

THEORY OF NEGATIVE POETICS

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Affirmative words are often, in their operation, negative of other objects than those affirmed; and in this case, a negative or exclusive sense must be given to them or they have no operation at all.

Chief Justice John Marshall,
Marbury v. Madison, 1803.

. . . that if it come to prohibiting, there is not aught more likely to be prohibited than truth itself.

Milton, Areopagitica

The final revelation is that Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of art.

Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying."

. . . for the truest poetry is the most feigning, and lovers are given to poetry. And what they swear in poetry may be said, as lovers, they do feign.

Shakespeare, As You Like It, II.ii.18-20.

The theory of Negative Poetics I am proposing here is based on the simple principle that misrepresentation is fiction's most irreducible feature. With deception there is fiction, but not without it. Unless the truth is meaningfully warped, distorted, or reorganized, fiction cannot by definition be fiction. Instead, it becomes history, biography, autobiography, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, or, taken to an unliterary extreme, statistics as confirmed by adequate verification procedures.¹ This distinction is of crucial importance, affording the primary criterion that separates literary creation from knowledge, whether the latter derives from scientific verification or from conventional wisdom.² Fiction's primary purpose is not to convey any basic insight, but to afford pleasure by making an improvement upon the world as we know it. Unless we try to fathom how or why a text revises experience in this fashion, we cannot understand its function, value, or structure as fiction. We might discern what it tells, but not what it fabricates or how such a fabrication appeals to readers. Of course, fiction also conveys its share of truths--partial truths and whole truths partially understood--but it only succeeds as fiction when these truths give credence to a gratifying alternative version of experience.

Saint Augustine's argument may be conceded that deception, as opposed to innocent

misinformation, must necessarily be intended.³ However, it would be a mistake to conclude, based on this principle, that the suspension of disbelief essential to literary experience thereby averts deception.⁴ By granting that they fabricate stories, authors do not acquit themselves of misrepresenting the truth. Contrary to Sir Philip Sidney's assurance that no lie is told if none is intended, the literary muse is both intentional and unavoidably distortive.⁵ In every dimension of literary experience, both conscious and unconscious, fiction gives motivation its primacy over both emotion and cognition, and effective distortion is the primary instrument of motivation. Sidney's distinction, drawn from Aristotle, "Not Gnosis but Praxis must be the fruit," may be both transliterated and expanded, "Not knowledge or feeling, but gaining results must be the fruit."⁶ Though authors might have a purpose different from those of their characters, to say nothing of their readers, there is no aspect or quality of fiction that escapes intention. There is nothing so passive, or so accidental, in literary experience that the role of motivation can be disregarded in reorganizing truths toward improved experience.

Moreover, fiction inevitably features misrepresentation by producing results different from life, sometimes with obvious disparities, sometimes by a relatively narrow margin. The superficial misinformation acknowledged by authors may be accepted as privileged behavior that escapes the lie based on Augustine's distinction as modified by Sidney's. However, the "truths" authors cherish in their fiction are no less vulnerable to the lure of misrepresentation, comprising the lies they tell at least partially conscious of what they are doing as well as the lies they must first tell themselves in order to share with their readers. The conclusion I would suggest, if fiction is intrinsically both intentional and distortive, is that this combination is irreducible and affords the purpose of literary experience. As Francis Fergusson argues in his interpretation of *Oedipus Rex*, fiction is organized as a "hierarchy of actualization," a conative integration of plot, characterization, and style to produce the necessary (or desirable) outcome--an outcome, I claim, that appeals to readers and playgoers because it differs from their daily expectations.⁷

Northrop Frye argued in one of his first metacritical essays, "Art deals not with the real but with the conceivable."⁸ This may be granted, but if the conceivable is different from the real, any treatment of the conceivable as if it were the truth becomes an act of deception. When one says, "Let's make believe," no deception occurs, but as soon as readers actually begin to make believe, absorbing themselves in alternative experience, to that extent, at least, they deceive themselves. Wolfgang Iser has likewise argued that fiction is primarily illusion, a negation of reality that makes experience readable. Gross deception, Iser maintained, falls short of what is needed, since fiction can only take effect by providing a credible interaction between illusion and the personal experience of readers.⁹ This, too, may be granted, but credible and true are two entirely different considerations, and accepting the credible as if true has always been important for deception to do its work. Unless a lie is credible, it is not effective as a lie. In his recent essay, "The Play of the Text," Iser compares fiction with play as an act of make believe (a "world enacted") that acts out difference.¹⁰ By allowing us to have absence as presence," Iser explains, "play turns out to be a means whereby we may extend ourselves." But when play substitutes absence (i.e. what isn't here) for presence (i.e. what is), it becomes no less an act of deception. Again, it may be granted that most individuals who make believe remain aware that they are doing so, but they may only enjoy their play to the extent that they can disregard this realization. Even if their engrossment in play is almost entirely under the sway of their sense of reality, it is their absorption in alternatives as if true that catalyzes their pleasure associated with play. In other words, apropos of fiction, even if

only the smallest portion of a novel's meaning is deceptive, as in the *roman à clef*, the novel's credentials as fiction depend on the catalytic effect of this minuscule portion. No matter how tiny, this trace of dishonesty offsets and vitalizes the bulk of the text which is merely true.

Some claim that fiction misrepresents only to permit the articulation of basic truths with greater effectiveness. I maintain just the opposite--that fiction engages an assortment of relatively superficial truths to justify its more fundamental act of misrepresentation. Even when lies are told to convey a more basic truth, I maintain that this, too, very likely constitutes misrepresentation, since truths which derive from untruths cannot be entirely true. Somehow, somewhere, yet more basic lies fester unseen. What results, I suggest, is a dialectic standoff between fiction's declared veracity and the relatively unpleasant truths it denies by substituting believable misinformation. Superficial truths are exaggerated to reject more threatening truths, and fiction's final, most inclusive "truth" consists of the dialectic interplay between the two.

What, then, is the truth whose neglect is encouraged by literary misrepresentation? In its simplest definition, the truth consists, as maintained by I. A. Richards, of relatively "undistorted references," ideas of ourselves and the world about us that may be tentatively established as being accurate.¹¹ But if no absolute truths may be established pertaining to a world "out there," as both pragmatists and neo-pragmatists have insisted, a "bivalent" distinction between hard and benign truths may be suggested, with hard (i.e. relatively unpleasant) truths consisting of those which are useful because they confront problems, and with benign "truths" consisting of those which afford satisfaction by diverting our attention from these problems, often by focussing on literary problems that may be dealt with more effectively. All thinking mixes these two versions of the truth, but it is the unique value of fiction that it disposes of hard truths by focussing on benign truths. This substitution is what primarily gives fiction its appeal as an act of deception.

If total accuracy is impossible, close approximations are nevertheless achievable, and, in fact, may often be taken for granted, for example in science, repair manuals, and grocery store bargain fliers, at least regarding prices. And truths need not be elaborate. Often a simple epithet or phrase captures the truth well enough to be appreciated for its veracity, as may be observed, for example, with some of the best aphorisms. On the other hand, long disquisitions with a heavy emphasis upon truths of one sort or another may be entirely deceptive. Justice Darling's remark cannot be disregarded, "Much truth is spoken, that more may be concealed," as well as Samuel Butler's remark, "The best liar is he that makes the smallest amount of lying go the longest way."¹² News stories often make a show of reporting the truth, but only to convey lies by excluding from consideration the most important issues involved--for example the actual kill ratio in a particular battle or the total lack of credentials in a particular leader. Even narrative history conveys truths, though, as Hayden White insists, its linear selectivity necessarily verges on literary distortion.¹³ For the average reader most truths are harmless, for example telephone numbers, the family tree, and the factual information that fills an almanac or encyclopedia. Other truths, however, are more dangerous (for example the unpleasant information that one has been dismissed from a job rather than having resigned from it), and the truths denied by literary misrepresentation often turn out to be the most threatening, since they are rooted in our sense of personal deficiency. These are the truths at stake in the context of literary form.

E. D. Hirsch has argued that an author's private experience is irrelevant to the truth of what

he tells.¹⁴ In fact, this experience is the most important of all for both authors and readers. Contradicting himself, Hirsch later declares, "The speaker himself is spoken," and here one may agree, but with two caveats: (a) that the reader is likewise "spoken," and (b) that the spoken identities of authors and their readers too often depend on ego adjustment rooted in avoidances, i.e. in evasions and prevarications. The personal truths we want to disregard--even, if necessary, to the extent of repressing them--these, I claim, are the truths denied by means of fiction, most obviously in escapist literature such as westerns and harlequin romances, but also at every level of sophistication. Ascertain what readers find the most uncomfortable, the most threatening, and its avoidance very likely turns out to be his primary reason for immersing themselves in fiction. Time and again they return to the same narrative formula (or formulas), and just as frequently literary outcome helps them to overlook what bothers them. Thus fairy tales help small children to reject feelings of helplessness, and the confessional *Bildungsroman* helps mature readers to reject their sense of entrapment in an adult world through identification with the author that turns out to be shared with the author. Do adults think their reading habits are fundamentally different from those of children? Their sensitivities may be more advanced, but their objective as readers is essentially the same relative to their needs.

Fiction's manipulation of the truth is obviously illustrated, for example, by the contrast between literary death scenes and the actual experience of dying which occurs daily in the real world. The reconciliation and transcendent lucidity typical of literary death differs from how most of us die--either by an abrupt terminal attack or, more likely, after a prolonged infirmity characterized by pain, exhaustion, recoveries followed by relapses, when there is an increasing sense of isolation, and, sooner or later, everybody's tacit gratitude that the suffering and uncertainty are finally done with. This is a common ordeal, and it is far more unpleasant than Shakespeare's death scenes, for example Hamlet's final eloquence, Lear's cradling Cordelia in his arms, and Othello's body stretched across Desdemona's in their belated rite of consummation.¹⁵ Likewise comforting are the death scenes of Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich and Emily Dickinson's bedridden woman for whom a fly "interposed." Katherine Anne Porter's depiction of Granny Weatherall's death might seem realistic, but her notion that the moment of death provides the key to life is quintessentially literary. Even Emma Bovary's terminal agony fits the pattern. Its clinical accuracy as a depiction of arsenic poisoning might seem uncompromisingly grim, but Emma's final spasm of ironic laughter at a beggar's song heard through the window is obviously literary. Each of these conventional death tableaux is frightening but on balance preferable to the commonplace act of dying that is almost inevitably a dull sinking into oblivion devoid of both rapport and redeeming wisdom. I would argue that the same upgrading may be observed in the fictional treatment of love, heroism, bold decision-making, and virtually every dimension of human behavior, if drawn from contrasts not quite so stark.

Of course fiction should muster enough truths to disguise its usefulness as a lie. It refrains from directly contradicting the truth, for example by declaring not X ("The hero is not greedy," when he obviously is). Instead, it proposes a Y that may be implicitly accepted as an alternative, either by asserting the contrary affirmation, for example "he can at times be generous," or by resorting to indirection, for example "he is bold and ambitious" and/or "he only treats money as a game." In either case, Y may be accepted as a different version of events whose acceptance diverts one's attention from the truth of X (Y = not X). Any kind of a standoff may be featured between X and Y, as long as denial is either declared or implied. Often this strategy is refined by

concentrating on limited truths to deny more inclusive truths, for example by affirming X to deny the blanket validity of X + Y + Z. Obversely, inclusive truths may be declared to deemphasize component truths, for example by affirming X + Y + Z to deny the paramount role of X. In the first instance, for example, a suitor's rectitude might be praised to exclude from consideration the wealth and social status that would make him particularly attractive; then again, his wealth and social status might be conceded, but in a catalog of virtues that masks the disproportionate importance of these in particular. In both instances denial occurs by imposing an alternative viewpoint, and of course without any acknowledgement that a substitution has been made. Usually this dialectic blends the truth and its denial in what seems an indistinguishable mixture, but it may be detected whenever readers find satisfaction in stories at odds with what they can see for themselves in their daily lives. In effect, the truth-untruth choice has been tilted and reorganized as an affirmative-negative polarity. The whole of the text has become a negative referent to dispose of unacceptable truths by means of creative expressiveness.

Stanley Fish's sweeping pragmatic question, "What does a text do?" is often answered by the Aristotelian dictum that it imitates behavior (*mimesis*) through its depiction of action (*praxis*). However, I want to maintain, more fundamentally, that mimesis itself affords praxis if and when plot's imitation of behavior organizes truths in such a manner as to convey desirable falsehoods.¹⁶ Whenever linear advancement predominates, as it usually does, a text produces results which only seem true to life. What is not true is presented as if it comes true, so a lie is told by advancing from valid uncertainties to a false sense of resolution. This, I propose, is what gives deception its dominant role in literature. Both truth and the lie may be "told" in the context of fiction, but, as plot (or *muthos*) it is only the lie that actually happens, giving fiction its primary appeal.¹⁷ Aristotle's definition of plot as the imitation (*mimesis*) of action (*praxis*) may accordingly be revised, as Plato would have insisted, with mimesis limited to the representation of praxis which produces a concluding misrepresentation of human behavior that is both credible and desirable for the targeted audience.¹⁸ Beginnings at least tacitly acknowledge uncomfortable truths, ends deny them, and the middle (i.e., story in the process of being told) functions to sustain momentum toward closure as acceptable misrepresentation. There are two plateaus, a before and an after, and the second essentially denies the first. The middle consists of the transition between the two while the lie is in the process of being told.

Unlike metaphor, which almost instantaneously declares or undeclares its truths, plot's metonymic organization subsumes representation to a protracted substitution based on the principle of denial. *After* resignifies *before*, but only by reversing it by means of a suitable (i.e. "happy") ending. If what is denied remains in view, as Wolfgang Iser argues, it is as a memory of a preliminary circumstance that serves to intensify one's satisfaction with the results.¹⁹ What can be forgotten is the threatening aspect of this circumstance, which has been erased (or "designified") through absorption into a benign and more inclusive context imposed by narrative form. Beginnings and local insights are revised by their outcome, so threat becomes little more than the memory of a challenge surmounted. Moreover, the confessional honesty that appears here and there in fiction's local texture is absorbed and finally denied by narrative closure.

Stanley Fish's question already mentioned compels three additional questions: (1) where does fiction take us? (2) what does it leave behind? and (3) how does this loss produce satisfaction? As the broadest answer, most texts provide a unique opportunity to deal with

problems by means of conventional literary truths. Momentum toward closure (the pseudo-solution of these problems) is pitted against a countervailing residue of subversiveness that concedes their validity. Usually, but not always, honesty confesses a sense of unacceptable uniqueness (Tolstoy's unhappiness "in its own way," as declared in the first sentence of *Anna Karenina*), and fiction's conventional resolution imposes the appropriate distortions to cope with this honesty in a socially acceptable manner. Sometimes authors consciously works to deceive readers, but more often they deceives them by first deceiving themselves well enough to let them respond in kind by drawing on their illusions to buttress their own. Self-deception accordingly becomes a collaborative act shared by authors with their readers. Here the notion of textual indeterminacy (or *aporia*), explained, for example, by Iser's "gaps," Derrida's "ruptures," and Barbara Herrnstein Smith's notion of "radical contingency," essentially concedes the freedom of readers to adapt the author's self-deception to suit their own needs.²⁰ The reader's freedom of choice may be emphasized, but it is the choice among untruths, not truths, that primarily determines the range of possibilities. Here the "linguistic competence" Fish emphasizes bears its counterpart in what might be described as "narrative competence," the skill of readers to adapt literary illusion to their own personal needs.²¹ If they can draw satisfaction from the illusion intended by the author, it is not of great importance whether they understand or concur with every aspect of his story. What it is important to recognize is that misrepresentation constitutes both the source and final outcome of literary experience. As a conscious and/or unconscious intentional act, literature affirms to deny for both authors and readers, and its formal organization provides the structural embodiment of this negative accomplishment. To borrow from Alfred North Whitehead's metaphysics, the opportunity for deception "ingresses" literary form, and all readers, the author included, may derive from it any lie they need within the spectrum (or "horizon") of opportunities it provides relative to their experience. As might be suggested by this more inclusive notion of indeterminacy, the "classic" as defined by Frank Kermode is merely a text that offers useful evasions for the broadest audience of readers over at least a century or two.²²

In recent years, Stanley Fish and others influenced by the neo-pragmatism of Richard Rorty have emphasizing a skeptical relativism that challenges the possibility of literal truth. All truth is presumably relative in fiction, so neither literal truth nor, a posteriori, the lie as an avoidance of this truth is of concern in hermeneutics. For if truth is impossible, so, too, is the lie as its misrepresentation. In "Interpreting the Variorum," published in 1977, Fish proposed that "interpretive acts" by "interpretive communities" provide the only valid basis for explicative objectivity. Each community features its own truths about literature, and no explication is better than the rest. In his recent book, *Doing What Comes Naturally*, published in 1989, Fish advocates an "anti-foundationalism" based on the recognition that what seems the most "impartial" opinion still necessarily expresses "partial" bias. Since all preferences are principled, and, obversely, since all principles are preferences, the relativity of knowledge presumably becomes inescapable.²³ In his article, "Rhetoric," Fish takes his argument one step further by insisting that all truths--scientific, literary and otherwise--are inevitably rhetorical.²⁴ He cites Thomas Kuhn to dispense with the "myth" of scientific objectivity and tries to demonstrate that J. L. Austin's "constative" truths are necessarily "performative," hence dependent on persuasiveness rather than factual accuracy.

However, contrary to Fish's arguments, relativism among truths, literary or otherwise, is not so immutable that any truth is unavoidably just as valid or invalid as another. Some truths

correspond to reality with a better fit than others, so their rejection for alternatives whose comparative inaccuracy affords greater satisfaction may be treated as an act of deception. In non-literary discourse, any theory or belief rooted in inaccuracy is vulnerable to being superseded by another with better and more inclusive--if not perfect--sufficiency in its misguided depiction of reality. But whatever aspects of the rejected theory still bear a useful fit may be retained and brought into synthesis with later alternatives. For example, the advance in empirical knowledge from one age to the next, as proposed by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, has not led to the wholesale rejection of each age's scientific hypotheses for those of the next.²⁵ Newton's theory of relativity has not been altogether superceded by Darwin's theory of evolution, Einstein's theory of relativity, or Hawking's theory of black holes. Certain hypotheses, for example of phlogiston and both the geocentric and heliocentric theories of the universe, have been displaced by others, but many other hypotheses have persisted, since the "truths" they convey were better supported by empirical data. As a result, the overall trend has been on balance cumulative rather than substitutive, as explained by two of the outstanding classics in the history of science, Alfred North Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* and Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld's *The Evolution of Physics*. Like Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, Kuhn's thesis has become a non-scientist's crutch for dispensing with scientific truths, and one doubts, as John Searle recently indicated, that Kuhn himself would approve of such an effort.²⁶ Certainly his mentor, Karl Popper, did not.

Fish likewise revises J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts to demonstrate the neo-pragmatic thesis that "constative" (i.e. literal) truth is always fundamentally "performative" (i.e. persuasive).²⁷ Truth, Fish claims, may only be judged true on a rhetorical basis, i.e. in a particular context for a particular audience. Here Fish's skepticism, like Hume's, cannot be refuted in the final analysis, but Fish ignores the prevalence of non-literary truths whose constative sufficiency affords relative performative certitude. Moreover, he fails to recognize that the distinction between the two is no more absolute than any of the other distinctions between truth and falsehood that he rejects. In fact, all truths are both performative and constative, and they probably on balance favor one at the expense of the other. Literary truths, for example, are necessarily more performative, and scientific truths more constative, but in neither instance is the alternative altogether eliminated. Two corollaries may accordingly be proposed, (a) that any exaggeration of performative value as if it were constative provides the matrix of literary experience, and, vice versa, (b) that any effort to weed out a statement's performative deficiencies probably (but not necessarily) increases its constative value. Any performative truth may be revised to be accepted as being relatively constative, often by merely adding the qualification, "perhaps," "at times," "according to," or, most inclusively, "granted the following exceptions. . . ." If, for example, the sentence "Hamlet commits suicide" seems dubious, its revised versions, "Perhaps Hamlet commits suicide," or "What Hamlet does is tantamount to committing suicide," are less vulnerable to challenge. Though all truths are performatives, some are more constative than others, and perfect accuracy remains a valid goal in non-literary discourse, whether or not it can ever be achieved. Though at times an endangered species (for example in politics, media hype, and television advertisements), the literal truth does exist, relatively speaking, and so too, therefore, does untruth as its literary avoidance. The use of skepticism to deny this possibility affords probably the biggest lie, the most basic of evasive strategies, as perhaps to be expected in the current political climate.²⁸

Nevertheless, the effort can be appreciated as an intermediate step between the insistence on artistic veracity and the negative approach I am proposing here. Until the last couple of decades the unexamined worship of literary "truth" has been commonplace in literary criticism, and, in what seems an overreaction in the wrong direction, Fish and others have replaced it with a notion of indeterminacy as the principal ingredient of literary discourse. What I propose as a synthesis, if such may be possible, is a recognition of the dialectic by which fiction arranges competitive versions of the truth in complementary phases: (a) the rejection of unpleasant truths through (b) the substitution of preferred truths, i.e. whatever diversionary truths are needed to convey the lie. Granted their context, they are true enough, but their truth is misleading relative to the truths their acceptance excludes from consideration. Victory "truths," for example, substitute for failure truths, love "truths" for frustration truths, adequacy "truths" for inadequacy truths, rapport "truths" for hostility truths, and, of Menandrine necessity, orthodox heterosexual "truths" for their supposedly unspeakable androgynous alternative. Other substitutions feature degree rather than kind, for example when one finds satisfaction in literary role models that seem more sensitive, more comprehending, more fortunate, more heroic, and/or more attractive to the opposite sex. Subtler variations include the reader's renewed sense of personal worth from acknowledging presumably universal "truths" (for example, ironically, the prevalent "truth" that honesty is the best policy) or from recognizing that no such answers are forthcoming, or that the right questions cannot even be asked (for example in "Waiting for Godot"). Paradoxically, even the "truth" that deception is an absolute necessity (for example Marlowe's final insight in *Heart of Darkness*) may be useful as a lie. In and of themselves such insights are certainly true, but their misinterpretation is finally what makes them useful, as for example with the fideist insistence that an inevitable ignorance of God's existence (true enough) necessitates its acceptance (not true).

And the same thing happens with our literary uses of the truth. Our feelings of adequacy are improved by identifying (or, as Simon Lesser explained, by "analogizing") with characters whenever we please and by our ability to share in the author's successful verbalization of his story.²⁹ As Northrop Frye maintains, reading literature establishes an identity that lets us get away from the world we don't like.³⁰ Otherwise, we would not bother to read fiction. In the most inclusive sense, we enjoy a text because it substitutes the world of fiction for the world outside fiction--and, once within fiction, because it substitutes an achieved world for the world left behind. Of course preferred truths may be declared as an instantaneous act of denial, but they are more effectively imposed by means of narrative reversal that culminates in acceptable closure, with the truths they deny limited to a texture of local images and metaphors quickly forgotten in the flow of reading.³¹ Narrative advancement thus consolidates the eventual victory of misrepresentation, its progressive momentum only temporarily impeded by anti-linear alternatives. Like the textual gaps proposed by Wolfgang Iser, these resistant features are more likely to emphasize subjective expressiveness, as opposed to the progressive features whose dominant context of meaning culminates in a pleasantly evasive resolution.

The linear dialectic I am suggesting may engage any number of distinctions--for example, at the most simplistic level, between good and evil, between temptation and its rejection, or between timidity and the courage to seek vindication. With greater complexity, it can pit a relatively surrealistic depiction of villains, as in the case of Milton's Satan, against a relatively conventional depiction of heroes, as in the case of Milton's Adam. Similarly, it can pit skeptical ambivalence against dramatic certitude (as in the case of Hamlet), or it can bring into play differences among

literary categories by pitting threatening local connotations against a combination of theme and narrative closure that disavows these connotations. As in the case of Frost's "Mending Wall," one state of mind can be implicit in the images, metaphors and puns that dominate the attention from one sentence to the next, but an entirely different state of mind can prevail once closure is imposed. In effect, the text's resolution denies both its beginning and the way it has been told. Here the "sense of an ending" I am defining essentially reverses Frank Kermode's definition in his useful book of the same title. According to Kermode, escapist fiction lacks serious fiction's apocalyptic experience of finality. Kermode argues that the two versions of literary experience are qualitatively different and that every novel fits one category or the other, not both. In his view, serious fiction compels our attention by representing improvements (the "world of potency") as being achieved (a "world of act") and by showing narrative movement "through time to an end, an end we must sense even if we cannot know it . . ."32 This explanation is pretty much in accord with my model of dialectic negation, but I must respectfully propose three relatively minor modifications: (a) that every text proposes its own "world of potency" which is realized as act (or praxis) in the context of narrative form, (b) that every text is accordingly organized to provide a sense of an ending (or finality) which can be somewhat accurately anticipated by readers, and (c) that the serious fiction which Kermode admires actually puts up more of a struggle than popular fiction against this narrative inevitability. In serious fiction there is usually a more effective manipulation of truths that defy simplified linear momentum toward closure, for example in style and characterization. Closure's final victory is consequently less decisive, but this does not diminish its importance.

The approach I am proposing here once again confutes Sir Philip Sidney's notion that a text tells no lies because it makes no attempt to tell the truth. Instead, I agree with Gerald Graff's argument in *Literature Against Itself* that the distinction between true and false propositions is built into the language of fiction and that it cannot be arbitrarily excluded from literary experience.³³ Contrary to Graff's position, however, I propose that this necessity limits fiction to the category of telling lies. There is plenty of truth to be found in works of fiction, of course, but its purpose is to justify and contextualize literary deception, for fiction, like religion, offers little room for strict verification standards, for the unbiased accumulation of data, or for the full exploration of exceptions. Instead, its truths and untruths inextricably blend with each other, reducing literary "truth" to verisimilitude as the appearance of truth rather than the truth itself. And it is no accident that fiction primarily deceives about the most important issues in life, and that authors, like politicians, are probably the most credible when they believe their fabrications. Misrepresentations important to readers may differ from those important to authors, but narrative conventions afford enough flexibility to let readers adopt an author's self-deception for their own purposes. From the authors' lies readers can generate their own, and the more basic the lie, very probably the broader its relevance to human experience, and thus the more universal its appeal. The same act of misrepresentation may serve to deny any number of unacceptable truths, and in any combination for any particular reader. In effect, the opportunity for self-deception is communicated just as words and images are communicated, and deception is built into each and every text as a structural obligation that guarantees rapport between authors and their readers. It is this implicit covenant that gives formal validity to a text, providing the vehicle for illusion as communicated from authors to their readers. On the other hand, the work of literature becomes irrelevant to readers' feelings if its formal organization discourages self-deception, whereupon they can be expected to set it aside for other, more interesting books to read.

My approach necessitates a revision of Aristotle's theory of catharsis by treating literary deception as its primary agent. I maintain that tension (i.e. fear, anxiety, or simple dissatisfaction) might be temporarily elevated by fiction, but only to be reduced to a steady-state minimum felt as pleasure (*hamartia*). This is primarily a matter of homeostasis, and, as with other such feedback strategies, fiction constitutes a relatively modest commitment of energy, the attention devoted to reading a text that helps to focus, then diminish more pervasive tension levels resulting from extra-literary complications in life. Paradoxically, the story's "plotted" resolution may be affirmative, but its positive value as illusion derives from the homeostatic principle of negative feedback, a relatively small diversion of nervous energy (in this case the cognitive activity of reading a book) for causing tension reduction experienced as pleasure. Contrary to the ordinary lie, which too often raises tension levels without any prospect of alleviation, literary deception raises, then lowers these levels by concentrating the reader's vicarious attention on imaginary characters whose successes provide an improvement on real life. Plot imposes catharsis: something happens contrary to our experience (i.e. denial occurs), and this makes us feel good (i.e. tension levels have been reduced by means of negative feedback).

As Coleridge famously insisted, fiction offers the opportunity to "suspend disbelief," as opposed to ancient skepticism's complementary suspension of belief described as *epoche* that forbids the acquiescence to simple answers. Coleridge also proposed that this immersion in an alternative world affords an ongoing pleasure ("the attractions of the journey itself") in the process of reading a text independent of its sense of an ending.³⁴ Local contexts actually provide homeostatic satisfaction additional to the machinery of closure, for example when there is a felicitous choice of words, when ambiguity is suddenly encountered, when rhyme and rhythm effectively contour ideas, or when elaborate periodic sentences are finally brought to a suitable conclusion, for example in Fielding and Sterne's prose. Consequently, a text integrates tension-aggravating and tension-reducing effects from beginning to end, not merely when final closure occurs. However, while reading a text our expectations as readers are increasingly dominated by the dynamics that bring its story to a suitable resolution. The sequence of minor homeostatic effects culminates in a final splurge, the broad gratification we feel upon finishing the story--because a suitable resolution has been imposed, and also (why not admit it?) simply because completion has occurred. The process is over and done with, followed by a genuine sense of accomplishment.

Significantly, literary form differs from normal somatic feedback processes as the source of homeostatic restitution, since it provides a medium for tension reduction which is situated outside the reader's nervous system, locked in the words and sentences an author has already transcribed to the pages of a book. Nevertheless, there are several important resemblances between literary form and the more basic restitutive dynamics of negative feedback that produce homeostasis within the human body. The linear act of reading a text completes the circuit (or "feedback loop") from high tension to a reduced tension felt as gratification. The text's fixed organization of words and sentences supplies a reliable temporary feedback loop for producing satisfaction that subordinates countervailing stimulation (i.e. "positive feedback") resulting from risk and discovery. Positive feedback can be accommodated, but only because it must eventually defer to negative feedback that surges produced by narrative closure. If a limited increase in nervous activity occurs, it can be tolerated because an overall reduction is anticipated once this

resolution is achieved. So fiction does grant a preliminary role to positive feedback, but with the limited purpose of setting the stage for homeostasis through renewed self-deception. The dynamics of homeostasis reward us with felt pleasure once we can obtain satisfaction in fiction's achieved lies confirmed by suitable closure. When the reader lays down a novel because he has lost interest, he is in fact declaring the inadequacy of its negative feedback dynamics relevant to his current needs and feelings. As earlier indicated, he turns to other, more pleasurable fiction--fiction with better homeostatic value for that particular moment.

The homeostatic use of denial I find at the root of literary experience bears an interesting comparison with Freud's analysis of the paranoid syndrome as a sequence of denial and projective displacements by which we can blame others for our own problems.³⁵ Freud shows how victims of paranoia cope with heightened anxiety levels first by resorting to hostility to deny their masochistic attraction ("I do not find him attractive; in fact I hate him"), then by projecting their hostility upon those who seem the most threatening to their sense of adequacy (It's not that I hate him; rather, he hates me"). I extend Freud's theory to literary analysis by showing how fiction abstracts and reverses these two displacements in a narrative context usually devoid of recognizable personal animosity. First the projective displacement is brought into play by the reader's vicarious identification with literary figures, whereupon the denial displacement is brought into play by his absorption in the narrative account of their struggle toward eventual success. Once again plot is the agent of denial, since it imposes a linear arrangement that sooner or later supplants need with vicarious fulfillment refashioned by readers to fit their individual circumstances. The denial implicit in Hamlet's revenge, for example, may be enjoyed for any number of reasons, as may the denial implicit in Antony and Cleopatra's martyrdom to love, David Copperfield's rise to success, and most of the other literary success stories familiar to readers.

Because readers only partially immerse themselves in fiction, paranoid defense mechanisms may be utilized as a relatively healthy kind of evasiveness. Nevertheless, fiction often features such obviously symptomatic paranoid coping mechanisms as the simplistic distinction between good and evil, the conflict between heroes and villains, the exaggerated centrality of heroes in a "pseudo-community" of friends and enemies, the undue importance of special truths and secret disclosures, the use of simplistic homophobic stereotypes to deny sexual ambivalence, and the perpetual quest for vindication in the opinion of readers. These classic paranoid traits are benign in fiction, since its make-believe context is limited to the act of reading. As a result, fiction's pre-paranoid organization of experience becomes a healthy expedient--temporary in its cathartic benefits, permanent (but not necessarily chronic) in its availability as literary reinforcement to our sense of personal worth.

This entire literary dynamic, I would propose, depends on what might be described as the Affirmative Fallacy, comprising the act of denial in its most basic and irreducible manifestation. Negation takes place, but it cannot be admitted for it to occur fully. Its manifestation must be denied to be useful, doubling its operation as a kind of Negationsnegierung, as defined by Friedrich Engels. What occurs is a denial of denial that best fulfills itself in the context of literary fiction as a compensatory affirmative vision. This is when undesirable experience automatically produces exaggerated affirmation in something--anything--that may be construed as its opposite without being recognized as such. This pattern of reversal happens, for example, when uncertainty triggers belief, confusion discipline, resentment false gratitude, and the diminished sense of

personal worth an overweening loyalty to whatever group or category one can take pride in (church, nation, local sports teams, etc.). The choice is affirmative, but, as obliged by the Affirmative Fallacy, its achievement is negative, guaranteed by the positive assurance that this is not the case. At one moment discomfort suggests itself; at the very next, pride, joy, or indignation crowds it from our minds. Energy is withdrawn from one mental disposition, almost as quickly invested in another--in effect, its opposite. There is a tenor-vehicle interaction, as I.A. Richards has suggested for metaphor, except that its forward metonymic organization depends on a vehicle whose acceptable truth designifies, or drives from consciousness, its tenor rooted in unacceptable truth.³⁶ The image implicit in this vehicle as a final state of affairs substitutes for its tenor's acknowledgement of countervailing difficulties instead of enhancing it through its more accessible representation.

Also designified, necessarily, is the recognition that such a displacement has taken place. When our minds shift from unpleasantness to diversionary affirmation, we must exclude from consciousness both the unpleasantness and our effort to divert our attention elsewhere. To reject or ignore an idea, we must also ignore our choice to do so. As E. H. Gombrich maintains, we cannot watch ourselves having an illusion.³⁷ We can fantasize or be conscious that we are fantasizing, but not both simultaneously. As soon as we recognize this is what we are doing, we no longer, strictly speaking, do it. Similarly, to tell ourselves lies, we must also lie about what we are telling ourselves. If we admit we are lying, the lie dissolves, so the lie we tell must be augmented by the lie that we are not lying. Two acts of denial thus simultaneously occur: (a) the affirmative truth which denies a more basic truth, and (b) a commitment to this truth which denies that denial has occurred. By means of this doubling, we defend our lies with greater energy than the truths we can otherwise take for granted. Our lies assume the value of a belief, or belief system, worthy of strenuous defense--strenuous enough at times that it becomes an imposition, almost an act of aggression.

The Affirmative Fallacy bears useful metacritical implications in helping to explain the almost universal collaborative eagerness of critics to share in literary deception by emphasizing their own assortment of literary "truths." There is exegetical complicity, but with several important differences between authors and their critics. While authors engage in a struggle to deceive themselves, critics enjoy relative peace of mind. They might have the same affirmative ends, but their explicative detachment glosses over literary risk without much risk of its own. Authors confront the truths they deny at least well enough to reject them in a narrative context. In contrast, critics limit themselves to partaking of the benefits of this effort with little or no concession to the experience denied. When critics such as Leslie Fiedler, Norman O. Brown, Luce Irigaray, or Camille Paglia try for a closer encounter, their speculations are likely to be repudiated for their presumably gratuitous vulgarity. Authors and critics thus tend to play complementary roles--authors by struggling to reject experience through pursuing substitutes, critics by finding satisfaction in the substitutions imposed without any conscious participation whatsoever in the presdignification involved.

Criticism's essentially parasitic commitment to literary deception can be observed among some of the principal critical theories popular today. Vulgar Marxist critics, for example, emphasize literature's historical "truth" in promoting a better future, ignoring the extent to which their version of history simplifies what actually happens. Fiction appeals to us because it

promotes the illusion of a better world in the process of being achieved here and now, as opposed to the complex and frustrating byways involved in the effort to create such a world in the indefinite future. As a result, fiction almost inevitably encourages a misguided sense of well-being that lessens one's effective commitment to social change. To this extent it serves a reactionary rather than revolutionary function, and the status quo is most likely neither threatened nor adequately explained by it. Similarly, psychoanalytic and response-theory critics praise literature for exposing readers to their own feelings. On the contrary, I claim, fiction primarily appeals to readers because it proposes pleasant substitutes, not because it makes them aware of the genuine problems they want to avoid. If an identity theme emerges, as Norman Holland suggests, it is based on evasiveness rather than self-discovery.³⁸ Resemblances can be appreciated, but primarily because they justify the pursuit of differences, as with the snapshot which must be both flattering and lifelike, each at the expense of the other.

Also misguided is the effort of deconstructionists in promoting the interpretation of fiction as an almost infinite "freeplay" of significations that divest literary form of its centrality. On the contrary, I claim that fiction appeals to readers because it imposes a negative "center" resulting from the designification of unacceptable truths. Fiction's significations may bear endless interreferentiality, but narrative denial remains the primary source of literary gratification. It is an act of designification that necessitates unity of action which is both negative and intra-referential as dominated by literary form rather than cumulatively inter-referential as dominated by free-floating associations with other texts and contexts. To jump from text to text necessarily diminishes the effective negativity of each particular text in and of itself. Textual endlessness predominates rather than the achievement of closure, but as a no less dishonest effort to avoid closure, thereby granting it its due among readers willing to take it into account. In contrast, fiction's negativity entails a dialectic standoff that is both singular and bimodal (this, not that) rather than endlessly diffusive (this, and this, and this, etc.).³⁹ By ignoring this focussed and essentially circumscribed literary function, deconstructionism falls victim to the Affirmative Fallacy at a new and more abstract level of substitution. In effect, discursiveness itself is employed to deny the act of denial. Taken to its extreme, deconstruction's pursuit of intersignifications becomes even more evasive than literary form, thereby joining the dialectic rather than explaining it.

All in all, I am proposing a "hyper-reductionist" model of literary experience, (a) as self-deception, (b) as a homeostatic tension-reduction strategy through self-deception, (c) as a paranoid double displacement that "plots" a self-deceptive outcome, and (d), most fundamentally, as the Affirmative Fallacy's doubling of literary evasiveness to anchor the rejection (i.e., designification) of unacceptable experience. Each of these four negative aspects of the critical approach I am proposing brings into play the same basic principle, the use of affirmation to deny. Each entails one particular aspect of denial, respectively by disavowing truths too painful to be acknowledged, by giving homeostatic value to the avoidance of these truths, by utilizing pre-paranoid fantasy as the agent for diminishing anxieties, and by automatically substituting an affirmative vision as an acceptable alternative. With the Affirmative Fallacy, finally, I reduce to its essence the use of literary illusion to deny (or designify) unacceptable experience. Each of these particular models stands alone, but any combination may be emphasized--to help clarify how fiction's distortions let us adjust to our own modestly distorted circumstances--our frustrations, empty successes and lost opportunities.

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Footnotes

1. I do not deny here that deception may also play a major role in other modes of discourse. Its importance in history is suggested by Hayden White's *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), and its importance in autobiography is explored with emphasis on psychiatric interviewing by Donald Spence in *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982) and with emphasis on published autobiography by Timothy Dow Adams in *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).
2. The dichotomy I am suggesting here derives from John Dewey's distinction between truths with "warranted assertibility" and those which derive from "habit" or "apprehension," some of which are more accurate than others. See John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1938), pp. 7-14, 143. In both *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) and *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), the neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty uses Dewey's concept of "warranted assertibility" to justify both the skepticism and anti-foundationalism that are featured by Stanley Fish in his recent publications. However, Dewey's definition of "warranted assertibility" in his *Logic* seems primarily intended to describe truths that may be provisionally confirmed by scientific experimentation.
3. St. Augustine, "On Lying," and "Against Lying," in *Treatises on Various Subjects*, ed. by Roy Deferrari (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1952), pp. 47-179)--cited by Sissela Bok in *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), pp. 32-5. For the central role of intention in literary deception, see Thomas Roberts in *When Is Something Fiction?* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), and by Clayton Koelb in *The Incredulous Reader: Literature and the Function of Disbelief* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984).
4. The suspension of disbelief was first proposed by Coleridge in Chapter Six of *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 6.
5. Sir Philip Sidney's exact words were, "Now, for the Poet, he nothing affirmes, and therefore never lyeth." "An Apologie for Poetrie," *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, vol. 1, ed. by Gregory Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), p. 184.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 171. Here I associate praxis with intention, as opposed to both cognition and affect or emotion. Apropos of the tripartite division among cognition, conation (or intention) and feelings (affect or emotion) as the three principal categories of experience, see James Ward, "Psychology," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v.
7. Francis Fergusson, *The Idea of a Theater: A Study of Ten Plays / The Art of Drama in Changing Perspective* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 36.
8. Northrop Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," in *Fables of Identity* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), p. 18.

9. Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," in *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 284-5.
10. Wolfgang Iser, "The Play of the Text," in both *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 249-61, and *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. by Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 325-39. Once deception is accepted as an "umbrella concept" more inclusive than play (cf. p. 327 in *Languages of the Unsayable*), the entire apparatus designated by Iser may be used to explain the dynamics of literary deception proposed in this book--"freeplay" and "split signifiers" representing metaphor, "schema" representing plot, etc.
11. I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1925), p. 266. The relativism implicit in Richards's definition of truth both simplifies and anticipates Dewey's concept of warranted assertibility. Cf. fn. 2.
12. John Gross, ed., *The Oxford Book of Aphorisms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 218. Also replete with quotations that challenge received notions of truth is *The Viking Book of Aphorisms*, ed. by W. H. Auden and Louis Kronenberger (New York: Viking, 1962).
13. White, *Metahistory*. See fn. 1.
14. E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 243-44.
15. It may be argued, of course, that the conventional use of death scenes in Shakespeare's plays was more accurate to the sixteenth century than the twentieth century, now that terminal illnesses are more likely to be prolonged because of professional medical care. Nevertheless, I maintain that the act of dying has not changed to that extent, and that Shakespeare's conventions were inaccurate even for the sixteenth century.
16. Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," *New Literary History* 2, no. 1 (Autumn 1970): 123-62--reprinted in *Reader-Response Criticism: from Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. by Jane Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 72-73. In the most inclusive sense I argue that lying constitutes the "event" Stanley Fish seeks out in fiction. In other words, the successful act of self-deception is the "something that happens to, and with the participation of, the reader."
17. Here I would seem to contradict Heidegger's argument proposed in "The Origins of the Work of Art," in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*, ed. by Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns (New York: Modern Library, 1964): "The art-work discloses in its own way the being of what is. This disclosure, i.e., this deconcealment, i.e., the truth of what is, happens in the work. In the art-work the truth of that which is has set itself into work. Art is the setting-itself-into-work of truth" (p. 667--italics in the original). The best way to bridge my difference with Heidegger, I suspect, is by treating

the final literary what is as a "truth" that consists of gladly accepting, if not glorifying, the substitution of what is not for what is as an inevitable byproduct of human consciousness.

18. The similar distinction between fact (*facere*--a thing done) and fiction (*figere*--a thing shaped or made) is discussed by Adams in *Telling Lies*, p. 10.
19. Wolfgang Iser, "Interaction between Text and Reader," in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 112. That "after" signifies "before" might explain at the most abstract level Jacques Lacan's notion of the displacement of a signifier, in this case with a story's outcome reinterpreting, thus signifying (or "designifying") its origins.
20. See Iser's "The Reading Process" as well as Jacques Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. by Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), pp. 247-65, Barbara Herrnstein Smith's "Contingencies of Value," *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1983): 1-35, and Gerald Graff's "Determinacy/Indeterminacy," in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. By Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 163-76. Other concepts now in vogue that emphasize textual indeterminacy include Claude Levi-Strauss's surplus of signifiers, Jacques Lacan's displacement of the signifier, Jacques Derrida's decentering, Roland Barthes' deferment of the signified, Michel Foucault's writing as absence, Mikhail Bakhtin's loopholes, Hans Robert Jauss's horizons, Frank Kermode's plurality of signifiers, and Harold Bloom's misprision. All of these may be subsumed the neo-pragmatic viewpoint, since they more or less stress William Empson's ambiguity as a feature built into textual form, reducing literary truth to "null-truth" in the sense that it is neither exactly true nor untrue. The alternative model I am proposing as a post-neopragmatic option divides the otherwise apparently indiscriminate category of "null-truths" into "relative truths" (those with Dewey's "warranted assertibility") and affirmative substitute truths (those with sufficient appeal to be featured in the context of fiction). Any truth may belong to either category, depending on its use, but in general fiction belongs to the latter category and scientific methodology to the former. By means of this distinction, I suggest, the roles of both form and literary truth, which have in recent years been neglected in literary criticism, may be resurrected, the second as a dialectic interplay between relative truths and affirmative counter-truths, and the first as a linear organization of this dialectic that may be brought to suitable closure.
21. Fish, "Literature in the Reader," p. 83.
22. Frank Kermode, *The Classic* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), chapt. 4, esp. p. 139.
23. Stanley Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1989), pp. 439 and 11.
24. Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally*, pp. 471-502. Reprinted in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 203-22.

25. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).
26. John Searle, "The Storm Over the University," *The New York Review of Books*, 37, no. 19 (Dec. 6, 1990): 40.
27. J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).
28. Here I cannot refrain from observing that the programmatic skepticism typical of modern trends in literary criticism has crested during the Reagan decade, when there has been such an abundance of hypocrisy and corruption in every realm of endeavor. A simplistic cause-and-effect relationship cannot be implied, but if "anything goes" in critical theory, it is easier to accept that "anything goes" in everything else as well.
29. Simon Lesser, *Fiction and the Unconscious* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 203.
30. Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination*, (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 55.
31. The importance of short-term memory limitations is discussed at length in my article, "Psychostylistics: The Possibilities of a Behavioral Science," *Style*, 18, no. 1 (Winter, 1984): 83-97. The "negative" model I propose shows how the short-term memory of threatening truths is crowded from consciousness by both the long-term memory of conventional truths and the steady stream of new experience likewise vulnerable to forgetting.
32. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 179.
33. Gerald Graff, *Literature against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 12.
34. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 2, pp. 10-11.
35. Sigmund Freud, *Psycho-analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 12 (ed by J. Strachey, London: Hogarth Press, 1958), esp. chap. 3, "On the Mechanism of Paranoia," pp. 59-79.
36. I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), Lecture 5, "Metaphor."
37. E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 5-6.
38. Norman Holland, *Poems in Persons* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1973), pp. 49-50.

39. In effect, deconstructionism eliminates from literary experience the formal constraints imposed by Aristotelian unities. In contrast, I try to salvage Aristotle by treating *muthos* as *praxis* with anti-mimetic value resulting from an emphasis on benign truths to deny less accommodating truths. As explained in Chapter One, I draw upon Plato's theory of literary deception in Book 10 of *The Republic* in order to revise and augment Aristotle's theory of plot.