as the non-linear narrative. Erich Auerbach suggests that the modernists 'hesitate to impose upon life, which is their subject, an order which it does not possess in itself'.

This is belied by T. S. Eliot's reading of "Ulysses", Order, and Myth (1923) as 'a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history'. Insofar as postmodernism has mimetic aspirations they are to represent the chaos and confusion of human existence, but much postmodernist fiction appears to summarily reject the mimetic ideal of both 'objective' (classic) and subjective (modernist) realism.

With postmodernism, metafiction is once again in favour. Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* is an exemplary postmodern metafiction which opens: 'You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler* [sic].' The 'story' is enclosed within a full frame and ends in the same manner: 'And you say, "Just a moment, I've almost finished *If on a winter's night a traveler* by Italo Calvino."' But unlike the traditional frame, which hermetically seals a realistic narrative, Calvino's is closer to Derrida's *parergon* or chiasmus, a deconstructed, collapsed or 'invaginated' frame that is both inside and outside the body proper of the text. Calvino intersperses 'classically' metafictive (numbered) chapters, with named chapters which are parodies of various fictional genres. The numbered chapters, which form a continuous narrative, are addressed to 'you', the Reader and in this metafictional story, 'you' read the first (named) chapter, 'If on a Winter's Night a Traveller', but find that the book has been wrongly bound and 'you' have in fact been reading the first chapter of a different novel. 'You' then return to the publisher for a copy of this book and are issued with a similarly deceptively bound novel, 'you' then return to the publisher for a copy of this book and are issued with a similarly deceptively bound novel, and so it goes on. The metafictional chapters also parody the classic realist love-story as 'you', the Reader, and Ludmilla, the 'Other Reader', meet, overcome various obstacles, and finally get married. The classic realist expectations of the reader are thematised while they are parodied; 'you' remark that 'this is a novel where, once you have got into it, you want to go forward, without stopping', but the structure of *If* prevents this as each false fictional start is arrested, suspended, and then succeeded by another.

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43 Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, p. 205.
45 Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, p. 64.
For many theorists, the function of metafiction is to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, the word and the world, by reminding the reader of his role in the production of meaning. Although mimesis and metafiction are apparently at odds, there is a tenuous (poststructuralist) argument to be made that postmodernist metafiction is itself a new sort of realism: if world is text and text is world, the text of the novel is neither a transparent nor opaque window on reality (realism), but is reality—more real than illusionist realism could ever be. This sounds rather far-fetched but Patricia Waugh states that metafictional novels 'show not only that the "author" is a concept produced through previous and existing literary and social texts but that what is generally taken to be "reality" is also constructed and mediated in a similar fashion. "Reality" is to this extent "fictional" and can be understood through an appropriate "reading" process.'

For Welch Everman,

On the one hand, the tale is only a tale, only fiction, only words. On the other hand, however, the word goes beyond itself, beyond its printed text and into the text of the Reader's (real) world. This novel is purposely literary, and yet it wants to push against the limits of the literary and break through to a place beyond language.

Peter Lamarque and Stein Olsen read the opening frame of *If* in the same dualistic way: 'The first sentence is both true and fictional in intent.' Calvino himself, however, appears to retain a clear distinction between the word and the world and in the essay 'The Written and the Unwritten Word', asks, 'But is mimesis the right way? My starting point was the irreconcilable contrast between the written and unwritten world; if their two languages merge, my argument goes to pieces.'

Elizabeth Ermarth maintains that postmodern novels, unlike conventional linear narratives, foreground the experience of reading as a continual present, but to imply that metafiction causes the reader to be continually conscious of his reading or the mechanics of writing is to underestimate the ability of the 'competent' reader to neutralise, naturalise, or simply ignore foregrounded literary devices. The reader of *If*, though addressed as 'you', can be read as a fictional character and this is encouraged by 'your' progressive fictionalisation in the text. Hutcheon concedes that 'The reader is... a function implicit in the text, an element of the narrative

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situation. No specific real person is meant. Dipple more pertinently points out the fact that the reader of *If* is a particular fictional character. Everman suggests that Calvino 'must be present in his tales and absent as well. He must write stories which betray his presence and erase it at the same time.' By reminding the reader of his role in the production of meaning and the fictional status of the text itself, metafiction inserts the real author and reader into the narrative. Simplistic accounts which posit the intrusion of the author into the text are similarly deluded, naively confusing author and narrator or author and character. While Barthes's 'Text' is metafictive—it asks of the reader a practical collaboration—he properly retains this distinction: 'It is not that the Author may not "come back" in the Text, in his text, but he then does so as a "guest". If he is a novelist, he is inscribed in the novel like one of his characters.' You', the reader of *If*, although directly addressed, are inscribed in the text, and are therefore read as a fictional character by the conditioned postmodern reader. The reader, if schooled in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tradition as well as the postmodern, is likely to experience no ontological confusion. James Kirwan explains the difference between fact and fiction thus: 'The descriptions or representations of fiction stand ... in an analogical relationship to reality, and it is their metaphorical appropriateness rather than the truth of their letter that we are invited to believe in.' Catherine Belsey cites as evidence of the confusion between (realist) literature and life a reader who believed in the historical existence of the fictional character, Sherlock Holmes. It should be pointed out that this type of mistake is exceptional; while assumption of the fictional stance allows the reader to partially or temporarily suspend disbelief and imaginatively enter the alternative fictional world, even naïve realist readers are generally aware of the simple fact that realism and reality are not identical, that literary and literal truth are different.

Philosophical attempts to establish the ontological status of metafiction are doomed to failure because of the primacy of context in interpretation and the active contribution of the reader. The power of metafiction is drastically reduced if the reader is already familiar with the technique, and most readers are. While Lamarque and Olsen sometimes make philosophical heavy weather of analysing the truth status of fiction, they rightly maintain that fact is largely irrelevant to literature because factual inference is blocked by what they call the tific stance':

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55 Heath, Narcissistic Narrative, p. 139.
56 Dipple, The Unresolvable Plot, p. 107.
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in presenting a story, or reporting it, a speaker blocks inferences from the fictional content to how things are in the world. There will of course be connections between fictional content and the world . . . but the barrier of the non-extensional context limits inferential access to these connections.59 This is something akin to literary competence or naturalisation.60 These theories all refer to the conventions of reading and account for the fact that apparently unrealistic presentation, technically innovative form, or fantastic content can be naturalised by the competent reader. Both formal and metaphysical accounts of metafiction will tend to overlook the flexibility of literary competence or the fictive stance, that is the willing suspension of belief.61 The fictive stance can undergo a power failure and may be unbalanced by unconventional literary devices; the reader's lack of familiarity with language, descriptive detail, or literary technique can frustrate authorial intent to create naturalistic illusion.62 It is therefore impossible to predict a 'reality effect' from any particular literary form without knowing the 'competence' of the reader.

It is clear, however, that radically experimental texts are most likely to frustrate a realistic reading. A novel which deliberately flouts the realist tradition is Christine Brooke-Rose's Thru (1975). Influenced by the structuralist and poststructuralist theories of Greimas, Lacan, Barthes, and Derrida, Brooke-Rose produced, in her own words, 'a novel about the theory of the novel, . . . a text about textuality and intertextuality, . . . a fiction about the fictionality of fiction'.63 She experiments with typography:

Through the driving-mirror four eyes stare back
now right on Q
to de V elop
how m(any how)

Brooke-Rose has asserted that this typography is itself (visually) mimetic, but the text is certainly not realistic. However, although it may prevent the suspension of disbelief, it does not produce ontological confusion in the reader. As Patricia Waugh suggests, Thru is peripheral to the novel tradition because of its rejection of traditional narrative form.65 It is accessible only to the academic who is conversant with poststructuralist theory. Postmodern metafiction is informed and
endorsed by poststructuralist theory; Derrida presents Mallarmé's metafictive text, *Mimique*, as an antidote to Platonic mimesis because it demonstrates a freedom from the nostalgia for presence: 'this imitator having in the last instance no signified, this sign having in the last instance no referent'. Post-Marxists have ideological objections to realism, which they regard as a tool of the capitalist state. In *Critical Practice*, Catherine Belsey claims that classic realism offers the reader 'the position of subject as the origin both of understanding and of action'. It emphasises 'the individual as a free, unified, autonomous subjectivity', interpellating the reader and thus maintaining the capitalist machine and bourgeois ideology. Peter Widdowson also maintains that realism is complicit with the bourgeois ideology which conceals the real relations of the individual and society. Belsey and Widdowson have a Platonic fear of mimetic art: the reader will identify with the subject position delineated by the bourgeois text and blindly support the capitalist state. They duly expose the conventions of realism and its pretensions to 'transparency', to help this alienated reader discover the invidious workings of bourgeois ideology and select a more enlightening reading matter. Belsey recommends the 'interrogative' text which 'invites the spectators to reflect on fiction as a discursive practice and the ways in which discourse allows them to grasp their relation to the real relations in which they live', but the political impact of 'interrogative' texts, which tend to be inaccessible, is questionable.

The postmodern predilection for metafiction leads Linda Hutcheon to misrepresent Aristotle. Hutcheon attempts to collapse the mimesis/metafiction opposition by arguing that because metafiction dramatises narrative it is mimetic of *process* where traditional realism is mimetic of *product*. She states that Aristotle presents both drama (mimesis) and narration (diagesis) as forms of imitation and mentions Homer's practice of allowing the character to relate the narrative in the *Odyssey*, suggesting that here 'The content has expanded to include diegesis or the process of narration itself'. Hutcheon is correct in her assertion that Aristotle regards narrative as a mimetic *form*; however, he cannot be recruited to support the idea of narrative as imitative of the fictional process itself. In fact, Aristotle presents metafiction and mimesis as irreconcilable and lauds Homer for his refusal to intrude upon the narrative: 'The poet should say very little in his own character,'
as he is no imitator when doing that' \(1460a\). For Aristotle, both narrative and drama are the means of representation: 'one may either speak at one moment in narrative and at another in an assumed character, as Homer does', but 'The objects the imitator represents are actions' \(1448a\), and these objects should be interpreted as the actions of the characters rather than those of the author or reader. Hutcheon promotes too wide a definition of metafiction, incorporating both 'auto-representation' (the linguistic self-consciousness of the *nouveau roman*, *Ada*, or *Finnegans Wake*), and fictive self-consciousness. This is to stretch the term too far; where *Finnegans Wake* ignores the world in favour of the word, the modernist foregrounding of language cannot be equated with the postmodernist foregrounding of fiction since it has a different effect and is born of different intentions. Metafiction deliberately foregrounds and explicitly thematises the text's fictional status and the reading experience; modernist or postmodernist word-play may defamiliarise, but is not generally designed to alienate in this pseudo-Brechtian manner.

Postmodern theory and fiction plays with the idea of collapsing word and world, time and space, with reference to the narrative construction of reality, the experience of living in the postmodern city, global communications, the postmodern economy, and so on. Postmodernist art and philosophy support this interpretation by deconstructing classical artistic conventions of coherence (the linear narrative) and referring to the same contemporary conditions. The majority of people continue to construct coherent linear narratives of their lives and to prefer the art forms which do the same. It is significant that the majority of postmodern novelists appear to concede this point and temper technical innovation with traditional story-telling. Calvino appears to have a certain sympathy for the naïve reader even while teasing him mercilessly. 'You' and Ludmilla compare favourably with Ludmilla's humourless academic sister, Lotaria, who values literature only as material for various theoretical methodologies. The narrator asks, 'Do you believe that every story must have a beginning and an end?'; although *If* plays with, it is constructed around, the classic realist/Aristotelian skeleton.\(^{74}\) This balance is also dramatised in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in which Saleem Sinai relates his life story to his consort Padma, a reader even more naïve than Calvino's Ludmilla. Padma believes Saleem's narrative to be factual and her credulity is unpredictable: 'what others will swallow as effortlessly as a laddoo, Padma may just as easily reject. No audience is without its idiosyncrasies of belief'.\(^{75}\) Saleem notes Padma's reactions to the metafictive elements of his narrative: Padma has started getting irritated whenever my narration becomes self-

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\(^{74}\) Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, p. 204.

conscious'. He modifies his narrative mode accordingly: 'I must return (Padma is frowning) to the banal chain of cause-and-effect.' Although this narrator is sometimes frustrated: 'I wish, at times, for a more discerning audience', he acknowledges the necessity of realist convention; Padma's 'ignorance and superstition [are] necessary counterweights to my miracle-laden omniscience?' In fact the metafictive elements of *Midnight's Children* are incorporated quite smoothly within the magical realism. Although Rushdie and Calvino treat realist conventions with a certain postmodern irony, both authors seem to make large concessions to the conventional narrative forms, despised by modernists but traditional staples of the novel as a genre.

The British novel has always been identified with realism and is regarded by some commentators as a hostile environment for the more exotic postmodern forms. However, British novelists such as Martin Amis, John Fowles, and Angela Carter have responded to developments in European and American fiction, and produced a home-grown postmodernism. The categorisation of this literature causes some problems. According to Randall Stevenson, Britain is now participating in the postmodern epoch to the extent that 'A certain self-reflexiveness even finds its way into otherwise realistic novels'. Richard Todd, amongst others, asserts that British postmodernism comprises a self-conscious reworking of the British realist tradition. To suggest that the defining characteristic of British postmodernism is its self-conscious reworking of realism itself betrays a certain insularity. Both Stevenson and Todd are over-zealous in their attempts to characterise the national literature: the kind of occasional self-reflexiveness identified by Stevenson is typical of the nineteenth-century novel while the fiction of Calvino or Gabriel Garcia Marquez shows that experimentation with or within the realist tradition is characteristic of mainstream—moderately rather than radically experimental—postmodernism in Europe and the Americas as well as Britain. Elizabeth Dipple's classification of both Calvino and Iris Murdoch as 'quasi-conventional' endorses this wider perspective.

But although novelists such as Fowles and Martin Amis have produced *echt* postmodernist texts of great sophistication, there are some authors whose fiction illustrates the sometimes awkward relationship between postmodernism and British realism. David Lodge and Murdoch are two such 'moderately experimental' middle-brow writers. In 1966 Lodge classified Murdoch as one of the few upholders of the "modern" tradition, along with William Golding and Lawrence Durrell, against 'contemporary'...
realists, Kingsley Amis and John Braine. Lodge's classification has been proved awry; although Murdoch was never an 'Angry Young Man', as some early accounts maintain, and her early novels experimented with forms such as the gothic, she has staunchly upheld the realist tradition.

The reality effect in Murdoch's fiction depends in part on traditional, descriptive 'scene-setting' such as occurs at the opening of A Fairly Honourable Defeat:

Hilda . . . reclined limply, exhibiting shiny burnished knees below a short shift dress of orange yellow. Her feet were bare. Her undulating dark hair showed some needle-thin lines of grey. Her burly boyish-faced husband . . . sat open-shirted, cooking in the sun. He was red, hoping later to be brown. His shock of abundant fair hair had faded with the years . . .

This type of 'telling' is characteristic of Murdoch and is attacked by both Harold Bloom and A. S. Byatt, who retain a modernist distaste for this mode of narration. Bloom in particular evinces a marked disdain for what he describes as Murdoch's 'formulaic procedures', 'anachronistic style and outmoded narrative devices', criticisms which Dipple ascribes to a general tendency to belittle the British novelistic tradition for its provincialism. Murdoch's novels of the 1970s and 1980s are confined to the intellectual, bourgeois, or bohemian middle classes and are often set in the nicer parts of London or the country. Such novelistic self-limitation brings to mind Austen's self-deprecating description of 'the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a brush, as produces little effect after much labour'. But even though Murdoch's novels are provincial in their self-imposed limitations, at times the narrative betrays a certain postmodern irony. The Green Knight opens:

'Once upon a time there were three little girls—'
'Oh look what he's doing now!'
'And their names were—'
'Come here, come here.'
'And they lived at the bottom of a well.'

Like Joyce's Portrait, this parodies the 'classic' fairy-tale beginning. But where Joyce continues with the defamiliarising device of the child's consciousness, Murdoch summons

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82 Lodge, Language of Fiction, p. 294.
84 Iris Murdoch, A Fairly Honourable Defeat (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972); first published 1971, p. 11.
88 See Bloom, Iris Murdoch, pp. 1-7; Dipple, The Unresolvable Plot, p. 185.
the classic realist omniscient narrator to explain: 'The first speaker was Joan Blacket, the second was Louise Anderson, the one so urgently summoned was a dog, the little girls mentioned were Louise's children, the place was Kensington Gardens, the month was October.'

Murdoch does play with metafiction. In *The Black Prince*, the main narrative is preceded by two forewords, one by the 'editor' and one by the anti-hero, Bradley Pearson, and followed by six 'postscripts' by various characters. Waugh cites this novel as the most explicitly metafictional because of its subject matter (two novelists who are sometimes read as two aspects of Murdoch herself), intertext (*Hamlet*), and various prefaces and postscripts. But although all the postscripts give different versions of the story, indicating a typically postmodern concern with the construction of narrative, and in spite of the novel-writing theme and intertext, the largely conventional treatment of narrative time and conventionally realistic narrative mode means that foreword and postscript function as traditional frame rather than Derridean *parergon*.

Hilda Spear points to the metafictive elements in *The Black Prince*, *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*, *A Word Child*, and *Henry and Cato*, suggesting that 'the most striking innovation in these novels is the consciously deliberate narration. The reader is made aware that a story is being told.' But realist texts are able to absorb a certain amount of metafiction and Spear admits that realism is still the dominant mode as 'the reader/audience is gradually drawn into the action and takes it for real.'

Elizabeth Dipple performs a similar dual reading of *The Philosopher's Pupil* which makes use of various metafictive devices, not least that of the narrator, 'N'. N introduces himself on page twenty-three: 'I am the narrator: a discreet and self-effacing narrator. This book is not about me.' He signs off in a truly postmodernist vein, remarking that 'The end of any tale is arbitrarily determined', and alluding coyly to 'the assistance of a certain lady' (that is, Murdoch herself). Dipple makes the point that the reader forgets about the narrator for long stretches of the text and argues that this attests to Murdoch's commitment to realism. The reader is indeed likely to forget the narrator for the simple reason that he intrudes only rarely in the narrative, being given the second short prefatory and concluding chapters, and very seldom lapsing into the first person in between. Although passages such as these are clearly metafictive, in terms of effect they do not greatly

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90 Spear, *Iris Murdoch*, p. 75.
91 Spear, *Iris Murdoch*, pp. 73-74.
93 Murdoch, *The Philosopher's Pupil*, p. 158.
94 Dipple, *The Unresolvable Plot*, p. 188.
surpass those interjections in Austen and Eliot and certainly do not carry the structural burden apparent in postmodernist novels such as Calvino's *If*

There is some disagreement over Murdoch's literary merit; critics such as Bloom point damningly to the conventional realism of the novels. There is a related tendency to belittle Murdoch as a writer of 'women's fiction' (a genre associated with realism). Deborah Johnson describes the reduction of Mary Clothier's predicament (husbandless, houseless) in *The Nice and the Good* 'to the level of a magazine cliche' as a marked failure in literary merit.® Byatt slates *The Sandcastle*, for approaching 'a women's novelette (or perhaps an expansion of a story for a women's magazine . . .)' 98 Dipple speaks slightingly of *Nuns and Soldiers* as a novel whose 'bourgeois surface with its overflow of tears occasionally skirts the domain of women's fiction'.® It can fairly be said that Murdoch's novels describe human relationships in a setting made concrete by detailed descriptions of people and places, food and furniture. However, as Conradi argues, 'the novel has always addressed itself to the theme of personal relations' and the same can be said of the descriptive detail.100

The desire to claim Murdoch's fiction as a worthy object of academic study in an anti-realist climate leads other commentators to over-emphasise its experimental or postmodern elements. Steven Kellman reads Murdoch's first novel, *Under the Net*, as metafictional or 'self-begetting' (a tendency he characterises as un-British) because of its hero, Jake, another unproductive novelist.® However novels about novels or artist figures (Künstlerroman) are not necessarily structurally metafictive in the postmodern self-reflexive manner. In *Iris Murdoch: The Saint and the Artist*, Conradi attempts to recoup Murdoch for academic literary studies by arguing that her interest in the idea of an infinite regress is 'of its time', as is 'her insistence that "truth" cannot be secured'.102 Although Murdoch willingly adopts certain obviously postmodernist techniques, she is probably the novelist least of our time with her unfashionable ethical Platonism and self-confessed debt to realism. Her eccentric adherence to unfashionable ethical and literary theories explains the fact that any postmodern devices are occasional and incidental rather than sustained and structural, and that the reality effect predominates.

The postmodernisation of Lodge's fiction runs parallel with his engagement with Continental theory. He has progressed since the 1960s from a fairly traditional realism, to the occasional use of metafiction, to a sustained, self-conscious, and structural

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100 Conradi, 'The Metaphysical Hostess', p. 434.
postmodernism, which surpasses that of Murdoch. Lodge himself attributes a 'scrupulous realism' to his first two novels, *The Picturegoers* and *Ginger, You're Barmy*. He affirmed his commitment to realism in the critical essay 'The Modern, the Contemporary, and the Importance of Being Amis', where he battles gamely on at the rearguard of the 1950s pro-realist movement, arguing that because realist works are the product of considerable technical skill they are worthy of serious critical attention. In 'The Novelist at the Crossroads', he again declared his allegiance to empiricism and realism over anti-referentiality and the 'radical' forms of non-fiction and fabulation (after Scholes).

As structuralism took an imaginative hold on the academy, however, Lodge's fiction underwent a gradual transformation and although he was still defending realism in theory, *The British Museum is Falling Down* displays a certain experimentalism which in retrospect can be labelled postmodern. The hero, Adam Appleby, a young Catholic PhD student who is haunted by the fear that his wife may be pregnant again, finds that his life keeps mimicking literature. The ontological confusion of the hero is marked in the text by ten passages of pastiche and allusion which, in Lodge's words, are 'naturalised... by making the hero prone to daydreams'. In an 'Afterword' to the second edition, Lodge states that it was comedy which liberated him from the 'restrictive decorums of the well-made realistic novel'. However, his iconoclasm was initially ignored; some reviewers of the first edition described the parodies as derivative rather than deliberate while many failed to notice them at all.

By 1981 Lodge was describing himself as 'basically antimodernist, but with elements of modernism and postmodernism'. *How Far Can You Go?* is the most 'classically' metafictive of his novels. The action follows the fortunes of a group of Catholics and their struggles with Church doctrine, particularly on contraception. Lodge avails himself of the intrusive narrator, who cosily discusses narrative technique with the 'gentle reader' in the traditional manner: 'Each character... has already been associated with some selected detail of dress or appearance which should help you to distinguish one from another.' Narratorial intrusions parody the nineteenth-century convention but their incidence is similarly low and they cause no problems even for the classic realist reader. Lodge, apparently in *propria persona*, also makes an appearance: 'I teach English literature at a redbrick university and write novels in my spare time' and some of the

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111 Lodge, *British Museum is Falling Down*, p. 167.
112 Lodge, *British Museum is Falling Down*, pp. 170, 169.
113 Lodge, *British Museum is Falling Down*, p. 171.
novels are alluded to elsewhere in the text. Lodge asserts that such a 'drastic' device 'invariably reveals some anxiety about the ethical and epistemological nature of fictional discourse and its relationship to the world.' Daniel Ammann imagines that 'this blend of fact and fiction may be even more confusing and disturbing to some readers than the simple metafictional comments.' Considering they were both writing in the 1990s, Lodge and Ammann retain a surprising faith in the continued defamiliarising power of this device. Such authorial intrusions have now become familiar to the postmodern reader and can be readily assimilated to a realist reading.

Lodge reaches his postmodern zenith with the comic campus trilogy: Changing Places, Small World and Nice Work. Here the 'classical', that is, occasional metafiction of How Far Can You Go? has been replaced with a structural intertextuality. In Changing Places, Morris Zapp and Philip Swallow, two academics, take part in a university exchange scheme. Lodge's engagement with theory informs the trilogy on several levels and in this novel, subtitled 'A Tale of Two Campuses', Zapp and Swallow can be read as semic units in the academic system. Their value depends on their difference from each other: Swallow is an old fashioned liberal humanist who loves literature too much to resolve on a specialisation, Zapp is a more professionally-minded American. They exchange jobs and, briefly, wives but the end result is stasis as the system adjusts. The setting of Small World replaces the 'duplex chronicle' of Changing Places with the global campus and structuralism with poststructuralism. Morris Zapp and Hilary, Swallow's wife deconstruct the binarism of the last novel:

'The day of the single, static campus is over.'
'And the single, static campus novel with it, I suppose?'
'Exactly! Even two campuses wouldn't be enough.'

The most structurally important intertext of Small World is the Grail myth. The action follows the quest of Persse McGarrigle, sexual innocent and theoretical ingenue, as he meets and pursues the lovely but elusive Angelica Pabst. Literature again intrudes upon life as Persse farcically enacts The Eve of St Agnes and becomes caught up in an ersatz Waste Land in his quest. This novel is subtitled 'An Academic Romance' which, according to both Siegfried Mews and Wenche Ommundsen, indicates its distance from realism.
However, to demarcate realism and Romance in this way is as problematic as
distinguishing between realism and metafiction; although the eighteenth-century novel
defined itself in opposition to the romance, the genres were always inextricably mixed;
even Pamela had links with both fairy-tale and popular contemporary 'inflaming novels'.
Small World is certainly a self-conscious tissue of quotations; there are multiple allusions
to other romances and myths, references to critical texts, and parodies of literary
theories. However, it can also be read quite independently of these theoretical in-jokes
as straightforward comic realism. Ammann describes Small World as a realistic fiction
with a mythopoeic structure and Ommundsen concedes that 'there is in Lodge a
simultaneous invitation to naturalise the text according to a realistic model'. Lodge
himself clearly saw Small World as a realist novel since he has stated that realism uses up
experience and describes how having conceived a novel set around international
conference going he accepted every conference invitation offered. There is no tension
between Romance and realism, mimesis and metafiction, or tradition and experimentation;
the novel rather achieves a synthesis of these modes and can effortlessly support both a
realist (recreational) and a postmodernist (academic) reading.

Lodge left Birmingham University in 1987 and has since stated that he has come to
regret the gap opened between the academy and the reading public by literary theory.
Following Small World, the incidence of postmodernist devices in his novels has also
decreased. In Nice Work (subtitled 'A Novel'), theory again provides material for parody
in the form of the theoretically sophisticated (post-Marxist) but rather blinkered and
priggish heroine, Robyn Penrose, and the novel also has a structural intertext in North and
South. There are a few metafictional asides; Robyn is introduced as 'A character who,
very awkwardly for me, doesn't herself believe in the concept of character.' However,
Lodge intended to write a contemporary Condition of England novel about the effects of
Thatcherism in the mid-80s and the traditional linear narrative dominates. In Paradise
News (1991) and Therapy (1995), Lodge returns to the realism of his early novels. In
Therapy, the central character and first-person narrator, screenwriter Tubby Passmore, is
suffering a mid-life crisis and marital break-up. In a reversal of his stated desire to break
out of realism in the afterword to The British Museum, in the 'The Novelist Today: Still at
the Crossroads?' (1992), Lodge states that 'First person narration . . . permits the writer
to remain within the conventions of realism without claiming the kind of authority which belongs to the authorial narrative method of the classic realist novel.124

As with Murdoch, it has generally been the postmodernist traits in Lodge's work, the way he has departed from or played with the realistic tradition, which have prompted academic comment. Peter Widdowson, grinding his post-Marxist axe, attacks Lodge's "conservative" comic realism masquerading as an open, non-deterministic postmodernism and asserts that this 'synthesis . . . validates the spurious liberal freedom of having it both ways'.125 Steven Connor suggests that 'the gentle forms of anti-realist hedging that [Nice Work] offers . . . are really only diversions from the process by which the novel . . . defends itself from the otherwise irresistible charge of having compressed and simplified that condition to one of fable or fantasy'.126 Connor's critique, which has distinct shades of the po-faced Robyn Penrose, appears to favour something akin to Soviet Socialist Realism. Valentine Cunningham praised Therapy as a comic 'treat', another reviewer, David Sexton, found it mechanical, dogged and pedestrian. Sexton writes: 'Whatever the voice, the prose remains, as always in the novels of Lodge and Bradbury, heavily, dutifully descriptive, as though this were a central literary virtue. No detail is too obvious or humdrum to be flourished as though it were a prize catch.'127 Although Sexton declares himself sympathetic to Lodge's declared aims 'to have at least a basis of recognisable representation of the real world' in his fiction, his comments sound like an attack on realism itself. Other European critics are more charitable, both to British realism and to Lodge's experiments. Pilar Hidalgo states that Lodge has gone quite far enough 'without relinquishing that commitment to character, values and the pleasure of storytelling which is an essential part of the tradition of the English novel'.128 Hidalgo fails, however, with Todd et al., to appreciate the prevalence of these values outside Britain.

Kirwan argues that the Aristotelian concern with "resemblance" is one that has hardly ever been out of favour, and today "convincing", "unconvincing", "realistic", and "unrealistic" are perhaps the most common evaluative terms used of art, particularly outside its academic study.129 In fact it is only literary journalism which still uses realism as a positive criterion of literary merit. Lorna Sage, reviewing Jackson's Dilemma in the TLS, upbraids Murdoch for failing to 'describe the day-to-day ordinary world with conviction'.130 Within academia it is only the irascible Tallis who has been prepared to

129 Kirwan, Literature, Rhetoric, Metaphysics, p. 63.
Mimesis and Metafiction

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tackle the anti-realists on their own territory. The novel as a genre has necessarily been subject to innovation throughout its history, but realism has predominated and continues to do so. Those theorists who regard this as unfortunate are lead to underplay a constitutive aspect of the genre and to promote academic novelties, such as *Thru*, over more texts which are more representative of the mainstream of the novel genre. Postmodern metafiction, an intellectual sub-genre, does engage in the contemporary debate over referentiality and textuality but is misrepresented by poststructuralist theorists who are over-impressed by the metaphysical transgression of ontological boundaries. Metafiction cannot usually prevent a realist reading and even where it does, still fails to undo the conceptual opposition between fact and fiction, the word and the world.

Part Three
Theory is 'distinguished from or opposed to practice' and the hierarchical relationship is indicated by theory's definition as 'a systematic statement of rules or principles to be followed'. Although historically, theory—particularly formalist theory—has enjoyed this status in literary studies by providing models and methods for critical practice, deconstruction seeks to co-imply the theory/practice opposition and thereby subvert the hierarchy. Since Continental theory has become part of the undergraduate syllabus, Anglo-American academics have also been searching for ways to get students to put theory into practice, that is apply it to the literary text and this desire has recently manifested itself in the publication of a rash of undergraduate 'theory-in-practice' Readers. While deconstruction is often recruited to this project, it is the less convoluted literary formalisms, such as New Criticism, which are designed for application and translate most easily into critical method. Metaphysical theories resist such integration and application. The current trend for applied theory appears to conform to the stereotypical British predilection for 'action' over thought and empiricism over metaphysics, and may represent a carefully concealed attempt to domesticate, by practically orienting, 'foreign' theory. This chapter will examine philosophical accounts of theory and practice, compare New Critical and poststructuralist theory and practice, and address the pedagogical issues raised by the application of theory to the literary text.

For Plato the relationship between theory and practice is integral and in the *Phaedo* philosophy is described as the practice of facing death (80e–81a). But metaphysics, although it follows certain rules, namely those of *a priori* reasoning or deductive inference, does not itself comprise 'a systematic statement of rules or principles to be followed'. For Aristotle in *De Anima*, 'the mind as speculative never thinks what is practicable, it never says anything about an object to be avoided or pursued' (432b). There is no correlation in the history of philosophy between metaphysics and the conceptual collapse of theory and practice or between empiricism and its separation. Kant, a 'moderate' idealist who believed that categories of existence were dependent on human perception but that objects existed independently of their perception, maintained the disjunction between theory and practice:

A Critique of pure reason, i.e. of our faculty of judging on *a priori* principles, would be incomplete if the critical examination of judgement, which is a faculty of knowledge, and, as such, lays claim to independent principles, were not dealt with separately. Still, however, its principles cannot, in a system of pure philosophy, form a separate
Kant contested the power of reason over action and the non-effectiveness of theoretical principles is explicitly asserted when he denies any practical consequences of establishing the a priori conditions of aesthetic judgement:

The present investigation of taste [is] . . . not being undertaken with a view to the formation or culture of taste, (which will pursue its course in the future, as in the past, independently of such inquiries,) but being merely directed to its transcendental aspects.

In The Science of Logic, Hegel refers condescendingly to 'the fashion of youth to dash about in abstractions', maintaining that 'the man who has learnt to know life steers clear of the abstract "either—or" [syllogism], and keeps to the concrete' (80). Abstract logic is not the 'business of philosophy which has to deal only with concrete thoughts' (80). Hegel believed in the material power of these concrete thoughts; in the Phenomenology of Mind he asserts that self-consciousness requires an external object in order to define itself. This external object is experienced as something alien to the self-consciousness which desires to possess it and erase its foreignness, thereby changing it. Hegel's dialectic underpinned Marx's theory of history where it functioned as an analytic model but was also perceived as supplying the means of changing social reality (praxis), hence the famous dictum: 'Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, but the real task is to alter it.'

Marx's unification of theory and practice effectively collapses the binary. However, it cannot be equated with the deconstructive project precisely because it marks the high point of theory's power over practice in the history of philosophy

Horace Fairlamb notes that 'For some practitioners of deconstruction, its putative significance is the final end of the traditional foundational hegemony of theory over practice.' Although the inconsistency of philosophical faith in the effectiveness of theory from Aristotle onwards belies the existence of Fairlamb's 'foundational hegemony', it is clear that Derrida does wish to destabilise this hierarchy. The deconstructive collapse of theory and practice was instigated by Nietzsche, for whom the opposition was 'a pernicious distinction, as if there were an instinct of knowledge, which, without inquiring into the utility or harmfulness of a thing, blindly charged at the truth; and then that, apart

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4 Kant, The Critique of Judgement, p. 6. In the Critique of Practical Reason, which seeks to establish the a priori grounds for moral action, Kant formulates the famous categorical imperative: act only so that your actions could form the basis for a universal moral law. However, this rule does not constitute the source of moral principles, but provides only the means of testing such principles.
from this instinct, there were the whole world of practical interests' (423). Nietzsche subsumed the binary under a third term, the will to power.

Although not exact equivalents, there is a significant connection between the theory/practice, intelligibility/sensibility, and ideal/real binaries. Derrida of course seeks to deconstruct all of these oppositions. In 'Spectres of Marx' he endorses 'a thinking of the event that necessarily exceeds a binary or dialectical logic, the logic that distinguishes or opposes effectivity or actuality (either present, empirical, living—or not) and ideality (regulating or absolute non-presence). The deconstruction of the intelligibility/sensibility binary in 'Différance' centres on the etymology of 'theory', foregrounding the connection between these binaries. The word has its roots in the Greek theoria (theoros spectator, theoreo look at). Derrida therefore notes that the term 'theorem', which denotes the intelligible, also connotes seeing (sensibility). This etymology informs the assertion in The Principle of Reason that 'Metaphysics associates sight with knowledge'. It is also cited by Adena Rosmarin as the foundation of the modern distinction between theory and practice, the separation between 'knowledge and its object, between the passivity of viewing and the activity of knowing.' As argued in chapter two, etymology is hardly proof positive of either connection or disjunction between seeing and knowing, or theory and practice. The conflation of sight and knowledge by reference to the Greek etymology is further undermined by Socrates' refusal to equate knowledge with sight in the Phaedo:

I was afraid that by observing objects with my eyes and trying to comprehend them with each of my other senses I might blind my soul altogether. So I decided that I must have recourse to theories, and use them in trying to discover the truth about things. Perhaps my illustration is not quite apt, because I do not at all admit that an inquiry by means of theory employs 'images' any more than one which confines itself to facts. (99e–100a)

Derrida himself states that 'shutting off sight in order to learn is of course only a figurative manner of speaking. No one will take it literally'.

In The Truth in Painting Derrida deconstructs the theory/practice binary in Kant's Critique of Judgement. Typically, he concentrates on the preface which contains a summary of the findings of the first and second Critiques (see above). He latches on to Kant's 'annexing' of judgement to both theory and practice, arguing that here 'we are plunging into a place that is neither theoretical nor practical or else both theoretical and practical. Art (in general), or rather the beautiful, if it takes place, is inscribed here.' Following his notification of the transcendental nature of the inquiry in the third Critique (quoted above), Kant confidently asserts: 'I feel assured of its indulgent criticism in respect

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10 Derrida, Spectres of Marx, pp. 45–46.
of any shortcomings on that score (170), to which Derrida responds: 'With this transcendental aim, Kant demands to be read without indulgence.' To aid him in his unmerciful task, Derrida requisitions Kant’s parergon, a ready-made deconstructive tool which functions like the pharmakon. It is defined by Kant as an ornamentation or adjunct to the aesthetic object, such as the frame around a painting, which augments ‘the delight of taste . . . only by means of its form’ (226). For Derrida, the parergon is significant not because it marks the edge of ‘the body proper of the ergon’ (as it does for Kant) but because it connects this body to ‘the whole field of historical, economic, political inscription in which the drive to signature is produced . . . . No “theory”, no “practice”, no “theoretical practice” can intervene effectively in this field if it does not weigh up and bear on the frame.’

This interpretation initially seems to imply that it is possible for a deconstructive or ‘parergonal’ theory to ‘intervene effectively’ in the real world. However, the significance of the parergon, like that of the pharmakon, is that it mediates and includes two polarities, in this case the inside and outside, the theoretical and the actual or practical. Like Nietzsche, Derrida co-implicates theory and practice under a third principle, thus subverting the effective power of theory—if two terms are subsumed by a third, then neither can claim any power over the other. However, although Derrida also wishes to exceed the binary, he is characteristically more equivocal than Nietzsche. In ‘The Principle of Reason’ he gestures ‘beyond the conceptual opposition between “conception” and “act”, between “conception” and “application”, theoretical view and praxis, theory and technique’, but this ‘beyond’ marks the step outside metaphysics which he is unwilling to take.

Derrida is suspicious of theory on its own account because of its pretensions to objectivity and scientism. In Of Grammatology, Grammatology is defined as the science (theory) of writing, although Derrida typically undermines the possibility of ever formulating such a theory: ‘such a science of writing runs the risk of never being established as such and with that name. Of never being able to define the unity of its project or its object. Of not being able either to write its discourse on method or to describe the limits of its field.’ This is because, according to Derrida’s ‘theory’, it is impossible to stand outside writing and to achieve an objective scientific viewpoint. The fundamental inadequacy of theory to the deconstructive project of subverting logocentrism is made clear:

the necessary decentering cannot be a philosophic or scientific act as such, since it is a question of dislocating . . . the founding categories of language and the grammar of the epistémè. The natural tendency of theory—of what unites philosophy and science in the

14 Derrida, The Truth in Painting, p. 42.
17 Derrida, The Truth in Painting, p. 63.
But theories, even scientific ones, are not necessarily the totalising entities that Derrida takes them for and may without contradiction be presented as provisional and context-dependent, even by scientists.

Derrida attempts to extricate deconstruction itself from the theory/practice binary by denying the existence of any deconstructive principles which could be identified as a theory and taken to govern a practice. Derrida's attempt at evading theory fails and in spite of his frequent injunctions, the 'rules' of deconstruction are formulated (see chapter one). Early works such as *Of Grammatology* explicate largely coherent theories of writing or textuality which continue to inform or govern deconstructive practice. There are several recent studies which quite rightly refuse to take Derrida at his word. Fairlamb questions deconstruction's potential to subvert or evade theory, referring disparagingly to 'some practitioners of deconstruction' who maintain without imagining any inconsistency that 'grammatology and deconstruction depend on what Derrida refers to as "the general system of economy" of which deconstruction is the practice'. Fairlamb is describing an implicit faith in the effective power of grammatology over a practice which attempts to subvert theory. He concludes that while deconstruction comprises a critique of foundationalist theory, it is itself theoretical. Christopher Johnson remarks that 'To suggest that Derrida is . . . formulating a specific "theory" or "concept", is perhaps contrary to a certain orthodox interpretation of his work which would have it that his "disseminatory" style precludes such reductive analysis or explanation.' However, Johnson proposes 'one possible response to those who claim the irreducibility of Derrida's work would be that his disseminatory style is itself a theory'. A more common plea for exempting 'disseminatory' deconstruction from the binary is that it manages to avoid theory by enacting its principles—the reverse of Johnson's position. However, Derrida is so anxious to dissociate deconstruction from either term of the theory/practice binary that he also denies that deconstruction is either 'an act or an operation'. There is no justification for the collapse of the binary or the subversion of the hierarchy with reference to deconstruction; the deconstructive style is informed and governed by the principles of multiple signification, anti-logocentrism, and so on, and those principles are explicitly formulated as theories.

Thomas McCarthy argues more generally that 'if knowledge itself is understood to be a social product, the traditional oppositions between theory and practice . . .

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20 Fairlamb, *Critical Conditions*, p. 103.
down, for there are practical dimensions to any social activity, theorizing included. This is certainly true, but only works on the general, or theoretical, level by subsuming theory and practice beneath an overarching concept, social activity. Theory is certainly practice when it signifies the activity of theorising. But it is still possible, at this level, to distinguish between general theoretical statements and the application of these principles or models to actual texts or examples. As McCarthy also notes, 'Not all critical work need be or can be done . . . at the same level of specificity or generality.'

In the preface to Of Grammatology Derrida questions the demonstration of theoretical precepts through application:

The first part of this book, 'Writing before the Letter', sketches in broad outlines a theoretical matrix. It indicates certain significant historical moments, and proposes certain critical concepts. These critical concepts are put to the test in the second part, 'Nature, Culture, Writing'. This is the moment, as it were, of the example, although strictly speaking, that notion is not acceptable within my argument. Derrida concedes a certain disjunction between theory and practice which could be read as admitting the validity of the binary. When pointing out the limitations of Saussurean theory in 'Différance', Derrida summons the binary: 'that particular model which is phonetic writing does not exist; no practice is ever totally faithful to its principle and Structuralism lives within and on the difference between its promise and its practice.' However, he also acknowledges a similar disparity between theory and practice in his own work: 'I should have liked . . . to have been able to shape both my discourse and my practice, as one says, to fit the premises of my earlier undertakings. In fact, if not in principle, this was not always easy, not always possible, at times indeed very burdensome.' Samuel Weber suggests that

Having established a certain structural instability in the most powerful attempts to provide models of structuration, it was probably inevitable that Derrida should then begin to explore the other side of the coin, the fact that, undecidability notwithstanding, decisions are in fact taken, power in fact exercised, traces in fact instituted. The failure to put deconstructive principle into practice is related directly to the disjunction between the metaphysical/linguistic theory of radical indeterminacy and polysemic and the practical experience of 'closure'. Arguably, it is not merely difficult but impossible to realise deconstructive principles; the infinite regression of meaning simply does not impinge on most discourse, even that of deconstruction. According to Arkady Plotnitsky,
'deconstruction points toward "the necessity of interminable analysis." But one must also account for the necessity of termination, for any analysis or interpretation is necessarily terminated at some point. At the very least, death of one kind or another . . . will terminate an analysis. In spite of Derrida's prolix rhetorical strategies, we close his books. Plotnitsky undertakes to thread his way between the dream of infinity and the fact of closure and identifies a pragmatic component in Derrida's theory which allows for this mediation. This element is the 'programmatological, at the intersection of a pragmatics and a grammatology. But Derrida, particularly in his early (theoretical) work, prioritises the 'grammatological' over the pragmatic by stressing indeterminacy. The salient disjunction however, is not between theory and practice, but between metaphysical theory and reality; as Lorna Sage puts it, 'theory is the region where common sense dies'.

The transformation of metaphysical deconstruction into a literary-critical practice in the Anglo-American academy has been faced with a double resistance. Deconstruction itself explicitly resists the concept of such transformation and the discipline of English has a long-standing prejudice against 'abstract' thought generally and French theory in particular. Long before Colin MacCabe was encouraged to leave Cambridge and take poststructuralism with him, intellectual xenophobia was rife in the pages of Scrutiny, the journal edited by F. R. Leavis. Leavis maintained that

The business of the literary critic is to attain a peculiar completeness of response and to observe a peculiarly strict relevance in developing his response into commentary; he must be on his guard against abstracting improperly from what is in front of him and against any premature or irrelevant generalizing—of it or from it.

For Leavis, the critic's 'first concern is to enter into position of the given poem . . . . In making value-judgments . . . he does so out of that completeness of possession and with that fulness of response.' Martin Tumell wrote scornfully that

It is a notable fact that the French critic attaches more importance to the external order and coherence of his system than to its flexibility or its completeness. The result is that his work often turns out to be inferior to that of English writers whose philosophical equipment appears at first to be less impressive.

Turnell appears perversely proud of the less than impressive British 'equipment'. He and Leavis were of the same mind; abstraction indicated a lack of sensibility and had the effect of repressing the response to the literary object which was necessary for that criticism which dealt first with particulars and only then with the larger 'sphere of morality'.

39 For an account of the MacCabe affair see Reprintz, Exploding English, pp. 10-17.
41 Leavis, The Common Pursuit, p. 213.
42 Martin Tumell, 'Literary Criticism in France (I)', Scrutiny 8 (1999), p. 298.
43 Martin Tumell, 'Literary Criticism in France (II)', Scrutiny 8 (September 1999), p. 175.
demotion of theory was the product of a Platonic hierarchy; criticism is at one remove from the primary subjective response to the text and theory at an even further remove.

Derrida, like Leavis, denies formulating a literary theory. In his published thesis 'defense' he describes how his initial proposal for a thesis on 'The Ideality of the Literary Object' was abandoned and three sentences in 'The Time of a Thesis' clearly indicate the steps he has attempted to take away from the 'literary-theoretical' question: 'What is literature? And first of all what is it "to write"? How is it that the fact of writing can disturb the very question "what is?"' Although this appears to indicate a primary concern with the ontological, Derrida assures the panel that 'my most constant interest, coming even before my philosophical interest I should say, if this is possible, has been directed towards literature, towards that writing which is called literary.' He sums up his attempt at non-theory thus: I tried to work out—in particular in the three works published in 1967—what was in no way meant to be a system but rather a sort of strategic device, opening onto its own abyss, an unenclosed, unenclosable, not wholly formalizable ensemble of rules for reading, interpretation and writing. But just as Of Grammatology explicates a metaphysical theory, Derrida's work on 'that writing which is called literary' incorporates a theory of the literary text. The precepts of this literary theory are coherent with and consequent on those principles developed in the more obviously philosophical texts and include the notion that the boundary between the literary text and the critical or commentary text is 'permeable', that literary theory is not external to its object of enquiry, and that the critic can therefore no longer claim mastery over the literary text.

Deconstruction struck at the heart of Anglo-American English. Some of the most influential theories, developed by I. A. Richards in England and the New Critics in America were specifically designed as sets of rules to be followed. There were other points of contention between poststructuralist and New Critical theory, and one of the most obvious of these lay in their sharply divergent conceptions of the literary text. For Cleanth Brooks, 'the elements of a poem are related to each other . . . . The beauty of the poem is the flowering of the whole plant, and needs the stalk, the leaf, and the hidden roots.' This notion of the poem as an organic and self-contained form is at direct odds with deconstructive notions of permeable boundaries. Christopher Norris posits Derrida's belief in 'the total dissolution of those boundaries that mark off one text from another, or that try to interpose between poem and commentary.' However, in 'Living On: Border Lines' in Deconstruction and Criticism, a collaborative effort with the Yale School literary

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40 Derrida, 'The Time of a Thesis', p. 40. The other texts referred to here are Speech and Phenomena and Writing and Difference. The Viva or viva was itself not standard since the doctorate was being awarded for published works.
critics, Derrida maintains the necessity of boundaries: 'If we are to approach a text, it must have an edge.'

He also states that

It was never our wish to extend the reassuring notion of the text to a whole extra-textual realm and to transform the world into a library by doing away with all boundaries, all framework, all sharp edges (all \textit{arêtes}: this is the word that I am speaking of tonight), but that we sought [sic] rather to work out the theoretical and practical system of these margins, these borders, once more, from the ground up.

In the 'footnote' text Derrida exhibits the pragmatic streak alluded to by Plotnitsky, acknowledging that 'It is always an \textit{external} constraint that arrests a text in general, i.e., \textit{anything}, for example life death.'

Another area of disagreement between poststructuralism and New Criticism is the latter's logocentrism. In 'The Dead End of Formalist Criticism', Paul de Man points to the logocentrism of Richards's theory, which presupposes 'a perfect continuity between the sign and the thing signified'. Leavis asserts that the critic's 'first concern is to enter into possession of the given poem (let us say) in its concrete fulness, and his constant concern is never to lose his completeness of possession, but rather to increase it.' This statement, suggestive of the much-derided evaluative criterion of 'felt life' and logocentric in essence, is inimical to deconstruction which denies the possibility of gaining access to the full presence of the literary work and promotes instead the elusive 'trace'.

There are some areas of theoretical congruence between New Criticism and poststructuralism and these have been discussed recently in Gary Day's collection, \textit{The British Critical Tradition}. This volume aims to demonstrate how New Criticism 'anticipates and to some extent parallels the concerns of post-modern critical theory.' Norris here characterises William Empson in terms he uses elsewhere to describe American deconstruction, stating that his 'method is to multiply meanings to the point where methodical distinctions collapse in a seemingly endless proliferation of sense.' In addition to deconstruction's multiplication of Empson's seven types of ambiguity, the heresy of paraphrase could also be seen as a less radical version of poststructuralist semantic indeterminacy, and the New Critical paradox as a forerunner of the deconstructive aporia.

In \textit{Criticism in the Wilderness}, Hartman exhibits a Leavisite mysticism: 'If theory presupposes a scientific language, there may be an untheorizable element in literature.' However, while Norris compares some of Empson's concerns with those of de Man (who refers approvingly to Empson in 'The Dead End of Formalist Criticism'), he also points to

\begin{itemize}
  \item Derrida, \textit{Living On: Border Lines}, p. 84.
  \item Derrida, \textit{Living On: Border Lines}, p. 171.
  \item Leavis, \textit{The Common Pursuit}, p. 213.
  \item Hartman, \textit{Criticism in the Wilderness}, p. 8.
\end{itemize}
less assimilable traits such as Empson's stalwart rationalism and common-sense view of language. Although radical indeterminacy represents an exaggeration of New Critical ambiguity, the view of the literary text as an organic unity cannot be reconciled with radical theories of textuality.

The notion that deconstruction is a method of literary criticism is predictably inimical to Derrida. He notes in Of Grammatology that 'No exercise is more widespread today and one should be able to formalize its rules.' However, he is typically unwilling to formulate these rules and asserts elsewhere that:

Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one. Especially if the technical and procedural significations of the words are stressed. It is true that in certain circles (university or cultural, especially in the United States) the technical and methodological 'metaphor' that seems necessarily attached to the very word 'deconstruction' has been able to seduce or lead astray. Hence the debate that has developed in these circles: Can deconstruction become a methodology for reading and for interpretation?

However, in 'Living On: Border Lines', Derrida does formulate something like a critical method, albeit a negative one. He issues direct instructions in the correct way of reading: 'We should neither comment, nor underscore a single word, nor extract anything, nor draw a lesson from it. One should not, one should refrain from'. Geoffrey Hartman, a New Critic turned poststructuralist who also contributes to this book, later provides his own summary of deconstructive critical precepts: 'contemporary criticism', he states, 'aims at a hermeneutics of indeterminacy. It proposes a type of analysis that has renounced the ambition to master or demystify its subject (text, psyche) by technocratic, predictive, or authoritarian formulas.' Deconstruction attempts to live out its principles in its practice by rejecting or parodying the techniques and apparatus of conventional criticism; in short, the traditional form of the literary essay. Derrida's 'Living On: Border Lines' is another 'graphic' text, which demonstrates its irreverence for academic conventions by inserting a continuous commentary, apparently addressed to the translator or co-author, in the space normally occupied by footnotes.

Inspired by deconstruction, Hartman has devoted much of his career to healing the breach between theory, criticism and literature. In the preface to Deconstruction and Criticism he endorses a more 'philosophical' criticism and consistently attempts to invert the academic deference to the literary text by asserting the creative aspect of criticism, betraying a certain Romantic nostalgia, the literary specialism of many of the Yale critics. Hartman asserts that because the essays in Deconstruction and Criticism 'retain the form of commentary they also move toward a theory of commentary'.

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26 Derrida, Letter to a Japanese Friend, p. 3.
29 Geoffrey Hartman, preface, Deconstruction and Criticism, p. viii.
mistakenly conflates discourse and metadiscourse, exemplifying the deconstructionist tendency to elide any distinction between the critical and theoretical, thereby concealing a bias towards the latter. Literary theory—that is general statements about literature—and close textual commentary may coexist, but this does not mean that they are identical.

In *Criticism in the Wilderness* Hartman asks, 'How did this divide between theory and practice come about? Is there hope for an unservile, an enlarged and mature, criticism, neither afraid of theory nor overestimating it?' His book is designed, of course, to provide us with the rudiments of this criticism. Ironically, the non-effectivity of deconstruction on critical practice is explicitly asserted by Hartman. Speaking of the aim of *Criticism in the Wilderness* he asserts, 'I began quite involuntarily to expand my notion of close reading into a theory of practice; that is, I had always wanted to plough back theory into practice. I saw that the practice was being misunderstood because there wasn't an explanatory theory.' He cites Derrida as providing the means to formulate this theory but at the same time inconsistently asserts the disjunction of theory and practice: 'I was at an impasse (in terms of philosophy) for a theory of practice, and he found a way of doing it. That was functionally important . . . but I never changed my criticism because of him.' Hartman advocates a critical technique which will 'allow a formal idea within critical theory to elicit the analysis of a poem, and vice-versa.' In the preface to *Deconstruction and Criticism* he makes the modest claim that deconstructive criticism supplies 'a new rigor when it comes to the discipline of close reading.' His essay in this collection comprises a deconstructive close reading of Yeats's 'Leda and the Swan' which is striking precisely for its marriage of New Critical and deconstructive formalisms. He first demonstrates his New Critical close reading skills: 'The mimetic faculty is stirred by rhythmic effects (the additional beat in "great wings beating still," the caesural pause between "terrified" and "vague"), while inner bonding through repetition and alliteration ("beating . . . beating," "He holds her helpless . . . ") tightens Yeats's verse as if to prevent its rupture.' This is followed by a typical deconstructive co-implication of the opposites: mimesis/poesis, presence/absence, visible/invisible. While this type of close reading is certainly more accessible to the reader than Derrida's more performative work, it makes not the slightest progress towards Hartman's declared intent to 'get beyond Formalism'. Rather than demonstrating a 'new rigor', the coupling of deconstruction and New Criticism simply extends the old techniques. The fact that metaphysical deconstruction and New Critical theory produce broadly compatible formalisms illustrates the disjunction between theory and practice.

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36 Hartman, *Criticism in the Wilderness*, pp. 3-4.
39 Hartman, *Criticism in the Wilderness*, p. 5.
41 Hartman, *Criticism in the Wilderness*, pp. 22-23.
The poststructuralist critic explains the coherence of New Criticism and deconstruction as an example of the double bind. This strategy is followed by both Hartman and de Man:

what I insist on is that the kind of New Criticism (closer than close reading) which gradually evolved had effectively the result of what is now called Deconstruction. This was done through a technique, but not a cold technique, because my concern was always to get beyond Formalism while realising that you had to go through it.®

The structural moment of concentration on the code for its own sake cannot be avoided, and literature necessarily breeds its own formalism . . . .

On the other hand—and this is the real mystery—no literary formalism, no matter how accurate and enriching in its analytic powers, is ever allowed to come into being without seeming reductive.

De Man compares the critical practice of Richards and Barthes: 'Richards's form-object resulted from the postulate of a perfect continuity of consciousness with its linguistic correlates; Barthes, on the other hand, proceeds from a historical situation. But, from the point of view of criticism, the result is the same since, in both instances, criticism begins and ends with the study of form.'® But where deconstruction is distinctly different from New Criticism is in the way it often prioritises its theoretical interests over and above the form of the literary text.

_deconstruction and Criticism_ ostensibly takes Romantic poetry as its literary focus, but Derrida's interest in literary texts is kindled only insofar as they relate to the metaphysical questions of boundaries, edges, 'invagination', translation, quotation and so on. Derrida glances at rather than (logocentrically) engages with the literary text and within the boundaries of his essay the licentious free-play identified by many critics of deconstruction appears to hold sway. Derrida refers to Shelley's poem, _The Triumph of Life_ (which it is not my intention to discuss here®), and then passes on to Blanchot's _La folie du jour_. He notes a textual variant in the subtitle of Blanchot's text: _Un récit? Récit_ denotes both fictional narration and factual account and the variant question mark signifies the interrogation of fictionality—in other words, metafiction. He discourses at some length on madness, light, and blindness, admittedly linking these themes with Shelley's _The Triumph of Life_:

In a dissemination as glorious as it is fleeting, the _same jour_, the 'same' jour, the other, is both _ajouré_ and _ajourné_—in itself, so to speak, in the precarious instability of its title. The madness of the day, of this moment, is momentary. The abyss that carries it away is expressed (for example) when a voice says, 'Oh, I see the daylight, oh God.'®

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® Paul de Man, _Allegories of Reading: Figure Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust_ (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 4.
® de Man, _Blindness and Insight_, p. 234.
Oh God! This is certainly not a form of close reading because rather than paying close attention to the words on the page it takes them as a starting point for an exposition on a tangential theme. Stuart Sim classifies Derrida's practice as 'off-criticism' and maintains that his performative tactics are designed to render the deconstructor invulnerable to further criticism. Such writing certainly has creative aspects, and therefore transgresses the boundaries of conventional criticism, but whether it contributes anything to the literary or the critical corpus is doubtful. Norris describes 'Living On: Border Lines' as 'a virtuoso exercise of writing which assumes all the textual freedoms granted by an underdetermined or radically ambiguous context'. It is a virtuoso deconstructive performance, but because it anti-logocentrically occludes rather than illuminates the text, attempting to enact deconstructive principles of intertextuality, it is of more value for those interested in deconstruction than for those interested in learning something about the work of Shelley or Blanchot.

In spite, or perhaps because of, Derrida's proclaimed lack of expertise in matters Joycean, the essay, 'Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce', marks a return to a more conventional use of scholarly apparatus: quotation, referencing, and notes. The essay opens with a discussion of the philosophical and linguistic character of affirmation, with reference to Molly Bloom's monologue at the close of *Ulysses*. Derrida considers topics coherent with those in 'Living On: Border Lines', such as translation and quotation: 'What right do we have to select or interrupt a quotation from *Ulysses*?' He brings the principle of the double bind to bear on literary criticism, citing the institutional requirement for mastery over Joyce's ineffable text: 'Everything we can say about *Ulysses*, for example, has already been anticipated, including, as we have seen, the scene about academic competence and the ingenuity of metadiscourse. We are caught in this net.' Derrida also muses on his own journeyings in conjunction with those of Leopold Bloom and his mythical forbear, Odysseus. It is at this point that deconstructive meandering again threatens to overrun the literary text. Derrida exploits those aleatory connections typical of deconstruction by describing various personal experiences which are tangentially connected with *Ulysses* (an incident in a Tokyo book shop, a yoghurt called 'YES'). This self-referentiality is of course self-conscious: 'But I am continuing the chronicle of my experiences.' Although, as Steven Connor points out, the structure of Derrida's peregrinations follows that of Joyce's text, the essay's close falls far short of Molly Bloom's poetic affirmation (yes I said yes I will Yes') as Derrida writes prosaically: 'I decided to stop here because I almost had an accident just as I was jotting down this last sentence, when, on leaving the airport, I was driving home after the trip to Tokyo.'
The idea of 'mastery' over the literary text is something poststructuralists associate with conventional criticism and find uncomfortable. Gayatri Spivak cites the double bind in defence of this position stating that 'as she deconstructs, all protestations to the contrary, the critic necessarily assumes that she at least, and for the time being, means what she says. Even the declaration of her vulnerability, must come, after all, in the controlling language of demonstration and reference.'\textsuperscript{13} In many texts Derrida abandons conventional textual apparatus and 'the controlling language of demonstration and reference', a practice dictated by the theory of intertextuality. The dazzling surface of deconstruction conceals not only the machinery of metaphysical logic but blinds some enthusiasts to the exploitation of the literary text. Not Sim, however, who remarks that Hartman's criticism 'positively radiates knowledge and authority.'\textsuperscript{14} Leavis, although he tends towards the dogmatic, foregrounds his manipulation of the text by the conventional use of textual apparatus.\textsuperscript{15}

There is a fundamental conflict in deconstructive criticism between a receptivity to the 'otherness' of literature and the repudiation of logocentrism and mastery. While the former appears to encourage close attention and responsiveness to the literary text, the latter rejects the possibility of a direct encounter. This results in a style which is intended to correct the illusion of critical distance, but produces an effect of unadulterated egocentrism. Morris Dickstein criticises deconstructive self-seeking and formalism, referring to 'the use of texts as opportunities for self-display' and 'as interchangeable occasions for a theoretical trajectory which always returns to the same points of origin.'\textsuperscript{16} Jonathan Culler states that 'Rumors that deconstructive criticism denigrates literature, celebrates the free associations of readers, and eliminates meaning and referentiality, seem comically aberrant.'\textsuperscript{17} They do not. Furthermore, everything blameworthy in deconstructive criticism arises from an attempt to put principle into practice: the deconstruction of metaphysical oppositions and metaphorical boundaries results in the wildly elliptical off-criticism attacked by Sim, or in a prevalence of theory over textual commentary, while the denial of critical objectivity and neutrality results in solipsism. Literary criticism should at least attempt to convey more of the text than of the critic, but

\textsuperscript{13} Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, introduction, Of Grammatology, p. ixxvii.
\textsuperscript{14} Sim, Beyond Aesthetics, p. 78.
\textsuperscript{15} Raman Selden attributes the resulting dogmatism to an inherited Romantic tradition producing a 'confidence in a consensus of sensibility' (Criticism and Objectivity (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 22). However, confidence in objective value judgement was equally firmly grounded in the possibility of a universal system, the exposition of which was an Enlightenment project. Kant attempted to resolve the problem of the dual (objective/subjective) natures of judgement in the Critique of Judgement (1790). In the 'Analytic of the Beautiful', he presents subjective experience as the proper source of aesthetic judgement: beauty is not appreciable by means of concepts and is therefore not deducible from aesthetic principles or laws. However, the form of aesthetic judgement 'it is beautiful' indicates that beauty is an objective property. The unique claim to the universality, and hence objectivity, of aesthetic judgement resides in the notion of 'common sense', which for Kant is the universally consistent working of healthy sense faculties. The individual with these healthy sense faculties can assume that his aesthetic judgement will be shared by others and is therefore universal. Deviant judgements will result only from defective sense faculties. The synthetic a priori ground (transcendental signified) of Kant's system is God: the perception of perfection in the aesthetic object allows the perceiving subject to apprehend the perfection of God.
the reader of 'Ulysses Gramophone' in the end hears more of Derrida than of Molly Bloom or of Joyce.

Although the introduction of Continental theory to the Anglo-American academy provided a boost for professional criticism, it caused pedagogical problems when it was introduced onto undergraduate English courses in the 1980s. Publishers responded to the new developments in literary studies by producing the theory Readers which anthologised and introduced representative structuralist, poststructuralist, Marxist, and Russian Formalist theories. However, the fact that the majority of English students had been reared almost exclusively on 'A' level English, that is close reading, meant that metaphysical abstraction was wholly alien. Well-documented reactions to theory from these students include frustration, misery, and hostility. Since the 1980s, strategies have been developed to counter student resistance, including the introduction of theory via its application to the literary text—'theory-in-practice'. K. M. Newton alludes positively to student demand, noting that 'anyone who takes part in a theory course with students will know that one is constantly being asked to direct them to where they can find theory being applied to practice'. The second-wave theory-in-practice Readers have claimed an increasing share of a market now saturated with 'straight' theory Readers and include Douglas Tallack's *Literary Theory at Work* (1987); Raman Selden's *Practising Theory and Reading Literature* (1989), K. M. Newton's *Theory into Practice* (1992), and Steven Lynn's *Texts and Contexts: Writing About Literature with Critical Theory* (1994). In 1993 a series edited by Nigel Wood entitled 'Theory in Practice' was launched by Open University Press and in 1995 a competing series was launched by Routledge under the editorship of Rick Rylance. Although the trend towards the integration of theory and practice is on the theoretical level associated with deconstruction, the pull towards practical application is quite probably related to British empiricism (to which Newton alludes in his introduction), the Leavisite suspicion of the abstract, and the institutional position of practical criticism. Even in those British universities where Continental theory has a high profile this distrust of unfettered abstraction lingers. In a survey of university English teaching Colin Evans writes, 'According to the head of school in Cardiff, post-

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graduates at the Centre for Cultural and Critical Theory are not encouraged to write
theoretical work, but to apply theory to literature. The 'mission statements' articulated in the introductions to the theory-in-practice
Readers indicate remarkably consistent ideals. Their editors share with those of the
straight theory Readers the aim to make theory more accessible, but the unique selling
point obviously rests in the claim of the new textbook genre to negotiate between literary
theory and critical practice. The preface to *The Waste Land* (a volume in the 'Theory in Practice' series), declares the editors' objective 'to help bridge the divide between the
understanding of theory and the interpretation of individual texts'. Selden remarks that it
is 'more sensible to grasp a theory and its potential value by observing it at work'. The
contributors to *Literary Theory at Work* insist that theory is most illuminating . . . when
dealing with a literary text. These Readers are all marketed as 'introductory' texts and
expend considerable effort in wooing the theory-shy student. Although their aims are
identical, however, there are sometimes minor disagreements as to the most effective
means of accomplishing them. Both Newton and Lynn conceive their volumes as
Which?
guides to theory; Newton likens students to 'inexperienced shoppers in a supermarket who
are confronted by numerous brands of the same type of products', and offers a trial pack of
various competing named brands from Leavis to Spivak. Lynn compares himself to a
holiday tour guide: Although wandering around is always an option, travelers who know
what they're looking for and have a plan for getting there are more likely to have a
satisfying and interesting visit. He undertakes to provide a comprehensive travel guide.
Only Selden declares worthily from the Left: I am not a salesman or broker and I reject a
"market economy" attitude towards critical theory. The formats of the textbooks vary
widely and range from Newton's simple selection of essays by 'canonical' theorists, to
Lynn's rather fussy authored book in which each chapter is divided into an exposition of
the theoretical approach, a 'How to Do' section, 'A Sample Essay', and a final section
comprising extracts from primary texts and helpful questions. Selden includes a chapter of
'Exercises' at the end of his book, while the Theory in Practice volumes include a section,
entitled 'Supplement', in which the editor interviews the contributor providing the reader
with a model theoretically-informed debate.

The first major stumbling-block faced by editors and authors is the difficulty of
theory; Newton makes the point that 'much literary theory operates at such a high level of
abstraction that students find it difficult to grasp'. One of the genre's rationales is making
the esoteric accessible, but there is a conflict built in to all student theory Readers in that a

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83 Colin Evans, *English People: The Experience of Teaching and Learning English in British Universities* (Buckingham: Open
87 Newton, *Theory into Practice*, p. 2.
88 Lynn, *Texts and Contexts*, p. 66.
choice has to be made between over-simplifying complex ideas and alienating the projected readership. Compromises between elitism and populism are attempted but not always achieved. Selden warns that 'conceptual difficulty cannot always be avoided.' Practising Theory is written in clear, accessible prose but Selden remarks that he 'would not wish readers to accept such thin theoretical presentations as adequate preparation.' Lynn jovially chaffs the nervous reader of deconstructive criticism thus: 'If the room starts spinning, or you find yourself getting dizzy, take a deep breath or put the book on the floor so you can read with your head between your legs. Seriously, the next little stretch is a bit theoretical and even strange...! Lynn's book fails due to a desire to spoon-feed the student and cater for an unfeasibly wide readership (students on 'courses that require students to write about literature'), to say nothing of its horrible matey tone. The Waste Land, on the other hand, in spite of its attempt to locate and explicate theories, is far too sophisticated for an introductory guide. Although the reader is forewarned against 'knotty thought', he is not always forearmed. Harriet Davidson, for example, presumes a working knowledge of sophisticated philosophical and linguistic theories when she asserts, without further explanation, that 'structuralism provides a critique of the priority of consciousness in phenomenology, and phenomenology provides a critique of the scientistic objectivity of structuralism'. Such rebarbative professional language would undoubtedly frighten the theoretical novice.

Objections have been raised to the rationale of these Readers; a note in the TLS vilifies the editors of the 'Theory in Practice' series for their denigration of the literary text. The 'gruesome preface' is deplored for implying that 'theory... needs to be "understood", as a whole.' While 'Those poor things, "individual texts"... require to be "interpreted" to come into their own.' It should be recorded that the relegation of literature is certainly not the intention of this genre and often an explicit attempt is made to forestall any criticism on this account. Wood et al. undoubtedly do uphold the concept of literary value and this is apparent both in their policy of selecting canonical literary texts (each volume is named after the literary work), and their warning of theory's various dangers. They thus note their intention to avoid two major difficulties which commonly arise in the interaction between literary and theoretical texts: the temptation to treat theory as a bloc of formulaic rules that could be brought to bear on any text with roughly predictable results; and the circular argument that texts are constructed as such merely by the theoretical perspective from which we choose to regard them.

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61 Selden, Practising Theory, p. 4.
62 Selden, Practising Theory, p. 6.
63 Lynn, Texts and Contexts, p. 88.
This is symptomatic of a fairly deferential approach to literature as is the tendency of contributors to *The Waste Land* also point to the inadequacies of particular theories. Davidson, for example, criticises the 'totalizing' effect and ahistoricism of Lacanian theory, while Tony Pinkney admits to the limitations of Bakhtin's 'Discourse in the Novel' when related to poetry.\(^7\) Such statements accede, at least in theory, both the limitations of theory and the power of the literary text.

Newton declares his suspicion of the idea 'that theory precedes and therefore occupies a superior position to practice' and asserts that theory cannot be simply 'applied'.\(^8\) Both he and the editors of the 'Theory in Practice' series refer instead to readings from a particular 'theoretical perspective'.\(^9\) But one idea entertained neither by theory-in-practice editors, nor by their critics, is that theory-in-practice subordinates theory to practice. As Lawrence Lipking notes, one objection to theory in the classroom in that 'the truth of a difficult idea . . . does not depend on its accessibility to undergraduates or its ability to generate plausible 'readings.'\(^10\) The argument for unapplied theory, divorced from the interpretation of the literary text, is one born of practical considerations; some concepts have value only in the context of theoretical discourse and cannot be addressed properly by way of literary interpretation—this applies most obviously to metaphysical theories such as deconstruction. It is likely that many queries provoked by applied theory would still need to be addressed at the level of abstraction alluded to by Newton. Such considerations mean that the editors and authors are obliged to perpetuate the breach they mean to heal. Newton admits the incommensurability of theory and practice, noting that 'it is often not clear from theoretical discourse alone what form of critical practice it would entail.'\(^11\) Nor is it necessarily clear what theory, if any, underpins literary criticism. Consequently all the Readers, except Newton's, which is an anthology of canonical theorists rather than an application of the ideas of these theorists, divide essays into a theoretical and a practical section—in that order. Furthermore, they are often designed and marketed as companion volumes to 'straight' theory Readers. Selden's and Newton's texts are described as 'supplements' to their earlier books: *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* and *Twentieth-century Literary Theory* respectively. *Literary Theory at Work* is marketed as a companion volume to Jefferson and Robey's *Modern Literary Theory* (both published by Batsford). The implication is that the student requires prior knowledge or at least an independent account of any theory in order to gauge its full significance and potential for critical practice. Not only can theory-in-practice not do justice to complex metaphysical theories, the majority of first-year students are simply unequipped to deal with such

\(^8\) Newton, *Theory into Practice*, pp. 3, 1.
\(^10\) Lipking, *The Practice of Theory*, p. 22.
theories, applied or otherwise. The introductory courses which appear most successful are those which take an empirical (inductive) rather than metaphysical (deductive) approach by focusing on particular literary texts and working outwards to general concepts. In this way the student is prepared for an introduction to pure unapplied theory and after this for the application of theory to the literary text.

There are two basic ways in which the theory-in-practice Readers could be said to function: either by simply demonstrating the encounter between text and theory, or by positively arguing for the value of a particular theoretical model. *The Waste Land* operates on the first principle, while the latter motivates Newton's and Lynn's 'consumer guides'. Closer inspection reveals a definite discrimination against New Criticism. Selden is the most obviously biased, but at least foregrounds his prejudice: 'My own critical orientation cannot and should not be suppressed . . . . I regard the dislodging of both "Old" and "New" criticism from dominant positions as a positive and progressive development'. He nevertheless includes a section on Leavisite and New Criticism. *The Waste Land*, however, does not include a New Critical section and continually snipes against what it regards as the ideological and political failings of New Criticism. In both teaching and research, New Criticism has been well and truly eclipsed by poststructuralism in its diverse forms. But by dismissing New Criticism, these Readers are simply exchanging one sort of critical orthodoxy for another equally intractable.

It is not necessary to redeem New Criticism by stressing its affinity with poststructuralism; there is a case to be made for New Critical methods and practice on other grounds. As Newton, the least partial of the theory-in-practice editors puts it, 'One of its major advantages was that it was made accessible to students at virtually all levels'. Christopher Cordner is impatient with deconstruction's critique of presence and argues against a radical overhaul of critical practice:

> If the proposal is . . . that we ought to read only in a way which banishes 'presence', then much that is deeply embedded in our practices of reading, as well as in our modes of engagement with other people, would have to be excised. Such a proposal would seem to me to have the tail of theory wagging the dog of praxis much too vigorously.

Cordner is arguing, after Leavis, against the rule of theory and for the Leavisite assumption of presence. Although he relies upon an oversimplification of the poststructuralist position (Derrida *et al.* do not seek to banish presence entirely, but concentrate on the elusive trace), it is worth re-examining Leavis's critical methodology as Cordner suggests to see if it could be reconditioned for current usage.

Unfortunately Leavis's criticism cannot be recruited in support of his methodology—the peremptory and eccentric valuations in *Revaluation* bear witness to

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103 Newton, *Theory into Practice*, p. 6.
this. Leavis justifies the exclusion of Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites because 'their verse doesn't offer...any very interesting local life for inspection' and demonstrates a curious literal-mindedness when vilifying Shelley's poetic metaphors: 'In what respects are the "loose clouds" like decaying leaves? The correspondence is certainly not in shape, colour, or way of moving.' However, the limitations of an individual critic do not necessarily invalidate his critical method. In *Revaluation* Leavis proclaims it the proper 'business of the critic to perceive for himself, to make the finest and sharpest relevant discriminations, and to state his findings as responsibly, clearly, and forcibly as possible.' Although the idea of a subjective response to a poem was fundamental to Leavis's theory, his method was empirical and objective: 'In dealing with individual poets the rule of the critic is...to work as much as possible in terms of particular analysis...and to say nothing that cannot be related immediately to judgements about producible texts.' Although 'objectifying' the literary text, Leavisite criticism seeks to engage directly with it and is therefore responsive in a way that deconstruction often fails to be, in spite of its assertion of the irreducible 'otherness' of the literary. As Leavis puts it, 'even if he [the critic] is wrong he has forwarded the business of criticism—he has exposed himself as openly as possible to correction; for what criticism undertakes is the profitable discussion of literature.' The post-Marxist might leap upon the idea of the critic reaping a profit from his critical practice (see chapter seven) and a feminist cavil at the patriarchal critic exposing himself thus, but such an approach provides the antidote to anti-logocentric 'off-criticism'.

In a recent forum in the *TLS* which asked whether literature and criticism have 'benefited, or suffered, from the rise of critical theory', Derrida declared himself unable to answer such a complex question in the space provided. However, in a more expansive mood he explains the function of deconstruction:

> Nor do I feel that the principal function of deconstruction is to contribute something to literature. It does, of course, contribute to our epistemological appreciation of texts by exposing the philosophical and theoretical presuppositions that are at work in every critical methodology...Deconstruction asks why we read a literary text in this particular manner rather than another.'

Deconstruction is a valid, if limited, literary theory, which addresses the metaphysical questions of literature and language. As a critical formalism it extends slightly the range of techniques available to the professional critic but adds little of significance to those developed by the New Critics. The principal claim of New Criticism to superiority is that

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106 Leavis, *Revaluation*, p. 15.
107 Leavis, *Revaluation*, p. 10.
108 Leavis, *Revaluation*, pp. 15–16.
109 'The Rise of Theory—a Symposium', *TLS* (15 July 1994), p. 13. Although 'critical' and 'literary' theory are used interchangeably here, critical theory is a distinct, socially-oriented branch of philosophy. For a recent account see Hoy and McCarthy, *Critical Theory*.
it actively discourages the sort of introspective approach which tends to bypass the literary text. Although the American New Critics may have been cultural conservatives, New Criticism with its critical vocabulary and close attention to the text (still apparent in Hartman’s reading of ‘Leda’) provides a better basic training in the close reading of literary texts than deconstruction and, in practice is not incompatible with a contextual or historical reading (see chapter six).

Lois Tyson regards the proliferation of literary theories in a positive light, suggesting that ‘the most useful conclusion we can draw from this state of affairs is not that every methodology is . . . correct or that all methodologies are equally useful, but that, no matter how correct or useful any methodology is, it is incomplete.’ She believes that the value of different methodologies lies in their interrogation of each other, in other words the production of metatheory (theory about theory). According to Culler,

Most of what we call theory does work to direct and influence critical practice, not because it reveals principles that are logically prior to interpretive practice, but because it provides redescriptions that seem attractive and productive, because it generalizes from other cases in ways that suggest how to deal with further cases (even though there is always the possibility that they might prove to be exceptions).

This is an oddly empiricist notion of theory for a poststructuralist and in any case misrepresents the state of contemporary theory. Culler also states that the postmodern loss of foundations has combined with a retention of the metadiscursive function to produce a self-conscious criticism. He elsewhere refers to deconstructive essays which ‘suggest the infinite regress of correction and make critics more inclined to situate readings than to correct them.’ There is currently a predilection for those literary theories—reader-response, revisionist Marxist, poststructuralist—which are just as likely to encourage metatheoretical as critical responses to the literary text, and which follow metaphysics by moving from the general to the particular. The current predilection for metaphysical theory draws attention away from the particular literary text. As Thomas Kavanagh puts it, ‘the contemporary preoccupation with theory has had as one of its effects the displacing of interest away from what is specific to any individual work and toward the presuppositions and systemic cogency of the theoretical constructs that allow us to carry out our analyses.’ Self-conscious theorising is not inherently valuable—intellectually, ethically, or politically—and the intrusion of metatheory into literary criticism has already resulted in the attenuation of the latter. This need not occur if literary theories, including formalisms, were once again valued for their provision of critical


Culler, On Deconstruction, pp. 269–69.

Theory and Practice

methods and metatheory was again distinguished from criticism since its object is criticism itself. Nor need this result in the return to an unexamined critical orthodoxy. As Fish suggests, our 'texts, standards, norms, criteria of judgment' exist 'within a set of institutional assumptions that can themselves become the objects of dispute.' It is the function of metatheory to examine and dispute these assumptions and the function of criticism to analyse and judge literary texts.

Even Tumell felt obliged to admit that while 'It is tempting to make a theoretic distinction between the two "moments" of the critical act—the critic's response to this text and the philosophical analysis of that response . . . we may doubt whether in practice there can be complete separation between the two.' In 'The Resistance to Theory', de Man states that 'A general statement about literary theory should not, in theory, start from pragmatic considerations.' In practice, as he also notes, it may have to. In order to thwart the impracticable collapse of theory into practice, it is necessary to qualify the assertion that all criticism is inherently theoretical, a notion whose prevalence justifies Patrick Parrinder's accusation that the 'concept of theoretical reading has hardened into a dogma'. This orthodoxy was perhaps instituted when René Wellek asked Leavis to defend his position 'more abstractly and to become conscious that large ethical philosophical and . . . aesthetic choices are involved'. Gerald Graff asserts that 'any teacher of literature is unavoidably a literary theorist. Whatever a teacher says about a literary work, or leaves unsaid, presupposes a theory'. Derrida maintains that 'literary criticism has already been determined, knowingly or not, as the philosophy of literature'. Although Leavis loudly proclaimed his refusal to formulate a literary theory, much of what he wrote, including his critical principles, could reasonably be classed as theoretical and clearly informed his critical practice. But while criticism is always open to a critique of its implicit metaphysical or ideological assumptions, such assumptions do not make criticism inherently theoretical. Ideology, which may be an unformulated and even unconscious set of beliefs, is not identical to theory, which is systematic and explicit. The difference between knowing and not knowing, as Derrida puts it, is significant.

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117 Tumell, Literary Criticism in France (O), p. 297.
120 See also Lipking, 'The Practice of Theory', p. 23.
123 Derrida, Writing and Difference, p. 28.
Harold Bloom has recently predicted the annexing of English and its traditional disciplinary practices by a non-literary media orientated cultural studies:

I do not believe that literary studies as such have a future, but this does not mean that literary criticism will die. As a branch of literature, criticism will survive, but probably not in our teaching institutions. The study of Western literature will also continue but on the much more modest scale of our current Classics departments. What are now called Departments of English will be renamed departments of ‘Cultural Studies’ where Batman comics, Mormon theme parks, television, movies, and rock will replace Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Wallace Stevens.

This pessimism is to a certain extent justified. Since the 1980s English has been in a state of accelerated transition and disruption which warrants the often applied label ‘crisis’. The most obvious ‘internal’ cause of this disorder is the Continental theory which undermined the relative stability associated with New Criticism. While theory initially caused the well-documented schism between traditionalists and theorists, it subsequently produced the less dramatic but more pervasive fragmentation of critical method into diverse factions, often politically driven. The proponents of cultural studies naturally wish to consolidate their advantage and are able to capitalise upon the internal disruption of English. While cultural studies originally defined itself in opposition to English, English’s incorporation of theory and political criticism has eroded the old distinction. However, the historical antagonism between English and cultural studies has been exacerbated by the combination of increasingly large areas of disciplinary overlap and limited institutional resources.

As Bloom suggests, a parallel can be drawn between classics and English in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and English and cultural studies at the present time. English was not studied as a university discipline until the nineteenth century; the first Chair of English Language and Literature was founded at University College, London.

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in 1828. However, it was not until nearly one hundred years later (1926) that the establishment of the upstart discipline was finally guaranteed with the introduction of an English degree at Cambridge. This signalled a territorial threat to classics, which then formed the lynch-pin of the humanities. Classics was a subject for the public-school educated 'governing class'. The vernacular literature was clearly accessible to a larger section of the population, particularly the working class, and English was early associated with University Extension lectures, mechanics' and working-men's institutes, and women's colleges, hence its lowly status in the eyes of the classicists. In 1965, one year after the founding of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham, D. J. Palmer declared that the controversy between classics and English 'is still far from extinct'. Over three decades later it is well and truly dead; classics is generally regarded as an esoteric subject and occupies a marginal place in the humanities, while English is fundamental to the national curriculum and a hugely popular subject at university level. However, cultural studies, now a growth area in higher education, decries the perceived elitism of English and presents its own focus on popular culture and the media as of greater relevance to contemporary society. The view taken by Alvin Kernan is that traditional English has little relevance in the modern world of the mass media and is merely self-perpetuating: 'serious literary activity, as well as most of the audience for literature, is concentrated in the universities. Courses in literature provide almost the only markets for literary works'. A similar view is held by John Frow, who maintains that 'High culture, we might say, is no longer "the dominant culture" but is rather a pocket within commodity culture. Its primary relationship is not to the ruling class but to the intelligentsia, and to the education system which is the locus of their power and the generative point for most high-cultural practices.' Colin MacCabe argues for the inclusion of film and television on the (English) curriculum because to omit such subjects would be to 'ignore the fact that the book's supremacy within our culture... is now challenged by the image'. MacCabe is effectively saying that literature no longer has the cultural significance to warrant a discipline to itself. The ethos and history of different universities will inform their attitudes towards English and cultural studies; ex-polytechnics favour interdisciplinary cultural studies, while older universities have an established English tradition, but if the two-fold analogy holds good, then English is facing irremediable decline.

An examination of the origins and history of cultural studies foregrounds its links with English. Just as early lecturers in English were often trained in classics, those trained in English staffed early cultural studies. The rise of cultural studies is associated in particular with three figures (two from English and one from History) and their seminal

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5 Palmer, The Rise of English Studies, p. 44.
texts: Richard Hoggart, author of *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) and founding director of the CCCS, Raymond Williams, who wrote *Culture and Society* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961), and E. P. Thompson, maverick historian and author of *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). The common ground shared by these rebel figures was a Left-political leaning, an interest in the social context of literature and popular culture, and a dissatisfaction with the dominant formalism of English. Cultural studies is therefore correctly presented as a breakaway movement from English, but the break was messy and is not yet final. The CCCS was initially housed in the English department at Birmingham and Stuart Hall, Hoggart's assistant and later director of the CCCS, describes from first-hand experience the hostility of both English and sociology to the 'cuckoo' which was cultural studies. Graeme Turner writes of later university pressure on the CCCS to be reabsorbed into the Department of English. This pressure was resisted and the CCCS reinforced its identity by maintaining its distance from English.

Cultural studies had inevitably inherited certain concepts and values from English. An early essay by Hoggart, 'Why I Value Literature', indicates a faith in aesthetic value, an unself-conscious empiricism, and a subscription to F. R. Leavis's literary criterion of 'felt life': 'No other art . . . bodies out so wholly and many dimensionally "the felt sense of life"'. Hoggart was an unapologetic humanist, insisting 'on the importance of the inner, the distinctive and individual, life of man', and he argued for the historical transcendence of the literary text which, if 'imaginatively penetrating . . . will go beyond particular time and place and speak about our common humanity, will become—as we used to say more readily—universal'. He also retained the New Critical concept of organic unity and a certain Romantic sensibility: 'It is of the essence of . . . the poem's meaning that all its elements simultaneously co-exist . . . so that you feel then all at once as you would in heightened moments of life, if you were sufficiently sensitive'. While Hoggart wrote this essay as a professor of English rather than cultural studies, it was reproduced in his two-volume *Speaking to Each Other* (1970) and he continues to promote these values today (see below).

Hoggart's evident sympathy with Leavis is no aberration since Leavis shared significant critical and even political ideals with the disciplinary emigrants. In *The Common Pursuit* he writes belligerently of 'the Marxizing decade' and its demands on 'the literary historian to explain literary history as the reflection of changing economic and material realities'. However, he claims that his opinion of Marxist criticism is low 'not because I think of literature as a matter of isolated works of art, belonging to a realm of pure literary values (whatever they might be)'. In the same work he writes that 'the
understanding of literature stands to gain much from sociological interests and a knowledge of social history. In *Education and the University* he proposes 'integrating study', addresses the need 'to relate a literary training to other disciplines and studies', and advocates the 'study in concrete terms of the relations between the economic, the political, the moral, religion, art and literature, [which] would involve a critical pondering of standards and key-concepts'. While Leavis regarded himself as marginalised by the establishment (Cambridge), and is cited by many historians of cultural studies, he cannot be appropriated entirely to that history largely because he continued to identify with English, albeit resentfully.

One of the founding differences between English and cultural studies is thought to lie in their attitudes to popular culture: according to the picture painted by cultural studies, English ignores or denigrates the popular while cultural studies actively promotes it. English's distaste for the popular was clear from the start; for Matthew Arnold, popular fiction was positively dangerous: 'Plenty of people will try to give the masses, as they call them, an intellectual food prepared and adapted in the way they think proper for the actual condition of the masses. The ordinary popular literature is an example of this way of working on the masses.' In *Fiction and the Reading Public*, Q. D. Leavis quotes Edgar Rice Burroughs's own account of his technique, which was 'to draw action pictures which permit my reader to visualise scenes without great effort'. For Leavis, popular fiction, was a 'detrimental diet', which encouraged the 'habit of fantasying' and would 'lead to maladjustment in real life'. *Tarzan* compares unfavourably with modernist texts such as *Heart of Darkness*: 'Conrad is engaged in expressing an infinitely more complex sense of the irony of human aspirations'. The denigration of popular culture by English was reinforced by the belief in a causal connection between high art and moral improvement and for similar reasons. However, early cultural studies was at times equally scathing about popular culture. Although Hoggart's attention to popular culture was what made *The Uses of Literacy* a groundbreaking study, he condemned the 'newer mass art' in terms identical to those of Q. D. Leavis:

This regular, increasing, and almost entirely unvaried diet of sensation without commitment is surely likely to help render its consumers less capable of responding openly and responsibly to life, is likely to induce an underlying sense of purposelessness in existence outside the limited range of a few immediate appetites.

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21 Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, pp. 53-54.
22 Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, p. 266.
Whatever their political persuasion or disciplinary location, early twentieth-century critics had at best an ambivalent attitude to popular culture. English traditionalists decried the loss of a civilising high culture, cultural studies retained a nostalgia for the idea of the organic community and its cultural forms, while Marxist critics regarded popular culture as a capitalist tool, designed to disseminate bourgeois ideology while delivering an addictive fix of easy pleasure.

This shared negative attitude towards the mass media can be explained by the prevalence of the modernist aesthetic which operated across disciplinary and political boundaries and which persists today. It was an ascetic rather than a hedonistic philosophy, privileging difficulty over ease and complexity over simplicity. There was a tendency, susceptible to a Freudian interpretation, to prioritise deferred gain over immediate pleasure and a consistently negative attitude, from Hegel to Hoggart, to the ‘consumption’ of art. In his lectures on the fine arts, Hegel argued that a work of art could not be ‘tasted as such, because taste does not leave its object free and independent but deals with it in a really practical way, dissolves and consumes it’. The critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, who do ‘belong’ to the history of cultural studies, shared a low opinion of the new forms of entertainment. In the Dialectic of Enlightenment (1944), Adorno and Horkheimer roundly attacked the culture industry for its failure to achieve aesthetic sublimation of the more basic instincts:

The secret of aesthetic sublimation is its representation of fulfilment as a broken promise. The culture industry does not sublimate; it represses. By repeatedly exposing the objects of desire, breasts in a clinging sweater or the naked torso of the athletic hero, it only stimulates the unsublimated forepleasure which habitual deprivation has long since reduced to a masochistic semblance. There is no erotic situation which, while instimulating and exciting, does not fail to indicate unmistakably that things can never go that far. [. . .] Works of art are ascetic and unashamed; the culture industry is pornographic and prudish. Love is downgraded to romance.

Henry James was demonstrating his superior literary sensibilities when he declared: ‘there was a comfortable, good-humoured feeling abroad that a novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding, and that our only business with it could be to swallow it.’ In ‘Art as Technique’, Shklovsky takes his predecessor Potebnya to task for the assertion that ‘Poetry . . . permits what is generally called "economy of mental effort", a way which makes for “a sensation of the relative ease of the process”’. Shklovsky argues precisely the opposite, that ‘The technique of art is to make objects “unfamiliar”, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in

Shklovsky’s concept of defamiliarisation has certain affinities with Barthes’ ‘Text . . . which goes to the limit of the rules of enunciation (rationality, readability, etc.).’ And while Barthes warns that ‘the tendency must be avoided to say that the work is classic, the text avant-garde; it is not a question of drawing up a crude honours list in the name of modernity’, it is clear that it is modernist and postmodernist texts which most often exhibit ‘Textual’ characteristics. Barthes values ‘pleasure without separation’ (Text) over the ‘pleasure of consumption’ (Work) and blames ‘The reduction of reading to a consumption . . . for the “boredom” experienced by many in the face of the modern (“unreadable”) text’.

In English today, modernist literary criteria are promoted most vociferously by the traditionalists. Frank Kermode suggests that ‘the classic must display a capacity to be indefinitely plural’. Bloom’s criteria for canonicity in *The Western Canon* are ‘strangeness’ and ‘a mode of originality’. Bloom asserts that ‘Contra certain Parisians, the text is there to give not pleasure but the high displeasure or more difficult pleasure that a lesser text will not provide.’ However, he is clearly with Barthes in his assertion that ‘The correct test for the new canonicity is simple, clear, and wonderfully conducive to social change: it must not and cannot be reread, because its contribution to societal progress is its generosity in offering itself up for rapid ingestion and discarding.’ James’s ‘pudding’ and Barthes’s ‘object of consumption’ produced what Adorno labelled the *kulinarische Rezeption*. Hoggart retains his admiration for literature and distaste for mass culture in *The Way We Live Now* (1995), where the alimentary metaphor goes into overdrive; mass culture is ‘a small voracious creature whose belly has little capacity but can and must all the time and rapidly digest small items and as rapidly void them’. The tabloids are compared to an unhealthy snack, high in calories and low in nutrition: ‘From those one doesn’t put pages aside, for a careful reading of a particular article. That would be like setting aside on Saturday a half-opened packet of salt-and-vinegar-flavoured crisps for your Sunday dinner.’ Literature, however, still represents the textual equivalent of meat and two veg. for Hoggart, being ‘irredeemably of the earth and so bound up all the time with possible meanings, hints of meanings, with the weighed creative and creaturely life; bacon and eggs, fish and chips . . .’.

Non-literary values—ethical, social, political—have always informed English and are not incompatible with aesthetics. For Arnold good literature was anti-revolutionary and improving, a force for levelling upwards: ‘It does not try to teach down to the level of
inferior classes; it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgments and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere. For the Leavises, literature taught us how to live better while popular culture encouraged moral laziness. But politics has always been to the fore in cultural studies. The analysis of cultural forms promoted by Adorno and Horkheimer was designed not to make a better citizen, but to provide an understanding of the workings of capitalist ideology which would facilitate its displacement. The teleological Marxism of the Frankfurt school has been undermined by deconstruction, but cultural studies is still associated with an explicit left-wing politics and continues to defend the political value of cultural critique. Terry Eagleton has kept alive a certain revolutionary enthusiasm, and in Literary Theory asserts that 'Any method or theory which will contribute to the strategic goal of human emancipation, the production of "better people" through the socialist transformation of society, is acceptable.' He clearly endorses his own method, which he refers to variously as rhetoric, discourse theory, and cultural studies. Cultural studies associates English with Conservatism and English clearly does retain some strategic value for Tory politicians (see epigraph).

Although modernist Marxists maintained an analogous causal relation between high art and political insight, cultural studies' subsequent rejection of aesthetics is partly a rejection of English values and hence the value of English. Aesthetic value is clearly relevant to literature; the fine arts are by definition those which appeal to the mind and the sense of beauty and what characterises the fine arts in general (and is most obvious in music) is the importance of form. Poetry, which prioritises linguistic form over content is classed as a fine art and it is significant that New Criticism focused largely upon this genre. But since aesthetic value has traditionally underwritten English it is expedient for an expansionist cultural studies to demystify and deconstruct this concept.

Eagleton asserts that art has no autonomous value: 'There is no such thing as a literary work or tradition which is valuable in itself, regardless of what anyone might have said or come to say about it. "Value" is a transitive term: it means whatever is valued by certain people in specific situations.' Although taking issue with Eagleton on certain points, Antony Easthope also sets out to devalue literary value in Literary into Cultural Studies. Literary value, he argues, is ascribed to those texts which have functioned intertextually to give a plurality of different readings transhistorically (this is precisely the conclusion reached by traditionalists such as Bloom and Kermode). Easthope undertakes an analysis of Tarzan and The Heart of Darkness which is designed to dispel the illusion of literary value. (Although he does not cite Q. D. Leavis, he is clearly responding to her comparison of Conrad and Rice Burroughs in Fiction and the Reading of Literature.)
Public.) He first admits the persistence of the modernist binary and states his aim to 'inhabit the opposition without too much prejudice at first'. He produces a table of textual attributes: *Heart of Darkness* is abstract, complex, figurative; *Tarzan* is concrete, simple, literal. Again, he concedes the vestiges of conventional literary valuation inherent in these adjectives, but asserts that if the terms are 'relativised in relation to each other', this will allow the 'serious' (high cultural) consideration of popular culture. He maintains that a 'modernist' analysis is inappropriate to *Tarzan*, because of its formal qualities, that is the 'visual' features (as described in *Fiction and the Reading Public*) produced by privileging action and event over language or psychology. Attending to the particularity of each text will allow 'an analysis of each kind of text in terms of the position it offers to its reader, and on this basis it becomes possible to deconstruct the high/popular opposition by demonstrating both high and popular cultural discourse have a common origin in textuality of which the way each hails the reader is an effect'. More simply stated this means that both texts are written, and since they are written differently they produce different effects. Although the high art/popular culture binary may be thus deconstructed in the classroom, the modernist hierarchy has so far stubbornly persisted. In the *Grundrisse* Marx explained the transhistorical appeal of Greek art as nostalgia for a pre-industrial era. Post-Marxists assert the entanglement of art in the mechanics of capitalism. Eagleton declares that 'The catch-word "postmodernism" just means that culture and social life are no longer opposites', and that postmodernist 'art has climbed off its pedestal . . . only to become a commodity'. For Fredric Jameson,

> What has happened is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally: the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods . . . at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation.

Postmodern art may be obviously commodified, particularly in the cases of pop-art, video, and advertising, but Jameson's terms indicate the persistence, not the destruction of the modernist aesthetic. Innovation and experimentation, particularly in literature, produce inaccessible and structurally complex works which fulfil modernist literary criteria. Cultural studies declares its superiority over English by claiming to analyse all values, not merely the outmoded aesthetic. Fred Inglis states that 'Making distinctions of value is the form of all human practices, and it is the vocation of the public-spirited student of culture to understand this practice as accurately and sympathetically as will make possible intelligent and upright action in the present.' He imagines that an understanding

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44 Easthope, *Literary into Cultural Studies*, p. 80.
45 Easthope, *Literary into Cultural Studies*, p. 89.
46 Easthope, *Literary into Cultural Studies*, p. 50.
49 Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review* 146 (1984), p. 56.
of cultural value will encourage the same moral rectitude that the Leavises associated with the study of literature. Cultural studies tends to disparage literary value because of its association with modernist elitism. In Popular Fictions, Peter Humm et al. repudiate the distinction between good and bad literature and suggest that literature should simply not be considered using aesthetic criteria. Although one must, in good faith, assume that Easthope and Humm have a fundamental belief in the textual equality they promote, the transvaluation of aesthetic value has not yet been effected and for cultural studies to deny this value will hardly facilitate 'intelligent and upright action' or even adequate cultural critique.

Far more viable a strategy on the part of cultural studies is the endorsement of non-aesthetic values, such as pleasure. The equation of beauty and pleasure recalls Aristotle, for whom that which pleased the senses was beautiful. The modernist aesthetic, while it produced literary works of great lyrical beauty, clearly promoted the cerebral aspect of art over the sensual. Cultural studies does not seek to rejoin beauty and pleasure by creating a neo-Aristotelian hedonist aesthetic, but promotes hedonism as an alternative to aesthetics. Although in The Uses of Literacy, Hoggart reviled the mass media, he was indulgent towards what he presented as a working-class tendency to prioritise immediate gratification over long-term advantage. In Postmodernism and Popular Culture Angela McRobbie rejects conceptions of postmodernist culture as nihilistic and suggests that the accelerated cycle of production and consumption frequently unites both positive pleasure and agency for the consumer (the overthrow of capitalism is clearly no longer the goal of cultural studies for some of its theorists).

Arnold defined the project of Culture and Anarchy as the recommendation of culture, culture being the pursuit of 'the best which has been thought and said in the world'. However, the combined effects of external attack from cultural studies and undermining from postmodern theory has meant that English is embarrassed by its traditional values (moral, aesthetic, and political) and the evaluative function of literary criticism has become attenuated. From the outside, the relative values of literary studies and cultural studies are difficult to ascertain. Those who criticise the elitism of English are right to the extent that the market for literature (as high art) clearly is reliant on an educated readership and literary values are disseminated and perpetuated by educational institutions. New Critical methods were designed to explicate complex poetic forms and those modernist works which were largely inaccessible to the uneducated. However, the populism of cultural studies is only superficial; while popular cultural forms may be more

52 See Topper (1962).
55 I have described the relation between postmodern theory and evaluative criticism in Postmodern Value in Postmodern Surroundings, ed. Steven Eamshaw (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 23–37.
56 See Cain, The Crisis in Criticism, p. 2.
immediately accessible to the uneducated than literary texts, the professional discourse of cultural studies is just as esoteric as that of English. This inaccessibility is compounded by the necessary divisiveness of a higher education which is not universal. It is just as easy to argue for the value of literature from the Left as it is from the Right. The texts of high culture are frequently interpreted as subversive of the dominant ideology. And although some sub-cultural forms may be explicitly anarchic (punk rock), popular genres such as romantic fiction tend to ratify bourgeois or patriarchal ideology. Both disciplines appear to have failed in their traditional objectives: cultural studies has failed to produce an adequate number of critical, sceptical individuals to bring down capitalism. The ideal of literary studies as a social or moral educator, producing a sensitive morally responsible person and shared cultural values (propounded variously by Arnold, Leavis, and more recently Iris Murdoch and Martha Nussbaum) is equally under threat. One has only to look at the personal lives and moral conduct of literary critics and lecturers to see that refined literary sensibilities do not necessarily correlate with sensitive ethical conduct.

One of the most pressing criteria of value imposed on disciplines from outside is the economic: the present Government is interested in direct contributions by research and indirect contributions by graduates to the national economy and the university is concerned with the related level of government funding, other external funding from industry, and overseas recruitment. English wins over cultural studies in terms of its recruitment figures, and is aided in this by its position within secondary education, although funding for interdisciplinary study is increasing and cultural studies' profile is slowly being raised. However, the humanities in general are overshadowed by the hard sciences, which make a more easily quantifiable contribution to manufacturing and research industries, and which are therefore granted more government funding while government funding for the arts and humanities has been progressively squeezed and it holds little interest for industry. Because the social, political, and economic values of English and cultural studies are clearly unquantifiable, it is far easier to assess the relative value of the two disciplines on 'internal' criteria, namely the validity of their theories on empirical as well as metaphysical grounds and the viability as well as the ideological probity of their methods.

The forging of English's disciplinary identity was consequent on its separation from philology. However, this schism, precipitated by a post-war loathing of all things German, also deprived English of its methodological backbone. There were early quarrels over what should constitute the discipline—philology, literary history, or literary criticism, such eclecticism is typical of a discipline in its formative years (and of one in crisis). I. A. Richards's practical criticism, which had some pretensions to scientism,
provided the requisite systematic method and, combined with the American New Criticism, remained dominant in university English teaching until the 1970s.

After the founding of the CCCS, cultural studies' development of a disciplinary method was hindered by the diversity of its object. In his inaugural lecture at the CCCS, Hoggart spoke of 'film criticism; television and radio criticism; television drama . . . popular fiction of many kinds—crime, westerns, romance, science fiction, the academic and academic's detective story; . . . the press and journals of all kinds; strip cartoons; the language of advertising and public relations; popular songs and popular music in all their forms'. This diversity clearly daunted some and a later report from the CCCS still indicated a concern about the lack of focus and 'a problem—which we cannot in any way claim to have solved—as to what the limits of the field of study are'. By contrast, the practitioners of English at this time were not greatly exercised over the limits of their discipline, which had been clearly demarcated by the New Critics, particularly in the sphere of undergraduate teaching. Paul de Man endorses this view of pre-1960 American English: 'There were polemics, no doubt, and differences in approach that cover a wide spectrum of divergencies, yet the fundamental curriculum of literary studies as well as the talent and training expected for them were not being seriously challenged.'

As befits its diverse object, cultural studies was conceived of as interdisciplinary in opposition to monolithic (New Critical) English. Hall, writing in 1990, asserts that cultural studies was conceived as a critique of the humanities rather than as a discipline. Its methods were purloined from not only from English and history, but also from sociology, anthropology, and then linguistics and semiology. Because New Criticism was the dominant method in English, cultural studies' perception of English as monolithic was not radically awry. Although Leavis and the New Critics were interested in social issues, Simon Frith overstates the case somewhat when he asserts that 'English studies have always been multidisciplinary, drawing on social and art history, on philosophy, on sociology and political theory'.

While Continental theory struck at the empirical heart of English, on the face of it, cultural studies was predisposed towards the assimilation of theory in a way that English was not; as a relatively new discipline its methods would not yet have ossified into a rigid protocol. However, the initial reception of theory by cultural studies was almost as awkward as that of English because of a shared empiricism. According to Graeme Turner, the introduction of Continental theory caused a split in cultural studies between the homegrown 'culturalism' of people like Williams and Thompson and the 'textualist' modernisers, who followed the innovations of the structuralists and poststructuralists (see chapter

60 Quoted in Turner, Cultural Studies, p. 181.
62 Hall, 'The Emergence of Cultural Studies', p. 12.
63 Frith, Literary Studies as Cultural Studies', p. 7.
This disagreement informs Hoggart's emphatic disavowal of structuralist principles in 'Why I Value Literature': 'Language is not simply a range of conventional signs'. Turner states that the tension in cultural studies was resolved by Gramsci's theory of hegemony, although it seems more likely that the breach was healed by Althusser's structuralist Marxism. In an overview of language studies at the CCCS in the 1970s, Chris Weedon et al. write that Althusser's 'model of the social formation ... created the space within Marxism for serious consideration of the importance of signifying practices'. Semiotic theory, particularly that of Roland Barthes, had a lasting impact on cultural studies and informs the shift in attitude towards the mass media. Fulfilling Saussure's vision of a general science of signs, Barthes used the structuralist theory of language as an analytic paradigm for textual and visual cultural forms. Structuralism managed to out the culturalism of Hoggart, Williams, and Thompson, and remains foundational to contemporary (anti-foundational) cultural studies.

Contemporary theorists of cultural studies are generally more sanguine than their forebears about diversity and disciplinary fragmentation, both of which fit well with a postmodernist philosophy. Inglis, Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Warwick, blithely declares that 'culture' is 'a protean, not to say a vacuously inclusive word, which can be made to include pretty well everything that is thought and made by human beings'. Leitch contends that 'The polysemy of the word ['culture'] and the perennial contention surrounding the idea reveal less a failure to isolate a discrete object of inquiry than a recurring magnetic pull characteristic of both the concept and the project of studying culture.' John Frow asserts that the focus of his book, *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value*, is 'not on the reality of the Other but on the circumstances of its construction and on the "we" who play and are played by this language game'. However, these theorists of cultural studies are writing for their peers—other theorists—and it is unlikely that such vague and sometimes inane statements are made by those who petition for institutional support. The actual study of any cultural form requires the identification of an object.

Contemporary cultural studies is still congratulating itself on its disciplinary flexibility and attacking English for its intractability. Henry Giroux, who aims to teach scepticism by means of an anti-disciplinary cultural studies, asserts that academics 'must not define themselves exclusively as specific intellectuals' and recommends a 'pedagogy of lived experience and struggle, rather than as the empty, formalistic mastery of an academic
Douglas Kellner asserts that cultural studies has a 'superdisciplinary approach' and Inglis attacks 'discipline' (English) for being authoritarian and commends (cultural) 'studies' for its provisional and flexible nature:

Cultural Studies curse the conventional idea of an academic subject with its implication of scholarly method and clear conceptual framework. They deny the careful boundaries watchfully patrolled by subject specialists in order to prevent poachers and levellers breaking up the fencing and polluting the pure springs of learning.

Inglis makes use of the 'policeman' rhetoric discussed in chapter two, defining the disciplinary specialist as a sort of anal-retentive autocrat and cultural studies as romantic outlaw. Easthope presents a similar, although less rhetorically fanciful, picture of literary and cultural studies:

Beneath the overarching schema of the aesthetic . . . literary study abrogates for itself a place as a coherent, unified and separated discipline. No such strategy is possible for cultural studies, which draws on a range of knowledges conventionally discriminated into disciplines: semiotics, structuralism, narratology, art history, sociology, historical materialism, conventional historiography, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction.

The pictures of English painted by the promoters of cultural studies are hopelessly out of date. The 'range of knowledges', which Easthope refers to (most of which are not conventionally defined as 'disciplines'), have already been imported into English via Continental theory. Julie Klein, although wrongly ascribing textualism to English, has a better understanding of the nature of the contemporary discipline: 'Currently the study of literature is being energized by a wide spectrum of interests, ranging across psychoanalysis, Marxism, history, sociology, and a complex set of interpretive stances that have evolved from structuralism, post-structuralism, and expanding interest in "textualism"'.

Eagleton points out the number of methods 'involved in literary criticism' in order to attack English's view of itself as a coherent entity. He asserts that these methods 'have more in common with other "disciplines"—linguistics, history, sociology and so on—than they have with each other'.

Some resistance to the new interdisciplinarity in English is put up by entrenched disciplinarians. Bloom regards it as symptomatic of a lack of interest in the literary text:

Precisely why students of literature have become amateur political scientists, uninformed sociologists, incompetent anthropologists, mediocre philosophers, and overdetermined

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73 Easthope, Literary into Cultural Studies, p. 172.
75 Eagleton, Literary Theory, p. 197.
This is a curious response from a critic whose most famous work comprises a post-Freudian theory of literary influence. Richard Levin, another traditionalist, argues that the new interdisciplinarians simply adopt theories from other disciplines and proceed to apply these with no particular appreciation or knowledge of their disciplinary provenance. Levin cites various Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalytic theories as adopted by Coppélia Kahn, Catherine Belsey, and Toril Moi. An example of this kind of 'transference' is the criticism informed by Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory of gendered language acquisition. One Lacanian term which is enjoying widespread currency in literary criticism is the 'Other'. This concept has its origins in Hegel’s philosophy of consciousness and for Lacan 'If I have said that the unconscious is the discourse of the Other (with a capital O), it is in order to indicate the beyond in which the recognition of desire is bound up with the desire for recognition.' Frow follows Lacan when asserting 'I capitalize the word to indicate the making of a mythical One out of many'. Harriet Davidson states of The Waste Land, that

At the end of the poem, the desire to control desire through the ego and the unconscious disrupting force of desire remain. In redefining 'my lands' as a series of allusions, the subject seems to accept his desire as the desire of the other. But that Other is not benign; the great cultural achievements of our symbolic system are also scenarios of despair and destruction.

The Waste Land does address human despair, even alienation (in psychology, the sense that life has no meaning and that the world is mechanistic and unsympathetic), but Lacanian theory tends to overdetermine a literary reading and produce a formulaic criticism. Shoshana Felman writes of Balzac’s 'The Girl with the Golden Eyes': 'The principle of identity is subverted along with the principle of opposition when Henri discovers, in the recognition scene, that the Same is uncannily Other and the Other is uncannily the Same: what he had expected to be Other—his rival's face—is Same; what he had expected to be Same—his rival's sex—is Other.' The argument that New Criticism internalised theoretical precepts such as the organic unity of the text can also be applied to Lacanian criticism. Whenever the 'Other' is used in critical analysis, Lacan’s psycho-linguistic theory may implicitly be endorsed without being understood. The term has been over-used and consequently debased. Easthope regards The concept of the other [as a...
diffuse, flexible, a relatively "deep" term able to gain analytic purchase in parts of texts that the more traditional accounts of ideology and gender cannot reach. Without the capital 'O', it signifies more generally opposition but it is not the Heineken of literary criticism and is often simply used an alternative to New Critical paradox or ambiguity.

The new interdisciplinarity means that English can compete with cultural studies, but also renders it vulnerable to the charge of methodological incoherence. Eagleton sounds a warning note to this effect: 'Before we become too euphoric ... we should notice that there are certain problems .... For one thing, not all of these methods are mutually compatible.' Interdisciplinarity may also encourage superficiality and dilettantism over depth of knowledge. Hegel supports disciplinary specialisation in the Logic for precisely this reason:

> There is a host of interesting things in the world: Spanish poetry, chemistry, politics, and music are all very interesting and if any one takes an interest in them we need not find fault. But for a person in a given situation to accomplish anything, he must stick to one definite point, and not dissipate his forces in many directions. {80 n.}

Although Plato's subject matter was diverse, he also advocated rigorous philosophical training; in the Parmenides, the young Socrates is admonished: 'you are undertaking to define "beautiful", "just", "good", and other particular forms, too soon [. . .] you must make an effort and submit yourself, while you are still young, to a severer training in what the world calls idle talk and condemns as useless' (135c-d). Derrida himself underwent just such a training at the prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. Although Derrida, like Plato, ranges across disciplinary boundaries, he always brings a distinctly metaphysical inquiry to bear and where deconstruction is assimilated by English as a critical method, this distinctive philosophical aspect is lost (see chapter six). Interdisciplinary study need not result in 'dissipation'. The dictionary defines interdisciplinarity as 'of or between different branches of learning', foregrounding the obvious fact that disciplinarity is a precondition of interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinary study can produce work of genuine merit when different disciplinary perspectives are brought to bear on the same object. This kind of interdisciplinarity often takes the form of collaborative works between practitioners of different disciplines, such as Peter Lamarque and Stein Olsen's Truth, Fiction, and Literature. Like Wimsatt and Beardsley's 'The Intentional Fallacy', this text is the result of collaboration between a literary critic and a philosopher. The two disciplinary perspectives combine to produce a novel angle on the

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82 Easthope, Literary into Cultural Studies, p. 133.
83 Eagleton, Literary Theory, p. 198.
87 See Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Truth, Fiction, and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994)
philosophical nature of literature. But this kind of fruitful synthesis is not exemplified by the Lacanian criticism cited above.

While contemporary cultural studies tends to posit the value of a fragmented discipline, this value is endorsed by anti-foundational philosophies rather than by any practical considerations. Disciplinary methods are not written in stone, as the incorporation of Continental theory by both English and cultural studies shows, and disciplinary boundaries are not impermeable. However, the very possibility of a radically fragmented or deconstructed discipline is doubtful. Even on a metaphysical level, Derrida is unwilling to deconstruct notional boundaries out of existence and in the context of the academic institution and its practical constraints, deconstruction is effectively defused. In spite of deconstruction, according to George Levine, 'The disciplinary divisions are almost absolute. Scientists don't talk to philosophers of science; philosophers of science don't talk to literary theorists; literary theorists—while implying their right through the study of language and discourse to tread on everyone's turf—seem not to talk to anybody but like-minded theorists.'

The institutional pull towards discipline is evident in the fact that although interdisciplinarity was becoming institutionalised at the time that the CCCS was founded, particularly in the polytechnic sector, attracting increasing interest and funding from educational organisations, a 1971 report declared that 'Interdisciplinary work . . . is poorly placed and supported . . . in practice it runs up against the boundaries between disciplines.'

Inglis asserts that cultural studies is only able to take an iconoclastic stance against disciplinarity because it is new. The dissolution of the disciplinary system itself, as required by idealists such as Giroux, is extremely unlikely. Inevitably cultural studies is turning into a discipline and there are now departments of and degrees in cultural studies. Institutional requirements have also meant that cultural studies, like English, has found it expedient to formulate a coherent method.

This method is textualism which is approaching the one-time monolithic dominance of New Criticism in English. In a chapter entitled 'How to Do Cultural Studies', Inglis asserts that the object of cultural studies is 'to discern historical narrative wherever one can, and let those stories . . . intertwine as theories.' A rather more detailed programme for contemporary cultural studies is formulated by Easthope in Literary into Cultural Studies. This is designed as a positive act of 'political intervention' against the humanist presumptions of empirical literary study. However, he rejects the 'over-arching concept of hegemony' as an analytic tool since it subsumes textuality. He defines six terms of analysis: sign system, institution, ideology, gender, subject position, and 'the other'. These

89 Klein cites British organisations as UNESCO and the Society for Research into Higher Education in Interdisciplinarity, p. 36; quoted in Turner, Cultural Studies, p. 186.
90 Inglis, Cultural Studies, pp. 8–10.
91 Inglis, Cultural Studies, p. 234.
92 Easthope, Literary into Cultural Studies, p. 138.
93 Easthope, Literary into Cultural Studies, p. 129.
terms are 'imbricated' (overlap) so that none is 'foundational', although one or several may be prioritised in a particular analysis. This anti-foundational or decentred methodology, he claims, prevents the subject from claiming a position of superiority over the object of study: 'Nor, considered as a pedagogic practice, does the proposed methodology, though it remains critical, seek to maintain itself as a mode of academic discourse promising its subject a position of theoretical mastery.' To give weight to this claim, Easthope recruits deconstruction, asserting that his paradigm breaches 'that inside/outside opposition, installing its subject in a different position altogether'. This effectively forestalls the criticism that might be levelled against any metadiscourse by a poststructuralist critic—that it claims to stand outside its object in a quasi-scientific manner. However, Easthope's egalitarian ideal is hopelessly compromised by the fact that even the unwilling subject cannot escape the position of 'mastery' consequent on the proficiency in a critical model (even if it is decentred, deconstructive, and anti-foundational) and its subsequent application. The designer of the paradigm, although scrupulously pointing out his historical location, is even less able to escape this embarrassing position. In addition, to design a critical model for cultural studies radically undermines Easthope's disavowal of disciplinary identity.

Furthermore, in practice 'mastery' is exactly what the paradigm delivers. Easthope sets his paradigm to work on a film thriller, modernist novel, cigarette advertisement, and nineteenth-century ballad. Barthes asserts that linguistic and non-linguistic signification are analogous; Easthope asserts that the advertisement 'must work as text, at the level of signification'. Easthope concludes that in decoding the cryptic symbolism of the advert, 'My imaginary security is confirmed both by my identification with Western imperialism as it imposes itself on its Oriental other and the operation of decoding by which I master the exciting and pleasurable otherness of this textuality.' The stress on textuality leads Easthope to undertake a literary reading of an advertisement, that is one which explores its connotative complexity. Furthermore, his 'mastery' of the 'text' undermines the non-authoritarian claims he makes for his paradigm.

The analysis of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* prioritises sign system and gender. The modernist text is read quite sympathetically for the masculine/feminine discourse of Mr and Mrs Ramsay, modernist ambiguity, and the psychological drama played out between the Ramsays and their son, James. Less convincing, however, is the interpretation of Mr Ramsay's interior monologue on his own intelligence. This monologue reads:

> It was a splendid mind. For if thought is like the keyboard of a piano, divided into so many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order, then his splendid mind had no sort of difficulty in running over those letters one by one, firmly and accurately, until it had reached, say, the letter Q. He reached Q. Very few people in

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95 Easthope, *Literary into Cultural Studies*, p. 139.
97 Easthope, *Literary into Cultural Studies*, p. 156.
the whole of England ever reach Q . . . But after Q? What comes next? . . . Still, if he
could reach R it would be something . . . Q he was sure of. Q he could demonstrate. If
Q then is Q—R—Here he knocked his pipe out . . .

For Easthope, this 'enacts' Lacan’s structuralist psychoanalysis; Mr Ramsay’s ‘position of
security and mastery is confirmed by the seemingly transparent access signifier gives to the
signified [as Easthope’s is confirmed by decoding the Benson and Hedges advertisement]
but undermined when he finds he cannot bring the effortless movement forward along the
syntagmatic chain’. Although Easthope’s privileging of language is appropriate to the
modernist text, the poststructuralist analogy is redundant to explain a passage which more
simply depicts the sterile linear logic of the masculine imagination in opposition to Mrs
Ramsay’s more fertile feminine mind. Easthope also fails to address in any detail the
institutional and ideological context of modernism and his previous assertion that ‘formal
features are always ideological’ makes this omission unaccountable. The loss of the
disciplinary perspectives of sociology and history (Easthope himself was trained in
traditional English), informs a method which is as intransigent and as mystical as New
Criticisms.

Easthope’s model proves woefully inadequate when applied to non-literary cultural
forms. The paradigm formulated in Literary into Cultural Studies clearly underpins the
comparative analysis of one of Wordsworth’s Lucy poems and Madonna’s ‘Like a Prayer’ in
Wordsworth Now and Then:¹⁰¹

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!¹⁰²

Life is a mystery—
Everyone must stand alone.
I hear you call my name—
And it feels like home.

Chorus:

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Easthope, Literary into Cultural Studies, p. 150.
¹⁰² Easthope, Literary into Cultural Studies, p. 148.
¹⁰³ Antony Easthope, Wordsworth Now and Then: Romanticism and Contemporary Culture (Buckingham: Open University
Press, 1993).
When you call my name
It's like a little prayer.
I'm down on my knees—
I wanna take you there.
In the midnight hour
I can feel your power.
Just like a prayer
You know I'll take you there.103

In his reading, Easthope prioritises sign-system and the 'Other' and points to thematic links between the two texts. Both present a dream of self-fulfilment by means of an 'Other': for Wordsworth's speaker this Other is Lucy; for the singer of 'Like a Prayer', an unnamed addressee. Easthope also compares the voice: 'In both cases language is to be wholly expressive, full speech, completely rendering a self which is only itself.'104 Easthope foregrounds the ideological link—bourgeois individualism—between Romantic ideas of self-presence in Wordsworth's poem and the modern theme of isolation in 'Like a Prayer'. However, not only does he privilege ideological content over poetic form, he again fails to address significant context, simply ignoring many aspects of the production and consumption of popular culture.

A broader analysis of Madonna's cultural significance actually undermines Easthope's argument for coherent bourgeois ideology. Madonna's success is founded not on her lyrical art or musical talent but on her skill as self-publicist and arch-image constructor. She is famous for her serial self-creation, with reference to iconic cultural figures such as Marilyn Monroe ('Material Girl'), and cultural stereotypes of femininity ('Like a Virgin'). Like a mass-marketed Cindy Sherman, Madonna literally embodies not the 'myth' of coherent self-presence, but the postmodern *fragmented* self and constructed identity, thus contradicting Easthope's interpretation of the lyrics. Commentaries such as Camille Paglia's, which focus on Madonna's status as cultural icon and her manipulation of the virgin-whore stereotype, are likely to produce more germane conclusions on this level than a poststructuralist analysis of her pop songs. This is the view taken by Paglia herself, debunking cultural studies in no uncertain terms:

Current academic writing on Madonna . . . is of deplorably low quality. It is marked by inaccuracy, bathos, overinterpretation, overpoliticization, and grotesquely inappropriate jargon borrowed from pseudotechnical semiotics and moribund French theory. Under the misleading rubric 'cultural studies', intensely ambitious but not conspicuously talented, learned, or scrupulous humanities professors are scrabbling for position by exploiting pop culture and sensitive racial and sexual issues for their own professional purposes.105

It is clear that English methods still comprise a significant part of cultural studies' disciplinary make-up. However, Easthope's critical technique is inappropriate because he

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simply applies a version of the close reading technique to the diverse forms of popular culture. Eagleton asserts that 'literary theory can handle Bob Dylan just as well as John Milton', but the application of literary-critical methods to non-literary forms marks a failure to engage with significant contextual and formal differences in the object of analysis.®

Although Easthope mentions the fact that 'Like a Prayer' is not a poem but a song with accompanying video, this is merely an aside and does not inform his analysis to any significant extent. Although song lyrics, unlike a cigarette advertisement, are a textual form, to 'read' a pop song in this way is to neglect significant differences. The practice of referring to non-literary cultural forms, visual or aural media, even events as texts, is misnomeric, the product of an undiscriminating textualism born of structuralist semiotics. Video, pop music, film, dance, fashion, are not written or literary texts and warrant specific forms of analysis reflecting their technical composition and cultural/social context, rather than a blanket semiotic or literary approach. The methodologies developed by one discipline, such as English, may be inappropriate or useless when applied to the objects and endemic problems of another. The accessibility of popular culture does not justify the waiving of specialist knowledge and forms of analysis. The yoking together of disparate cultural forms actually extends the realm of literary studies manifesting the colonising impulse more often imputed to English. Easthope concedes that 'there is nothing inherent in the intellectual schema which would stop the kind of paradigm, method and object of study I've advocated leading to no more than the cultural imperialism Fish foresees, no more than the growth and perpetuation of a revised form of literary studies'.®

Colonisation is an appropriate metaphor in that imported infrastructures have often proved both inadequate and inappropriate in a different context. The ideal of early cultural studies as an interdisciplinary field should not be forgotten. Cultural studies would function better as an umbrella term, like the humanities, operating as a faculty, centre, or field, supporting interdisciplinary research in the arts and social sciences.®

Although cultural studies has an anti-disciplinary rationale, it has already been institutionally validated as a discipline and because of its overlap with English represents a real threat since institutions are unlikely to have the resources to support two departments. English should answer the criticisms of cultural studies where relevant, although criticisms of monolithic imperialism are clearly unjust. Easthope makes a dismissive reference to the 'conventional literary studies account' of To the Lighthouse which would mistakenly privilege the unified text over gendered discourse, but this is again founded on an outmoded conception of English. English is already capable of producing a reading which surpasses his in terms of addressing historical context and ideology, as well as sign-system and gender, but is clearly in a state of methodological confusion. Many of those who theorise and teach English are aware of the need for a disciplinary overhaul. In The Crisis

106 Eagleton, Literary Theory, p. 205.
107 Easthope, Literary into Cultural Studies, p. 178.
108 Although Birmingham now offers undergraduate degrees in cultural studies, the CCCS initially supported only postgraduate work.
In Criticism, William Cain argues for a reformed English studies which 'draw[s] on many disciplines, dispute[s] the barriers between the literary and non-literary, contest[s] the opposition between the canonical and non-canonical, and exhibit[s] critical skills in a variety of culturally oriented ways'. This is too vague, betrays the influence of metaphysical deconstruction, and goes too far towards cultural studies. Leavis's agenda in The Common Pursuit is still germane:

> to insist that literary criticism is, or should be, a specific discipline of intelligence is not to suggest that a serious interest in literature can confine itself to the kind of intensive local analysis associated with 'practical criticism'—to the scrutiny of the 'words on the page' in their minute relations, their effects of imagery and so on: a real literary interest is an interest in man, society and civilization, and its boundaries cannot be drawn; the adjective is not a circumscribing one.

Adjectives may not circumscribe the boundaries of literary criticism but institutions do. In Politics and Value in Literary Studies, Guy and Small argue more pragmatically that English must stop regarding itself as a special case and compete with other disciplines; it should 'possess a clearly defined object of study, a set of specialist practices appropriate to explaining it, a theory (or theories) of those practices, and ways of evaluating theories'. English need neither uphold New Critical methods, canonical literature, and conservative values for their own sake, nor accept literary theory uncritically. What is required is a mediation between the two extremes.

> Literary studies should reject the more impracticable ideals of postmodernism such as 'non-mastery' and continue to promote knowledge acquisition and competence in disciplinary methods (as well as the institutionally required 'transferable skills'). It should re-establish itself as a discipline with a distinct and coherent methodology, while selecting what is relevant from postmodern theory and engaging with the world outside the text. This model for contemporary literary studies is formulated as a strategic response to Easthope's aggressive cultural studies, although actually it overlaps with his paradigm because of the historical connections between the two disciplines and the fact that post-New Critical English has incorporated alternative theories and approaches. Where the literary studies paradigm differs most obviously from Easthope's model is in citing a foundational practice, that is close reading and formal analysis. The literary critic should also be equipped to analyse the historical context and ideological content of the literary text but should consider social identity not only as a rhetorical construction, as textualist cultural studies tends to do, but also in relation to political, economic, and social conditions and historical events. The English degree associated with the proposed paradigm would require a competence in grammar, rhetoric, and composition after the traditional American model. But while this would mean that the student possessed the

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109 Cain, The Crisis in Criticism, p. xvii.
111 Guy and Small, Politics and Value in Literary Studies, p. 156.
requisite skills to analyse 'government proclamations, diplomatic communiqués and
advertising copy', as Easthope recommends, and to undertake an authoritative comparative
analysis of literary and non-literary text, practical disciplinary constraints and historical
convention mean that the literary text would take priority over the non-literary.112
Although an understanding of the complex relation between literature and popular fiction
is relevant to English, the high cultural form would also be privileged. English should
retain its traditional disciplinary identity and object, expand to include popular literature,
but reject the analysis of non-textual forms with which neither it nor contemporary cultural
studies is equipped to cope. Although the historical parallel drawn between early
twentieth-century English and contemporary cultural studies suggests that English will
eventually be ousted, the coherence between English and cultural studies and the current
transformation of English suggest that the two disciplines may instead merge. While the
future of English will depend upon institutional funding, policies and politics, its
reformation as a viable and coherent literary studies may go some way towards preventing
its gradual mutation into textualist cultural studies.

112 Easthope, Literary into Cultural Studies, p. 177.
7

Poetics and Politics

For poetry makes nothing happen.

W. H. Auden, 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats'

For academics in France, Britain, and America, the 1960s was a decade marked by the high-profile political activism which has ever since been remembered with nostalgia by left-wing intellectuals in the humanities. Since this period, particularly in Britain and America, there has been a concerted attempt by these same intellectuals to politicise literary studies which had formerly been dominated by the ostensibly politically neutral New Criticism. The politicising impetus has been successful in that the Left now represents the orthodox, though not unchallenged, political position for humanities intellectuals in Britain and America. The shift from formalist criticism to ideological critique has been linked with the assimilation of the poststructuralist theory, which was explicitly developed, but expressly failed, to facilitate the social revolution predicted by Marx. Although some twenty years later the full-blooded revolutionary is now a rare political and intellectual animal, politicised literary and cultural studies still claim to reach outside the academy and assist in political and social change. It is argued below that precisely because of the continuing influence of poststructuralist theory these claims remain unjustified.

Marx has been the single most influential figure on the Western intellectual Left in the twentieth century. One reason for his enduring appeal for humanities intellectuals may be the fact that by training Marx was a philosopher rather than an economist. This also explains the strand of philosophical idealism in his political and economic theory. Marx's writings have always been informed by the Hegelianism which he first encountered when studying for his doctorate at the University of Berlin. Marx took a critical view of Hegelianism; in The German Ideology (with Engels), he described the contemporary philosophical idealism as 'the putrescence of the absolute spirit'. In The Poverty of Philosophy, he castigated 'the metaphysicians' and criticised Proudhon for reducing the dialectic to its 'meanest proportions', affirmation, negation, and negation of negation. Marx and Engels always stressed their prioritisation of actual material conditions over abstract theories: 'The premises from which we start are not arbitrary ones; not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity, and the material conditions under which they live . . . .

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These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way. This claim was to a certain extent justified (see below) and informs Bertrand Russell's accusation that (for a philosopher) Marx 'is too practical, too much wrapped up in the problems of his time'. It nevertheless remains that case that for a political theorist Marx's interpretation of and predictions for society were overdetermined by the Hegelian dialectic: 'is it at all surprising that a society founded on the opposition of classes should culminate in brutal contradiction, the shock of body against body, as its final denouement?' This reliance on a philosophical model caused Marx to misread contemporary historical events. In 1848 there was an uprising in Paris as the working-class National Guard forced the abdication of King Louis Philippe and the formation of a provisional government. In June 1849 Marx wrote to Engels: 'never has a colossal eruption of the revolutionary volcano been more imminent than it is in Paris today.' But although the incipient revolution fizzled out later the same month, faith in the dialectic allowed Marx to interpret this failure as merely one small step in the creation of the necessary conditions for the inevitable revolution. In 1850 he wrote in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*:

> only the June defeat has created all the conditions under which France can seize the initiative of the European revolution. Only after being dipped in the blood of the June insurgents did the tricolour become the flag of the European Revolution—the red flag! And we exclaim: the revolution is dead! Long live the revolution.

The overthrow of capitalism by the working class in Britain predicted by Marx and Engels in the nineteenth century never materialised in Western Europe, while revolutions later took place in industrially underdeveloped Russia and feudal China. The fact that communism subsequently collapsed in the U.S.S.R. could be accounted for by the fact that a vital stage of the dialectic (the antithesis, capitalism) was left out.

In spite of an indigenous Left politics which was characterised by gradualism and moderation, British intellectuals were impressed by Marx's political theory and also by the prospect of communism. The Communist Party of Great Britain had been founded in 1920, and intellectual Marxism flourished in the 1930s with the Left Book Club and affiliated journal the *Left Review*. The leading poets of this decade are also well known for their communist sympathies, propagandist poetry, and, in some cases, active support of the communists in the Spanish Civil War.
Moscow show trials but there were already dissenting voices. George Orwell, who had also taken part in the Spanish Civil War, was already aware of Stalinist atrocities in 1939. In his essay 'Inside the Whale' he described communism as the 'patriotism of the deracinated', and instanced the 'purges, secret police, summary executions, imprisonment without trial, etc., etc.' However, according to Michael Kenny, it was the revelations after Stalin's death in 1953 and the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 which engendered a profound political and ethical crisis for communists around the world and caused the exodus of intellectuals from the Party. In Britain these intellectuals included E. P. Thompson, Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart. They rejected Party orthodoxy and formed a breakaway movement, subsequently labelled the 'New Left'. This New Left occupied the political ground between communism and social democracy and had its own 'organ', the New Left Review. In 'Revolution', Thompson rejects both violent revolution and Fabian gradualism, suggesting that 'It is possible to look forward to a peaceful revolution in Britain, with far greater continuity in social life and institutional forms than would have seemed likely even 20 years ago'. In the first issue of New Left Review (1960), Hall set out its aims in an editorial which was gradualist rather than revolutionary in tone. He demanded that 'The humanist strengths of socialism... must be developed in cultural and social terms, as well as in economic and political.' He also sought to 'bring to life a genuine dialogue between intellectual and industrial workers'. The link between theory and political action is made explicit: 'We have spoken of the New Left as a “movement of ideas”: the phrase suggests both the place we accord to socialist analysis and polemic, and the natural growth of ideas, through people, into socialist activity.' However, Thompson was more emphatic that theory alone was not enough: 'it is necessary to find out the breaking-point, not by theoretical speculation alone, but in practice by unrelenting reforming pressures in many fields.' The moderate political position was complemented by the 'sensible' empiricism favoured by Williams, Hoggart, and Thompson. In the 1960s Britain was enjoying a post-war economic boom, but this apotheosis of capitalism was anathema to the New Left. Kenny reports the dismay of a contemporary at the New Left Review's glossy paper, 'a selling out to the consumer society that we all against'. In spite of this rampant consumerism, the journal ran into financial difficulties, but was rescued in 1962 when the editorship passed from Hall to Perry Anderson.

Stuart Hall, editorial, p. 2. 
Kenny, The First New Left, p. 27.
The relation between discipline and political position in the humanities at this time is emphasised by the fact that it was New Left personnel, Hoggart and Hall, who founded the CCCS at Birmingham in 1964 (see chapter six). Although Williams had been appointed to the Cambridge faculty of English in 1961, the general exodus of the left-wing to cultural studies in the 1960s meant that the politicising of English was retarded by a good decade. In America, which had its own New Left, there was a similar split between political critique and the dominant formalist literary criticism although this did not produce a 'breakaway' discipline of cultural studies. Mark Jancovich has recently defended early New Criticism—John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren—by pointing out that the Southern Agrarians were critical of industrial capitalism. This is true, as is the fact that these critics were interested, like Leavis, in the relationship between literature and society. However, the basic tenor of their cultural criticism was reactionary as, again like Leavis, they harked back to a pre-industrial way of life—the term 'organic unity' resonates with this nostalgia. Furthermore, while they were concerned with the state of the nation, they actively disparaged reference to social, historical, and political context in literary criticism and this prohibition continued to inform American criticism through the 1960s.

The New Left had taken its name from France's nouvelle gauche, associated with the newspaper, France Observateur, and its editor Claude Bourdet. The political context in France, however, was entirely different from that in Britain and America, since communism was a real political option; the French Parti Communiste Français (PCF), which had also been founded in 1920, was relatively hard-line Stalinist for a Western European party, but unlike its British equivalent had achieved significant electoral success. France also preceded Britain and America in infusing its literary criticism with radical Left politics. The advance guard of this literary-political movement was the journal Tel Quel, which was also instrumental in the development of the coherent intellectual movement, subsequently labelled 'poststructuralism'. When Tel Quel was founded in 1960 (the same year as New Left Review) it was primarily concerned with developments in literature—the nouveau roman, Alain Robbe-Grillet's experiments with literary language. However, as the decade proceeded, it increasingly engaged with contemporary political issues. In May 1968 the famous student protests and sit-ins in Paris spread to factory workers, resulting in widespread disruption and a general strike. In the same month, Tel Quel declared its political commitment to this struggle and outlined a course of supportive 'textual' action which would 'bring the social revolution to its conclusion in the realm of...
language. This action comprised the development of a branch of Marxist-Leninist theory, which would integrate philosophy, linguistics, semiology, psychoanalysis, literature, and history of science, and would be capable of avoiding the pattern of a teleologico-transcendental humanistic and psychologistic mystification, the abettor of the terminal obscuration of the bourgeois state. For the perpetrators of poststructuralist theory to accuse another body of 'terminal obscuration' is a case of the pot calling the kettle black. The May 'revolution' failed in spite of its intellectual support because the workers were neither organised nor coherent in their demands and public support waned. General de Gaulle diffused the situation by dissolving the National Assembly, the PCF supported parliamentary democracy, and in the subsequent election there was a drop in support for both communist and non-communist Left and a decisive Gaullist majority. The next issue of Tel Quel opened not with a rallying editorial, but with an article by Julia Kristeva on semiology in the USSR.

There are illuminating comparisons to be drawn between Tel Quel and New Left Review, not least the inverse ratio between theoretical coherence and direct political action. Since 1962, under the editorship of Anderson, New Left Review had been moving away from the empiricism of Thompson et al. to a more sophisticated Marxism which drew upon the European tradition of Lukács, Gramsci, Sartre, Marcuse, Adorno, and Althusser. This caused a schism between 'old' and 'new' Left; in 1963 Williams wrote disappointingly in an internal memorandum that 'we strain to catch the idioms of the Third World, or Paris, of Poland, of Milan'. Thompson publicly attacked Anderson and Tom Nairn in the Socialist Register (1965) and Anderson responded in New Left Review by reaffirming his commitment to European theory and accusing Thompson of ignorance, insularity and a 'pseudo-empiricism'. It is clear that since the first editorial, the revolutionary fervour of the journal had also increased. New Left Review celebrated the Paris failure with a special issue in which Anderson wrote that 'the May events vindicated the fundamental socialist belief that the industrial proletariat is the revolutionary class of advanced capitalism. It has, at the same stroke, made indisputable the vital revolutionary role of intellectuals, of all generations.' This misplaced faith in the inexorable dialectical movement of history towards revolution matches Marx's some 120 years before and also indicates the assimilation of Gramsci's intellectual-flattering theory. For Gramsci, 'the study of the role and function of the intellectual is intimately related to the core of revolutionary strategy since a working-class victory can be assured only when working-class hegemony has been achieved over the whole of society'. But while Thompson had

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24 Jean-Louis Baudry et al., 'La Révolution ici maintenant', Tel Quel 54 (1986), p. 3. Translation by John Burgass.
25 Baudry et al., 'La Révolution ici maintenant', p. 4.
26 Quoted in Kenny, The First New Left, p. 31.
advocated political activism and is known for his involvement with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the new New Left largely confined itself to textual action. Ironically, Anderson himself admitted in *Considerations on Western Marxism*, that since 1925, the European tradition (which he had defended in *New Left Review*), had effectively severed the link between theory and practice which is essential to Marxist thought (see chapter five). Post-Marxists had indeed lost faith in the unity of theory and practice; Adorno wrote that 'Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed.  

The apparent discrepancy between thought and deed for both French and British intellectual Left can be attributed to theory. According to Patrick ffrench, Gramsci’s notion of ideology ‘permitted a link between cultural practice and political practice’ for *Tel Quel*. For Gramsci, ideology was the world-view expressed in and reinforced by language and culture, which maintained the hegemony of the ruling class. As Tony Bennett points out, the early twentieth-century European theorists ‘were either, after an initial period of political involvement, divorced from concrete political pursuits, concerning themselves with theoretical issues . . . or, from the very beginning, had been concerned with Marxism in a purely theoretical sense’. Poststructuralist theory reinforced the political significance of language by suggesting that the subversion of hegemonic language was an inherently revolutionary activity. While *Tel Quel* and the New Left reinforced this theoretical link between language, culture, and politics, Gramsci’s notion of ideology encouraged the substitution of political action with cultural critique. Terry Eagleton suggests that French literary theory was born of the failure of 1968: ‘Unable to break the structures of state power, post-structuralism found in [sic] possible instead to subvert the structures of language.’ The intellectuals’ disillusion with communism found expression in the deconstruction of Marxist theory. Jean-François Lyotard indicates his suspicion of the Marxist metanarrative in *Economie Libidinale* (1974): ‘It is clear that . . . European capitalism cannot but collapse soon. (We know that it is not so simple . . . ).’ The gap between the doctrinaire politics of the early twentieth-century intellectuals and the rather less respectful poststructuralist approach is clear in this text:

We must come to take Marx as if he were a writer, an author full of affects, take his text as a madness and not as a theory, we must succeed in pushing aside his theoretical barrier and stroking his beard without contempt and without devotion, no longer the

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33 For example, Jacques Lacan’s revision of Freud suggests that gender positions are constructed and patriarchal society supported by language. In issue 51 of *New Left Review* (1968) both Gramsci and Lacan were *introduced* to the readers.  
false neutrality which Merleau-Ponty advised in the past... no, stroke his beard as a complex libidinal volume, reawakening his hidden desire and ours along with it.\textsuperscript{24}

Lyotard explains his rhetorical tactics thus: 'Our politics is of flight, primarily, like our style'.\textsuperscript{27} Significantly, Lyotard closes his tract with what appears to be a call to inaction, a justification of the Marxist intellectual (and a defence of glossy paper):

We need not leave the place where we are, we need not be ashamed to speak in a 'state-funded' university, write, get published, go commercial... What would be interesting would be to stay put, but quietly seize every chance to function as good intensity-conducting bodies. No need for declarations, manifestos, organizations, provocations, no need for exemplary actions. Set dissimulation to work on behalf of intensities. Invulnerable conspiracy... with neither programme nor project, deploying a thousand cancerous tensors in the bodies of signs. We invent nothing, that's it, yes, yes, yes, yes.\textsuperscript{25}

While Lyotard clearly endorsed the political effectiveness of his rhetorical critique at the time of writing, he later publicly dismissed this text—a judicious if craven gesture as poststructuralist practice had by that time been proved utterly ineffectual.

This flight from politics to poetics also characterises the work of poststructuralist feminist Hélène Cixous, for whom 'To fly/steal is woman's gesture, to steal into language to make it fly.'\textsuperscript{39} In 'Sorties', Cixous investigates the patriarchal nature of language and advocates, in order to undermine this system and achieve the revolution in language, particular modes of speaking and writing, which she identifies as feminine. To define the feminine is already to violate its principle; feminine writing 'will never be able to be theorised, enclosed, coded... But it will always exceed the discourse governing the phallocentric system.'\textsuperscript{40} Cixous nevertheless allows that even within this system 'one can begin to speak. Begin to point out some effects'.\textsuperscript{41} The strategic practice of \textit{écriture féminine} is apparent in Cixous' own writing ('enactment') and involves the disruption of various linguistic codes by means of characteristic deconstructive style: 'Voice! That, too, is launching forth and effusion without return. Exclamation, cry, breathlessness, yei, cough, vomit, music. Voice leaves, Voice loses. She leaves. She loses.'\textsuperscript{42}

In an 'Exchange' with Verena Conley (1984), Cixous also asserted that \textit{écriture féminine} was politically effective: 'To teach upon feminine writing frees, liberates language, word usage. Of course, one cannot imagine a political liberation without a linguistic liberation; that is all very banal.'\textsuperscript{43} In the same interview, however, Cixous explicitly extricates herself from politics and the 'real': 'I would lie if I said that I am a
political woman, not at all. In fact, I have to assemble two words, political and poetic. Not to lie to you, I must confess that I put the accent on poetic. I do it so that the political does not repress, because the political is . . . so rigorously real that sometimes I feel like consoling myself by crying and shedding poetic tears.\footnote{Cixous, 'An Exchange', pp. 139–40. In a later ‘conversation’ (interviews are obviously patriarchal) she asserts that ‘I found the only way I could deal with politics—poetically—was by changing genres’. Cixous, ‘Conversations with Hélène Cixous and members of the Centre d’Études Féministes in Writing Differences: Readings from the Seminar of Hélène Cixous’, ed. Susan Sellers (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988), p. 153.} According to Conley, Cixous left the feminist publishing house Des Femmes in 1982 'in order to enjoy greater poetic freedom, which, she felt, had been reduced by pressures and interpretations of the relation between the poetic and the political'.\footnote{Conley, Hélène Cixous, p. ix.}

Cixous makes similar claims for the Brazilian poet, Clarice Lispector, which depend on the conflation of the ethical and the political. Cixous maintains that Lispector's 'approach is political . . . it is the living space, the betweenus [sic], that we must take care to keep. Having the humility, the generosity, not to jump over it, not to avoid it.'\footnote{Hélène Cixous, 'Clarice Lispector The Approach: Letting Oneself (be) Read (by) Clarice Lispector. The Passion According to C. L.', trans. Sarah Cornell and Susan Sellers in 'Coming to Writing' and Other Essays, ed. Deborah Jenson (London: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 62.} This is because Lispector's writing demonstrates 'a patience for the egg, a patience for a rose . . . . Patiences are birth-givers. A patience pays attention'.\footnote{Cixous, 'Coming to Writing', p. 66.} Ideas of receptivity to the 'Other' and care for mundane objects link Cixous's 'criticism' with Heidegger's ontology (see chapter one), although Cixous elsewhere takes care to indicate her difference from this philosophical tradition: 'I know the Heideggerian problematic . . . but I have no obligation toward that kind of thinking, toward this kind of rigor.'\footnote{Cixous, 'An Exchange', p. 138.} Sorge, as a kind of midwife to Being (as essence or presence), informs 'The Approach'; as Donna Stanton puts it, 'the return of flowers . . . and of the lost fruits—Eve's apple, Clarice's orange—requires an obstetric act of deliverance'.\footnote{Domna C. Stanton, 'Difference on Trial: A Critique of the Maternal Metaphor in Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva', in The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy, ed. Jeffer Allos and Iris Marion Young (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 165.} In spite of Cixous's postmodern suspicion of metaphysical systems, it is possible to extrapolate a principle of responsiveness to difference (the other), an ethics of alterity, from her work. She rather circuitously affirms the ethical-political link in the same way as she asserts the poetic-political connection: 'It is the same thing, though it depends on what one means by political. In the sense of management, it becomes a technical question which in any event refers back to a political question. Otherwise, for me, there is only ethics, nothing else.'\footnote{Cixous, 'An Exchange', p. 152.} However, 'The Approach' is literary appreciation in the literal sense—Cixous is rejoicing in her sense of affinity with Lispector—and its relevance to any 'rigorously real' politics is obscure. In theory, feminism, like any positive political movement with particular concrete goals, and the anti-teleological, anti-foundational, and anti-positivist philosophy of deconstruction, make uneasy bedfellows. In practice the conflict is minimised as Cixous gets carried away with her poetic tears, the...
ecstatic discourse of écriture féminine, and leaves quotidian discourse and the 'rigorously real' behind. It is precisely this esoteric style and language which alienates many readers and thereby contains the subversive potential of écriture féminine firmly within the academy.

Economic analysis, the foundation of many political theories, was universally derided by the poststructuralist 'poets'. Lyotard, Derrida, and Cixous attempted to undermine both the scientific pretensions and disciplinary identity of economics. In 'From Restricted to General Economy' (1967), Derrida considers the economy of 'Hegelian speculation', that is, Hegel's philosophical system. According to Derrida, Hegel is a philosopher who considers that everything can be made sense of, or turned to profit, by means of the Aufhebung (see chapter one). Derrida, however, turns the Aufhebung against Hegel by suggesting that its radical indeterminacy (it signifies both conservation and negation) means that it is one term which cannot be turned to semantic profit. Derrida rejects this 'economy' and is at pains to disassociate différence from the Aufhebung: 'Contrary to the metaphysical, dialectical, "Hegelian" interpretation of the economic movement of différence, we must conceive of a play in which whoever loses wins, and in which one loses and wins on every turn.' In the Aufhebung, the economic law of absolute reappropriation of the absolute loss, is a family concept. And so political. The political opposes itself to the familial while accomplishing it. So the political economy is not one region of the general onto-logic; it is coextensive with it.

In interview, Derrida foregrounds the fact that he is preoccupied with economics as a metaphysical discourse rather than an empirical science per se: 'economic discourse is founded on logocentric philosophical discourse and remains inseparable from it.' The function of deconstruction is to 'teach science that it is ultimately an element of language . . . despite its attempts to justify itself as an exclusively "objective" or "instrumental" discourse'. Deconstruction, however, is an equally restricted system and what happens in both 'From Restricted to General Economy' and Glas is that Derrida turns the Aufhebung

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2 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 133.
4 Derrida, "Deconstruction and the Other", p. 115.
and the concept of economy to philosophical profit by using them to illustrate his theories
of unstable reference and co-implicated oppositions.

Lyotard is similarly scornful of political economy which he describes as the "left's"
illusion par excellence.\(^{56}\) Anticipating The Postmodern Condition, he describes science
itself as 'at first glance research into efficiency, that is, into power, and on the second
merely the production of strange and efficient fictions. Not only is there no "economic
thing", there is no "scientific thing", either.\(^{57}\) He undertakes a performative philosophical
exposition, describing Chinese (Taoist) eroticism and Hegel's 'sublation' (the Aufhebung)
as illustrative of the same desire for augmentation which Derrida ascribes to profit-making
philosophy: 'desire as affirmative force becomes reserve and institution'.\(^{58}\) Unlike Derrida,
Lyotard refers to events in economic history such as the Wall Street crash of 1929. He
cites Jacques Nérot's, La Crise de 1929 as the source of the following facts: 'from June
1918 to December 1920 the value of the commercial portfolio of the Federal Reserve
System rises from $435 to $1578 million. In parallel, the percentage of gold reserves falls;
at the start of 1921, it is at 42.4 per cent, when the legal minimum is then 40 per cent'.\(^{59}\)
However, economic statistics are similarly turned to rhetorical profit as the relation
between gold and paper currency and the process of inflation provide neat metaphors for
poststructuralist theories of unstable reference and plural signification.

Cixous uses the same monetary metaphor while eulogising Lispector: 'There is a
slow, cosmic time there, that of the seed and its fruit, of the chicken and the egg, of
gestation, and of dripping honey. With monetary "signs", we get away from this time and
its space. We go crazy in signs . . . .'\(^{60}\) In 'Sorties', the feminine economy is intimately
related to the feminine libido, both of which oppose their masculine counterparts.
Patriarchal economy is capitalist: 'what he wants, whether on the level of cultural or of
personal exchanges, whether it is a question of capital or affectivity (or of love, of
jouissance)—is that he gain more masculinity: plus-value of virility, authority, power,
money, or pleasure'.\(^{61}\) The feminine economy is altogether less acquisitive: 'She too, with
open hands, gives herself—pleasure, happiness, increased value, enhanced self-image.
But she doesn't try to "recover her expenses"'.\(^{62}\) The Hegelian dialectic is initially disparaged
for its stake in the masculine economy; Cixous decries 'its syllogistic system, the subject's
going out into the other in order to come back to itself'.\(^{63}\) This idealistic depiction of
feminine generosity is undermined by the fact that following the description of the feminine

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\(^{56}\) Lyotard, Libidinal Economy, p. 238.
\(^{57}\) Lyotard, Libidinal Economy, p. 215.
\(^{58}\) Lyotard, Libidinal Economy, p. 223.
\(^{59}\) Lyotard, Libidinal Economy, p. 230.
\(^{60}\) Lyotard, Libidinal Economy, pp. 239–40. Patricia Waugh remarks that the 'Big Bang' in the London stock market of the
1980s meant that Post-structuralist commentators could feel vindicated in their analyses of late capitalism as an economy of
p. 19. See also Terry Eagleton, Discourse and discourse: Theory in the space between culture and capitalism, TLS (15 July 1994),
p. 3.
\(^{61}\) Cixous, 'Sorties', p. 87.
\(^{62}\) Cixous, Sorties, p. 87.
\(^{63}\) Cixous, Sorties, p. 78.
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economy as one which rejects (negates) profit, écriture féminine is advertised as paying large dividends: 'the act that will . . . return her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her vast bodily territories kept under seal'. Such discrepancies, excused in theory by the double bind, could perhaps be forgiven if écriture féminine constituted a truly subversive, that is profitable, strategy for female emancipation, but it does not. Subscription to the feminine economy appears to prohibit its backers from the deliberate accumulation of financial wealth and reproduces rather than revises an ideal of female self-sacrifice.

The claim to political effectivity and relevance made by Tel Quel survived both the failure of the Paris uprising and subsequent blows to Marxist good faith, although it had to be modified. After 1968 Tel Quel had turned hopefully to Maoism, whose concept of cultural revolution was extremely congenial. However, a visit to China in 1974 revealed the actual conditions of the regime and produced further disillusion. Julia Kristeva dates her turn away from politics to psychoanalysis from this point: 'I thought that it would be more honest for me not to engage politically but to try to be helpful or useful in a narrow field, where the individual life is concerned'. In spite of this renunciation of political activism, in 'A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident', she asserts: 'It is the task of the intellectual, who has inherited those "unproductive" elements of our modern technocratic society which used to be called the "humanities", not just to produce this right to speak and behave in an individual way in our culture, but to assert its political value.' For Kristeva, dissidence itself was critical thought turned on language and institutions and the effects of this thought are 'multiple sublations of the unnameable, the unrepresentable, the void'. In The Postmodern Condition (1979), Lyotard makes similarly vague but positive assertions of the political use of cultural critique: 'Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name.' Since Marx had been scathing about 'the metaphysicians' in The Poverty of Philosophy, it may be that the metaphysicians were paying him back by stroking his beard (deconstructing his political and economic theory), though ostensibly 'without contempt'. But although social, economic, and political change meant that Marxist theory was in need of radical revision, it is highly debatable whether poststructuralism represented any improvement on 'vulgar' Marxism. The effect of poststructuralism outside the academy, even outside the humanities, was extremely limited. The critique of metaphysics, Derrida's in particular, has had some effect on philosophy because it operates within that discipline. However, the attack on political economy and science has left these discourses largely intact because it works at the same level of metaphysical speculation. Although the

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64 Cixous, 'Sorties', p. 97.
65 Quoted in The Kristeva Reader, p. 7.
66 The Kristeva Reader, p. 294.
67 The Kristeva Reader, p. 300.
68 Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi; (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); first published as La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir, 1979, p. 82.
linguistic dissidents acted in good faith, their rhetorical strategies have been ignored by both public and policy makers.

The political Right was dominant from 1979 in both Britain and America. The Right was represented in the universities and the media in America by the 'neoconservatives', but the literary Left was nevertheless consolidating its position within the humanities. Poststructuralism found its way into England via the Atlantic rather than the Channel (Derrida's 'Structure, Sign and Play' was first delivered as a lecture at Johns Hopkins University in 1966). By the mid- to late 1970s, literary theory from France was being translated into English (although generally without its original political baggage). At the same time, Marxism began to get a foothold in British literary studies, thus ending cultural studies' monopoly. During the 1980s literary studies began to diversify, supplementing feminist studies with black and gay studies—all explicitly politicised discourses with radical agendas. Deconstruction fits neatly with the identity politics of these movements and has contributed to the elevation of the 'other' or difference to a founding principle. Terry Eagleton puts the same interpretation on American poststructuralism as he does on the Parisians: the 'reason for making a fetish of discourse is the political paralysis of the North American left which must direct into the sign what it cannot realize in reality.' Nevertheless, its political force has been persistently trumpeted. In Criticism in the Wilderness, Geoffrey Hartman asserts that 'The revisionists [deconstructionists] challenge the attitude that condemns the writer of criticism or commentary to nonliterary status and a service function. To that extent they are a political movement that attacks the isolation of the critic: isolation within the university and from broader, more public issues.' The deconstruction of theory and practice, inside and outside, underpinned this assumption of political relevance. However, Hartman is infamous for his rhetorical flights and textual thefts and in Criticism in the Wilderness political relevance is stated but never substantiated.

The American Marxist Fredric Jameson also follows the poststructuralists, especially Lyotard, in The Political Unconscious in seeking a revolution which involves 'the liberation of desire and of libidinal transfiguration'. However, the sense of impotence induced in the western post-Marxist comes to the fore in Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism' when he identifies the double bind of capitalism: 'even overtly political interventions ... are all somehow secretly disarmed and reabsorbed by a system of which they themselves might well be considered a part, since they can achieve no
distance from it. Jameson argues that whereas the 'psychic experience' of modernism was dominated by categories of time, postmodernism is dominated by categories of space. The action he endorses is cerebral rather than concrete: 'The political form of postmodernism, if there is any, will have as its vocation the intervention and projection of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as a spatial scale.' Jameson asserts that cognitive mapping 'seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system'. He states that contemporary poststructuralist theory is 'useful for us as a very significant symptom of the very postmodernist culture which is our subject here'. However, James Seaton has recently argued that Jameson's political ineffectiveness is matched only by his cultural importance. The 'individual subject' who is going to benefit from cognitive mapping would need to be very highly educated indeed in order to decode the 'terminal obscurantism' which follows from Jameson's adoption of the language of poststructuralism.

The two strands of political and literary theory did not merge in the discipline of English until the 1980s. This post(-structuralist)-Marxist criticism made the same claims for the transformative power of literary-critical practices as the Paris poststructuralists. It is epitomised by Catherine Belsey's influential text book, *Critical Practice*. Here Belsey asserts that 'Post-Saussurean linguistics . . . undermines common sense in a more radical way and so provides a theoretical framework which permits the development of a genuinely radical critical practice.' It was an article of faith with the post-Marxist literary Left that the concept of the transcendent, essential, or universal self (itself an article of faith for humanist philosophy) is complicit with bourgeois ideology and capitalism whereas the 'subject' is in reality linguistically and/or ideologically constructed. For Belsey, the subject is 'Initially (and continuously) constructed in discourse'. The deconstruction of this subject was presented as a strategic political weapon against bourgeois, patriarchal, Enlightenment, and humanist ideology, as well as theoretically plausible. However, because it is basically a philosophical thesis, a reworking of Marx and Freud by Althusser and Lacan, it is relieved of the burden of empirical proof. In fact the idea of the subject in process can be traced back to the pre-Socratic philosopher, Heraclitus, who believed that all things were in a state of flux and that therefore man could not step twice into the same river because neither he nor the river would be the same. Enough scientific evidence can

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17 Jameson, 'Postmodernism', p. 61.
be found to support this hypothesis, but none to show that self-consciousness is constructed by language or ideology.  

Deconstruction was not universally admired by the intellectual British Left and has been criticised as an apolitical and ahistorical discourse. In *Literary Theory* Eagleton asserts that for Derrida deconstruction is ‘an ultimately political practice, an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought, and behind that a whole system of political structures and social institutions, maintains its force’. However, for Eagleton this project fails and ‘Derrida’s “work has been grossly unhistorical, politically evasive and in practice oblivious to language as “discourse”’.

Christopher Norris asserts that deconstruction serves a reactionary politics by undermining ‘the very concept of historical reason as aimed toward a better, more enlightened or accountable version of significant events’. This is a reasonable interpretation; in ‘Différance’ (first published in the very historical year of 1968), Derrida states of history: ‘I utilize such concepts . . . for their strategic convenience and in order to undertake their deconstruction at the currently most decisive point’. Deconstruction cordons off history, like any other metaphysical concept, within quotation marks:

I am starting, strategically, from the place and the time in which ‘we’ are, even though in the last analysis my opening is not justifiable, since it is only on the basis of *différance* and its ‘history’ that we can allegedly know who and where ‘we’ are, and what the limits of an ‘era’ might be.

The fact that poststructuralism slid, chameleon like, not only into Yale School formalism but also into the postmodern nihilism which celebrates linguistic play for its own sake, rather than as the agent of social change, suggests that its political colour is indeterminate.

Some British poststructuralists continue to defend the political relevance of deconstruction. In *Legislations* a collection of republished essays which are not ‘about’ politics, but are ‘inscribed in a political situation’, Geoffrey Bennington defends Derrida’s political relevance against those who ‘appeal in their criticisms of deconstruction, to the concepts of “history” and/or “politics”’. He counter-attacks by arguing that ‘These concepts function in their discourse as uncriticized and uncritical transcendental terms . . . But as the effort of deconstruction is precisely to question just such transcendental concepts, and more generally the transcendental position itself, then invoking them against it without further clarifying or modifying their status can never constitute a valid criticism’. On the positive side he argues that ‘deconstruction, in so far as it insists on the

83 Raymond Tallis argues against Belsey et al. that the sense in which the subject is in process is “trivial” and cannot be adduced to support the idea that the self is radically fragmented and incoherent. *In Defence of Realism*, p. 69.


necessary non-coincidence of the present with itself, is in fact in some senses the most historical of discourses imaginable. The line of defence here is that the deconstruction of history, a teleological and logocentric concept, is necessarily a political activity. Deconstruction may have implications for political rhetoric, but they have so far been ignored with impunity by political speech-writers.

Derrida has recently turned deconstruction on political theory in 'Spectres of Marx', first published in New Left Review. He eschews rhetorical beard stroking and considers Marx's pervasive influence, particularly 'in political philosophy which structures implicitly all philosophy'. He asserts that deconstruction itself 'would have been impossible and unthinkable in a pre-Marxist space' and is a radicalisation of Marx. But the double bind is at work since 'a radicalization is always indebted to the very thing it radicalizes'. Derrida is clearly hostile to the capitalism which 'is attempting to install its worldwide hegemony in paradoxical and suspect conditions', helped in this by the media. However, as argued in chapter one, Derrida's basic analytic paradigm (itself a version of the Hegelian dialectic) has not developed, but has been repeatedly applied to different texts in the same formulaic way that Marx applied the dialectic to history.

Derrida asserts that both anti-Communist America and Marx himself relied upon the concept of a 'dividing line'. The Americans wished to use this line to exclude communism and Marx wished to cross the line between theory and actualisation by revolution, but both continued to 'believe in the existence of this dividing line as real limit and conceptual distinction'. The 'spectre' of Marx is the motile entity which deconstructs the binary of linear history: 'Before knowing whether one can differentiate between the spectre of the past and the spectre of the future . . . one must ask oneself whether the spectrality effect does not consist in undoing this opposition, or even this dialectic, between actual, effective presence and its other. He asserts that 'In order to analyse these wars and the logic of these antagonisms, a problematics coming from the Marxian tradition will be indispensable for a long time yet. Although Derrida mentions historical events and contemporary conditions (see below), he is less concerned to analyse these events historically or sociologically than he is rhetorically and logically and the deconstruction of history or politics is still primarily a philosophical/textual exercise.

Nevertheless, unlike Lyotard in Libidinal Economy, Derrida asserts that the spirit of Marxism is a promise 'not to remain "spiritual" or "abstract", but to produce events, new effective forms of action, practice, organization, and so forth'. This, however, appears to contradict the 'spirit' of deconstruction; in response to an interviewer who asked
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whether deconstruction translates into 'political praxis', Derrida has answered that 'the available codes for taking such a political stance are not at all adequate to the radicality of deconstruction' and that 'I try where I can to act politically while recognizing that such action remains incommensurate with my intellectual project of deconstruction.' The more pragmatic of contemporary poststructuralists preempt criticism by agreeing that deconstruction and political action are irreconcilable. Gayatri Spivak argues that:

Deconstruction points out that in constructing any kind of an argument we must move from implied premises, that must necessarily obliterate or finesse certain possibilities that question the availability of these premises in an absolutely justifiable way. Deconstruction teaches us to look at these limits and questions. It is a corrective and a critical movement. It seems to me also, that because of this, deconstruction suggests that there is no absolute justification of any position.

Asked repeatedly how poststructuralism might lead us to act politically, Spivak replies: 'in terms of how it would change one's practice, it would depend on not believing that the formula for the good end would come if the programme were adequately represented, because there is in fact no possibility of adequate representation of any narrative in practice.' Elsewhere, however, she states categorically that 'Deconstruction cannot found a political program of any kind', but that if one did want to found a political project based on deconstruction, 'it would be something like wishy-washy pluralism on the one hand, or a kind of irresponsible hedonism on the other.' This contrasts markedly with the claims made by Marxists and poststructuralists in the 1960s and preempts Stuart Sim's criticism that Derrida's continual reference to the metaphysical double bind effectively removes him from the practico-political dimension:

To claim that Derrida is yet again drawing attention to 'the predicament of having to use the resources of the heritage he questions', while acting as an agent of writing, a concept that instantly unweaves what he says while remaining forever beyond his power to control, comes perilously close to a despairing argument on the 'human condition' model. Who can control writing? If no one, then what is its practico-political dimension, other than being a medium for the registration of individual angst?

While the poststructuralist line of defence is that the deconstruction of metaphysics has political significance, it is clear that there is simply no common philosophical ground on which poststructuralist metaphysicians and unreconstructed socialists can thrash out their differences. The more pragmatic of the left-wing intellectuals point to the political uselessness of poststructuralist theory, while the poststructuralists point to the metaphysical presuppositions of political discourse.

Cixous's gambit of stressing the ethical nature of deconstruction to convince the sceptic of its political relevance is still being used. According to Derek Attridge, 'there has always been an ethico-political dimension to Derrida's writing, manifesting itself particularly in a respect for otherness, be it textual, historical, cultural, or personal'.

Bennington asserts that deconstruction is political because it is open to the 'other'. Derrida himself corroborates this to a certain extent, asserting that 'deconstruction is, in itself, a positive response to an alterity which necessarily calls, summons or motivates it'. However the link between ethics and politics, doubtful in the context of practical politics, is only obscured further by the poststructuralists. Bennington asserts that 'the space of communication is most radically itself, most radically open to the coming of the other, when I am not even sure whether someone has come and said something'. According to Bennington, violence is judgement or legislation by the other, however it is always possible that the legislator is a 'charlatan' and the 'moment at which the legislator always might be a charlatan . . . just is the moment of the political, and it is irreducible because it is undecidable. This is why there is no end to politics. Because of its openness to the other (as legislator), deconstruction provides a unique access to this irreducible moment and therefore a unique access to the political. Deconstruction's relation to political, or even ethical, practice is obscure; in communication with an 'other', a knowledge of deconstruction does not in any way facilitate good ethical or political behaviour. Furthermore, the accessibility of Bennington's text is effectively limited to those academics with a higher degree in literary theory. He is contributing to the thirty-year tradition of poststructuralist metaphysical philosophy, but the pretensions of such discourse to political relevance are insupportable.

The correlation between Left politics and literary theory in general is undeniable as is the tendency of disciplinary conservatives to eschew both political comment and literary theory. Richard Levin states that 'There is no necessary connection between critical approaches and political beliefs'. Harold Bloom admits 'that canons always do indirectly serve the social and political, and indeed the spiritual concerns and aims of the wealthier classes of . . . Western society', but resists the reduction of aesthetics to ideology. Hilton Kramer and Roger Kimball, beleaguered traditionalists, set up a journal, The New Criterion, expressly to attack the left-wing orthodoxy and maintain their 'independent critical voice' and the 'integrity and independence of artistic activity'. Kramer coyly alludes to his politics, but argues that the political crisis represented by the Left's attack on humanism/the humanities is not answered by reducing art to politics. He

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105 Acts of Literature, p. 5.
106 Derrida, 'Deconstruction and the Other', p. 118.
107 Bennington, Legislations, p. 3.
109 Bloom, The Western Canon, pp. 25, 55.
110 Hilton Kramer and Roger Kimball (eds), Against the Grain: The New Criterion on Art and Intellect at the End of the Twentieth Century (Chicago: Dee, 1995), pp. ix, x.
argues that 'To subordinate art to politics . . . is not only to diminish its power to shape our civilization at its highest levels of aspiration but to condemn it to a role that amounts to little more than social engineering.' In 'The Treason of the Intellectuals', Kimball endorses Julian Benda's attack in *La Trahison des clercs* on intellectuals who forego their attachment to philosophical and scholarly (Enlightenment) ideals and enter the political arena. The squabble between literary Left and Right in America culminated in the 'PC wars which, according to Michael Bérubé, broke in 1991 'when the literary public sphere was littered with newsmagazines [sic], conservative journals, editorials and opinion pieces on the new "left McCarthyism" in the universities'. For some defenders of PC, however, any publicity is good publicity; Christopher Newfield and Ronald Strickland, who define themselves as 'progressive humanists', defend PC against reactionary attacks and commend the expanded literary studies, which includes feminism, race studies, lesbian and gay studies, marxist literary and social theory, deconstruction, as 'the worlding of the literary profession'. They suggest that anti-PC attacks by the Right in America are part of the attempt to perpetuate cultural inequality, when it is no longer socially acceptable to argue against political equality for minority groups. Few would argue with egalitarian ideals, although the practice of positive discrimination is a political and ethical minefield. Perhaps the worst crime of the politically correct Left was its stupidity in imagining that deconstruction would somehow be of use in achieving concrete political goals. After the French poststructuralists, the deconstruction of language had been underway for over two decades and no liberation (as Cixous puts it), or revolution had occurred, rather the opposite with the more extreme manifestations of political correctness (the suppression politically incorrect terms on university campuses).

In 1992 Colin MacCabe argued that 'The events of 1989 were . . . of such staggering import that they did remove the last vestiges of any supposed link between theory and Marxism.' William Cain, who identifies with the political Left, admits that 'The literary Left has minimal influence on public debate . . . and it has shown no ability to convert people to progressive causes and reverse the momentum of the Right's social policies.' The persistent failure of the intellectual avant-garde to transform liberal democracy and overthrow capitalism in the twentieth century makes the credibility of the post-Marxist intellectual extremely weak. After the debacle of Political Correctness, where the positions of intellectual radicals and reactionaries were further polarised by the

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media, the liberal Left appears to be reasserting itself in America. This reaction from the moderates, which is also noticeable in Britain, often involves the reaffirmation of certain aspects of humanism or Enlightenment philosophy against poststructuralist theory. Seaton asserts the superiority of culturally conservative journalists, such as Edmund Wilson and Lionel Trilling, over postmodern theorists such as Jameson, Rorty, and Fish because of their accessible language. Those who avoid an esoteric vocabulary, who write in a public language that allows non-specialists to understand and judge their arguments, implicitly declare their allegiance to a common culture and thus to what they have in common with other citizens. He also asserts the democratic concept of human rights over that of 'diversity' (difference).

Newfield and Strickland are representative of a trend in politicised literary and cultural studies whose buzzword is the 'public intellectual'. In 'Academics as Public Intellectuals', Henry Giroux, combines disciplinary radicalism with political liberalism, and argues that higher education must be defended as a vital public sphere... whose moral and educative dimensions impact directly on civic life. What is notable about this sentiment is that it was expressed by Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* (see chapter six). Where Giroux differs from Arnold is in seeking, in the Marxist intellectual tradition, to educate students as self-conscious 'critical agents', rather than good, that is acquiescent, citizens. Giroux argues that 'Such a mode of self-reflexivity must become part of a wider strategy of crossing and transgressing the borders between the self and others, theory and practice, and the university and everyday life'. However, the public intellectual is a worthy ideal which is still not realised in part because of the literary theory which hermetically seals the academic, like Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, within the academy. Stanley Fish argues that whereas politicised literary and cultural studies are unable to reach outside the academy because of the inaccessibility of their professional language, the neoconservatives are able to broadcast their ideas in non-academic publications. Fish also points out that literary and cultural theorists are experts in literary criticism rather than 'arms control, city management or bridge-building' and do not have the ears of policy makers.

It is not merely the language of political literary and cultural theory which defuses its political potential, but an apparent disinterest in concrete facts. Donald Lazere identifies 'a refreshing trend away from poststructuralist theorizing and toward concrete issues in cultural studies', citing Derrida and Spivak. Spivak herself argues that 'to be a theorist of something, you have to look at the documentation in detail', and asserts that

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117 Seaton, *Cultural Conservatism*, p. 158.
119 Giroux, 'Academics as Public Intellectuals', p. 298.
120 Giroux, 'Academics as Public Intellectuals', p. 302.
122 Fish, *Professional Correctness*, p. 90.
what is read by cultural critics is rather 'ideological stuff in journals and newspapers'. However, her theoretical writing often either makes use of an encounter-group type narrative of personal experience or the dense poststructuralist discourse which does not stoop to mundane empirical inquiry. In 'Spectres of Marx', Derrida accuses Francis Fukuyama in The End of History of a failure to analyse empirical evidence in favour of theory and cites against the assertion that the ideal of liberal democracy has been realised the fact that 'never before, in absolute figures, never have so many men, women, and children been subjugated, starved, or exterminated on the Earth'. Ironically, when theorists do cite data in support of their arguments, it is often without reference to the original research. Lyotard cites both data and sources in Libidinal Economy, Derrida cites no figures or sources in support of his emotive statements. Richard Rorty, who (tongue-in-cheek) describes himself as a 'bourgeois liberal', explicitly blames the current 'prestige' of theory on Marx's combination of Hegelian philosophy and economic analysis, maintaining that political situations are clarified by empirical analysis rather than metaphysical theory. However, Marx, whose preoccupation with contemporary material conditions was criticised by Russell, illustrated his economic theory with concrete examples. In Das Kapital, Marx's analysis of working conditions in nineteenth-century industrial Britain is supported by references to Acts of Parliament and official reports which describe these conditions in detail. There is one quotation from 'J. Murray, 12 years of age': 'I turn jigger and run moulds. I came at 6. Sometimes I come at 4. I worked all night last night, till 6 o'clock this morning. I have not been in bed since the night before last. There were eight or nine other boys working last night. All but one have come this morning. I get 3 shillings and sixpence.' On the next page Marx cites a doctor's report: 'Although in the district of Stoke, only 36.6% and in Wolstanton only 30.4% of the adult male population above 20 are employed in the potteries, among the men of that age in the first district more than half, in the second nearly 2/5 of the whole deaths are the result of pulmonary diseases among the potters.' What is more, Marx scrupulously cited his sources with full bibliographical details.

In response to a criticism that Derrida ignores 'the specificity of politics and of empirical social research', Anselm Havercamp asks rhetorically, 'But is it not the very specificity of politics that asks for a refocusing within the frame given, "democracy", and even of a refocusing of the frame as it is given and too easily taken for granted?' It is clear that poststructuralism has no obligation to empiricism and positively discourages such logocentric practices as fact-finding. While metaphysicians are to some extent absolved from attention to the real world, logic can refer to its own internal rules, and literary

124 For an example of the former see Postmarked Calcutta, India, The Post-Colonial Critic, 75-94.
125 Derrida, 'Spectres of Marx', p. 83.
128 Marx, Capital, p. 246.
criticism can legitimately stop inside the text, immediately cultural theorists claim political purchase they are morally and intellectually bound to take notice of history, facts, statistics, and the real experience of people. Giroux attacks neoconservatives, including Kimball, who remonstrate with cultural critics for their failure to 'address the real problems of everyday life', asserting that they are anti-intellectual, market-led, and hostile to scepticism. But ideological critique is leached of significance without reference to the world outside the text and political analysis stands or falls on its ability to point to concrete evidence. One cannot question the sincerity of any Left theorist but there is a certain amount of 'bad faith' and bad taste in their failure to attend closely to the world outside the text while claiming to address its problems. Historiography and narrative construction are valid areas of study but historical events in the material world are not merely narrative or ideological constructions.

The assumption that metaphysical theory can be put into practice in educational and other social institutions often depends upon a collapse of categories which is actually tenable only within the realm of metaphysics itself. The recruitment of deconstruction to certain projects which seek to alter practices in the humanities betrays a false assumption of the material power and relevance of metaphysics outside of its proper sphere. This thesis has sought to defend certain conceptual oppositions against deconstruction, not on the grounds of their mutual exclusivity or essential nature, but because they represent culturally significant material differences of particular relevance in the humanities. The deconstruction of conceptual oppositions does not impact greatly upon material differences and the effective and viable modernisation of humanities disciplines depends not on a competence in metaphysics but on a far broader understanding of disciplinary history and practical functioning. The literary theory which continues to present conceptual oppositions as pernicious ideological reifications and empirical methods of inquiry as naïve is itself fundamentally misguided and must be challenged.

129 Giroux, 'Academics as Public Intellectuals', p. 296.
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