
Theorese and Science Envy in the Humanities: A New Take on the *Two Cultures* Divide

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We in the humanities used to ridicule the clumsy and obfuscating language of sociology as masking the often trivial nature of its contents. Sociologists, we quipped, say what everybody knows in a language that nobody understands. We cheered C. W. Mills, when in a celebrated exercise he summed up the gist of a drawn-out, virtually impenetrable paragraph by Talcott Parsons in one brief sentence. *Sociologese* was our name for this academic dialect, and we had some innocent fun with it. But now our innocence is gone and the joke is on us; for the humanities have been producing something worse. Arising from hypertrophic theorizing, a steady proliferation of neologisms, for the most part unnecessary or vacuous, has been bloating the critical idiom of the humanities.

THEORESE

Theorese is the name of the beast. Among the justifications its apologists offer for the spawning of its neologisms, there is one that gives the game away. If there ever was an unnecessary one, it is *narratology*. Its coiners, apparently commanding small Latin and less Greek, must have assumed a Greek word by the name of '*narratos*,' to which they unabashedly added the suffix *-logy*, thereby creating a linguistic monstrosity (topped only by another pseudo-Graecism, *homographesis*, claiming to denote 'gay writing'—which also proves that a little Greek can be a dangerous thing). *Narratology*, in turn, gave birth to 'focalization,' 'focalizer,'

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'focalisee,' 'narratee,' 'intradiegetic'—terms that fascinate for their sheer ugliness. Why these repellent neologisms when workable terms—'narrative theory,' 'perspective,' 'point-of-view,' etc.—are available? Because, as the apologists, when challenged, assure us with a straight face, 'narratology' possesses a *more scientific air* and *sounds more recherché* than unpresumptuous 'narrative theory.' This is the inadvertent caricature of a legitimate concern: like the natural sciences, the humanities need a differentiated and complex nomenclature, a technical terminology that distinguishes scholarship from belletrism. Fair enough. But we have that nomenclature already. It is an ensemble of the terminologies of poetics, aesthetics, rhetoric, and literary criticism, to be easily enriched if need be by the occasional neologism and by borrowing from the terminologies of philosophy, psychology, linguistics, anthropology and other social sciences. No need therefore of the current tidal wave of ugly and pretentious jargon words that disfigure the critical idiom.

A more recent coinage, 'Hellenicity,' caused me some grief, as I was made aware of yet another avenue of justifying such neologisms. When deploring this one as fatuously pretentious, and totally unnecessary to boot (since 'Greekness' or the 'Hellenic ethos' or Latin *Graecitas* would easily do), I was berated for my Teutonic arrogance and pedantry, which were said to obstruct the enriching evolution of language that takes place in the formation of such coinages. So it was my *Teutonicity* (only thinly hidden beneath my *Canadicity*) that prevented me from seeing the light. When I countered that *Hellenicity* was rather contributing to the impoverishing corruption of language, giving rise to the *uglicity* of what Frank Kermode, a scholar of impeccable *Britonicity* and therefore free of all Teutonic pedantry, deplores as the "deformed and mortal prose" of the postmodern academy, I realized that the frivolity of my *reductio ad absurdum* had gone a tad too far; and so it was justly given short shrift by being dismissed, with haughty disdain, as not warranting a reply.

I had given offense by ridiculing a conspicuous and very precious sort of coinage, the kind with the Latinate *-ity* suffix, preferably attached to Greek roots as in *Hellenicity* for enhanced ugliness, that has so copiously enriched the evolution of language. *Theorese* feasts on anemic abstractions such as *rhetoricity*, *tropicality*, *systematicity*, *metaphoricity*, *metonymity*, *linguisticity*, *graphicality*, *paradoxicality*, *logicity*, *citationality*, *undecidability*, *grammaticality*, *logocentricity*, *phallo(logo)centricity*, *structurality*, *supplementarity*, *theoreticity*, *discursivity*, *rituality*, *metahistoricity*, *constructivity*, *deconstructivity*, *narrativity*, *homosociality*, *referentiality/self-referentiality*, *literarity*, *scientificity*, *multiaccentuality*. Then add to these the hideous brood spawned by textualism: *textuality*, *intertextuality*, *intratextuality*, *monotextuality*, *paratextuality*, *metatextuality*, *peritextuality*, *pretextuality*, *archi-textuality*, *multitextuality*, *hypertextuality*, *hypotextuality*, *transtextuality*, and the quaintest of them all, *sister-textuality*, complete with its offspring *sister-textual* and *sister-text* (as in “we have in autobiography the configuration of the metatextual and the sister-textual which when taken together produce the third relation of the hypertextual”).¹

Most of these terms aptly exemplify (and so are of some use, after all) the ‘free-floating signifier’—a creature one regularly meets in postmodernist discourse, constantly slipping, skidding, and shifting, and all the while singing and dancing as it celebrates its liberation from its signified. This creature is hard to fathom; for in Saussurean linguistics, on whose garbled appropriation much of postmodernist discourse rests,² a signifier is only a signifier of a signified: a free-floating signifier, a signifier severed from its signified, is therefore a mere noise, a Baconian *flatus vocis*. *Metaphoricity* is a case in point. Take Gorgias’ famous aphorism “vultures: living tombs” (γῦπες ἔμψυχοι τάφοι, D-K 82.5a): we can say of it that it makes metaphorical use of ‘tomb’/‘τάφος.’ But the insistence of pretentious *Theorese* on its *metaphoricity* amounts to spurious essentialism, bearing in mind that abstractions in *-ity* have the air of essential properties. Since

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speakers of *Theorese* habitually abhor essentialism, spurious or otherwise, we can ignore it and settle for the vacuity of the term. Such *vacuity* is what distinguishes *jargon* from *technical terminology*: thus, to keep the distinctions clear, one should not refer to the nomenclatures of the natural, humanist, and social sciences as jargon (although their practitioners sometimes do so in an ironic self-deprecating manner), for their terms and concepts have a distinct meaning, a signified—something the free-floating signifiers of *Theorese* lack. Oh, and by the way, these odious neologisms are not the worst thing about the postmodern lingo: even more deplorable is that impeccable words such as *desire*, *eros*, *gaze*, *discourse*, *construction*, *difference*, *paradigm*, *paradox*, *subversion*, *transgression*, *dissemination*, and indeed *text*, have become tainted by contact with such jargon.³

three case studies

The life and times of three terms will exemplify my critical point on *Theorese*.

DECONSTRUCTION

I begin with a term that is not ugly and became a pretentious jargon word only when outsiders picked it up. Unlike those neologisms that combine a Latinate suffix with a Greek root, this one is a flawless coinage possessing even a certain elegance. *Deconstruction*, its prefix *de-* functioning like a minus sign before a bracket in a mathematical equation, resumes one of the best and noblest traditions of the fifth century-BC First Sophistic, the *nomos-physis* distinction, which subverts and thus dismantles phenomena claiming to exist *physei*, 'by nature,' through unmasking them as culturally or socially constructed, i.e., as existing *nomôi*, 'by convention.' The sophists' *démontage* of slavery as a social construction by deconstructing its spurious naturalness is a case in point. Its modern versions are Marxian ideology critique, Der-

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ridean post-structuralism, and de-Manian 'rhetorical reading.' *Démontage* might be claimed as saying the same; yet *deconstruction* is so felicitous a term because its very shape aptly describes the critical procedure it denotes: while it unmasks the assumed naturalness of a phenomenon as spurious, as the result of construction (cultural/social/political/linguistic/rhetorical/etc.), the *de-* instantaneously attaches itself to the *con-*, and the deconstructive process takes its inevitable course. As such it could be an excellent tool for exposing the inherent contradictions in a discourse. By its strategy of playing off the rhetoric of a discourse against its logic, deconstruction can subvert a phenomenon's surface unity and artificial coherence by revealing its hidden aporias and ruptures, and thus cause it to unravel or 'self-deconstruct.' Alas, this did not prevent the decline of deconstruction as a critical theory and its subsequent descent into eristic—a folly that began with the proclamation of interpretative free-play along with the totalizing doctrine (described as "potentially totalitarian" by Paul de Man himself in a moment of self-critical lucidity)⁴—namely that language itself, and thus *all* its productions, are inherently self-deconstructive; that, therefore, *all* texts lend themselves to the deconstructive process. Since only some texts do and many more don't, the deconstructionist critic has to smuggle time and again the aporetic ruptures deconstruction postulates into the texts as interpretive contraband. Hence (to use de Man's quoted self-critical descriptions), the unpleasant monotony and boring predictability of deconstructionist routine always yielding the same result: texts and discourses reduced to clusters of aporias and paradoxes.

Yet deconstruction's descent into the hell of eristic is not my concern here; rather its other malaise, for which it cannot be blamed: its going the way of *paradigm* and *paradigm shift*, which is the way of trivialization. *Vestigia terrent*: both these terms, originally designed by Thomas Kuhn to describe and explain revolutions in the history of the natural sciences (where they are largely ignored),⁵ have been hijacked

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by humanists, social scientists, journalists, and Wall Street philosophers. These have, by overuse and misapplication, run both terms into the ground so that they have become empty, and are now good only for the hype in book reviews (any new idea is hyped into a new paradigm) and in journalism as well as in the babble of business gurus.⁶ In the process, *paradigm shift* has come to mean the replacement of one silly fad by a sillier one. When we see *deconstruction* used in provincial newspapers, it, too, has reached an advanced stage of trivialization. The majority of those using the term today are not deconstructionists; and soon we might witness Jacques Derrida and his Branch-Derrideans renouncing *deconstruction*. Even traditionalists are now fond of it when, in an adventurous mood, they want to display a bit of daring and a taste for the dangerous life “at the cutting edge of theory”: they are then winking and knowingly smiling at their audiences when they use *deconstruct* in lieu of any of the following verbs:

abolish; abort; analyze; annihilate; annul; blot out; call into doubt; cancel; condemn; contradict; correct an error; criticize; delete; demolish; demythologize; denounce; depose; destabilize; destroy; discard; disenchant; dislodge; dismantle; dispel; dissolve; efface; eliminate; eradicate; erase; explode; expunge; extirpate; exterminate; interrogate; invalidate; kill; liquidate; make implode; nullify; obliterate; overthrow; overturn; question; refute; renounce; revoke; subvert; take apart; tear in pieces; trash; undercut; undermine; undo; unmask; unravel; void; waste; wipe out.

But let the audacious user beware: by making the substitution you are trivializing the term and what it stands for. For this you may incur the fury of a Derrida who might turn up to trash you—or (wink, wink) deconstruct you.

INTERTEXTUALITY

Intertextuality is currently very much in vogue among literary scholars, most of whom are unaware of its poststruc-

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turalist origins.⁷ It is presented as if it were a branch of literary studies like genre study or drama theory; it even seems to aspire to being a discipline, almost usurping the place of comparative literature, as if being related to another text (or texts) were a text's *property*, and not just a *relation*. By itself, *intertextuality* only says, if it says anything, that two or more texts are *somehow* related to one another—a grotesque discrepancy between exiguous content and bombastic term. What we want to ascertain when studying the relations between and among texts is the specific and exact nature of this 'somehow.' Now, for the wealth of relations that can obtain between and among texts, we have a corresponding wealth of concrete terms which articulate the 'somehow,' each one denoting a particular and nuanced relationship:

absorption; adaptation; allusion; appropriation; assemblage; (shared) background (intellectual, mythical etc); banalization; borrowing; citation; collage; comment; conflation; confluence; connotation; contamination; correction; critique; deconstruction; dialogue; desacralization; distortion; dramatization; echo; emulation; creative engagement; epicization/'novelization'; estrangement (*Verfremdung*); evocation; (shared) genre; imitation/mimesis; influence/anxiety of influence; interpolation; interpretation; interrogation; inversion; montage; motif-transfer ('*Motivübertragung*'); irony; judgment; palimpsest; parody; pastiche; plagiarism; play; polemics; questioning; quotation; re-codification; re-creation; re-evaluation; reference; re-imagination; re-interpretation; remaking; reprise; resonance; response; restatement; reversion; revision; rewriting; satire; secularization; (shared literary) traditions; subversion; topos/traditional theme; transformation; translation; travesty; trivialization; variation; vulgarization.

This plenitude of particularity and nuance vanishes when a sterile and nearly vacuous abstraction such as *intertextuality* usurps the place of these terms. Its redundancy is patent in that the fashionable term always requires having recourse to the listed words to specify its use.

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Now, I expect to be told that *intertextuality* synthesizes all these relations as the theory of the fundamental “implicatedness of *all* literary language in intertextual negotiations.”⁸ This totalizing turgid phrase proves once again that the best parodies are inadvertent self-parodies. (Note the doctrinaire whiff of textualism: it is the literary language that is doing the ‘intertextual negotiations,’ not the authors, who, if they really exist and are not figments of logocentric fancy, are relegated to the status of mere functions of textuality.) Translated from *Theorese*, this phrase offers us no more than the truism that literary works, especially those of Greek and Roman antiquity, are in one way or another informed by literary traditions, which they in turn inform. This is known by the familiar name of hermeneutics. (Why not translate another hermeneutic truism—that all texts are ‘implicated’ in some sort of context—into bombastic *Theorese* by creating ‘Contextuality’ as the theory of the fundamental ‘implicatedness of all texts in contextual negotiations’?)

Those aspiring to master *Theorese* will have to replace bland statements such as ‘Text A and Text B are related to one another’ by ‘Text A and Text B relate to one another *intertextually*.’ The latter says the same, yet in a trendy way; never mind that trendiness is purchased at the price of bloating the prose with a tautology. If an author parodies another text, *Theorese* requires stating that ‘Texts A and B relate to one another by the *intertextuality of parody*.’ Instead of saying ‘Author X cites other texts a lot,’ it is more opportune to speak in *Theorese* tongues: ‘Author X’s text is *inscribed with citational intertextuality*.’ And should author X not cite but tacitly lift from other authors’ texts, then *Theorese* demands avoiding so passé a term as plagiarism and extolling his *intertextual virtuosity* instead.⁹ A little hot air goes a long way in making the critical prose sound chic and recherché, and yields some welcome euphemisms into the bargain.

INTRATEXTUALITY

If *Intertextuality* comes, can *Intratextuality* be far behind? *Intratextuality* is a most recent coinage, formed out of enthusiasm for, in analogy to, and as a complement of, *intertextuality*. Its content is even more exiguous than that of its sister: “intratextuality is about how its (i.e., the text’s) bits need to be read in the light of other bits, but it is also about the bitterness of literature” (7); it surprises us with the stunning revelation that literary texts have parts; it holds forth to explain “how parts relate to parts, wholes” in texts; and to explore this relation by “textual segmentation and recombination” (5).¹⁰ Intratextuality is further said to be “a *property* of texts where the internal design, structure, and partition of the text are particularly paraded” (326). The term itself makes little or no sense: for what does it mean when a text is said to have the property of being ‘inwardly textual’ (= ‘intratextual’)? It’s at best a bungling tautology; and there is reason to hope that it will not fly. Translated into plain parlance, *intratextuality* turns out to be a pretentious as well as inept way of referring to something quite commonplace: what we ordinarily call the analysis and interpretation of a text’s formal and intellectual structure. It’s the daily bread in the study of literature. That’s all. And why do we need for this so grandiose and bizarre a term as *intratextuality*? To confer on our humble critical practice the air and pretense of exact science.

Both *intertextuality* and *intratextuality* carry with them ideological baggage; and in this respect they are not altogether vacuous; but when we take a closer look at this baggage, we might wish they were. It’s ideological baggage of the poststructuralist sort.¹¹ Most of those using the term *intertextuality* do so because it is *le mot du jour*, unaware of its dubious provenance from an extremist textualist doctrine.¹² This doctrine postulates that the world consists of a network of texts writing themselves and referring always to other texts and never to an extra-textual reality (which poststructuralist decree has abolished: there is nothing *dehors*

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texte); and, above all, relating to one another of their own accord without the benefit of author. *Intertextuality* reproduces textualism's abolition of the aesthetic subject: "the notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity" (Julia Kristeva).¹³ Doctrinaire textualists denounce any concession to authorial control of a text as "philological fundamentalism." They deny authorial control even to the *poetae docti* of Alexandria and Rome; and a modern master of the *mot juste* such as Gustave Flaubert does not fare better: authors are, without exception, mere 'effects of textuality.'

Intratextuality is a bird of the same feather. It too subscribes to the 'death of the author': it "enables readers to describe textual phenomena without attaching them to authorial intention: 'design' implies authorial intention ('the author designs'); 'intratextuality' does not" (146). Moreover, the emphasis of its structural analysis is on segmentation or, with the postmodernist habit of replacing argumentation by typographical gimmicks such as hyphenation, on "part-ing" (11): *intratextuality* "encourages fragmentation" (5);¹⁴ it thus partakes of the postmodern cult of incoherence and rupture, which for some mysterious reason are held to be liberating. The 'death of the author' doctrine is perhaps the most self-serving doctrine of academic critics; it is also patently self-refuting. Such critics make themselves a name as *academic authors* by promulgating the *death of the creative author* and translating this doctrine into the license of their unrestrained interpretive free-play; while at the same time asserting their own authorship and guarding jealously their authorial rights and privileges, as well as their intellectual property and the integrity of their own texts. The godfather of this doctrine, Jacques Derrida himself, exemplified this to perfection, when he invoked all entitlements of authorship in what became known as the 1993 *L'Affaire Derrida* in the pages of *The New York Review of Books*.¹⁵

Yet most of those who make use of the patois of textualism (and *Theorese* in general), are as a rule unmindful of the ideological implications, and are just availing themselves of what

they think is a sophisticated vocabulary—exciting, innovative, hip, a touch subversive and a tad transgressive, unlike the established terms that may have meaning and express nuances, but which for their lucidity are too jejune and dull. Grandiose statements such as “Propertian intertextuality, and its intertextual practices, privilege Callimachean intertexts” roll all too glibly off the tongue without much labor of thought. This obfuscating sentence, sounding obscure enough to give off the air of profundity, intimidates the laity of readers into keeping a respectful distance from the academic mandarins. It has certainly more chic than its unbombastic translation into common parlance: ‘for his poetic art Propertius chose Kallimachos’ works as models to emulate.’ Oddly, people deem their discourses original, audacious, and avant-garde (‘cutting-edge’ is currently the preferred trope of academic hype) when they make them resonate with the trendy jargon of the day. Besides the will to trendiness, there is another motive for using the argot of *Theorese*. In the current intellectual climate of literature departments, film schools, and art colleges, its buzzwords carry an automatic credit; so there is no need to justify them by argument or examine their validity. In short, jargon relieves your discourse of critical self-examination and ultimately does the thinking for you.

postmodern science-envy

Narratology replacing *narrative theory* because it sounds more scientific and recherché: here lie in a nutshell the chief aspirations and pretensions of *Theorese*. Its neologisms (preferably with the aura of Greek, even if it is faux Greek as in *homographesis* and *narratology*), in mimicking the terminology of the exact sciences, aim to create the air of scientific rigor.

This is the height of bad faith. What *Theorese* is striving for is the *prestige* that science has gained as a result of its colossal success in the modern world. The radical postmodernists in the humanities, the framers of *Theorese*, by fash-

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ioning a terminology that appears as formidable and intimidating as that of the sciences, are attempting to look and sound scientific. They make a show of scientific rigor; yet the ideal of rigor that obtains in the natural and mathematical sciences is the last thing they are after. Indeed, while envying science its prestige, they simultaneously wage war on it—though with the “Science Wars” issue of *Social Text*, the flagship-journal of Cultural Studies, postmodernists engaged in a war, which, with the Trojan horse of Alan Sokal’s “Hoax” on board, they had already lost before it started.¹⁶ Yet, while trying to wage war on science, postmodernists seize voluptuously on those aspects of modern physics and mathematics that they hope to exploit for postmodern relativism, anti-rationalism, rupturism, paralogic, and New Age mysticism. Postmodern theorists bandy about such notions as Gödel’s incompleteness theorem, Schrödinger’s cat-paradox, chaos theory, non-linearity in mathematics, and the all-time favorite, the uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics; yet they do it with hardly a trace of comprehension, as scientists such as Paul Gross, Norman Levitt, Alan Sokal, Jean Bricmont, J. M. F. Perutz, Steven Weinberg, and others have demonstrated time and again.¹⁷ They inhabit those academic quarters from which issue *bêtises* such as that science, as just one *narrative* among others, is really rhetoric (Stanley Fish), and natural laws therefore mere metaphors; that scientific medicine is no different from the practices of tribal witch doctors (Paul Feyerabend); that writing always preceded and precedes speaking, and that there is no such thing as an objective extra-textual world (“*il n’y a pas dehors texte*”: Jacques Derrida); that facts have only a linguistic existence (“*le fait n’a jamais qu’une existence linguistique*”: Roland Barthes); that “it is the world of words which creates the world of things”: Jacques Lacan); that “the ultimate goal of the human sciences (is) not to constitute but to dissolve man” (Claude Lévi-Strauss); that language is “simply fascist,” as Roland Barthes declared, trumping the Nietzschean meta-

phor of “the prison house of language”; that reason equals totalitarian power (“reason and power are one and the same . . . prisons, prohibitions, selection processes, the public good”: Jean-François Lyotard); that madness is subversive of despotic reason (Michel Foucault) and of fascist rational grammar, and thus liberating. These are the quarters where they reach for their revolvers when hearing the words *reason* and *humanism*.

To a large degree Postmodernism is yet another Nietzsche reception, with the agenda of a vast ‘transvaluation of values’ (though Nietzsche, a refined stylist of German prose, would despair of his most recent disciples’ rebarbative argot). Reason, truth, knowledge, logic, rhetoric serving truth, rigorous method proceeding by argument and evidence, sanity, humanism, objectivity, coherence, lucidity in thinking and writing—values that the very idea of the modern academy has always connoted—are now denounced as repressive tools of totalitarian logocentrism. In their place postmodernists boost irrationalism, the debunking of the very notions of truth and knowledge, paralogic, rhetoric serving the will to power, the arbitrariness of ‘anything goes,’ madness, anti-humanism, incoherence, obscurantism, and deliberate obscurity peddled as profundity—all of these traditionally viewed as antithetical to the academy, but now extolled as subversive and thus liberating. No effort has ever been made to explain why reason is repressive and totalitarian, and unreason liberating. But then, when you embark on irrationalism and incoherence, the refusal of rational argumentation is but consistent. All that is needed, and that, too, one gets from Nietzsche, is the rhetoric of the will to power that makes the results of the transvaluation stick: *hoc volo, sic iubeo; sit pro ratione voluntas*.

the *TWO CULTURES* divide revisited

By now, two lines of argument have emerged; and it’s time to bring them together. The malaise of the humanities is nowhere more patent than in the present danger of their id-

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iom's descent into a bloated jargon. When jargon takes over, scholarship tends to lapse into epideictic rhetoric: the display of one's brilliance in the clever handling of *Theorese's* buzzwords *à la mode*. Critics have repeatedly invoked the naked emperor metaphor. Yet with *Theorese*, it is not, as in Hans Christian Andersen's tale, that the emperor is naked because there are no clothes. On the contrary, there are plenty of clothes, most of them Parisian *haute couture*—but no emperor in them. This is the more apt metaphor for the vacuity of *Theorese*, which, in turn, is the expression of the hollowness at postmodernism's core. A vacuum is notoriously abhorred. To overcome the *horror vacui*, postmodernist intellectual hollowness has been filled with a pernicious mixture of various components of irrationalism: diverse glib relativisms, obscurantism, anti-intellectualism, hostility to science, and New Age flakiness—all dressed up in that appalling *Theorese*.

The return of irrationalism to the academy, despite the fact that its ideological role in the rise and practice of fascist totalitarianism in the last century had thoroughly discredited it, has not escaped the notice of the natural scientists. It greatly alarms them. Several books and numerous articles have explored the quaint phenomenon of the academy taking to *the flight from science and reason*, the theme of a congress held in 1995 under the auspices of the New York Academy of Sciences.¹⁸ This brings to mind the old concern with the *two cultures* divide, first raised in C. P. Snow's 1959 Rede Lecture "The Two Cultures," though treated there in a very unsatisfactory manner.¹⁹ Portraying and deploring, as he did, the culture of the scientists and the culture of literary intellectuals as two mutually indifferent solitudes and as the dominant polarity of Western civilization, Snow excluded much of the humanities, especially the various branches of history, along with the social sciences, thus marring his account by the narrowness of its focus.

With the advent of postmodernism in the academy, the *two cultures* divide has taken on an entirely novel shape: we can

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see the two cultures now in a constellation that is more complex and at the same time much clearer in its demarcations. It is quite different from that which Snow has described: the new divide is comprehensive, cuts across all the divisions of faculties and academic disciplines, and extends beyond the academy. The 1995 New York Congress reflects this. Scientists and scholars from the three branches of *scientia*—natural, social, and humanist—analyzed critically the postmodernists' flight from science and reason in these three branches. The new division they drew is between the culture of those who uphold and defend rationality, the power of argument and evidence, objectivity, scientific rigor, and lucidity as the guiding principles of the academy; and the culture of postmodernity that has arisen within the academy and denounces its principles as repressive while extolling irrationalism, relativism, interpretative free-play, and willful obscurity; and which, above all, not only denies the possibility of objective knowledge but ridicules its very idea. To put it in different terms: it is the division between those who have inaugurated the postmodernist transvaluation of values, and embrace its results, and those who understand and condemn this transvaluation as another *trahison des clercs*. Such is the new version of the old *two cultures* divide; unlike the version of Snow's, its comprehensiveness embraces all the disciplines within the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. Yes, there is the occasional natural scientist that has joined the culture of postmodernity, but this is a very rare bird.

This new constellation of the two cultures suggests a reorganization of the academy to reflect the new division, which is now ingrained in its very texture. Here is an immodest proposal for the reform of the academy. Corresponding to the two cultures, the proposed division should be that between the *Faculty of Science* (in the broad sense of Latin *scientia* and German *Wissenschaft*), with its three traditional branches of the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities, each enjoying as much autonomy as desired, but all united in the espousal of the notion of objective knowledge; and a fac-

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ulty comprising the postmodern discourses, whose appropriate name would proceed from postmodernism's notorious scorn of the very idea of *scientia*: the *Faculty of Nescience*.

notes

I wish to thank Heather Laskey, Gordon McOuat, Sam Scully, and in particular Dennis Young, for their helpful criticism and suggestions, which have greatly improved this essay. Given the controversial nature of my argument, I deem it necessary to emphasize that I alone am responsible for the content and tenor of this piece.

1. "Sister-textuality," "homosociality": skeptical readers may be forgiven for suspecting me of having made up the more bizarre buzzwords of my collection. They are advised to read the long introduction to M. Worton and J. Still eds., *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (Manchester 1990), 1–45, and some of the essays in this tome, which is a veritable orgy of *Theorese*, an instructive illustration of what Frank Kermode means by the deformed and mortal prose of the postmodern academy: working one's way through it feels like trying to swim in a pool of porridge. "Homosociality," which comes close to trumping even 'homographesis' in linguistic horror, is found on 152–55; note the Lyotardian spin in "economy of homosocial desire" (158, n. 10). "Sister-textuality," and its derivations "sister-textual" and "sister-text," are prominent on 111–12, 114; the above quotation is from 120.

2. See R. Tallis, *Not Saussure: A Critique of Post-Saussurian Literary Theory* (London 1988).

3. A further justification associates the willfully obscure and convoluted writing of *Theorese* with complex, profound, critical, and subversive thinking; and denounces the language of clarity as repressive, trivializing such thinking and exposing it to commodification. Apologists of *Theorese* taking this line are in the habit of invoking Th. W. Adorno as their witness—quite illegitimately so, for Adorno had expressed his scorn for jargonized writing in his *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main 1964). His own writing is both difficult and lucid: it is as difficult as his subjects require, and as lucid as its subjects allow. Greatly amusing is the notion that an obfuscating jargon like *Theorese* protects critical discourse against 'commodification': it suggests dark market forces lurking behind every bush ready to seize the critical writings of the postmodern avant-garde, and to turn them into commodities thereby sapping their subversive force (and presumably—and this is the most amusing thing—making huge profits in the process). It is hard, if not impossible, to make out any critical and subversive sting in all that obfuscation that *Theorese* works on all writing. Obscurity, not transparency, blunts and neutralizes critique.

4. P. de Man, "The Resistance to Theory," *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis 1980), 19: "Technically correct rhetorical readings (=decon-

structive readings, RF) may be boring, monotonous, predictable and unpleasant, but they are *irrefutable*. They are also *totalizing* (and *potentially totalitarian*) for since the structures and functions they expose do not lead to the knowledge of an entity (such as language) but are an unreliable process of knowledge production that prevents *all* entities, including linguistic entities, from coming into discourse as such; they are indeed universals, consistently defective models of language's impossibility to be a model language" (emphasis added).

5. On T. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago 1962), see S. Weinberg, "The Revolution That Didn't Happen," *NYRB*, 8 October 1998, 48–52.

6. Scott Adams' *Dilbert* cartoon often mocks the talk of paradigm and its shifts (managers "qualitize paradigms," and Dogbert has an ear for the sound of paradigm-shifts without a clutch)—a sure sign that it has become a fad among the business gurus as well as a buzzword with Wall Street hucksters. Compare a recent article in a Toronto pro-business newspaper on today's insanely overpaid "visionary CEOs": "opportunistic dealmakers or flashy entrepreneurs talk about 'creating new paradigms' and 'blowing up the business models'—common euphemisms for 'we're going to make a lot of money in a business we know nothing about,'" ("Report on Business," *The Globe & Mail*, 13 July 2002).

7. *Intertextuality* along with *intertext* made its debut in Julia Kristeva, "Bakhtin, le mot, le dialogue et le roman," *Critique* 239 (1967), 438–65; the English version "Word, Dialogue and Novel" is found in T. Moi ed., *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford 1986).

8. S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge 1998), 18 (emphasis added).

9. B. Brecht's notorious plagiarizing or, as he put it, his "principal laxness in matters of intellectual property" (see *Bertolt Brechts Dreigroschenbuch: Texte Materialien Dokumente*, ed. S. Unseld [Frankfurt am Main 1960], 204) is actually being defended by his apologists as intertextuality. On the translation of the terms of Brecht's modernism into the lingo of postmodernism, among them plagiarism=intertextuality, see R. Friedrich, "Brecht and Postmodernism," *Philosophy & Literature* 23 (1999), 44–64.

10. A. Sharrock and H. Morales eds., *Intratextuality: Greek and Roman Textual Relations* (Oxford 2001); page numbers in my text refer to this book.

11. For the textualist ideology inherent in intertextuality see the already mentioned Introduction by M. Worton and J. Still eds., *Intertextuality* (note 1 above).

12. Note 7 above.

13. "Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity": *The Kristeva Reader* (note 7), 37, n. 6.

14. See A. Sharrock and H. Morales eds., *Intratextuality* (note 10), 146, 11, 5.

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15. It started with Jacques Derrida's quarrel with Columbia University Press over the inclusion of one of his texts on Heidegger in Richard Wolin ed., *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (New York 1991; Cambridge, MA 1993). In protesting the inclusion and in attempting to annul it, Derrida "invoked all entitlements of authorship" (Wolin, x), a notion he had previously deconstructed with great gusto as a logocentric atavism (ibid). Derrida's insistence on authorial control of *his texts* went as far as threatening through his lawyer to have the book impounded. Thomas Sheehan's review of Wolin's book (*NYRB*, 14 January 1993) triggered the extended debate that became known as "L'Affaire Derrida": *NYRB*, 11 February 1993; 4 March 1993; 25 March 1993; 22 April 1993.

16. A. Sokal, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," *Social Text* 46-47 'Science Wars' (Spring-Summer 1996), 217-52.

17. P. R. Gross and N. Levitt, *Higher Superstition. The Academic Left and Its Quarrel with Science* (Baltimore and London 1994, 1998); A. Sokal and J. Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense. Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science* (New York 1998; includes a reprint of Sokal's *Social Text* 'Hoax'); N. Chomsky "Rationality/Science," *Z Papers Special Issue on Postmodernism and Rationality* (1992-93); S. Weinberg, "Sokal's Hoax," *NYRB*, 5 October 1996. M. F. Perutz, "The Pioneer Defended," *NYRB*, 25 December 1995, 54-58; N. Koertge ed., *A House Built on Sand: Exposing Postmodernist Myths about Science* (New York and Oxford 1998).

18. The proceedings are published in P. R. Gross, N. Levitt, M. W. Lewis eds., *The Flight from Science and Reason* (New York and Baltimore 1997).

19. Republished in C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and a Second Look* (Cambridge 1969). The flaws of Snow's argument have been mercilessly exposed by F. R. Leavis, "Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow" (*Spectator*, 9 March 1962), republished in *Nor Shall My Sword* (New York 1972); alas, Leavis' critique is, as the title indicates, for long stretches very much *ad hominem*, occasionally bordering on personal abuse, which regrettably diverts from the issue. On the two cultures divide in general and the Snow-Leavis controversy in particular, see R. Tallis' trenchant *Newton's Sleep: Two Cultures and Two Kingdoms* (New York 1995).