

The
New Historicism

R E A D E R

EDITED BY *H. Aram Veeger*

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This book surveys the New Historicist diaspora. "*Je resous de m'informer du pourquoi*," Baudelaire wrote, having seen *Tannhäuser* in 1860, "*et de transformer ma volupté en connaissance*": "I set out to discover the why of it, and to transform my pleasure into knowledge." I was lucky enough to have many friends who helped me to explore the furthest reaches of New Historicist scholarship.

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The essays included here are classics that have appeared before: "The Role of the King," *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley, California): 59–87; "The Improvisation of Power," *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); "'Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes,' and the Pastoral of Power," *ELR* 10 (1980): 153–182; "Shakespeare's Ear," *Representations* 28 (Fall 1989): 6–13; "George Eliot and *Daniel Deronda*: The Prostitute and the Jewish Question," *Essays from the English Institute* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); "New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon," *Boundary 2* 17 (1990); "The Construction of Privacy in and around *The Bostonians*," *American Literature* (Winter 1992); "Romance and Real Estate," *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 87–112; "Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History," *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 122–146; "'Make My Day!': Spectacle as Amnesia in Imperial Politics," *Representations* 29 (Winter 1990): 99–123; "The Logic of the Transvestite: *The Roaring Girl* (1608)," *Staging the Renaissance*, eds. David Kasten and Peter Stallybrass (Routledge), 221–234; "*Adam Bede* and *Henry Esmond*: Homosocial Desire and the Historicity of the Female," *Between Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 134–160; "*Mismār Goba*: The Arab Challenge to Cultural Dependency," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 87 (Winter 1988), 109–130; "History is Like Mother," 1981 (Routledge), 206–239; and "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?" *Representations* 37 (Winter 1992), 1–26. I wish to thank the editors and publishers who granted me permission to reprint these essays.

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THE NEW HISTORICISM

H. ARAM VEESER

Only a mad desire could motivate the doomed effort to marshal together the best of the New Historicism (NH*). To group and define these wildly individual efforts would demand an even crazier yearning. When I attempted something like this in 1989, I was intrepid, many thought, because NHs were always proclaiming themselves to be unrelated to each other. In the very book that I was introducing, the four bona fide NHs were in denial about indulging in a movement of any sort. Joel Fineman, one of the four, spoke of the NH's "programmatic refusal to specify a methodological program for itself—its characteristic air of reporting, haplessly, the discoveries it happened serendipitously to stumble upon in the course of undirected, idle rambles through the historical archives . . ." (52). Louis Montrose thought NH equally unprogrammatic, saying NHs are "actually quite heterogeneous in their critical practices," and Catherine Gallagher added that the "phenomenon" was one of "indeterminacy." As for the most recognizable NH, Stephen Greenblatt declared that NH was "no doctrine at all" and made other disavowals that provoked one reviewer to say, "the general himself is . . . swearing that he is no theoretician, that his invention of the term NH was virtually accidental." But if it was not a movement in the sense of having a strong common practice, still less was it strictly lined up behind a brigadier. Simon During notes more recently that "books and articles of a bewildering variety have been called NH," and Alan Liu says that their only unifying thread is their agreement that they have no unifying thread. Faced with their collective identity crisis, I confessed that "the NH is a phrase without an adequate referent." Reviewers quoted that phrase more than any other, except perhaps for another exactly opposite passage, the passage in which I reassured readers with the five key assumptions that do reappear and bind together the NHs.

*NH signifies *New Historicism*, NHs signifies *New Historicists*, and NHt signifies *New Historicist* throughout this introduction.

THE FIVE FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS

In the absence of a doctrine, manifesto, and strong common practice, the only sure recourse is to the NH texts themselves. My own five-point definition grew from a close reading of these documents, but even then I was tentative. Any such list would reduce NH's wondrous complexity, and unfortunately reviewers have liked my five points for just that reason. Yet the first four points have held up pretty well, and the fifth has vastly thickened and defined its sinew. NH really does assume: 1) that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices; 2) that every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes; 3) that literary and non-literary "texts" circulate inseparably; 4) that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths or expresses unalterable human nature; and 5) that a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe.¹ All the articles in this book consistently embrace these five tenets, except for the five essays grouped as "Some Fractures and the Future of NH," whose authors contend that some truths do not change—that white heterosexual males consistently enjoyed privileges, for example, while women, gays, and subcontinental Indians consistently paid the price.

Assumption 5 (that it's high time for criticism to catch up with capitalism) raises all the urgent questions that have always swirled around NH. Is it liberal or Leftist? Literary or historical? Feminist or neuter? Reformist or radical? Canon-making or canon-smashing? Stabilizing or capsizing? Most NH would object that these binary differences between entities (between liberal and radical, for example) arise only by repressing differences within entities (the houses of liberalism, radicalism, and feminism all have many mansions). Yet readers have a right to know: does NH get us somewhere new or does it reinforce the literary, disciplinary, social, sex-gender, international status quo?

Nothing better captures NH's potential conservatism than does the wax-museum stolidity implied by M. A. Abrams's 1992 edition of the *Glossary of Literary Terms*. Abrams isolates four characteristics:

1. The idea that ideology positions readers as subjects—black middle-class post-colonial lesbian, working-class second-generation Italian-American heterosexual marxist—called a virtual halt to the practice of speaking as if for a common humanity.
2. Second, Foucault's Knowledge/Power fusion gave intellectuals the confidence that their knowledge had power, but the powersource—housed in oppressive institutions—clamped down on their subversive desires to promote cultural change.
3. A third idea, dialogism, also acknowledged that conflict defined social inter-

action. But the project, embraced by liberal critics who sought to apply Bakhtin, was insistently to demonstrate that unifying, stable institutions and structures usually managed to contain and neutralize disruptive energies. The novel, like the state, actually seemed to enjoy its own internal hemorrhaging.

4. Fourth, as an alternative to Marxist polemical writing and upsettingly deconstructive or feminist ecriture, a writing practice called thick description rapidly gained New Historicist backing. Thick description—used by anthropologists to distinguish a wink from a blink, and by cultural historians to study what people thought they were doing when they conducted charivaris and cat massacres—gave New Historicists a hermeneutic for unraveling social texts without discussing class struggle, emergent groups, or macroeconomic change.

Apolitically tame and quietistic, all four tendencies—subject-positioning, Power/Knowledge, internal dialogism, and thick description—suggest that NH is bent on neutralizing solidarity, subversion, disruption, and struggle.

But if NH seems committed to what David Simpson has called the strong containment thesis, in practice it has radically disrupted business as usual in the study of literature. It especially upsets narrow, prescriptive, authoritarian critics who insist that art must attack the dominant social, political, and economic order. Barbara Harman suggests that a reversal of ordinary assumptions is at stake when she remarks that "the strength of Greenblatt's analysis is a function of its ability to demonstrate the self's deep implication in its founding culture, even where we have always assumed that we were witnessing an opposition" (63). As D. A. Miller succinctly puts the most broadly shared and defiant NH axiom, "even if it were true that literature exercises a destabilizing function in our culture, the current consensus that it does so does not."² To say that the most radical-oppositional critics are really the most conforming-conservative critics may seem to be an insight worthy of Orwell's *1984*. Yet at the same time it liberates NHs from certain preconceptions and allows them to study centuries-worth of literature within capitalism on precisely its own terms. The essays below confront the market's bizarrely distorting effects (anorexia, homophobia, agoraphobia) and their spectacular impact on representation (naturalism, photography, film, trompe l'oeil). NH studies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts indicate an important shift within the NHs' "poetics of culture," which now is committed to showing that capitalism and market relations metabolize all of art as well as life.

NHs have entertained from the first the heresy of a good capitalism. Greenblatt was again out in front: "Society's dominant currencies, money and prestige, are invariably involved," he writes ("Poetics of Culture" in Veese, 12), and the revealingly entitled *Shakespearean Negotiations* radically proposes that all aesthetic representation anticipates or embodies market relations.³ And yet for Greenblatt the "circulation of social energy" meant something like rhetorical *energia* or force. *Economy* and its metaphors mean something very much more specifically capitalist

for later NHs. Michaels, Gallagher, Thomas, Pease, Tompkins, and Rogin, in their pieces printed below, disagree about the inherent subversiveness of art. But they all agree that contemporary life at its best embodies mobility and impersonality. Two legal maxims sum up the modern and postmodern conditions. One is the great legal jurist Blackstone's comment, reprinted as Michaels's epigraph, that "property best answers the purposes of civil life, especially in commercial countries, when its transfer and circulation are totally free and unrestrained."⁴ The second comes from another historian of the English law, Sir Henry Maine, and is quoted in Brook Thomas's essay: the "movement of progressive societies has . . . been a movement *from status to contract*." All these later NHs agree that capitalism requires hollow, empty personalities that resemble money itself—a medium totally free, unconstrained by silly principles that would inhibit their entering any contract or compromise. Hovering in its own borderland between text and material context, between aggression and embarrassment, between literature and non-literature, between lucky "finds" and universal verities, NH has gravitated in its studies to the go-betweens, middlemen, long-distance traders, translators, and cross-cultural brokers—Rushdie's Chamcha, Shakespeare's Iago, the conquistador Cortez's Aztec "wife," La Malincha—those mobile figures who oscillate much after the fashion of market prices and NHs themselves.⁵

CONVERTING DETAILS INTO KNOWLEDGE: THE CLASSIC MOVES

One might in fact say that all the features I have enumerated flesh out one fundamental oscillation between two sorts of contingency. Contingency means "that which may or may not happen," which is chancy, aleatory, uncertain. But it fundamentally means, as Marlon Ross has pointed out, to touch together, "a happening dependent upon another happening," a causal connection. For just one example, the anecdote—that signature NH move—is accidentally contingent and therefore shows that writing history is an arbitrary, illogical business. But it also expresses conditional contingency, the making of explanatory connections, and so it reveals that everything is logically connected to everything else. This unresolved tension between arbitrary and conditional contingency makes the NH volatile and inexhaustible.⁶

But critics of the NH have tended to perceive its allegiance to one contingency or the other, never to both. Thus arises the charge that NH eschews totalities, teleologies, and grand narratives, turning instead to details, local knowledge, and what Frank Lentricchia calls "the gritty, ground-level texture" of life. Each unique detail, episode, or essay comes to represent, *duplicate, stand in for* much more than its insignificant self. This logical difficulty has emboldened NH's detractors, who have long charged that NH poses "a context, text, and in between a relation of pure suggestiveness" (Liu 743). Simpson indicts NH for its "Geertzian para-

digm of semiotic saturation . . . wherein all facets of a culture are imbued with functional-expressive meaning, so that any interaction of text and context (or any other text) is by definition charged with exemplary significance" (14). Even the NH critic's own airplane rides and minor traumas take on disproportionate importance. Are these indictments justified? A closer look at one representative essay will yield some answers.

An NH essay speeds the reader through a series of gestalt shifts that leave the brain spinning in its pan. Yet the soul can travel no faster than a trotting camel, according to the Arab proverb, and in fact a typical essay resolves into five discrete, measured operations. "Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Play," the chapter in Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* that just precedes the chapter reprinted in this volume, moves through five moments—anecdote, outrage, resistance, containment, and the critic's autobiography—all in a tight twenty-five pages.

The opening acts "less as explanatory illustration than as disturbance, that which requires explanation" (Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 5). The chapter begins laconically: "On 26 June 1586 a small fleet, financed by the Earl of Cumberland, set out from Gravesend for the South Seas." With the fleet under way and the twice-terminal name *Gravesend* safely behind, Greenblatt turns over the microphone to an actual, historical merchant-adventurer, John Sarracoll, who picks up the tale. The English fleet set in at Sierra Leone, merchants and crew admiring a beautiful "town of the Negroes . . . of about two hundred houses, and walled about with stakes so thick, that a rat could hardly get in or out. . . ." A postscript drops this final news: "our men at their departure set the town on fire" and burned it to ashes.

No easy answers unlock the conundrum of an awed admirer who burns down the object of admiration. Greenblatt registers puzzlement and outrage. Having found this shocking passage where no old historicist would look, Greenblatt reads it as no old historicist could. He tries to imagine what Sarracoll thought, why he wrote what he did. Does an "aesthetic element" in the Englishmen's admiration for the town "conflict with or somehow fuel the destructiveness?" And if Sarracoll feels no uneasiness at all, "why does he suddenly shift and write not *we* but *our men*? . . . when he recalls the invasion, why does he think of rats?" Although Sarracoll's *rats* and his change of *we* to *our men* would attract few historians' interest, Greenblatt pries at these hairline verbal fractures to get an inside look at something also beneath most historians' notice—a single *human subject*. Greenblatt concludes that only a very empty person could write such a document, that absence of feeling is an ethical vacancy, as is now inescapably evident in "the moral blankness that rests like thick snow on Sarracoll's sentences" (194). Sarracoll's bland moral vacancy, so like that of Arfie in *Catch-22* and Pyle in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, seems endemic to imperialism. But so is its negation, resistance and rebellion. Greenblatt now introduces just such a nay-sayer, Christopher Marlowe, who rebels against every secular and divine orthodoxy,

including heterosexuality. Marlowe's "life suggests the very opposite of that 'peculiar equilibrium'" and "rushes to embrace the tragic with a strange eagerness." In Marlowe's dramas the moral rhythms that usually soothe English conscience, rhythms such as pride-goes-before-a-fall, fail to materialize. Human personality is radically reduced to "a senseless lump of clay/That will with every water wash to dirt." Most of all, Marlowe insists on the "essential meaninglessness of theatrical space, the vacancy that is the dark side of its power to imitate any place." Marlowe gets in the face of authority and stands outside society.

But in that sense Marlowe represents precisely the version of the artist—iconoclast, foe of hypocrisy, intransigent outsider—that D. A. Miller calls the liberal-consensual version, a version whose universality Jane Tompkins and other critics here call into question. Greenblatt anticipates these later challenges when, midway through the essay, he performs the strong containment move: authority flicks the would-be-satanic Marlowe aside. In Marlowe's supposedly destabilizing drama, attacks on social norms—Tamburlaine's excessive violence, Barabas's amorality, Edward's homosexuality, Faustus's skepticism—are "exposed as unwitting tributes to that social construction of identity against which they struggle." By embracing what society deems evil, "they have unwittingly accepted [society's] crucial structural elements." At such moments—archetypal, inevitable moments for an NH steeped in Foucault's microphysics of disciplinary society—leftist, feminist, oppositional, liberationist critics have traditionally walked out: Who wants to hear that the good fight is doomed to fail? Yet "the crucial issue is not man's power to disobey," he writes, "but the characteristic modes of desire and fear produced by a given society, and the rebellious heroes never depart from those modes" (209). By turning Marlowe from a socially destabilizing writer into a socially reinforcing one, Greenblatt makes him a true rebel, one whose "unwitting tributes to society" undermine the liberal consensus that great art is oppositional.

The unavoidable, final move is autobiographical. Greenblatt feels compelled to ask if the NH can itself avoid exhausted modes of desire and fear. In a last, deeply characteristic NHt gesture, Greenblatt summarizes Marlowe's heroes in terms that could describe the NHs themselves:

Rather they take courage from the absurdity of their enterprise, a . . . supremely eloquent, playful courage . . . a penchant for the outlandish and absurd, delight in role-playing, entire absorption in the game at hand and consequent indifference to what lies outside the boundaries of the game . . . (220)

Having reinstated biographical criticism, Greenblatt now restores autobiography. We learn, alarmingly, that Greenblatt silently watched a man—who winked at him!—steal a tourist's camera in Naples. With equal alarm, we now see that the absorbing game of criticism supersedes outrage, that the delights of playing the

game offset political impotence, that the more important matters lying outside the game leave a critic indifferent. This penchant for playful, aggressive forgetfulness sounds like Nietzschean amorality or postmodern play at its worst. (What if Greenblatt had silently watched a rape in Naples?) Yet the five critics who appear at the end of this volume (see "Fractures and the Future") find they can use NH strategies and still commit their work to liberatory politics. They can because NH occupies (as we have just seen) the shifting ground between history (Sarracol) and literature (Marlowe), between true rebellion and unwitting tribute, between analysis of the literary text and scrutiny of the critic's troubled self. Strong containment versus art-as-opposition, accidental discovery (of Sarracol's log) versus fateful contiguity (the log makes Marlowe blindingly transparent), and now playful amoral theatrical outsider versus the NHt critic engaged in (as Gallagher avows) "an attempt to de-moralize our relationship to literature, to interrupt the moral narrative of literature's benign disruptions with which we soothe ourselves" (Veesser, 46). With this fifth, allusive autobiographical moment, the NHt essay completes a full cycle.⁷

RESISTING THE NEW HISTORICISM

Opposed to the moralizing of literature, NH has met its own share of opposition. True, hard-core, traditional scholars praise the NH's "gorgeous vitality" (Litvak) and popular magazines—shell-shocked by twenty years of deconstructive jargon—hug plain-speaking NH like a long-lost twin.⁸ Some first-wave objections to NH have been answered or set aside. The charge made often in the early eighties that NH had failed to theorize itself seems laughably wrong now that meta-critical essays build up like Chinese lacquer around every NHt twist and angle.⁹

But other long-standing objections have been harder to shake off. The charge of quietism, based on NH's alleged strong-containment position and its demonstrations that all subversive moves were doomed to be contained by and perverted to serve the uses of Power, remains (as the Pease essay here suggests) very much alive.¹⁰ Judith Newton's charge that the NH recycles—without much attribution—long-established feminist arguments and strategies, and Marguerite Waller's contention that Greenblatt remains wedged in patriarchal assumptions, both deserve further discussion. In the present collection, Jane Gallop reads the coded language of women's critical anthologies in order to trace the complex internal branchings of feminism after 1981. Gallop's foray into historical scholarship represents a new departure for her. Her success in this mode reminds the reader that NH has been equally a women's tradition, its major figures including Natalie Zemon Davis, Joan W. Scott, Leah Marcus, Catherine Gallagher, Wai-

Chee Dimock, Myra Jehlen, Nancy Armstrong, Cathy N. Davidson, Carol Clover, Susan Stewart, Gillian Brown, and Sharon Cameron.

The charge laid by Walter Cohen in 1982—that “arbitrary connectedness” vitiates NH conclusions—has echoed down the years. Historians remain deeply troubled by what they perceive to be methodological anarchy. Where, they might ask, does my unalphabetized list of feminist NHs in the preceding paragraph find its organizing principle? To read a historian’s review of Greenblatt, Gallagher, or even Thomas, who follows most closely the historians’ own genealogical and “coverage” protocols—is to glimpse the chasm that divides the literature faculty from their historian colleagues.

Francois Furet complained, for example, that his colleagues devoted to the study of *mentalites*, the historically important operations of feelings, love, conscience, instinct, had resulted in an “unending pursuit of new topics” no better grounded or motivated than changing fashions in trousers or cars. Lynn Hunt preemptively criticizes social historians for moving “from one group to another (workers, women, children, ethnic groups, the old, the young) without developing much sense of cohesion or interaction between topics.” Cultural history as practiced by NHs might also fall into the trap of defining itself topically and thus “degenerate into an endless search for new cultural practices to describe, whether carnivals, cat massacres, or impotence trials.”¹¹

And yet historians have themselves fielded an NH team. Walter Laqueur, Natalie Zemon Davis, Lynn Hunt, Anson Rabinbach, Sean Wilentz, a brilliant group of New West historians (Richard White, Peggy Pascoe, Patricia Limerick) and many other familiar names—Robert Darnton, Roger Chartier, Carlo Ginzburg, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie—often sound notes in an NH key. Sean Wilentz has usefully summarized three assumptions that unite the New Cultural Historians:

1. All polities “are ordered and governed by ‘master fictions’ as well as by . . . force.” Certain fictions—the Nazi Aryan cult, divine right of kings, charisma in Negara—may appear as sheer fantasy today, whereas others—the myths of justice, equality, and popular sovereignty, “partake of a mixture of fact, myth, and wishful thinking.” (4)
2. Not just public verbal forms (speeches, sermons, parliamentary debates) but rather all kinds of signs and rhetoric—public and private, verbal and nonverbal—are open for interpretation. “Personal diary jottings about recalcitrant slaves, disobedient children, and mired cattle can tell us things about political relations in colonial Virginia not to be found in the most impassioned pamphlet on natural law.” (5)
3. Thick description will enable historians to sort out the levels of rhetorical meaning—to understand when a blink is a wink, to discern “the subtle dynamics of agreement and disagreement.” (5)

All these points would be congenial to the NHs represented in this volume.

But resistances to the NH continue to multiply. Some critics have demanded an investigation, for example, of the NH misappropriation of lexical funds. Words that once had fairly stable referents, such as imperialism, colonialism, and logic, today float free. Neologistic phrases like new historicism, linguistic colonialism, imperialist poetics, academic imperialism, and logics of disintegration make up a goodly part of any younger professor’s table talk. These terms evoke no small display of pique on the part of Marxists, who have haggled for decades over the precise meanings of these words. Genuine Marxists are scarce, but post-colonialist critics also deplore the loose misuse of the left-lexicon: “imperialism” and “colonialism,” “exploitation” and “appropriation.” Tim Brennan writing in a recent issue of *Race & Class* denounces what he calls the merely *metaphorical* mis-uses of perfectly clear and precise terms, terms that Brennan feels have been slyly taken over and turned into mere tropes. He makes the same point that George Orwell made in his famous essay equating the degeneration of English with the rise of fascism. To speak, for example, of the *imperial designs* harbored by English departments toward history and anthropology departments, is to drain the sap right out of the term *imperialism*. Without the red juice of Marxist struggle-philosophy, *imperialism* loses all the polemical force that it might have had as a theoretical weapon against actual global imperialism. But NH could return the very plausible counterclaim that global, territorial imperialism is busily replicated across a much wider social field, including the domestic and private space of the home. Elaborating, Simon During notes the “sixties’ enlargement on what could be named ‘political’ and engaged politically.” The NHs’ expanding of the word *economy* may well be faithful to this sixties enlargement of *politics*. Wai-Chi Dimock has no loyalty, for example, to Marxist economics.¹² In keeping with NH’s emphasis on the personal, she examines Ralph Waldo Emerson’s emotional economy upon the occasion of his son’s early death. Emerson suffers anguish because he cannot feel regret, or at least not enough regret. Dimock writes: “He feels some pain when his son dies, sure enough; but that pain turns out to be no more than what he would have felt had he lost a large sum of money” (85). Dimock pursues an NHt strategy as she unearths the great man’s outre calculations and shows how his language with its market logic enables him to assess an emotional bankruptcy of which that logic is itself the cause. After a discussion of *economy* such as Dimock’s, one must agree with Brennan. This is not what Adam Smith and Ricardo meant at all.

NH: FASHIONABLE PRESENT, DODGY PASTS

Those critics who resist NH commitments to local knowledge, accidental contingency, and foregrounding of the personal really object to a much older tradition

of American criticism and philosophical pragmatism. Where after all did NH get its moves? The NH is old-fashioned, as Brook Thomas persuasively argues. NH can promote its program in *Chaucer Review* and *Modern Philology*, where deconstruction and postcolonialism get marked, "Return to Sender." Perhaps this is so because NH has rejuvenated traditional humanist practices, such as biographical criticism.¹³ Historians tend to say NH came from them, and indeed (as David Simpson points out) Roy Harvey Pearce should be credited with the invention of the term *new historicism* in his 1972 book, *Historicism Once More*. Thomas has investigated these claims carefully in a superbly written book that cultural critics called shrewd and well-informed but that historians approached with suspicion. One such reviewer said that Thomas should not have bothered to write the book and simply should have directed us to Morton White's superior 1949 book on the same topic (written when Greenblatt was six years old and Gallagher hadn't yet been born.) Linda Orr explains some of the suspicion and hostility. Tracing historians' two-hundred year effort to deny their own literariness, debts to rhetoric, and need for emotive language, Orr quips that NH is literature's revenge on history.

If we do return to Morton White, we can see what it is that separates NH from even the newest old historicism. White traces the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American pragmatist tradition, and finds there several useful definitions with which NHs would for the most part agree:

By 'historicism' I shall mean the attempt to explain facts by reference to earlier facts; by 'cultural organicism' I mean the attempt to find explanations and relevant material in social sciences other than the one which is primarily under investigation.¹⁴

Organicism and historicism define the NH cosmos, as well but with this difference. Whereas historians traditionally balanced their sociological organicity and their linear historicity, NHs let their organicism eclipse their historicism. Simon During refers to the NHs' "lucid, diachronically torpid, synchronically hectic literary histories" (183). Devotees of sweeping, centuries-spanning narrative (diachrony) find the organicist project (synchrony) obnoxious. David Simpson has argued that no essential section (*coupe d'essence*) or cultural biopsy can accurately take society's measure (one of "the aggressively simple theories derived from Clifford Geertz"). Brook Thomas steps up the attack on Geertzian thick description, which recreates a detailed, integrated setting. Thomas remarks that the "organic model is hard to dispel"—implying it should be dispelled. Marjorie Levinson has delivered the ultimate insult. The wish to reconstruct a milieu in which "to restore to the dead their own living language" is precisely unaltered *old* historicism. With this charge, we come full circle. NH has evaporated.

Yet NH refuses to disappear, in part because it refuses to surrender the power

to read from individual lives to macro-social structures, and vice-versa. Organicist? Humanist? Seduced by chimeras of social relevance? Perhaps. Yet NH has won over critics and readers well-schooled in poststructuralism and Marxisms who nonetheless search for connections between social structures, literary texts, and their own gender, sexuality, class position, ethnic background, relations to bosses and parents—in short, to their lives.

Not that NH has supported a self-centered identity politics. NH has also done that rarest of things—it has touched other disciplines and inspired non-academics. Avid readers of the NH often contend that NH analysis has given them ways to reconnect their personal lives with large societal shifts. Disappointingly, deconstruction had ignored the shifts, while Marxisms had ignored the personal lives. NH insisted that "the intensely personal moment . . . is intertwined with the great public cris[is]," and this hook-up lit many people's imaginations.¹⁵ In the late seventies Foucault's now-translated work and his lectures at Berkeley—the home of NH—dragged critics' attention back to the human subject. After Foucault, the human being had to be resituated somewhere between the integral humanist person and the structuralist fabrication. Foucault also complicated the prevailing sixties notion that power was hoarded like shares of preferred stock.¹⁶ Rather, it was passed from Gucci handbag to backpack to hip pocket, the "Hey, boy" at work becoming the "Yes, Boss" at home. NH would also accept the pragmatists' view that "history is not merely a chronicle of the past, but rather a pragmatic weapon for explaining the present and controlling the future." As White and Thomas fully document, history had ceased to be "a tale of regal insanity and political intrigue" (48). NH inherited nineteenth- and twentieth-century North American pragmatism and twisted it to fit Foucault's microphysics of power.

But new historicisms go back even further. Fineman exploits his gift for outrageous statement by calling the early Greek historian Thucydides "the first New Historicist" (51), since Thucydides's anecdotes first disrupted an otherwise seamless narrative of Greek triumphs and virtues. Thomas brilliantly documents the NHs' debt to von Ranke, Burckhardt, and Nietzsche, then to Robinson and the Beards, as well as the more obvious debts to the many poststructuralist and New Left projects. At his most New Historical when traversing from literature to law—and, in his essay here, to legal realists including Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis Brandeis—Thomas has expanded upon Hayden White's powerful book, *Metahistory*, which shook up historians by pointing out their unconscious reliance on rhetorical figures.

Another little-talked-of debt, this one to the elite Courtauld and Warburg Institutes that did such brilliant Renaissance scholarship in the forties and fifties, complicates the revenge-of-literature motif. Whereas the Warburg group acquired a snobbish erudition ("I have allowed quotations . . . to remain only in the original languages"),¹⁷ NHs are more passionately moved to recover original *ver-*

naclular and demotic “languages”—popular rites, rituals, and body language. NH inversions deserve to be more fully explored in the genealogical manner that Brook Thomas has shrewdly laid out.

The NH gives its would-be genealogists a headache in part because it wants to forget its opponents and its intellectual ancestors, or at least to select the ones it prefers. As Patrick Brantlinger points out, NH has no strong wish to claim its American-pragmatist forebears, who so readily supported U.S. imperialism.¹⁸ Nietzsche is an equally shameful progenitor, as is even Foucault, now that so many have condemned him for hypostasizing Power and denying that anyone could successfully resist it. The NH's convenient amnesia, its energetic forgetting or *aktive Vergesslichkeit*, may clear the road to further action, but it plays Old Harry with any effort to tell the NH story.¹⁹

A HAPPY HOLLOWNESS

In failing to know its own history, NH pays silent homage to deconstruction, for literary writing as understood by Derrida and de Man always fails on a rather magnificent scale. All writing is a tomb enclosing nothing, but literary writing ostentatiously flubs its efforts to refer to the world, express authorial emotion, communicate in transcendental symbols, or differentiate itself from rhetoric.²⁰ Having learned the thrilling effects of linguistic failure, NH simply assumed that the same joys attended personal failure. “We might say,” During concludes, “that individuating escape routes are never incorporated into the social system more effectively than when they reveal the hollowness of the social system's conceptual struts, when the individuals feign, rather than naively endorse, faith.” The hollow man or woman plays a crucial role in all New Historicism. Whether La Malincha—Cortez's interpreter, who brings down her own Aztec society—or Iago, professing beliefs that he does not hold, the hollow go-between is absolutely crucial. Whereas hold-over modernists still bewail disillusionment, inauthenticity, the *trahison des clercs*, and alienation, NH considers such laments bloated and pretentious. It treats modernist moralizing the way the Sex Pistols treat England's Queen. Its anthems to emptiness blast with garage-band intensity, causing Terry Eagleton and other plaintiffs to charge that NH fetishizes torture and death. “The flayed, crucified, disemboweled body has become a veritable emblem for this approach,” Eagleton complains. “Sub-Nietzschean defeatism” rules the NH roost. But NHs consider Eagleton an old fart. Their initial fang-bearing denials of Marxism have modulated into condescending faint praise—a potentially more dangerous attitude, when one recalls (to pursue the punk analogy) that the explosive Hell and the Pistols subsided into Devo and New Wave. Will NH end not with a bang but a pop?

Perhaps the taming of the NH is still far down the road—even though Simpson

has already called it “pop Foucault.” Foucault and NH emphasize very different logics of capitalism. Foucault studies the individual dissolved in advancing microstructures of power and represents (in Edward Said's words) “an irresistible colonizing movement that paradoxically fortifies the prestige of both the individual scholar and the system that contains him.”²¹ NH emphasizes by contrast the self-disrupting logics of capitalism. The Latin *contingere* means, antithetically, “closely linked” and “thrown together by chance,” or connected and disconnected—a logical scandal that NH's “arbitrary connectedness” repeats. Another scandal is the contradictory valuation and debasement of the human individual, an oscillating effect captured in contributor Catherine Gallagher's remarks about Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*:

Eugene and Lizzie are equally garbage and treasure to each other; indeed, they are treasure because they are garbage . . . (62)

Uncannily alive to paradoxes that inhabit the money form—debasement and empty (garbage), it lays the foundation for modern citizenship, rights, and love (treasures)—Gallagher yet refuses to moralize and preach. Rather she graphs with stunning precision and evident pleasure the ways capitalism promotes thrusting, tireless human desires and the ways literature alchemizes those desires into art.

WHY THE RENAISSANCE FIRST?

If NH finds its own practices doubled in free-market circulation, capital penetration, and self-referenced simulacra that refer—like pornography—to an un-touchable, illusory “reality,” then why should this literary-critical tendency have made its first home the primitive, nascent capitalist societies of early modern Europe? Instead of fully developed turbulent free markets and selves liberated from quasi-feudal status hierarchies, the Renaissance fostered a potentially modern culture just emerging within “a jumble of traditional rules and offices designed to govern older, very different theatrical practices and a set of ordinances drawn up hastily in response to particular and local pressures” (“Circulation of Social Energy” 16). Why did NH first gain purchase in Renaissance studies? Many critics resort, in explanation, to Renaissance exceptionalism, calling the Renaissance the origin of subjectivity and individualism. This thesis goes back to Burckhardt in the nineteenth century, but it retains persuasive force.²² Jean Howard has remarked, for example, that “these scholars construe the [Renaissance] period in terms reflecting their own . . . exhilaration and fearfulness of living in a gap in history” (17). Marlon Ross posits the same sort of homology when he argues that “we might say about Greenblatt's relation to his historical materials what he has said of the Europeans who destroyed Indian culture. In tearing down what both

appealed to them and sickened them, they strengthened their power to resist their dangerous longings' (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 183)" (505). The Renaissance is the delivery room in which NHs witnessed their own birth. /

The first four selections printed here testify to the unimaginable excitement that men and women of the Renaissance must have felt as the rigid constraints of medieval institutions and physical hardships began to fall away.²³ Those pleasures are abundantly clear in Stephen Orgel's *The Illusion of Power* but so are the perils: the individual's surging sensations of power may befuddle and destroy him. Orgel demonstrates that the absolute power of a monarch—exercised daily in edicts and executions—may be less solid than a court masque or cardboard stage-set. Charles I finds out too late that he is chiefly a theatrical king whose real power base has crumbled away.

Greenblatt shows that the rigid structures of English and Venetian society may yield to a cunning agent who exploits those structures. Othello almost achieves admission to the tony men's club—upper Venetian society—and his failures allow us to glimpse early modern subjectivity in the making. Fineman finds the glimmerings of a later Freudian subjectivity in Shakespeare's sonnets, and so his piece too brings to the reading of early texts a tingling sensation of self-discovery and recognition. The "Why's" of NH's Renaissance genesis have been widely debated, but one canny explanation comes from David Simpson. Unlike his own field, Romanticism, the Renaissance was not yet theory-saturated or equipped to defend against the reductive NHt reading of Marxism. It needed refreshing new critical approaches to refurbish its thoroughly canonical texts. NH reads these classics in terms of extra—"literary" analogues, and instead of creating a new canon reaffirms the old one. Now Shakespeare connects with everything!²⁴

FIVE ASSUMPTIONS AS ILLUSTRATED IN THIS VOLUME

I. EMBEDDEDNESS

These early-modern men's and women's tormented or ecstatic writhings can profitably return us to the five basic tendencies that I outlined in 1989 and summarized briefly above. Consider the first-named assumption, that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices. The Renaissance period makes this embeddedness particularly clear. It was then, according to Jonathan Dollimore, that state power and cultural forms "most visibly merge." Pastoral, the masque, and the institution of patronage offer a rudely explicit lesson on the inseparability of culture and power. So completely had literature merged with social and economic practices that, according to Dollimore, "Jane Tompkins has argued that the Renaissance inherited from the classical period a virtually complete disregard of literature's meaning and a correspondingly almost exclusive

emphasis on its effect. What mattered, ultimately, was action, not signification, behavior, not discourse." Tompkins's point, the same point that she makes in the selection below, is that literature does social work. Similarly, Greenblatt observes in his article that literary production and rhetorical education were completely bound up together in this period. "In *The Tudor Play of Mind*, Joel Altman has recently demonstrated the central importance for English Renaissance culture of the *argumentum in utramque partem*, the cultivation of the scholar's power to speak equally persuasively for diametrically opposed positions. The practice permeated intellectual life in the sixteenth century and was, Altman convincingly argues, one of the formative influences on the early drama." Orgel's piece demonstrates not just the emptiness of the king's illusions but also that the very epitome of empty, false shows—a court masque—could serve as a medium of nation-shaking contest and debate. A lavish masque that the lawyers produced at the king's command presented a powerful argument on the lawyers' own behalf. It concludes pointedly refuting Charles's claim to have an absolute prerogative, or ultimate authority, in all affairs of state:

The world shall give prerogative to neither
We cannot flourish but together.

Today a reader must step into history in order to understand how odd an exchange this really was. Here were two parties representing interests that had locked in a deadly contest that led to the Ship Money Case in 1641 and literally cost Charles and the hereditary aristocracy their head in 1649. That this momentous and nation-shattering conflict should work itself out through the highly allegorical, displaced medium of the court masque suggests some of the uses of hollowness. Deeply embedded in material conflicts, the masque fully illustrates the first NHt assumption—that material and aesthetic practices incite each other. They cannot flourish but together.

II. FALLING PREY TO THEIR OWN CRITIQUE

Orgel's vivid recreation of the political contests enacted through court masques also illustrates a second principal NHt assumption, namely, that every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes.²⁵ This was indeed the fate that overcame the lawyers who mounted "The Triumph of Peace" for King Charles I. The lawyers wanted to tell Charles that he had lost touch with reality. But they told him in a masque, the ultimate out-of-touch fantasy form. Their scoldings and veiled threats, instead of the intended subversive thrusts, turned into harmless compliments and delighted Charles so mightily that he ordered the performance repeated. Medium in this case nullified message.

NH's oft-noticed ambivalence and embarrassment, its occasional angst-laden confessions, may be the consequence of assumption two. Louis Montrose remarks that "integral to this new project of historical criticism is a realization and acknowledgement that the critic's own text is as fully implicated . . . as is the document under study." Doomed ceaselessly to perceive their own guilty investment in the systems they publicly deplore, they have further cause to see themselves mirrored in a Renaissance that prized and cultivated self-exposing, self-assembling confession, whether in church, on the rack, at the Globe, or through the sonnet.²⁶ NHs' own confessions have rarely gained them absolution. Frank Lentricchia contends that their self-undermining confessions link them to the main-line tradition of aesthetic humanism and "our colleagues in literary study, who take not a little pleasure from describing themselves as powerless" (in Veesper, 241), while Stanley Fish attributes these "uneasy," "nervous," self-blaming gestures to either "large ambitions that have been frustrated" or the "familiar academic" conviction that "we must be doing something wrong because people are listening to us and offering us high salaries" (315). Others who deplore NH self-unmaskings land somewhere between Lentricchia, who urges critics to believe in their revolutionary power, and Fish, who counsels the critics to "sit back and enjoy the fruits of their professional success" (315). The Rogin article below turns the screw yet tighter. Noting that adults increasingly see films that appear to have been made for children, he observes that they keep their self-respect by "admiring the skills by which they have been infantilized" (Robin Wood, quoted by Rogin). "This self-aware quality," remarks Rogin, "should be read not as maturity but as escape from troubling depths" (119). NH could be said to stage the same escape—as could Rogin himself.

III. LITERATURE AND NON-LITERATURE: SAME DIFFERENCE

Greenblatt, Orgel, and Fineman also disclose the ways in which—and this is the third point on which NHs broadly agree—literary and non-literary texts circulate inseparably. History and literature have been endlessly juxtaposed before now, but never in quite so insouciant a fashion. When critics obeyed the historians' reigning protocols, they pressed the life from their work. During observes. NH is the first critical movement to ignore the historians' conservative complaints.

In Greenblatt's "Improvization of Power," a chapter from Peter Martyr's *De orbe novo*, a travelogue of Spanish conquistadors in the New World, is the best gloss on Shakespeare's tragedy of a Moorish soldier in Venice and Malta. For Orgel, the "most complete expression of the royal will" was to be found neither in the king's weak army nor his erratically obeyed edicts but rather in his lavishly funded court theatricals that provided Charles with his own self-scripted illusions of power. Fineman shows that literary and non-literary texts can interpenetrate over a great historical divide. The Symbolic motif of writing overwhelms, in

Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, the Imaginary motif of visual, Petrarchan compliment. In this "capture" of the Imaginary-visible-narcissistic-and-mirroring mode by the Symbolic-written-intersubjective mode, Shakespeare prefigures Jacques Lacan. By connecting two symbol-doctors across a four-and-a-half-century gap, Fineman completes the circuit joining psychoanalysis and poetry. A sixteenth-century imaginative text by Shakespeare and a twentieth-century scientific text by Lacan occupy exactly the same epistemological plane.

The world irresistibly contaminates the literary text. Montrose draws on the pioneering work of Daniel Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness in Renaissance England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) to show how beautiful language and ugly politics collude. He illustrates in the selection here how certain powerful magnates and peers mounted their own theatrical receptions for the queen in order to smooth over the conflicts that had arisen between her and them. One of the most powerful, Gyles Brydges, Lord Chandos, had resisted the Crown's dictates, used his private army to terrorize his own vassals and peasants, and in short acted as a law unto himself. His pastoral festivities in honor of the queen's visit epitomize the ironies and hypocrisies of courtly behavior. Observing that the local magnate's appointee, a lord high constable who had overtaxed and even murdered some of the local country people, appeared before Elizabeth in the costume of a sheep, Montrose notes the "remarkable sublimation" of local conditions and events in "a grimly comic miming of satire's wolf-in-sheep's-clothing motif." Montrose reveals the Renaissance origins of what we tend to consider—following George Orwell—a peculiarly modern tendency to aestheticize real-life horror. The high constable's nasty/funny charade joins other instances of the political-literary macabre, the sick jokes at the scaffold in Orwell's "A Hanging," the human ears spilled from a jar in Carolyn Forché's "The Colonel," or—a superb recent example critiqued by Bruce Robbins—the body-dump outings in Joan Didion's *Salvador*. In all these instances literary critics ably expose entrenched, thuggish power attempting to amuse itself. An era when the Tudors had not yet consolidated their monopoly of violence allows NHs to catch, in their natural habitat, the dangerously free subjectivities liberated by early-modern capitalism that have used the arts to found one fascism, junta, and political dystopia after another.

IV. NO TEXT ACCESSES UNCHANGING TRUTHS

But in asking why the NH arose particularly within Renaissance scholarship, one must question all the claims made on behalf of what we might call Renaissance exceptionalism. All these claims about the extraordinary nature of the sixteenth century—that it is the time when state and culture most visibly merge, that the seventeenth century inherited the classical disregard for literature's meaning and looked instead only to its persuasive effect, that (as Peter Burke has

suggested) the sense of anachronism—that things can be out of date—originates with the Renaissance, that the psychoanalytic subject had its origins in the Shakespearean subject—all these claims require circumspect review.²⁷ Could one not say that every age is an exception?

Greenblatt has said that NHs study the Renaissance “by analogy to ourselves,” a remark that one could take to mean that subjectivity never changes. And indeed Lentricchia condemns the apparent anti-historicism embodied in what he sees as NH’s defeatist argument that “the Renaissance is *our* culture because it is the origin of our disciplinary society” (Veese, 239). But it is more accurate to say that the Renaissance epitomizes the moment of historical fracture: “European humanists were right to perceive a significant cultural rift between their era and the one that preceded it,” especially given the “emergence of social structures previously unknown to the stage of world history.”²⁸ Feminism—another such historical break—has placed the older break in question. Joan Kelly-Gadol’s question, “Did women have a Renaissance?” (Parker xxx), aptly captures the NHt willingness to overturn period pieties. One group’s Renaissance may be another’s ice age. Some women remain skeptical about NH. Is it a renaissance in scholarship for them? Judith Lowder Newton flatly replies, No. “Non-feminist ‘new historicism,’ ” she writes, “has been widely criticized for its tendency to insist upon the totalizing power of hegemonic ideologies, ideologies implicitly informed by elite male values and often presented as typical of the way culture itself is constructed as a whole” (Veese, 166). NHs’ emphases on Power necessarily confine it to the study of powerful men, in other words. Marguerite Waller has also argued that “Greenblatt’s text [*Renaissance Self-Fashioning*] is unselfconsciously sexist” (3). By wholeheartedly entering the imaginative world of Sir Thomas Wyatt’s self-fashioning lyrics, the critic “does not undo the act of usurpation and colonization being perpetrated either on Wyatt’s text or on the reader who does not identify with the thrills and disillusionments of the male traffic in women” (5). Other feminists have registered similarly disturbing objections to the NH enterprise.²⁹ At the same time, Greenblattian investigations of pathological masculinity can give feminists new forms of ammunition. A crystalline example comes as so often from Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. Fox-Genovese writes that Locke’s misogyny “inadvertently furnished future feminists with a language of rights and rationality.”³⁰ Oppositional acts are revealed as gestures—fun to make, but empty. They are—as J. L. Austin said of literary speech-acts—in a peculiar way hollow or void.³¹

The awakening to this unhappy fact has come about in just the last twenty years. Nancy Hartsock, Judith Newton, and other vigorous fighters have cried “Foul,” and denounced as conspiracy the recent moves to question narratives of opposition just when long-oppressed groups of women, gays, people of color, and workers have finally begun to tell their own stories.

But NH lets us see that it was not for Renaissance men only that individualistic feeling suddenly gathers to a head. Gallagher’s article on Margaret of Cavendish

and Marjorie Garber’s chapter below on *The Roaring Girl*, based on the real-life Mary Frith, show that explosively released subjectivities could thrive in female bodies, too. Women in a patriarchy headed by a dangerous, crafty queen were uniquely well situated to test the limits of freedom, constraint, desire, and repression. Mary Frith, a.k.a. Moll Cutpurse, can star in a Renaissance play that is “about the circulation of parts, about women with penises and testicles and men who lack them” in part because the real Moll could dress as a man throughout a career that moved from pickpocketing to prostitution to bawdry and—long after she saw herself represented in *The Roaring Girl*—finally to tavern keeping. Mobility, exchange, appetite, identity shifts, traffickers, go-betweens, fixers, markets, money, bodies—Renaissance women clarify these exemplary NHt themes.

Orgel, Greenblatt, Montrose, and Fineman memorably pursue, in the classic essays below, the shifting, proud, doomed subjectivities that Renaissance literature helped to make profoundly alterable, rarely stable, and never secure. The backwash reaches into Chaucer’s era. But the rolling force of it all tumbles down the years and crashes on the nineteenth century.

V. NEW ECONOMICS DEMAND A NEW POETICS

The fifth NHt assumption—that literature in capitalism requires a capitalist poetics—receives magnificent elaboration in the post-Renaissance studies included here. Progress from status to contract demands that all goods and even personal traits be alienable, marketable, and perpetually up for sale. In a contract, each party, now hollowed-out, requires the other party to complete the whole, and because the whole itself now stands beyond the contracting parties, a third term like the state for Hobbes or the general equivalent for Marx or the phallus for Freud or *la langue* for Saussure must arise. The general equivalent in all cases scoops out the human subject and absorbs the subject’s essence.

GARBAGE AND TREASURE

Please note the NH difference. The hollowness of the self that so enraged and demoralized everyone from T. S. Eliot to Bertolt Brecht now inspires respect and study, not recrimination and calls for revolution. NH initiates a truly radical change. It accepts the inevitability of emptiness.

The raucous wake had already begun. Roland Barthes, in “The Death of the Author,” denied the very existence of selves (he writes *Barthes on Barthes* not to form his identity but rather to erase it). Lacan’s empty subject, Foucault’s exuberant “lament” for the disappearing human subject, and Derrida’s death of the addressee inscribed in the written mark (in *Limited, Inc.*, for example)—all these helped bear the pall.³²

To see how this positive response to hollowness works itself out, we may begin with Gallagher's essay on George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, which, included below, shows what has happened to money and to Jewish subjectivity in England over three centuries. The terms have all shifted, and Daniel Deronda, the attractive leading man, bears little resemblance to Barabas, a package of nastiness. Deronda is, like Barabas, identified with money. But money itself has changed. An early establishing shot finds Daniel in the classic Laura Mulvey, male-gaze position, observing but unseen, as (in the gambling casino in Leubrunn) Gwendolyn Harleth excitedly wins and loses money. Her excitement strikes Daniel as sordid, and when she pawns a necklace to get more gambling money, he redeems it and returns it to her, along with a stern note.

Gallagher comments that the roulette wheel stands for the free market, part for whole. The wheel respects no ranks or genders, only money, just like the market itself. Deronda, like a traditional father, orders his "daughter" (in Gallagher's words) to "vacate the marketplace and depend on his legacy alone." He tries to restore a paternalist, sex-gender system. To recall Sir Henry Maine's idiom, *Status* would—if Daniel had his way—replace gaming-table *contract*. Deronda wants to escape the market. The market drags him back. Daniel makes the shattering discovery that his mother is an actress, an artist, virtually a prostitute, and a Jew, while Gwendolyn abandons casinos only to be sucked into the equally debasing English marriage market. Now a mere commodity, Gwendolyn is forced to receive the insulting gift of her husband's concubine's jewelry, a gift that makes her own concubinage all too clear. Daniel and Gwendolyn watch themselves slide from the realm of independent self-production to the hell of circulation.

What saves Daniel is Jewish nationalism—Zionism—which negates the market because it is opposed to a "viciously cosmopolitan" Jewishness that would "resolve all national interests into the algebra of loans." Jewish nationalism gives Deronda a fixity of purpose and a geographical destination. Asking herself why Eliot should repudiate the generous cosmopolitan culture in which Eliot herself was immersed, Gallagher discovers the neurotic insecurities grounding a capitalist poetics. "It's the problem more than the solution that's compelling," she says. The fertile problem is how to create "a self-sustaining anxiety."

This new anxiety differs from the "salutary anxiety" that Greenblatt so penetratingly explores. That Renaissance anxiety tends to come from without. The powerful people contrive to make the weaker people anxious. The great Protestant divine Hugh Latimer conceals a royal pardon until a condemned woman accepts a doctrinal point of religion; theatrical suspense tightens the throat and stomach of its happily terrorized audience; the Duke in *Measure for Measure* makes Juliet fear needlessly for her brother's life; and Prospero strikes a paralyzing and ceaseless anxiety into everyone on his island. But the *self-sustaining* anxiety Gallagher sees in *Deronda* comes from within, from Deronda's upsetting discovery that he originates in theatricality, circulation, gambling, brokering, and the market. His self-

generating anxiety drives Deronda into action, into a search for stability, a cultural center, a geographical home. Anxiety originates not in Power but in his own rootless subjectivity.

The problem, not the solution, is compelling, because the solution can resolve nothing. Were the novel actually to observe Daniel settling down in Palestine, the restless mobility that defines capitalist poetics would have to cease. Capital cannot stand cessation any more than nature can support a vacuum. A case could be made for the accuracy of NH perceptions. Daniel's Zionism has indeed carried out its program. The Jewish settlement of Palestine failed to end Jewish anxiety and incited the Intifada. "Self-sustaining anxiety" can be humanly admirable only until it tries to dispel itself.

The unstable market that creates subjective anxieties receives analysis in Pease, Michaels, Tompkins, Thomas, and Rogin, as well. Donald Pease observes that some prominent Americanists, such as Quentin Anderson in *The Imperial Self*, have discerned a romance of interpretation that traps readers and critics in intolerably anxious circular logic. Anderson saw in his Columbia students after the 1968 student riots an "extreme passivity designed to 'suffer' the unmastered materials of the external world." "The material so suffered ceases to remain external and turns instead into the fluent and circumambient energies of the creative self." Attracted by this theory of anxieties sublimated in art, Pease approvingly cites Gerald Graff, the superb historian of university literature teaching:

The symbolic-romance theory, stressing as it did the inability of American narratives to resolve their conflicts within any social form of life, provided expression for disappointments left over from the 30s toward a society that had failed to fulfill its ideal image of itself but evidently could not be righted by social action. (213)

Pease deplores the usual response to this disappointment. Instead of retreating from the disheartening public realm to the reassurances that one can after all dominate a text, external nature, previous interpretations, a former self "in a relentlessly circular economy" (O'Hara calls this the romance of interpretation), Pease demands a renewed public program. Given the Bercovitch hitch, this call gets a bit tricky, since in all likelihood Pease's most strident opposition will only strengthen the power of academic studies as they are traditionally performed in the ivory tower.³³

Pease therefore makes a signature NHt move by assuming the role of the go-between. He asserts that New Americanists, of whom he is one, "occupy a double relation" as "liaisons between cultural and public realms." In defiance of conventionalists such as Fish and Michaels who say that you can never step outside your culture in order to evaluate it, for you will then have no terms of evaluation left, Pease insists that his group is "at once within the field and external to it." He and

his associates—Jonathan Arac, Paul Bové, Daniel O'Hara, Rob Wilson—operate as “representatives of subjects excluded from the field imaginary” of Bercovitch and consensus American studies. This self-assured return to confident declarations of one's own representativity and objectivity would sound like whistling in the dark to the other contributors to this volume.

Pease's essay enters this volume as the lone champion of a more widely shared critique of NH. At least half the contributors to my earlier volume disputed the NHt claim that criticism has no political mandate or valency. That critique continues to thrive in ever more nuanced versions that Pease so lucidly elaborates. These counterarguments have failed to persuade the NH mainstream to alter their course.

They have especially failed to persuade Walter Michaels, known as the Great Satan by cultural materialists like Pease who would still claim that literary criticism can effectively oppose and disrupt an unjust system. Dangerous threats to social stability? Michaels speaking for Berkeley NH replies, “Our studies show the opposite.” Going well past the Bercovitch theory about Puritans' approving dissensus, Michaels says that all representational modes push each other towards increasingly corporate styles of being. Daguerrotype and photography, the legal decisions about corporate responsibility, anti-trust battles, monetary debates and gold-bug agitation, bankruptcy legislation all profoundly redefine humanity. We have a new technology of being human: “what seems monstrous now is the discovery that for a man to be a man, he must also be a corporation—a man *is* a corporation.” Observations such as this one (which is about Frank Norris's great novel, *The Octopus*) pervade Michaels's brilliantly argued work.

Michaels's article printed here discusses the American writer Hawthorne's opposition to the logic of the market, his apparent wish to recover an organic community of hereditary and inalienable property. Michaels asserts that the apparently feudal, reactionary desire for inalienable title—a born gentleman can never be less than that—is by no means anachronistic in the 1850s when Hawthorne wrote *Gables*. Congress had before it a bill providing that slaves “could not be bought or sold by creditors.” In addition, radical reformers were urging that homestead land be made inalienable, so as to keep it from the hands of speculators. Hawthorne's novel resists the unregulated capitalist market, much as did these hedges against unrestrained slave and land sales. Holgrave embodies this resistance within the novel. And yet Holgrave has himself circulated through many jobs. He seems to be a pure product of the market economy, a self-made operator and manipulator. His current profession, that of daguerreotypist, even more completely embodies the innovations and degradations that drive the market. Daguerreotypy had commercialized and debased image making, replacing oil portraiture forever. The market that Hawthorne sets out to escape reasserts itself at the center of his novel.

Thus, while Holgrave represents profoundly anti-market forces in the novel,

stands for hereditary title (he recovers land he has never seen but that somehow *belongs* to him), and practices daguerreotypy, an art that gives him access to deep truths about people, he is himself the pure product of republican fluctuation. The stronghold of clear title stands on the quicksand of free-for-all corporate capitalism. Michaels's reading strongly suggests that characters may represent stability one minute and fluctuation the next, or more alarmingly, both at once. As in capitalism itself, every representation is always up for grabs.

STATUS TO CONTRACT

Brook Thomas brilliantly tracks hollow personality to yet other legal and aesthetic norms that frame it. In an essay on privacy in Henry James's *The Bostonians*, Thomas focuses on a handshake. Noting that with this handshake the heroine Verena agrees to keep silent about an illicit meeting, and comparing the handshake to another physical sign, the kiss, Thomas extracts a lesson about movement from status to contract as the basis for social relationships. Contending that status is more primitive than contract, Thomas remarks that her “privacy is constructed by maintaining a space . . . an emptiness at her core that makes her dependent upon relations” (“Privacy”). Every good novel, too, sets up a contract with its reader that makes it “dependent on relations.” This is clearly a further step both toward understanding capitalist personality and inventing a capitalist poetics. “Verena's remarkable capacity to establish relationships with people results not from a fullness, but an emptiness,” Thomas observes. Her eventual husband, Basil, attributes “to Miss Tarrant a singular hollowness of character” (*Bostonians*). A private personality means, for Henry James, creating a space *between*, “a space that establishes connections while simultaneously helping to define the parties involved.” Personality and privacy depend on contracts and thus owe “much to the ideal of the period's market exchanges,” says Thomas. An oppositional, left-leaning critic himself, Thomas would like to make the Jeremiah move and transcend his culture. Yet every bit as much as Michaels and Gallagher, he doubts that he can execute that move. Drawn back into the vortex of lack and desire, Thomas succumbs to the logic of the go-between.

In her powerful argument in support of the literary value of women's sentimental fiction, Jane Tompkins shows perhaps most forcefully of all the contributors that time and place shape each succeeding version of human subjectivity. Thus the multitudinous nineteenth-century Americans who read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and wept at the doll-like little Eva were not “unaccountably moved to tears by matters that are intrinsically silly and trivial.” Instead they were caught up in a monumental effort “to reorganize culture from women's point of view.” In Harriet Beecher Stowe's understanding, “it is the *modern* view that is naive.” It is silly to believe that political change can save humankind. Politics is the *problem*,

not the *solution*. Only action through the private, domestic, women's sphere can relieve that problem. Thus, "Stowe relocates the center of power in American life, placing it not in the government, nor in the courts of law, nor in the factories, nor in the marketplace, but in the kitchen." Tompkins demonstrates effectively that within a few decades, great literature was marked down to the status of laughable pap. The reasons were social and economic, and American criticism, "which had been evangelical and religious . . . evolved during the 1870s and '80s into a concern for the material conditions of social life." In consequence, novels once thought "superb" now were seen to be "full of idealized characters, authorial didacticism, overt religiosity," to be "morally false and artistically naive." Besides illustrating most effectively that no texts offer access to unchanging truths, Tompkins performs the added NH service of leaving us nowhere solid to stand. Instead of trumpeting the moral probity of women writers who stood for justice and—because they had no male prerogatives to run off and become boat captains—made their stand in the home, Tompkins also lets us see how pernicious this latter ideal could be. In a remarkable passage, she cites Catherine Beecher, Stowe's elder sister. Beecher's famed *Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841; rev. as *The American Woman's Home* [1866]) expresses the hope that this cheering example of power centered in the home would

soon spread, and ere long colonies from these prosperous and Christian communities would go forth to shine as "lights of the world" in all the now darkened nations. Thus the "Christian family" would become the grand ministry . . . in training our whole race.

The imperial designs expressed here render the inspiring feminist message somewhat hollow.

Equally hollow to post-colonial ears will be the Bush-Reagan years' political culture as analyzed here by political scientist Michael Rogin. Rogin finds that anxiety comes home to roost in the state itself. Arguing that "a multinational-dominated internationalized economy that resists state control sets the stage for a defensive nationalism," Rogin sees the state as an actor (quite literally so, in Reagan's case) who lacks power either to control the economy or to mobilize the populace but can still conduct covert military action (Bush was CIA director). *Daniel Deronda* confronts the same situation—eroding national power in an increasingly cosmopolitan world—and finds a projected solution in Jewish nationalism. For Reagan-Bush and (perhaps) beyond, the answer is a weird new NHt trope, the covert spectacle—backstairs Watergate and front-page Grenada, back-channel Iran-Contra and prime-time smart-bombing. Such tactics developed gradually. "The full-fledged absorption of American foreign policy by symbolic gesture," concludes Rogin, "awaited the Reagan presidency."

Rogin's stunning analyses remind the reader of this volume how much more

there is to learn from critics than from talk shows. In other essays, Rogin has demonstrated how the one group—Jewish black-face performers, for example—obtains freedom and psychic mobility at the price of another group's fixity—that is, the stereotyping of African-Americans. And with his discussions of psychic mobility and the theatrical triumphs achieved by impotent rulers, he returns us full circle to Greenblatt's nauseatingly mobile Iago and Orgel's paper tiger Charles I.

FUTURES AND FRACTURES

The final section of the book deserves its own introduction. For in Garber, Chakrabarty, Gallop, and Harlow, we find non-NHs appropriating NHt methods selectively. They do so in part because their own work has changed—Gallop and Garber moving from purer psychoanalytic viewpoints to projects contaminated by historical circumstance, Sedgwick historicizing her seemingly ahistorical paradigm—a model in which pandemic homosociality ensures the degradation of women—and the often relentlessly historicizing Harlow and Chakrabarty adapting the synchronic, organicist tactics of NH. These are fractures of NH—selective grabs that ignore what cannot be used. Chakrabarty and Harlow cold-shoulder NH's skeptical unwillingness to confirm particular versions of history. Gallop expands the permissible range of NHt evidence—what seems a chance typo or an inadvertently omitted footnote proves, for Gallop, the key to pervasive editorial repressions and political suppressions. Garber too exceeds NH's roomy limits. Analyzing wordplay in *The Roaring Girl*, she suddenly begins to pun and goof on her sister critics' texts and even their names. The changing of costumes, roles, and genders slips from the cordoned-off-for-safety Jacobean city comedy and runs wild in the normally sedate milieu of the critic. The autobiographical move, long an NHt tactic, gravitates to the center of analysis. Gallop's article here proceeds from her having "always enjoyed being a bad girl" of criticism; Sedgwick writes poems, was spoiled and spanked, eats too much; Chakrabarty wears bell bottoms; Garber wears men's clothes. When did we know so much about critics' lives?

The two most unexpected inclusions in this volume are Harlow and Chakrabarty. Chakrabarty observes that in an India very apt to take on British models of subjectivity, very few autobiographies have been written. Those that have appeared include almost no intimate details. Chakrabarty asks the piercing questions:

How do we read this text, this self-making of an Indian male who was second to no one in his ardor for the public life of the citizen, yet who seldom, if ever, reproduced in writing the other side of the modern citizen, the interiorized private self unceasingly reaching out for an audience?