

# I

## Making Films Mean

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For better or worse, it is the commentator who has the last word.

—Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*

“I do not know,” remarks Roland Barthes, “if reading is not, constitutively, a plural field of scattered practices, of irreducible effects, and if, consequently, the reading of reading, meta-reading, is not itself merely a burst of ideas, of fears, of desires, of delights, of oppressions.”<sup>1</sup> Barthes’s doubt seems to me too strong; a systematic metacriticism of interpretation is a plausible project. Nonetheless, the task does require some ground-clearing.

### Interpretation as Construction

To speak of “interpretation” invites misunderstanding from the outset. The Latin *interpretatio* means “explanation” and derives from *interpretēs*, a negotiator or translator or go-between. Interpretation is then a kind of explanation inserted between one text or agent and another. Originally, interpretation was conceived as wholly a verbal process, but in current usage the term can denote just about any act that makes or transmits meaning. A computer interprets instructions, a conductor interprets a score. A divinator interprets the will of the gods, while at the United Nations an interpreter translates between languages. In the criticism of the arts, interpretation may be counterposed to description or analysis; alternatively, criticism as a whole is sometimes identified with interpretation. A perceptual psychologist may describe the simplest act of hearing or seeing as an interpretation of sensory data, while a philosopher may speak of interpretation as a high-level act of judgment. Our first problem, then, is to interpret “interpretation.”

I start by stipulating some exclusions. Some writers take “interpretation” to be synonymous with all production of meaning.<sup>2</sup> The chief

notion behind this broad usage is that any act of understanding is mediated; even the simplest act of perceptual recognition is “interpretive” in that it is more than a simple recording of sensory data. If no knowledge is direct, all knowledge derives from “interpretation.” I agree with the premise but see no reason to advance the conclusion. Psychologically and socially, knowledge involves *inferences*. In the chapters that follow I shall use the term *interpretation* to denote only certain kinds of inferences about meaning. For much the same reason, I shall not be using *reading* as a synonym for all inferences about meaning, or even for those interpretive inferences about films’ meanings. I reserve the term *reading* for interpretation of literary texts.<sup>3</sup>

Introducing the concept of inference enables us to flesh out a common conceptual distinction. Most critics distinguish between *comprehending* a film and *interpreting* it, though they would often disagree about where the boundary line is to be drawn. This distinction follows the classic hermeneutic division between *ars intelligendi*, the art of understanding, and *ars explicandi*, the art of explaining.<sup>4</sup> Roughly speaking, one can understand the plot of a James Bond film while remaining wholly oblivious to its more abstract mythic, religious, ideological, or psychosexual significance. On the basis of the comprehension/interpretation distinction, tradition identifies two sorts of meaning, summed up in Paul Ricoeur’s definition of interpretation: “the work of thought which consists in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning.”<sup>5</sup> Thus comprehension is concerned with apparent, manifest, or direct meanings, while interpretation is concerned with revealing hidden, nonobvious meanings.<sup>6</sup>

To speak of *hidden* meanings, *levels* of meaning, and *revealing* meanings evokes the dominant framework within which critics understand interpretation. The artwork or text is taken to be a container into which the artist has stuffed meanings for the perceiver to pull out. Alternatively, an archaeological analogy treats the text as having strata, with layers or deposits of meaning that must be excavated. In either case, comprehension and interpretation are assumed to open up the text, penetrate its surfaces, and bring meanings to light. As Frank Kermode puts it: “The modern critical tradition, for all its variety, has one continuous element, the search for occulted sense in texts of whatever period.”<sup>7</sup>

Yet to assume that sense is “in” the text is to reify what can only be the result of a process. Comprehending and interpreting a literary

text, a painting, a play, or a film constitutes an activity in which the perceiver plays a central role. The text is inert until a reader or listener or spectator does something to and with it. Moreover, in any act of perception, the effects are “underdetermined” by the data: what E. H. Gombrich calls “the beholder’s share” consists in selecting and structuring the perceptual field. Understanding is mediated by transformative acts, both “bottom-up”—mandatory, automatic psychological processes—and “top-down”—conceptual, strategic ones. The sensory data of the film at hand furnish the materials out of which inferential processes of perception and cognition build meanings. Meanings are not found but made.<sup>8</sup>

Comprehension and interpretation thus involve the *construction* of meaning out of textual cues. In this respect, meaning-making is a psychological and social activity fundamentally akin to other cognitive processes. The perceiver is not a passive receiver of data but an active mobilizer of structures and processes (either “hard-wired” or learned) which enable her to search for information relevant to the task and data at hand. In watching a film, the perceiver identifies certain cues which prompt her to execute many inferential activities—ranging from the mandatory and very fast activity of perceiving apparent motion, through the more “cognitively penetrable” process of constructing, say, links between scenes, to the still more open process of ascribing abstract meanings to the film. In most cases, the spectator applies knowledge structures to cues which she identifies within the film.

Taking meaning-making to be a constructive process does not entail sheer relativism or an infinite diversity of interpretation. I take the informing metaphor seriously. Construction is not *ex nihilo* creation; there must be prior materials which undergo transformation.<sup>9</sup> Those materials include not only the perceptual output furnished by mandatory and universal bottom-up processes but also the higher-level textual data upon which various interpreters base their inferences.<sup>10</sup> A composition, a camera movement, or a line of dialogue may be ignored by one critic and highlighted by another, but each datum remains an intersubjectively discriminable aspect of the film. While critics build up meanings by applying institutional protocols and normalized psychological strategies, we shall see that they typically agree upon what textual cues are “there,” even if they interpret the cues in differing ways. Indeed, in Chapter 11 I shall argue that one virtue of a poetics of cinema is that it offers middle-level theoretical concepts that capture intersubjectively significant cues.

Both comprehension and interpretation, then, require the spectator to apply conceptual schemes to data picked out in the film. What sorts of conceptual schemes might be used?

The first candidate might be a *theory*. A film theory consists of a system of propositions that claims to explain the nature and functions of cinema. Many critics today would assert that, consciously or unconsciously, the interpreter employs some theory in order to pick out relevant cues in the film, organize them into significant patterns, and arrive at an interpretation. For example, to execute a Freudian interpretation of a film is to utilize a theory about, say, how cinema channels desire, and this will affect the selection of data and the inferences which the critic draws from them. Less obviously, many critics would go on to assert that even the critic who claims to subscribe to no theory but seeks only to understand the film “in itself” can be shown to have a tacit theory (humanist, organicist, or whatever) that shapes the interpretive act.

In several respects, I think, theories do play a role in conceptual schemes, particularly in contemporary criticism. There seems little doubt, for instance, that psychoanalytic theories of cinema do assist many critics in making meaning. But we must ask how this assistance takes place. In what sense does the interpretation *follow from* the theory?

Perhaps the critic’s interpretation *tests* a theory. That is, a critical exegesis, judged acceptable on grounds of interpretive propriety, functions to confirm, revise, or reject a theoretical argument. This makes the interpretation roughly analogous to the scientific experiment that tests a hypothesis, while the conventional procedures across theoretical schools become something like an accepted scientific method.

In the course of this book I shall be trying to show that no such pure separation of theory and method obtains within film criticism. For now, I simply suggest that film interpretations do not conform to the “testing” model. Unlike a scientific experiment, no interpretation can fail to confirm the theory, at least in the hands of the practiced critic. Criticism uses ordinary (that is, nonformalized) language, encourages metaphorical and punning redescription, emphasizes rhetorical appeals, and refuses to set definite bounds on relevant data—all in the name of novelty and imaginative insight. These protocols give the critic enough leeway to claim any master theory as proven by the case at hand.

Merely finding confirming instances does not suffice as a rigorous

test of a theory in any event. This is the error of “enumerative inductivism.” A confirmed scientific hypothesis must also pass the test of “eliminative inductivism”: it must be a better candidate than its rivals.<sup>11</sup> At any given time, a scientific claim is tested against a background of alternative theoretical explanations. But this condition is usually not met within the interpretive institution. Even interpretations which tacitly claim to be the most adequate do not characteristically present themselves as confirming one theory at the expense of others.

Instead of positing an inductivist separation of theory and criticism, perhaps we should think of the critic’s interpretation as *deductively* deriving from the theory. According to this line of argument, no description of anything is conceptually innocent; it is shot through with presuppositions and received categories. Therefore every critical interpretation presupposes a theory of film, of art, of society, of gender, and so on. Stanley Fish pushes this notion toward a thoroughgoing “coherentist” account, whereby every interpretation necessarily confirms some underlying theory; there is no Archimedean point outside the theory on which the interpreter can stand.<sup>12</sup>

On conceptual grounds, the deductivist conception is far from cogent. A theory has conceptual coherence, and it is designed to analyze or explain some particular phenomenon. Assumptions, presuppositions, opinions, and half-baked beliefs do not add up to a theory. My conviction that credit sequences come at the beginning and end of movies, that the film’s star is likely to portray the protagonist, and that Technicolor is aesthetically superior to Eastmancolor does not constitute a theory of film. Nor can a theory be inferred from my entire (very large) stock of such beliefs—a stock which, incidentally, contains fuzzy, slack, and contradictory formulations.

Even if every interpreter tacitly harbored a full-blown theory of film, it would not necessarily determine the details of any given interpretive outcome. Two psychoanalytic critics might agree on every tenet of abstract doctrine and still produce disparate interpretations. In any event, no critic acts as if every theory automatically extruded an interpretation that is challengeable only in terms of that theory. Critic B can agree with Critic A’s putative theory but suggest that certain aspects of the film still need explaining. Or Critic B can accept the interpretation as valuable and enlightening while proceeding to dispute the theory. Neither critic assumes that the theory dictates the interpretation.

So might we simply say that the critic’s interpretation *illustrates* a

theory? Jacques Lacan opens his seminar on Poe's "Purloined Letter" by announcing: "We have decided to illustrate for you today the truth which may be drawn from that moment in Freud's thought under study—namely, that it is the symbolic order which is constitutive for the subject—by demonstrating in a story the decisive orientation which the subject receives from the itinerary of the signifier."<sup>13</sup> In a similar fashion, some theoretically inflected criticism has used films to illustrate the theories proposed.<sup>14</sup>

This is a much weaker claim than the inductive and deductive conceptions. To make an interpretation a parable of a theory is not to undertake to establish the truth of the theory. Any doctrine, be it psychoanalysis or Scientology, can be illustrated by artworks. Moreover, this proposition runs into a problem already mentioned. If not every set of beliefs relevant to the interpretive act counts as a theory of cinema, then the interpretation may illustrate the beliefs but will not illustrate a theory.

Perhaps, then, a theory merely offers *insights* which can guide the critic's interpretation. This formulation sounds appealing, and many practicing critics would probably accept it. Once again, though, this makes the relation of theory to the work only contingent. An unusually wise critic, wholly innocent of theory, might be brimful of insights which could yield intriguing interpretations. And once again, this view surrenders any concern for the theory's claims to truth. From this perspective, a critic could use the I Ching, numerology, astrology, or any fanciful system as long as it generated hunches that led to acceptable interpretations. In fact, the critical institution does not permit such wide-ranging research methods. Only certain theories count as worth mining, and those are assumed to be valid or accurate on grounds other than their applicability to the film at hand. (Psychoanalytic theory furnishes obvious examples.) "Insight" does not suffice as a criterion to guide critics' choice and use of theories.

I have tried to show that the critic's interpretation does not follow from a theory in any strong sense. Some other sort of conceptual scheme must play a role. Since Jonathan Culler's pathbreaking *Structuralist Poetics*, several theorists have proposed that critics produce interpretations by following *rules*.<sup>15</sup> Despite the significant results of this line of research, the concept of rules upon which it rests remains somewhat vague.<sup>16</sup> In most cases, the term *rule* is largely synonymous with "norm" or "convention."

Being a little fussy here will help clarify the argument to come.

Critics arrive at interpretations, I suggest, by using certain conventions of reasoning and language. Criticism is conventional in that broad sense identified by David Lewis: it creates regularities in behavior by coordinating the actions of agents who have expectations that common goals will be met.<sup>17</sup> But critics do not obey stringent rules, like the one that directs drivers to stop for a red light. Critical interpretation, it seems to me, chiefly consists of a “covert” or tacit conventionality. In such cases people are largely unaware of the conventions they obey. Imitation and habit lead agents to expect coordinated action from others but without any particular awareness of an underlying rule.<sup>18</sup>

The concept of tacit convention seeks to capture both psychological and social dimensions of the interpretive activity. Psychologically, interpretive conventions rely upon reasoning practices. Most generally, human beings possess broad inductive skills which govern everyday sense-making, and these play a large role in interpreting artworks. Critics also possess skills which are attuned to specialized domains. Together, all such reasoning practices constitute interpretive expertise. The rules involved are primarily rules of thumb. Like an artisan using strategies derived from experience, the critic draws upon a repertory of options and adjusts them to the particular task. And this skill no more constitutes a theory of cinema than a good bicyclist’s know-how amounts to a physics of moving bodies or a sociology of recreation.

From a social perspective, conventions can be seen as coordinating agents’ patterns of action for the benefit of the goals of a group. To perform the role of film interpreter is to accept certain aims of the interpretive institution and to act in accordance with norms that enable those aims to be reached. Here again, goal-achieving strategies need not consist of theories in any rigorous sense. Indeed, if the critic is like an artisan, she will tend to “dwell within” the standard practices: abstract theoretical knowledge will fade into the background, tacit procedures will govern her inferences, and attention will focus on the minutiae of the task at hand.<sup>19</sup>

A constructivist account of “the beholder’s share,” then, has the task of explaining how pragmatic reasoning practices guide the critic’s act of assumption, expectation, and exploration; how cues are highlighted, arranged, and worked into the basis of critical inferences; how the film flashing on the screen is reconstructed into a meaningful whole by the perceiver’s perceptual and cognitive activity. Chapter 2 will seek to show how institutional norms and reasoning strategies shape the conventions of critical interpretation. Before we consider them,

though, I want to introduce some distinctions that are fundamental to this book's argument. It is time to say more about meaning.

### Meaning Made

I suggest that when spectators or critics make sense of a film, the meanings they construct are of only four possible types.

1. The perceiver may construct a concrete "world," be it avowedly fictional or putatively real. In making sense of a narrative film, the spectator builds up some version of the *diegesis*, or spatio-temporal world, and creates an ongoing story (*fabula*) occurring within it.<sup>20</sup> The spectator may construe nonnarrative forms, such as rhetorical or taxonomic ones, as proposing a world that manifests structures of an argumentative or categorical nature.<sup>21</sup> In constructing the film's world, the spectator draws not only on knowledge of filmic and extrafilmic conventions but also on conceptions of causality, space, and time and on concrete items of information (for example, what the Empire State Building looks like). This very extensive process eventuates in what I shall call *referential* meaning, with the referents taken as either imaginary or real. We can speak of both Oz and Kansas as aspects of referential meaning in *The Wizard of Oz*: Oz is an intratextual referent, Kansas an extratextual one.<sup>22</sup>

2. The perceiver may move up a level of abstraction and assign a conceptual meaning or "point" to the fabula and diegesis she constructs. She may seek out explicit cues of various sorts for this, assuming that the film "intentionally" indicates how it is to be taken. The film is assumed to "speak directly." A verbal indication such as the line "There's no place like home" at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, or a stereotyped visual image such as the scales of Justice, could be said to furnish such cues. When the viewer or critic takes the film to be, in one way or another, "stating" abstract meanings, he is constructing what I shall call *explicit* meaning.<sup>23</sup> Referential and explicit meaning make up what are usually considered "literal" meanings.

3. The perceiver may also construct covert, symbolic, or *implicit* meanings. The film is now assumed to "speak indirectly."<sup>24</sup> For example, you might assume that *Psycho*'s referential meaning consists of its fabula and diegesis (the trip of Marion Crane from Phoenix to Fairvale, and what happens there), and you might take its explicit



meaning to be the idea that madness can overcome sanity. You might then go on to argue that *Psycho*'s implicit meaning is that sanity and madness cannot be easily distinguished. Units of implicit meaning are commonly called "themes," though they may also be identified as "problems," "issues," or "questions."<sup>25</sup>

The spectator may seek to construct implicit meanings when she cannot find a way to reconcile an anomalous element with a referential or explicit aspect of the work; or the "symbolic impulse" may be brought in to warrant the hypothesis that any element, anomalous or not, may serve as the basis of implicit meanings. Furthermore, the critic may take implicit meanings to be consistent, at some level, with the referential and explicit meanings assigned to the work. Or, as in the process of irony, implicit meanings may be posited as contradicting other sorts. For example, if you posit that the psychiatrist's final speech in *Psycho* explicitly draws a line between sanity and madness, you might see the film's implicit denial of such a demarcation as creating an ironic effect.

4. In constructing meanings of types 1–3, the viewer assumes that the film "knows" more or less what it is doing. But the perceiver may also construct *repressed* or *symptomatic* meanings that the work divulges "involuntarily." Moreover, such meanings are assumed to be at odds with referential, explicit, or implicit ones. If explicit meaning is like a transparent garment, and implicit meaning is like a semiopaque veil, symptomatic meaning is like a disguise. Taken as individual expression, symptomatic meaning may be treated as the consequence of the artist's obsessions (for example, *Psycho* as a worked-over version of a fantasy of Hitchcock's). Taken as part of a social dynamic, it may be traced to economic, political, or ideological processes (for example, *Psycho* as concealing the male fear of woman's sexuality).

In what follows, I shall assume that the activity of comprehension constructs referential and explicit meanings, while the process of interpretation constructs implicit and symptomatic meanings. But I do not intend the comprehension/interpretation couplet to correspond to a distinction between the naive viewer's "innocent viewing" and the trained viewer's "active" or "creative" reading. A first-time viewer of a film under "normal" conditions may well seek to construct implicit and symptomatic meanings, while the interpretive critic reflecting on the film after the fact will still find referential and explicit meanings

relevant. Still, in this book I will not be much concerned with comprehension.<sup>26</sup> My stress here falls on interpretation, conceived as a cognitive activity taking place within particular institutions.<sup>27</sup>

Barthes's pessimism about a metacriticism of reading is probably based on the fact that interpreters can ascribe an indefinitely large range of meanings to a textual element. If I am right, however, each such meaning will function as one of the four sorts I have indicated. The taxonomy makes it possible to study—socially, psychologically, rhetorically—the principles and procedures of meaning-making, independent of the particular meanings that are made.

What must be stressed is that these four categories of meaning-construction are *functional* and *heuristic*, not substantive. Used in the processes of comprehension and interpretation, they constitute distinctions with which perceivers approach films; they are assumptions which can generate hypotheses about particular meanings. To the same textual element, different critics assign not only different meanings but also different *sorts* of meaning. The sexual meaning of the skyscrapers and drills in *The Fountainhead* may be considered explicit or implicit or symptomatic, depending on the rationale of the critic's argument.

This is one reason why interpretation can generate a cycle of meaning-production. Critic A can take certain referential and explicit meanings as literal and seek to interpret the film as having other, implicit meanings. Critic B can take the same implicit meanings as a point of departure and build a symptomatic interpretation of what they, and the referential and explicit meanings, repress. But the next interpretation can swallow up Critic B's. Critic C may offer a new set of symptomatic meanings, perhaps by treating Critic B's interpretation as repressing the real dynamic of the text. Or Critic C may treat the entire configuration of meanings as implicit, so that the work deliberately symbolizes the relation of the repressed to the manifest content.<sup>28</sup>

Consider a controversy that arose in 1955 around Lindsay Anderson's critique of the ending of *On the Waterfront*. Although the opening title announces the film as showing how a "vital democracy" can defeat "self-appointed tyrants," Anderson contends that the film actually celebrates undemocratic action. He suggests that throughout the movie Terry acts wholly on his own, spurred on by selfishness and revenge. Anderson also proposes that the final scene of the beaten Terry leading the dockmen back to work harbors a fascist meaning, that of the need to follow a strong leader. Anderson is constructing

an explicit meaning (the democratic moral), which he attributes to the film's "consciousness," and a repressed meaning (the totalitarian faith in a superman) that works against this. The latter meaning emerges in the final image of the lowering portcullis shutting the men off from the mob. "Whether intentional or not," Anderson notes, "the symbolism is unmistakable": the men are locked in a dark world of toil, and Terry's sacrifice has won them no real liberation.<sup>29</sup>

Several *Sight and Sound* readers wrote in to dispute Anderson's symptomatic interpretation. Some recast his data in referential terms: the workers follow Terry because they recognize his right to a job; they acknowledge him to be their surrogate and let him go forward as "a matter of courtesy and respect." Others proposed implicit meanings: Terry's walk symbolizes his moral rebirth or recalls Christ's Via Dolorosa.<sup>30</sup> The most extensive rebuttal was offered by Robert Hughes, who posits a psychological development in Terry that leads him to cut himself off from both Johnny Friendly's gang and his fellow workers. Hughes points out that before the climactic fight Terry replies to the gang's taunts with: "I'm standin' over here right now." Hughes adds: "His standpoint has changed." That is, Hughes puns on the word *standpoint* to make Terry's physical separation imply psychological independence.<sup>31</sup> Thus Terry's final walk becomes not the march of a herd's leader but a signal that he has repudiated the gang, a decision that impels the dockers to cluster around him. Hughes counters Anderson's symptomatic interpretation with one that relies on implicit meanings. We have long known that critics can shift their interpretive focus from datum to datum (here, from the portcullis image to a significant line of dialogue); we ought to recognize that they can also shift among types of meaning.

Nor should we assume that the four sorts of meanings constitute levels which the critic must traverse in a given sequence. The interpreter need not analyze referential or explicit meaning in detail. There is evidence that whereas beginning interpreters of poetry do read referentially and have trouble making the thematic leap, skilled interpreters try out implicit meanings from the start and often neglect the "literal" level, or summon it up only to help the interpretation along.<sup>32</sup> Teaching cinema in college furnishes plenty of occasions to watch people plunge into interpretations of shots whose diegetic status has not yet been established. I once attended a conference at which a British film theorist confidently offered symbolic interpretations of frame enlargements from movies which he had never seen.

At times, of course, a critic can try to halt the play of meaning by

dismissing implicit or symptomatic possibilities and tying the film more closely to the referential and explicit levels. This is what some of the *Sight and Sound* readers tried to do with Anderson's symptomatic interpretation. Another example would be Dwight MacDonald's claim that Fellini's *8½* expresses its theme of aging "not in Bergmanesque symbols or narcissistic musings but in episodes that arise naturally out of the drama." The film is "nothing but a pleasurable work of art . . . a worldly film, all on the surface . . . delightfully obvious."<sup>33</sup> Yet another critic can always claim that sticking to the literal level ignores the intriguing possibilities of meaning offered by the text, and that one is entitled, perhaps compelled, to look more closely.

Furthermore, as the *On the Waterfront* instance suggests, there is not always a consensus about the film's explicit and referential meanings. Most viewers seem to agree that *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* offers a "message," but there is considerable dispute about exactly whether it is anticommunist, anti-American, or anticonformist. Worse, viewers may also disagree about "what happens" in the diegesis—about the concrete actions, the characters' motives, the definiteness of the resolution, and many other aspects. The critic can back up his construal either by seeking out extratextual information, such as interviews with the director, or by looking for more evidence at the referential level. Neither course will inevitably yield firm results. A moviegoer writes in to a columnist:

Dear Pat: I almost had a heart attack when the writer in the movie *Stand by Me*, played by Richard Dreyfuss, turned off his word processor without pushing the key to "save" the story. Now a friend insists this was meant to be symbolic, that he was putting the past behind him. What are the facts?

—Hacker, Marina del Rey, California

Dear Hacker: It was ignorance, not philosophical. Neither director Rob Reiner nor Dreyfuss uses home computers—nor apparently did anyone else connected with the picture.<sup>34</sup>

Hacker's friend follows the critic's rule of thumb that referential anomalies furnish good cues for implicit meaning. In an equally common countermove, Pat looks for extratextual sources to explain the referential uncertainty. The first tactic encourages the critic to ask, "What does the referential anomaly *contribute* to the text?" (Is it, for instance, inviting "symbolic" or "philosophical" reflection? Does it create an ambiguity?) The second tactic invites the critic to ask, "How did this

anomaly *get in the text?*" (Did the artist make a mistake? Did censors interfere?) The disparity is that between functionalist and causal explanations and, more notoriously, between a "formalist" criticism and a "historical" one.

Taking meaning-making as a constructive activity leads us to a fresh model of interpreting films. The critic does not burrow into the text, probe it, get behind its facade, dig to reveal its hidden meanings; the surface/depth metaphor does not capture the inferential process of interpretation. On the constructivist account, the critic starts with aspects of the film ("cues") to which certain meanings are ascribed. An interpretation is built upward, as it were, gaining solidity and scale as other textual materials and appropriate supports (analogies, extrinsic evidence, theoretical doctrines) are introduced. Another critic may come along and add a wing or story to the interpretation, or detach portions for use in a different project, or build a larger edifice that aims to include the earlier one, or knock the first one down and start again. Yet every critic, as I shall try to show, draws on craft traditions that dictate how proper interpretations are built.

### Interpretive Doctrines

The types of meaning-making I have described are clearly discernible across many centuries of literary interpretation. A thumbnail history, however schematic, can usefully remind us that film criticism carries on the routines of a remarkably coherent tradition.

In antiquity, pre-Socratic writers made Homer the vehicle of symbolic meanings. Anaxagoras identified Penelope's web with the process of the syllogism, while the Sophists and the Stoics interpreted Homer's gods as representating natural cosmic forces. Such significance, often labeled "allegory" or *hyponoia* ("under-meanings"), is a clear instance of implicit meaning. For Plato, however, implicit meanings could not redeem poetry: "A child is not able to judge which [works] have hidden meanings and which do not."<sup>35</sup> Therefore, Plato argued, only those works with accurate and morally correct meanings (specifically, of referential and explicit sorts) ought to be produced in the Republic. For Aristotle, however, poetry necessarily treats the universal qualities of human behavior.<sup>36</sup> Although the *Poetics* notably avoids discussing interpretation, the claim that poetry is "more philosophical and serious" than history furnished Renaissance writers with a rationale for disclosing implicit meanings in a literary work. Similar possibilities

were opened to eighteenth-century thinkers by Longinus' remark that in a great passage of literature, "more is meant than meets the ear."<sup>37</sup>

By the second century A.D., the Bible had replaced Homer as the chief spur to interpretive activity. In the Roman period, the Hellenistic Jew Philo of Alexandria borrowed the Stoics' allegorical method in order to produce implicit meanings, as in this account of Samuel: "Probably there was an actual man called Samuel, but we conceive of the Samuel of the scripture not as a living compound of soul and body but as a mind which rejoices in the service and worship of God and that only."<sup>38</sup> In rabbinical commentaries on the Bible, *peshat* ("plain sense") focused on explicit meanings, while *midrash* consisted of filling in referential gaps (for example, what Cain said to Abel) and producing symbolic interpretations (for example, in planting a seed a biblical personage is imitating God, who created Eden).<sup>39</sup> With the spread of Christianity, the church fathers needed to make the Gospel coherent and comprehensive for the sake of winning converts and combatting heresy. Pauline exegesis developed the doctrine of typological meaning, whereby a person or event in the Old Testament was said to prefigure one in the New. This required an implicit analogy, or what Paul, borrowing from the Greeks, called "allegory."<sup>40</sup> Now explicit meanings in one portion of Scripture could furnish the basis for discovering implicit meaning in another.

The Alexandrian interpreter Origen, who was the first person to teach theology under church auspices, devised an interpretive method that eventually became Augustine's famous doctrine of the four senses of biblical texts. According to this, any passage could be read historically, allegorically (or typologically), morally (that is, as presenting how we should live now), and anagogically (as prophesying the heavenly glory to come). In our jargon, the historical meaning is referential, while the other three may be either explicit or implicit, depending on the passage. The doctrine of the four senses was imported into the reading of secular works as well, as can be seen in the celebrated 1319 letter, possibly by Dante, that suggests that *The Divine Comedy* is "polysemous, that is, having many meanings."<sup>41</sup> Such operations of meaning-making were not confined to texts. The twelfth-century Abbot Suger described his bejeweled altar panels as shining "with the radiance of delightful allegories" and leading the mind to heaven "in an anagogical manner."<sup>42</sup>

Interpretive thought in the Renaissance continued to appeal to the sorts of meanings I have described. With pagan mythology and the

Bible as their basis, commentators and historians assigned referentially based historical and cosmological meanings to obscure passages, ascribed explicit morals to fables, and explicated tales and icons as edifying allegories of the moral life.<sup>43</sup> Renaissance mythographers produced detailed symbolic readings of Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and even ancient Egyptian texts.<sup>44</sup> A dance could be taken as an allegory of the planets' celestial course.<sup>45</sup> The northern humanists of the sixteenth century composed emblem books and mythographic encyclopedias aiding the public in deciphering symbolic images and serving as manuals for practicing artists.<sup>46</sup> Within a century, Vermeer's paintings of everyday interiors could bear implicit meanings.<sup>47</sup> Literary theory had arrived at the formulation that poetry both teaches and pleases, and Renaissance theorists linked poetry's didactic function to its power to deliver knowledge of ethical activity. In the hands of humanists like Sidney, verbal art became an allegory of right conduct.

While such pragmatic interpretive activities continued in various arts over the next several centuries, a new theory of interpretation was emerging that promised, in contrast to church exegesis, a "scientific" basis for assigning meaning. This can be traced to Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus* of 1670. Spinoza insisted, against patristic exegesis, that hermeneutics must be concerned wholly with meaning, not with truth. He proposed that the interpreter's construction of meaning be constrained by the grammatical rules of the text's language, by the coherence of its parts, and by the historical context of its epoch.<sup>48</sup> Spinoza's tenets came to inform what has been called the "philological" tradition of hermeneutics in the nineteenth century. According to F. A. Wolf, the interpreter must grasp the author's thoughts, and this can be done by filling in referential background.<sup>49</sup> Friedrich Ast took a more comprehensive view, arguing that the interpreter must grasp not only the letter (that is, the referential meaning) and the "sense" (what is assumed to be the explicit meaning) but also the "spirit" (the implicit meaning).<sup>50</sup> F. D. E. Schleiermacher revised the philological tradition by shifting the emphasis from textual features to the psychological process of comprehension, conceived as an identification with the author.<sup>51</sup> In founding hermeneutics as "the art of understanding," Schliermacher took it out of the provinces of law, linguistics, and religion and made it a central domain of the human sciences—a project which Wilhelm Dilthey was to continue in his development of hermeneutics as a psychological, comparative, and historical discipline.<sup>52</sup>

The philological tradition resurfaced in literary studies at the end

of the nineteenth century under the aegis of Gustave Lanson, the founder of literary *explication de texte*. Like the hermeneutic thinkers, Lanson sought to interpret the text historically. The interpreter starts with the text's literal or *grammatical* sense and supplements that with social and biographical background. Both activities involve what I have called the construction of referential meaning. Then the interpreter explicates the *literary* sources of the text, as determined by contemporary models of language or genre. Finally the interpreter moves to the *moral* meaning of the text.<sup>53</sup> Since the latter two stages reveal what Lanson called the text's "secret,"<sup>54</sup> they produce what I have called implicit meanings. Like other philologists, Lanson constrained his interpretation by a principle of fidelity to authorial intention, arrived at through scrupulous positivist research.<sup>55</sup>

Lanson's Viennese contemporary Sigmund Freud proposed a far more radical conception of interpretive activity. Some historians hold that psychoanalytic interpretation derives from the rhetorical, ecclesiastical, and philological traditions.<sup>56</sup> Others consider psychoanalysis to be allied with that "hermeneutics of suspicion" practiced by Marx and Nietzsche.<sup>57</sup> Michel Foucault sees psychoanalysis as providing "a perpetual principle of dissatisfaction" in that it points "not toward that which must be rendered gradually more explicit by the progressive illumination of the implicit but towards what is there and yet is hidden."<sup>58</sup> Certainly, in many respects Freud did not go beyond revealing what I have called implicit meanings. (His later approach to symbolism supplies the most obvious examples.) Yet he also made an original contribution to the interpretive tradition by demonstrating the force of *repressed* meaning. Explicit or implicit meaning could be a decoy. Freudian psychoanalysis posits not discrete layers to be peeled away but a dynamic struggle between "rational" pressures and the upwellings of more primal forces. Worked on by the unconscious, repressed wishes and memories return in cryptic and highly mediated forms, drawing on all the resources of figurative language and visual symbolism in order to find a compromised, and compromising, expression.<sup>59</sup>

By and large, twentieth-century interpretive activity has refined all these conceptions. In art-historical research, Erwin Panofsky sought to synthesize the description of subject matter (referential and explicit meanings), the analysis of "images, stories, allegories" (explicit meanings), and the interpretation of a culture's symbolic values (implicit and symptomatic meanings).<sup>60</sup> Anglo-American New Criticism reacted



against the philological tradition by emphasizing intratextual unity, rejecting authorial intention as a guide to exegesis, and concentrating on implicit meanings. Northrop Frye's archetypal criticism can be seen as reviving allegorical translation, while the Geneva school of phenomenological criticism constitutes a new version of the philologists' reconstruction of authorial vision. Although it is common to set contemporary hermeneutics in opposition to structuralism, in fact structuralist theory has a strong interpretive bent. Claude Lévi-Strauss, for instance, ascribes implicit or symptomatic significance to customs and myths. More recently, a Marxist critic has recast Augustine's doctrine of four senses.<sup>61</sup> Lacan, Althusser, and Derrida have charted new domains of symptomatic reading: what is repressed becomes desire, ideological contradiction, or the subversive force of writing. Now more than ever, scholars take the construction of implicit and symptomatic meanings to be central to understanding the arts and the human sciences.

This search has shaped the history of film theory and criticism in important ways. When film study broke away from journalism on the one side and fandom on the other—when, that is, it became academic—it could have become a subdivision of sociology or mass communication studies. It was instead ushered into the academy by humanists, chiefly teachers of literature, drama, and art. As a result, cinema was naturally subsumed within the interpretive frames of reference that rule those disciplines.

More specifically, the growth of film studies attests to the powerful role of literature departments in transmitting interpretive values and skills. Academic humanism's omnivorous appetite for interpretation rendered cinema a plausible "text." (Advertising and television would later become texts too.) Moreover, literary criticism continued its expansionist phase in the 1960s, when—New Criticism and its derivatives having become solidly entrenched—the popularity of film courses made cinema a prime candidate for inclusion in a critical-skills curriculum. By this time, literary studies had embraced the ideology of multiple "approaches"—intrinsic, myth-centered, psychoanalytic, cultural-contextual, and so on. Film could be studied from all the critical perspectives that could be mobilized around a poem. The liberal pluralism that absorbed film studies (admittedly not without friction) would also eventually accommodate black and ethnic studies, women's studies, and literary theory by adding departmental units—areas, programs, courses—that brought in new interpretation-based

subjects and methodologies.<sup>62</sup> Film also proved highly assimilable to the existing schedule of teaching novels and plays: a film or two per week, lectures and discussions interpreting the film, assigned papers to probe further. These concrete historical factors led film studies to follow the interpretive path, constructing implicit or symptomatic meanings along lines already laid down in other humanistic disciplines.

Such historical forces cast doubt on any hypothesis that interpretation is merely an assortment of diverse practices. Throughout its history, interpretation has been a social activity, a process of thinking, writing, and speaking within institutions governed by norms. Biblical interpretation was overseen by Jewish and Christian communities. Philology developed largely out of a pressure to reconcile academic and religious approaches to Scripture. Psychoanalytical interpretation was conducted within the confines of a movement characterized by a firm hierarchical structure of master, disciples, and excommunicants. Studies in art history, literature, and allied fields are conducted according to protocols of academic inquiry. Interpreters may celebrate the unique insights of particular interpretations (the “humanistic” move) or gain comfort from the way practice appears to confirm theory (the “scientific” approach). Yet both attitudes usually ignore the extent to which social factors shape not only the interpretive outcome but the very notion of what shall count as an illuminating essay or a powerful theoretical demonstration. The institution sets the goals. The next chapter suggests some ways in which it does so, and what the consequences are for making films mean.

# Notes

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## 1. Making Films Mean

1. Roland Barthes, "On Reading," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), p. 33.
2. See, for example, John Reichert, *Making Sense of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 114–115. Cf. Paul Kiparsky, "On Theory and Interpretation," in Nigel Fabb et al., eds., *The Linguistics of Writing: Arguments between Language and Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 195.
3. I will, though, continue to refer to the object of interpretation as a "text," whether it be a piece of writing, a painting, or a film. I would prefer to call it the "work," but this is often too ambiguous, evoking the idea of task or labor. The last chapter tries at one point to make something useful of the overlapping senses of "work."
4. See, for an explanation, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 19.
5. Paul Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," in Josef Bleicher, ed., *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy, and Critique* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 245.
6. A contemporary instance of this dichotomy is Dudley Andrew's contrast between a film's structured and "grammatical" transmission of a "message" (literal meaning) and the transgressive "derailing" of clear meaning (figuration). See *Concepts in Film Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 158, 167–169, 188.
7. Frank Kermode, *The Art of Telling: Essays on Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 24.
8. What follows is discussed at a little more length in my *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 30–40.
9. This version of constructivism assumes that it is possible to arrive at inferences which are at least approximately true; it is thus compatible with a critical realist epistemology. For a defense of "constructivist real-

- ism,” see Ronald N. Giere, *Explaining Science: A Cognitive Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
10. Gerald Graff calls this “given and unrefusable” aspect of perceptual construction the “Godfather effect.” See *Literature against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 202.
  11. Marshall Edelson, *Hypothesis and Evidence in Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 46.
  12. See Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), especially pp. 268–292, 338–371.
  13. Jacques Lacan, “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter,’” *Yale French Studies* 48 (1972): 40.
  14. See, for example, Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 146–148.
  15. Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), especially pp. 117–118, 225; Peter J. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), chaps. 2–5.
  16. For example, Culler models his notion of “literary competence” upon Chomsky’s notion of linguistic competence; *Structuralist Poetics*, pp. 25–26, 122. But Chomsky’s Transformational Generative Grammar conceives of rules as defining correct expressions and inference steps in a constitutive fashion, whereas the interpretive rules proposed by Culler are regulative, strategic ones. For a discussion of this distinction, see Renate Bartsch, *Norms of Language* (London: Longman, 1987), pp. 160–163. For Transformational Generative Grammar, syntactic rules define the very notion of what will count as a sentence in a natural language. Culler’s rules, by contrast, express probabilistic expectations about textual structure. Most recently, Chomsky has suggested that knowledge of language consists not of rules but of “principles.” See Noam Chomsky, *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use* (New York: Praeger, 1986), pp. 145–160.
  17. This derives from David Lewis, *Convention: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 58, 78.
  18. On the notion of overt versus covert conventions, see Robert M. Martin, *The Meaning of Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 79–81.
  19. See, for a relevant discussion, Barry Smith, “Knowing How vs. Knowing That,” in J. C. Nyiri and Barry Smith, eds., *Practical Knowledge: Outlines of a Theory of Traditions and Skills* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), pp. 8–9.
  20. For a discussion of these concepts, see Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, pp. 48–62.
  21. These types of form are discussed in David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: Knopf, 1985), pp. 44–81.
  22. My double-edged usage of the term—including both intratextual and extratextual referring—conforms to current thinking in linguistics and literary semantics. See Keith Allan, *Linguistic Meaning*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 68, and the essays in Anna White-

- side and Michael Issacharoff, eds., *On Referring in Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).
23. For a discussion of how explicit meaning can be derived from referential meaning, see Gerald Prince, "Narrative Pragmatics, Message, and Point," *Poetics* 12 (1983): 530–532.
  24. For detailed and wide-ranging discussions of implicit meaning (from different theoretical perspectives), see Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, *L'Implicite* (Paris: Colin, 1986), and Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).
  25. It may be that only with explicit meanings as a model can we build up notions of implicit meaning. Thus in the life history of the individual, learning to see the moral of a fable or the point of a fairy tale may be a necessary step to learning how to find an implied theme in "high" art.
  26. I sketch a model of comprehension for fictional cinema in *Narration in the Fiction Film*, pp. 29–47.
  27. Other interpretive institutions do not fall within my purview, but it seems likely that they could be studied using the same categories of meaning. For instance, censorship as an interpretive activity would appear to aim at definitively determining a film's referential and explicit meanings while having a difficult time pinning down its implicit and symptomatic ones.
  28. As in this claim about Godard's *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*: "The incidents of abuse are clearly presented as ritual humiliations, symptomatic instances of a general malaise." Robert Stam, "Jean-Luc Godard's *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*," *Millennium Film Journal* 10/11 (1981): 197.
  29. Lindsay Anderson, "The Last Sequence of *On the Waterfront*," *Sight and Sound* 24, 3 (January-March 1955): 128.
  30. "On the Waterfront: Points from Letters," *Sight and Sound* 24, 4 (Spring 1955): 216.
  31. Robert Hughes, "On the Waterfront: A Defense," *Sight and Sound* 24, 4 (Spring 1955): 215.
  32. See Irene R. Fairley, "The Reader's Need for Conventions: When Is a Mushroom Not a Mushroom?" *Style* 20, 1 (Spring 1986): 12.
  33. Dwight MacDonald, *On Movies* (New York: Berkley, 1971), pp. 47, 54, 56.
  34. Pat Hilton, "Ask Pat," *TV Week, Wisconsin State Journal*, 16 November 1986, 35.
  35. "The Republic (selections)," in Allan H. Gilbert, ed., *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961), p. 25.
  36. Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Gerald F. Else (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), p. 33.
  37. Longinus, "On Literary Excellence," in Gilbert, *Literary Criticism*, p. 153.
  38. Quoted in Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), p. 3.
  39. Frank Kermode, "The Plain Sense of Things," in Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick, eds., *Midrash and Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 179–191; Barry W. Holtz, "Midrash," in

- Holtz, ed., *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts* (New York: Summit Books, 1984), pp. 180–182, 201.
40. Robert M. Grant with David Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1984), pp. 19–20.
  41. “Letter to Can Grande della Stella,” in Gilbert, *Literary Criticism*, p. 202.
  42. Excerpts from *The Book of Suger, Abbot of St.-Denis*, in Elizabeth G. Holt, ed., *A Documentary History of Art*, vol. 1, *The Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1957), pp. 29, 30.
  43. Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 11–121.
  44. See Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970).
  45. Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 109.
  46. Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art: From Plato to Winckelmann* (New York: New York University Press, 1985), pp. 263–269.
  47. Mark Roskill, *What Is Art History?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), pp. 139–144.
  48. See Tzvetan Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 131–143.
  49. Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp. 81–83.
  50. *Ibid.*, pp. 78–79.
  51. *Ibid.*, pp. 84–97.
  52. See Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Dilthey: Philosopher of the Human Sciences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 267–272, and Edgar V. McKnight, *Meanings in Texts: The Historical Shaping of a Narrative Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 12–32.
  53. Michel Charles, “La Lecture critique,” *Poétique* 34 (April 1978): 144–146.
  54. *Ibid.*, p. 141
  55. Gustav Lanson, “La Méthode de l’histoire littéraire,” in Lanson, *Essais de méthode, de critique, et d’histoire littéraire*, ed. Henri Peyre (Paris: Hachette, 1965), p. 44.
  56. See, for example, Emile Benveniste, “Remarques sur la fonction du langage dans la découverte freudienne,” in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 86; David Bakan, *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1958), pp. 246–270; and Tzvetan Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 248–249.
  57. See Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 537.
  58. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 373, 374.
  59. Useful summaries of this process are provided in Ellenberger, *Discovery*,

- pp. 474–534; Richard Wollheim, *Sigmund Freud* (New York: Viking, 1971), pp. 59–111.
60. Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1955), pp. 40–41.
  61. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 30–31.
  62. See Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 247–262.

## 2. Routines and Practices

1. See C. J. van Rees, "Advances in the Empirical Sociology of Literature and the Arts: The Institutional Approach," *Poetics* 12 (1983): 285–310. Other social groups which practice film criticism include censorship agencies and fandom. Neither lies within my purview, but a study of each one's interpretive norms would be worthwhile.
2. Janet Staiger discusses the rise of the academic canon in film study in her article "The Politics of Film Canons," *Cinema Journal* 24, 3 (Spring 1985): 4–23.
3. James Monaco, *How to Read a Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
4. See Steven Mailloux, "Rhetorical Hermeneutics," *Critical Inquiry* 11, 4 (June 1985): 634–637, and Vincent B. Leitch, *American Literary Criticism from the 30s to the 80s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 109–114, 150–151.
5. Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. 112.
6. See Jonathan Culler, "Beyond Interpretation," in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Deconstruction, Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 3–11; Gerald Graff, *Literature against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 5–7, 129–149.
7. See, for example, Richard Levin, *New Readings vs. Old Plays: Recent Trends in the Reinterpretation of English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Grant Webster, *The Republic of Letters: A History of Postwar American Literary Opinion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); William E. Cain, *The Crisis in Criticism: Theory, Literature, and Reform in English Studies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); Gerald Graff and Reginald Gibbons, eds., *Criticism in the University* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1985); Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
8. These tenets are drawn, selectively, from Levin, *New Readings*, pp. 2–5.
9. See Cain, *Crisis in Criticism*, p. 106.
10. Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, p. 112.