THE LITERARY THEORY OF HAROLD BLOOM

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T.D. Armstrong

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ABSTRACT

Harold Bloom's critical work involves a systematic attempt to unify rhetoric and psychology into a theory which provides an account of the nature, aetiology and structuring principles of influence in Post-Renaissance poetry. The thesis examines the development and context of those theories, seeing them partly as an initially mythologised response to structuralist thought which is modified and meliorated in later work. The theories themselves are examined, including the argument for the unity of psychology and rhetoric, the historical account Bloom provides, and his arguments on the nature of influence-relations. It is argued that the attempt to link psychology and textual material results in a distorted account of these various topics which ignores the complexity both of actual influences and of texts. It results also in disunities within Bloom's work between psychological and rhetorical perspectives, and between progressive and retrospective formulations for literary creation. His practical criticism is examined and found to loosely apply his theories but to operate more by a suggestive intertextuality. It supports his own myths only by a considerable distortion of its subject and by a selective blindness. Finally, Bloom's stance and metatheoretical claims are examined. This stance is both polemical and empirical, claiming to unify the two by a duplication of the stance of Romantic poets which also initiates a levelling of discourse. Consequently his theories are reflexive. However this reflexivity does not constitute proof, and Bloom's claims to empirical status ultimately deconstruct his mimetic stance because of the presence of a hermeneutics which depends on a privileged position. His theories thus never achieve the coherency they argue for.
For Dorothy
ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

In referring to Bloom's work I have used the abbreviations listed below. The abbreviated title and page number follow the quotation in the text and are written thus: (MM100). A full bibliography of Bloom's work appears in Appendix 1. With respect to poems mentioned or briefly quoted in the text a full reference is included only if I am quoting them independently of Bloom's use of them.

AI The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry
FCI Figures of Capable Imagination
KC Kabbalah and Criticism
MM A Map of Misreading
PR Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens
RT The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in the Romantic Tradition
WS Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate

The four earlier books receive only passing mention and are referred to in the usual way.
I. INTRODUCTION

Harold Bloom stands in a position within modern Literary Criticism that is unique. Since the end of the 1960's he has developed an idiosyncratic and massively elaborated critical theory which is remarkable for its ambitousness, if for nothing else, and which in many ways bears little relationship to any other theory of literature. This study shall attempt to examine that theory fairly exhaustively, its many different claims, implications, method of argument and application. It will also attempt to locate Bloom within a larger context, especially that of a response to the new modes of criticism initiated by the structuralist attack on the more established paradigms. I shall try to avoid pure description in examining Bloom's theories, since his method often involves wilful contradictions which require a more-than one-dimensional gaze, and merely repeating his assertions is akin to literalizing poetry. Like Freud and other linguistically "exteriorized" authors Bloom's discourse lacks the transpherency of a language that ignores its own struggles, and consequently requires an equally committed interpretive effort, one that makes few assumptions about the methods of analysis it employs.

The order of development of this work will be to examine a number of topics, beginning with a discussion of Bloom's style and moving further into the theoretical questions he raises, returning finally to his practical criticism and the relationship it holds to his work. As much as possible Bloom's categories shall be used since his modes of thought do not centre around concepts such as "meaning", "value" or "symbol" but his own terms: "influence", "misreading", "trope", "strength" and so on. Such a découpage follows the spirit of Mills' famous remark on
Coleridge's treatment of his subject: "he looked at it from within, and endeavoured to see it with the eyes of a believer in it; to discover by what apparent facts it was at first suggested, and by what appearances it has ever since been rendered continually credible."²

However, some themes will be emphasized throughout, and some assumptions made which Bloom's own work brings under scrutiny. I will list these for convenience:

1. **Demarcation**: critical studies often distinguish between the study of the production of texts; the study of texts themselves; the study of readers' responses; and the sociology which governs canon-formation. Bloom attempts to unify all these areas.

2. Bloom's stance is a double one, both empirical and psychological, and rhetorical and language-centered, and the interplay between the two dominates his theory.

3. This stance is a self-conscious one that attempts to dialectically resolve its own contradictions.

4. The idea that Bloom's theory is reflexive and applies to himself: thus to some extent his theory is a continuation rather than a description of Romantic thematics.

Other consequences of Bloom's theory shall also be examined: his historical account of Romantic and American literature, the nature and application of the 6x4 matrix of the "map of misreading", the relationship between his practical criticism and theory. A certain knowledge of his work on the part of the reader is assumed, since an exposition of his theories would be time-consuming.
CHAPTER I

STYLE AND TERMINOLOGY

This chapter shall examine Bloom's style as it affects and reflects his thought. Bloom's discourse, as we said in the introduction, is a highly language-conscious one in which praxis and doxa are inseparable (or where they are separable, provide insights into the rifts in his theory), so that his style is more relevant to his work than is the case with many critics. We shall refer to some of the points made in this chapter later in applying a Bloomian analysis to his own work.

1. SOLIPSISM AND STRUGGLE

Poets, according to Bloom, speak a language which is not their own but which they attempt to make their own by repressing its sources. This applies very much to his own discourse. It is marked by an absence of references attached to the quotations he uses (references admit priority and property, something which poets must claim for themselves). There is a parallel lack of indices in his more theoretical works. The use of quotations he does make is more often an abuse, either misquotation or misinterpretations. Various characteristics are often added, even tones of voices and intentions - Kierkegaard's concept of repetition as 'easy' we are told is a "genial joke" (AI82) and phrases like "Allen Guttmann, sensitively and accurately perplexed, asks..." (FCI248) abound. Quotations are always included as part of Bloom's argument and interpreted rather than allowed to stand (as for Eliot, strong poets steal rather than borrow).
The result of this is that the discourse obeys its own rules. For someone well versed in Bloomian usage and terminology this is easy to forget, but as he himself says he is not for the "common reader" (MM178), and just to enter this discourse requires considerable effort, as it does to enter the discourse of writers like Foucault.\(^3\) Partly as a consequence ideas of accountability are devalued. Wayne C. Booth, searching for an example to contrast to Meyer Abrams' style and method, seize upon Bloom as an author whose work does not attempt an "im-personal force" - "the style throughout persuades me (along with other matters) that what we are primarily illustrating is the author and his sense of his situation."\(^4\) The 'sense of a situation' is something Bloom shares with F.R. Leavis, who also created his own distinctive style and vocabulary. Common to both is a resulting vocabulary of imprecation, moral debate, judgement which in Bloom's case reflects his interest in the skirmishes of canon-formation, in identifying the "poems of our climate." Phrases like "the tides of aggressive ignorance, or the counter-culture... the young and their middle aged followers" (FCI xii) attest to this moralism, which sends rather strangely alongside Bloom's own pronouncements on the "pieties" of canonical interpretation. He accuses C.S. Lewis of "moral idiocy" (AI33) and insists that moralizing on poetry is "pernicious" (AI23), but his own works are full of terms like "A more difficult, indeed a Higher Criticism..." (MM61), talk of poetic "salvation", "covenants" and so on, a language full of moral resonance and capitalized value-terms. At times this touches sentimentality, as here Bloom reads more like Holden Caufield than himself (addressing Emerson) -
"No - I want to reply...you shall not bring me down to such fitting and being fitted, I will not join you in building altars to the Beautiful Necessity, which you of all men should not be doing in my case. If the daimon was your destiny you should have followed him out to the farthest rings of the circumference he drew for you, since you knew better than I that the transpherency is most absolute out there..." (FCI63).

There is a tinge of nostalgia about such prose, which we shall return to in due course. Bloom's stance also colours his description of other critics as they are involved in the battles of canon-formation: Empson and Wilson Knight are "Strongest" because they are most antithetical (one could suggest other reasons), and Bloom's "foes" are described in the terms of chivalry as "noble", "eminent" and even "heroic". This especially applies to his Yale colleagues Geoffrey Hartman, Paul de Man ("this advanced critical consciousness", WS93), Hillis Miller and to Jacques Derrida, and results in the kind of mutual clubbery that has caused the Yale School to be labelled the "Hermeneutical Mafia". At one Stage Bloom even has the temerity to compare Hartman to Jehovah brooding upon the waters. Bloom's overall conception of critics is one based on a rather Shellyan outlook, as well as by his own theory.

2. TROPES AND TOPICS

Such a polemical stance results in a good deal of rhetoric; and in fact the whole of Bloom's discourse proceeds not so much by argument as by a succession of tropes, figures, misprisons, swerves away from predecessors and so on. We shall later discuss the possibilities of "reading Bloom" this opens up, but here will provide some examples of characteristic procedures, strategies, listing them for convenience.
(1) Combination of a pertinent observation with a supposed tradition because of some feature it incorporates. An example of this is when he discusses the over-determined and over-organized nature of Pynchon's novels (MM31) and the formula "everything acts on everything else." This is quite correct but the argument continues in order to link this with Kabbalah, which is a distortion since Pynchon's work is better explained in the context of other works (modernistic novels, Borges etc) and the similarity with Kabbalah is interesting but peripheral.

(2) Simplification of complex questions to dialectical turns. An example of this is his reduction of the influence-relationships he discusses to the basic question of "Do we choose a tradition or does it choose us, and why is it necessary that a choosing take place, or a being chosen?" (MM32). This is not to question the validity of such oppositions, especially as starting points in a discussion, but any theory which goes on to examine actual influence relations in such terms is bound to court disaster, since both are likely to take place (i.e. a choosing and a being chosen) on a variety of different levels of organization.

(3) Incorporation of relatively commonplace observations (especially from other theories) into his own complex and over-determined system. An example is the idea that "literal meaning" is death to poetry (a relatively common Romantic sentiment) becomes the means to equate the avoidance of literal meanings in poetry with a defense against death, and to thus valorize originality (MM 91ff). A corollary of this would be that the most un-literal poems would be the most lively, which is obviously nonsense. Poems depend on literal meaning to communicate not in all in the same way that we depend upon death in order to live (birth would be a better analogy, since it is both an origin and a precondition).
(4) The misdirected question. Often Bloom asks quite pertinent questions about his own work (for example "how can my apparently arbitrary locations and naming of these rhetorical disjunctions aid interpretation?"

she characteristically goes on to not answer these questions, to turn them into a choice between polarities, or a re-phrased question that barely resembled the original one (Other examples can be found on KC117; WS8 and 14; AI58).

These strategies are not an exhaustive list, but serve to illustrate the point that Bloom's argument is trophaic - as indeed he insists all critical discourse is (KC105) - but persuasively trophaic, employing reasoned argument and analysis to a minimal degree, and polemic and misprison to a maximum.

The weaving of references, allusions, misprisons, tropes reaches even greater heights in Bloom's last critical book - Bloom alternates between Stevens' notebooks, letters, poem and other texts which Stevens had contact with (Nietzsche and Valéry especially) in a way that provides the impression of complex interactions but which operates by suggestive juxtaposition rather than argument. A passage taken at random will illustrate this: Bloom has just quoted from Emerson's "Circles" on An Ordinary Evening in New Haven

"Emerson genially undoes, in that closing trope the Miltonic tragic moral of Satan's self-realization on Mt. Niphates. An American Satan merely discovers, "There are no fixtures in nature. The universe is fluid and volutile." Emerson's nature is, as we will see, Steven's "reality," and the fitting together of an ordinary evening in an ordinary city of the different degrees of reality will expose a volatile interplay of ocular circles. So, at the start, the thing apart or obstructed is again the First Idea as an imaginal thing, the perceptual language of experience..."
This is performance as much as argument, and in order to "refute" it one would have to trace a multiplicity of references, assumed significances, Bloomian topoi. In doing so one would of course have provided, in Bloom's terms, evidence for the "Strength" of his misreading in the battle one wages with it. An evaluation of it is largely subjective matter because some readers find its suggestive rhetoric fascinating while others decide its (very real) distortions outweigh the insights (a rather more normal reaction would be closer to that of many to even more mythopoeic writers like Norman O. Brown - an initial enthusiasm followed by revaluation).

Bloom's trophic discourse proceeds most commonly by the process outlined above. Characteristically it moves among what I shall call the Bloomian topoi, or succession of unit-ideas which he was to encapsule his thinking on certain subjects. Usually these are attached to people so that when, for example, subjectivity is bought up Bloom refers to Wittgenstein, or when the Imagination - as - defensive is brought up he utilizes Vico, but they also apply to a kind of thematic analysis which traces certain images through poetic history ("the fiction of the leaves", "the merkabah" or chariot of God). This thinking - by - topoi can produce a good deal of repetition without justification, so that ultimately what are assertions become unit - facts that convey the illusion of not standing in need of evidence. It is with a certain degree of weariness that the reader encounters

"Imagination as Vico understood and Freud did not, is the faculty of self-preservation" (PR25); then in the same book "Meaning in poems, as Vico first saw...is always a matter of survival" (PR99); "That Vico knew overtly, that poetic meaning is always concerned with the struggle for poetic survival"
and so on. The result is an illusion of critical argument since Bloom's Vicorian "truth" is simply asserted in turn for each poet, and the reference to origins serves in lieu of further explanation.

3. TERMINOLOGY

The question of what terminology to use is one that all critics face, whether they decide to utilize the terms characteristic of a period (as Auerbach does with his "ansatzpunkt") because they are closer to its "spirit"; whether they import terms from another discipline; or whether they attempt to develop heuristic terms. Bloom's own discourse contains all of these possibilities in fact. His early work, up to and including The Ringers in The Tower (1971), is characterised by a use of the Romantic categories that relates one set to another in constructing a coherent account of Romantic poetic thought. Beside this however is a willingness to utilize terms heuristically (Martin Buber's I - Thou distinction in Shelley's Mythmaking (1959) for example); and in the later theories this is expanded into the six "ratios" with their "arbitrary" derivation (which is nevertheless meant to be suggestive FCI10). These are linked in turn to Freudian defense mechanisms, and to Bloom's own formulations of rhetorical categories (tropes), as well as to more prosaically outlined images (high and low, inner and outer, and so on). The result is the "map of misprison" which can be seen as the 6x4 matrix shown in Appendix II. In later theory this is modified slightly to include in account of the "topics", categories of thought rather like Hume's complex ideas, which govern the image-patterns. Finally, this terminological fecundity is poised with a continued use of the categories of the poets themselves, especially in his practical criticism.
Bloom's justification for all this terminology is simply that it might work (MM105, PR14, FCI10 and elsewhere): i.e., it is heuristic. It is timely, however, to remember our initial conception of Bloom's double stance; like Frye he treats his heuristic structures very literally at times, calling them "latent principles" and seldom finding exceptions. The expansiveness of these structures which are archetypical within the limitations he places upon them (despite his insistence they are not) contributes to what amounts to a non-refutability, so that their use must be related to other criteria within his work. These (generated by the opposite pole of his thinking) are "Strength" and the necessity of generating a "myth of the self", a personally coherent system; and ultimately they provide a better focus for his terminology than the idea of 'usefulness.' The 'mythology of self' they contribute to reinforce the idea of the solipsism of Bloom's critical world, and Geoffrey Hartman provides a good perspective on this when he contrasts a "carefully promiscuous testing of terms" with what may amount to a "mental latin." Bloom's terminology approaches the monasticism of the latter, both in its elaboration and its denial of other frames of reference.

Finally with respect to Bloom's terminology it must be emphasized that certain key words operate on two levels. As Patrick Coleman points out terms like "strength", "misprison", "defense" are made to accommodate vast generalizations (usually about specific poets) and very specific judgments (usually linguistic) which "neither illustrate nor limit those judgments." There are in fact two sets of terms: a poet may be "strong"; but a misprison may also be "strong" if it reversed or internalizes an earlier image and the concrete connection between the two is never developed (are strong poets simply ones with lots of strong misprisons?).
The result is a blurring of rhetorical and psychological terms which is essential to Bloom's theory; but sustained by this 'double discourse', which consequently takes the place of the proof which the use of independent sets of terms would require.

CHAPTER III

PSYCHOLOGY AND RHETORIC

This chapter will examine Bloom's theory of meaning and its development in his later theory, especially in his latest critical work. Central to this are the ideas of intertextuality and of the unity of psychology and rhetoric.

1. MEANING AND INTERTEXTUALITY

A discussion of Bloom's theory of "meaning" immediately takes us to the centre of his discourse. The topic is an artificial one in some ways, in that Bloom does not discuss "meaning" as an isolated topic in the way he does concerns more central to his theories (influence, tradition, defense), but it is useful for this reason because it opens to all there topics. It is also difficult because it displays the same mixture of circularities and inconsistancies which his theory as a whole displays; and the same solipsism and subjectivity. Bloom makes little attempt to relate his theories to those of Lévi-Strauss and Jacques Derrida, for example, both of whom maintain the intertextuality of literature but for more coherently argued reasons.

Bloom's theory of meaning is based upon an intertextuality which makes the differences between works their meanings, there differences being read as psychological defenses. Texts do not have meaning (KC122) but meaning can be dialectically located between texts. In early theory this is usually formulated as
"the meaning of a strong poem is another strong poem"
(AI94, FC19) but in later theory this is either more qualified in order to avoid the regressiveness of the above (e.g. "A single text has only part of a meaning: it is itself a synecdoche for a larger whole including other texts. A text is a relational event...", (KC106), or are more elaborated. In his last book it is developed into a system which allows meaning to be produced both within the dialectical processes of poems and also within the tropes themselves (there is also a different account of the "Interchapter" of The Anxiety of Influence (1973) which will be discussed separately).

There are two possible results of intertextual theories like these. One is that we come to inhabit a universe of texts (as E.M. Said says this is the end-product of structuralist logocentricity). Bloom sounds like this at times: "Contact, in a poem, means contact with another poem, even if that poem is called a deed, person, place or thing" (KM70). If one adds to this the next statement - "Influence is the whole range of relationships between one poem and another" - then "influence can mean any relationship with the world; and meaning also disperses outwards. Bloom however does not mean this because "influence" is interpoetic, rather than inter-textual in the broad sense. This courts the other outcome of intertextuality, the kind of self-reference in which not only the structures of literature are informed by internal pressures, but its meanings as well. Bloom readily accepts this self-reference—the spirit of Hume's moralizing on "decadence" in which the artist is led "gradually to forget the end of his art, in his attempt to display his superiority in the art itself"—because his claim is that such pressures are characteristic of post-Hiltonic poetry. Thus "greatness results from a refusal to separate origins from aims"
(MM80); a statement sometimes meteorized into a microcosm/macrocosm argument that "the relation of any poet to his precursors is humanized into the greater themes of all human influence - relations" (FCI xii). As in life, the end of literature is to free ourselves from our origins.

It must be noted that this argument is completely fallacious if taken literally as a theory of meaning, since it leads to an infinite regress in search of meanings. If there are no particular meanings then a poem's precursors text cannot be even located (especially when we come to consider Bloom's method of locating influences). As a theory of composition it argues for the equation of tropes and defenses, which we shall examine, and for a structuring of texts, which we shall also examine; but as a philosophy of reading it is especially interesting. Reading is as Bloom emphasizes a search for coherency, for rules that enable one to structure the text, to interpret. I shall assert from time to time that Bloom's theories apply more to the idea of reading than that of writing, and especially to his own reading, which even in his early criticism was deeply intertextual. The result is in application to poetry of what Harry Wolfson calls the "hypothetico-deductive" method, based on "the assumption that every philosopher in the main course of the history of philosophy either reproduces former philosophers or interprets them or criticizes them." Wolfson also assumes latent processes are at work, attempting "to uncover these uncluttered thoughts, to reconstruct the latent processes of reasoning that lie behind uttered words... by tracing back the story of how it came to be said." The parallels between Bloom and a historian of ideas are interesting because of his rather logocentric concentration on meaning (latest or manifest) in poetry, and in his sense of an
interpretive tradition in which preconditions can be shown to be more important than results. Both these ideas inform his theory of meaning, but there is a curious sense in which more modern conceptions are imposed upon them, for one could also read Bloom's theories as a reification of Derrida's "difference" in both its senses: meaning is intertextual (difference) and a 'deferring' which depends on the existence of a prior act of signification. This complex response to the challenges of the modern continental assault on the American academy is one of the more interesting aspects of Bloom's influences.

2. THE UNITY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND RHETORIC

The equation of psychology and rhetoric is something Bloom offers very little evidence for. It is part of the argument of this thesis that it is a false leveling, that the two discourses require different languages, and it shall be shown at various points that Bloom links them only by ambiguities of terminology and circular arguments.

The first argument which Bloom offers is that death and time are connected in that language "as it is" is death to poets in the Romantic tradition. This is a function of the larger theme of belatedness, since poets are instructed yet need to further themselves. As it is set out in A Map of Misreading (1975) "Tropes... are necessary errors about language, defending ultimately against the deathly dangers of literal meaning, and more immediately against all other tropes that intervene between literal meaning and the fresh opening to discourse" (MM94).

This idea is repeated in later works, sometimes with the suggestion literal language is a "figuration for" death - The metaphor is a characteristically Romantic one and in this sense is supposed to be descriptive rather than analytic (he suggests,
that is, it is true for poets, rather than for language); but in later theory this is applied to the process of figuration itself so that all tropes are defenses, necessarily.

There are a number of objections to this argument. How, for example, is literature like death? Ordinary language is a precondition for the rule-breaking and deviations of figuration so that in this sense it is more like birth than death, the place from which the possibilities of action develop.

"Ordinary language" itself is a problematic and increasingly attacked concept, and Bloom admits this when he states that "all language is trophic" (WS395), the corollary of which should be "all language is alive". Pragmatically, he is forced to adhere to some notion of "ordinary language" in order to assert that it is death; which contradicts his earlier statement. Moreover, if swerving is associated with avoidance of death then, by definition, catachresis is the most "lively" defense. In order to avoid this Bloom resorts to notions of "figures of will" (WS393ff) which are attached to the topoi or modes of thought, and thus condition the direction of the "swerve" of psychological meaning. These are empirical and embodied in the "Map of Misreading" so that ultimately it stands as the proof of the unity of psychology and rhetoric. This however is circular, since the "Map" already makes this assumption, and its application is in any case problematic (as later sections show).

Bloom also argues for the unity of psychology and rhetoric from ideas of teaching or instruction. Since all meanings are "given" in some sense the overcoming of that 'given' is a defensive process. This idea owes something to Derridas' concept of "path-breaking" and his parallel assertion that "writing is unthinkable without repression," but in Derrida this is so because the psyche is a text in which repression is a linguistic formulation. Bloom, who is committed to an inter-poetic meaning locates this repression within a Freudian framework of poetic
"incarnation" and the "scene of instruction." This leads to a number of problems (and here we become involved in the complexities of Bloom's troping of Freud). Firstly the precursor poets (or their sublimity) becomes the equivalent of repressed material in the id (MM50), to be defended against because of the "afflictions of secondariness" (MM50). Thus intertextuality is a tracing of differences from the father-figure(s) which must be interpreted as defenses. It is difficult to see how precursor-poets get into the id (to become the equivalent of biological desires) since poetic incarnation is something that seems to take place at a fairly late stage in life; and in any case what does it mean to "repress Milton", since Milton is a dialectical entity himself, a function of earlier and infinitely regressing repressions? This becomes especially problematic when one considers that this sudden shifting into the id on the part of poets (even in an analogy) took place in the few centuries between Petrarch and Milton.

Secondly the connection between Freudian structures and "belatedness" is ambiguous. Freud pointed out that anxiety occurs both between the feared event and the fear of that event, so that repression could be replaced by a self-consciousness. Bloom tends to conflate the two (e.g. Repressing Milton vs. repressing a fear of Milton) and the difference is crucial to the way one reads poems, since only in the first case can one try to set up an intertextuality. At a later point we shall also show that this has consequences for the way that Bloom treats the self-awareness of poets and their own statements about influence.

Thirdly, the Freudian and the linguistic arguments for defense tend to clash. In the former, poets defend against the sublimity of their precursors. In the latter they defend against the life-in-death of ordinary language, or against death itself. The
former involves concepts of priority; the latter of an escape from the surface of language ("path-breaking", in Derrida's terms\(^9\)). The inter-poetic location of defenses is difficult to understand in terms of the linguistic metaphor because poets inherit the whole of language and not just their precursors' influence, and deviate from it rather than are blocked by it.

Finally, the Freudian analogy is ultimately just that, an analogy, and its justification is circular. Bloom argues "To interpret a poem, necessarily you interpret its difference from other poems. Such a difference, where it vitally creates meaning, is a family difference, by which one poem extirpates for another. Since meaning, as difference, rhetorically depends upon troping, we can conclude that tropes are defenses..." (HM75). This is an admirable syllogism except that its premises are the same as its conclusion, asserting that differences are family differences and that poems need to extirpate for one another.

More precisely located arguments for the identity of each trope and ratio are discussed in Chapter 4. These are equally problematic: the equation of ratios and defenses approaches being a stipulative definition in Bloom's work.

3. DEVELOPMENTS IN THEORY

Bloom's later theory is characterised by a shift from the Freudian formulations of The Anxiety of Influence to a position much closer to that of the structuralists. In this later theory the concept of a "trope" becomes central, rather than that of a defense. This results in a number of shifts in emphasis, and also a greater tension in Bloom's theory between the psychological and linguistic formations. This is especially so in his most recent book which marks a considerable modification of earlier theories. First however we shall briefly discuss the "interchapter"
of Bloom's most well known but also least coherent book, The Anxiety of Influence (1973).

(1) The "Manifesto"

The "manifesto" of the "Interchapter" to The Anxiety of Influence (1973) is often used as a point of departure for attacks on Bloom. It is in fact not the place to begin any attack on Bloom and is a typical of his theory. In it he sets up an arithmetic of misreading which is found nowhere else in his work (understandably). Works are read by:

1. Learning a poets descendants as ephebes
2. Rating our own misreadings of those descendants as ephebes
3. Attempting to "measure the first clinamen against the second" and "apply it as a corrective" to the first but not the second poet or poets.

This argument combines objectivist assumptions (that we can "learn to read a great precursor poet as his greater descendants compelled themselves to read him", (AI93) and subjectivist claims that we can only misread, and is unsustainable as procedure. In The Anxiety of Influence Bloom merely operates by juxtapositions and assertions, as he does elsewhere, and this rather elaborate calculus is never bought into play.

(2) Developments

The influence of Bloom's colleague Paul de Man seems to be central to the shift in Bloom's theory. In a review of The Anxiety of Influence de Man imposed his own rhetorical theories upon Bloom and pointed out that "the intentional schemes by which Bloom dramatises the "causes" of the misreading can be ignored; one should focus instead on the structural pattern of
He continues "from the moment we begin to deal with substitutes, we are governed by linguistic rather than by natural or psychological models: one can always substitute one word for another but one cannot, by a mere act of will, substitute night for day or bliss for gloom."

Similar points are made in this work. Most relevantly, de Man points out that Bloom's category of inter-textuality (misreading) applies at all levels once one removes the subject, finally "down to the interplay between literal and figurative meaning within a single word or grammatical sign." This is the type of thinking that characterizes Bloom's most recent book, where literal and figurative meaning are seen to interact within tropes.

These shifts are first adumbrated in *A Map of Misreading*, which retains the subject-centred psychology but which emphasizes the equation of tropes as defenses, and the fact that "a trope is... a kind of falsification, because every trope (like every defense, which is similarly a falsification) is necessarily an interpretation, and so a mistaking" (WM93) (This is almost a direct quotation from de Man's review). In this book the ratios are presented both as stages in a poet's life-development (WM54 ff.) and later as structural principles in poetry (WM Chapt.5).

This shift in theory produces a number of changes in practical criticism. An example of this is the treatment given Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*. In *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) it is quoted as an example of apophrades, a final statement of unique gifts and an opening to the "terror" of the precursor-poem, Wordworth's *Intimations* Ode; and thus also a final style in a poetic biography (AI140). In *Poetry and Repression* (1976) it receives a full reading as a completed poem governed by the six-stage dialectics of composition, and the relationship to Wordworth...
also is shaped by the full series of ratios (PR Chapt. 4). In the later work too the juxtapositions which Bloom makes become less and less repressed connections and more and more instrumental. This does not apply to central ideas like Steven's "solitude" (related, convincingly enough, to Emerson's Society and Solitude) but rather to the way various ideas are blended, compared. Schopenhauer's concept of the individual will versus a purer contemplation, for example, is used to illustrate the difference between Stevensonian subjectivity or "solitude" and the "idea of order"; and he states rather casually "If we want an opponent for The Idea of Order at Key West, certainly Emerson's Seashore would do" (WS97). If we draw upon our earlier demarcation the use of the theory becomes more a function of reading than of writing. This becomes especially obvious in the case of unfinished poems, which he reads as whole poems using the full "map", as he does to The Triumph of Life asserting that there are no entities, only relationships (PR99). This makes nonsense of the idea of the map as a "philosophy of composition" in any empirical sense.

4. LATER THEORY: IMPROVEMENT AND DISUNITY.

(1) The dissolving of the subject: poetry

As a result of the changes outlined above Bloom's theories come to emphasise intertextuality rather than inter-poetic relationships. The "dissolving of the subject" thus becomes a possibility, and the referential nature of defenses threatened. As Jonathan Culler points out this loss of the inter-subjective had been implicit in certain parts of his earlier theory: Bloom asserts at various times that a poet may not even have read the precursors he is influenced by, that he may have read his
Emerson in Whitman, for example, as Stevens did (NS10), or his Milton in Wordsworth. The result is an intertextuality of creation rather than an intersubjectivity; and behind this the ideas of a unified "tradition" as both immanent and transcendent which shadows Bloom's works.

Consequently poetry is studied as "a kind of labour that has its own latent principles, principles that can be uncovered and then taught systematically" (PR25). The result for poems, which "are defensive processes in constant change" (PR26), is that the "defense" becomes a purely rhetorical formulation, without a subject to be attached to. Bloom addresses himself to this dilemma in Kabbalah and Criticism (1975) when he examines "the residue of metaphysics" in his own ideas and asserts that poems still contain a "willing" while they are linguistic defined by difference. "One can deny the primacy of "Language" over desire, yet still acknowledge that the idea of a thinking subject, an author, writing a poem, his poem, still partakes of a fiction" (KC114). He goes on to add "If there are no texts, then there are no authors - to be a poet is to be an inter-poet... But we must go further yet - there are no poems, and no poets, but there is also no reader" (KC114-115), and at this point one is tempted to agree with Culler that there is only language left. Bloom however maintains that "error is too wide a category to aid much in achieving an authentic literary history" (KC124) and that the idea of trope as defense is necessary to save the human subject.

(2) The Reconstitution of the Subject: Reading

Bloom re-emphasises the importance of the subject in terms of what he calls a swerve from Nietzsche to Emerson (KC117 ff.), which "re-centers" the interpretive sign. Basically this is an insistence that the reader internalize the text so that it is a "life-enhancing defense" (KC118). I would suggest that the idea
of "defense" here is a Bloomian trope (and what he calls a "residue of metaphysics") in his later theory, because it is linked to the concepts of "imaginative need" discussed earlier. Despite Bloom, this is a concept of participation in reading rather than a defensive one. In his last book it comes to be linked to the idea of "willed errors" and "restoration of meaning" which renders more or less obsolete the retrospective Freudianism of his earlier theory, even if he continues to use it occasionally in his practical criticism. Bloom's own assessment of these Freudian theories, central to The Anxiety of Influence, becomes "quite useful" (WS10); which emphasizes the point.

(3) The Dialectics of Creation

Bloom's theory also moves back to a re-centering via a discussion of the "dialectics of creation," which also involves a slight shift from his earlier theory an emphasis of the power of poetry to will. In earlier works the Imagination or Sublime is valorised as being without "referential aspect or literal meaning" (FC1236) and thus a figuration of freedom. This is a freedom from the "limitations" of metaphor and, he argues, it is connected with reality by the fact that it is a repression. But of what? In earlier theory the imaginative strength of the poet (MM100), which is without referent. In late theory it is the force of "Tradition", which is again "without a referential aspect" (KC98). Consequently the freedom Bloom valorises as the hyperbolic is undirectional, it is pure discontinuity. This is something Bloom seems to recognise, firstly in Emerson but also with respect to his own theory. On Emerson he writes: "Freedom, in Emerson's dialectic, has to be translated as a mode of vision conditioned by vagary, or most simply as the whim that Emerson exalted as self-reliance and finally as solitude" (WS4). Perhaps
consequently in the later work freeplay is more concretely located within a linguistic dialectic: not in the sublime but in the "aphoria or moment of doubt" (WS392) that intervenes between each trope of limitation and that of restoration. The emphasis on the value of his own criticism is that it moves through that freedom (which he says allows negative interpretation, or deconstruction) in order to "restore" the power of the word to intend. It is thus not something valued in itself (as Bloom says it is in Emerson) but a dialectical moment emphasizing the return to meaning (language opening to interpretation or "a capacity to respond", pathos: WS402) rather than language concentrating on its own limitations (ethos) or solipsistically locked into its own freedom (logos). Essentially what has happened, then, is that daemonization as a ratio is revalued and some of its attributes (non-referentially) transferred back to the middle term of the dialectic in order to re-connect the poetic word to life.

Bloom finally sets up a strangely multilayered theory of poetic language in this essay, one in which theory and metatheory are isomorphic (it requires some explanation). Firstly, the ethos/pathos distinction is described in terms of "language conceived as a system of tropes" and "language as persuasion (WS392), a formulation derived from de Man (and ultimately perhaps from phenomenological thinking or from Saussure's langue /parole distinction). The second is associated with a diachronic movement: "all rhetoric as system of tropes is a synchronic rhetoric, but all rhetoric as persuasion is diachronic" (WS396). The consideration which he derives (somewhat erroneously) from de Man is of a debate between the two concepts of language as they are embodied in "ethos" or
"pathos", thus in a movement from trope to trope which "re-definition of poetic thinking as the process of rhetorical substitution rather than as thinking by a particular trope" (WS392). Bloom however wishes to save the concept of tropes as "figures of will" (WS393), providing the swerves within tropes from ordinary language. Therefore he sets up a system which enables this, acting as a first order system to the second order inter-trophic debate. The "places" of language which are associated with "Images of voice" are the given from which the trope swerves (associated with the "topoi"); and the tropes themselves are "images of writing" which defend (WS401). Consequently, combining these two discourses,

"Poetry is a debate between voicing and writing, an endless crossing between topics or tropes, but also an endless shifting between topics and tropes" (WS401).

This is a remarkable theory. It manages to swallow both devition theories of meaning (topics/tropes) and the deconstructionist theories which examine the signifiers of language as a second order system in order to play them off against each other (topic/topic, or trope/trope; as ethos/pathos). It does so, however, at the same cost as his earlier theory: an overschematization (which we shall later examine in detail) and a loss of the 'ordinary significations' of language: deviation is reduced to defense and the creation of new meanings to an affirmation of the power of language, self-referential.

(4) Psychology

As a result of these changes a split occurs in Bloom's last book between psychology and linguistic analysis. While the linguistic descriptions we extended and refined, the psychological account of the poets development is simplified.
In this theory the six ratios of the "Map" are reduced in essence to three "crossings" which indicate stages in a poet's lifetime (though all three will be present in later poems, thus forming a recapitulation of that development). These are the crossing of Election, the Crossing of Solipsism, the Crossing of Identification. The first pertains to confronting "the death of the creative gift, and seeks an answer to the question, Am I still a poet, or, perhaps, am I truly a poet?" (WS403). The second, the Crossing of Solipsism, "struggles with the death of love and tries to answer the fearful query Am I capable of loving another besides myself?" (WS403), and the third, the Crossing of Identification faces the dilemma of "the confrontation with mortality, with total death" (WS403).

These crossings are described both psychologically and rhetorically according to the three "substitutions" of the map. As a schema however they mark an alteration of Bloom's theories. The earlier theories of The Anxiety of Influence are superceded, since poets no longer antithetically complete other poets (though he uses this idea in the book) but face their own inner crisis. These crisis are described concretely (Stevens' happened in 1915, 1921-22 and on to 1936, and in 1942: WS3); but also rhetorically, since later poems repeat them (WS3), using the formulations worked out in the poems around the time of the crisis.

This results in some theoretical difficulties. Such an account of crisis located in time means that he cannot, in theory, employ the full "map" on poems before the final crossing (in practice he does, for example on Ideas of Order at Key West (WS104), asserting only that its resolution is "equivocal"). He also points out that Emerson and Whitman are both said to have had two poetic crises by their critics, which precludes a full reading.
of their poems if we literalize the "crossings". It is also
difficult trying to connect the dialectic of "Ethos - Logos -
Pathos" (in poems) with these crossings since it is problematic,
for example, how the question of "Am I capable of loving another
beside myself?" is answered by a hyperbolic or sublime
"restoration".

Finally, as psychology this account is more realistic than the
earlier mythologised one, even if empirically questionable. As
we shall see Bloom's theory of figuration is also closer to more
common ideas in this book. The price is that they do not produce
the unity of psychology and rhetoric he desires. The psychology
that he draws from rhetoric in his later theories centers around
the concept of will rather than that of defense or the "scene of
instruction", as we have seen.

CHAPTER IV

TRADITION AND INFLUENCE

This chapter will take the form of a brief description of
theory followed by a series of loosely-structured essays on the concerns
which seem to lie at the core of those theories, also producing a
suggestion of alternative paradigms to Bloom's. It will end by
emphasising some of the more reductive and mythic aspects of
Bloom's critical framework.

1. BELATEDNESS AND ANXIETY

According to Bloom the "anxiety of influence" stems from
an inner psychological pressure created by the internalization
(heightened self-consciousness) characteristic of post-Renaissance
poetry. This results not from a pressure towards newness or
"originality" in a public sense, but from an anxiety by internal
mechanisms focused towards what he calls a "scene of instruction".
The precise way in which this is articulated varies: in later books
it is emphasised that the "scene of instruction" is itself a trope, and the emphasis is on the linguistic rather than the filial sense of "belatedness." We shall begin; however, with the more Freudian theory of The Anxiety of Influence (1973), the seminal text, and briefly sketch the arguments.

(1) The Freudian Theory

"Belatedness" in Bloom's The Anxiety of Influence is a result of the application of the Freudian Oedipal theories to literature. The anxiety we feel, according to Freud at not having fathered ourselves becomes the anxiety of poets at not poetically fathering themselves, of being instructed in what it is to be a poet rather than self-created. This is antithetically completed since what does make poets (strength) is something that simply is or is not in them. The result is this Bloomian equivalent to "genius" operates indirectly (by repression) because in order to engender itself it must overcome the anxieties of influence, the conditions of its growth. It is also, one can note, an equal balance between determinism and original genius - and this dialect of continuity/discontinuity is central to all of Bloom's theory.

The central metaphor apart from the Freudian one in this account is that of the "Scene of Instruction"; and the map itself is a figure for the scene of instruction as it is generated in its tropology by the encounter with the precursor or precursors. The consequences of this account, which is a myth rather than an argument, will be discussed at various points throughout this chapter.

(2) The Linguistic Theory

Bloom also argues for belatedness from linguistic grounds.
are born into language which as the "given" has a priority, and hence we can never create a stance that is wholly our own. In later theory this is modified to the somewhat conflicting argument that we defend against literal meaning which is death. The argument depends on the intertextuality of literature: all than can produce poems is previous poems, and the same spurious link between preconditions and subject matter is present.

(3) Other Accounts

Other metaphors for the belatedness of Romantic poetry are offered. One is that of "displaced Protestantism", describing the double-bind situation of a god we are enjoined to be like and not be too like (this is borrowed from W. J. Date). Another is that of Kabbalah, which we shall examine separately as a paradigm case of an "interpretive tradition". A final account is one, surprisingly, of the three general forces of social de-subjectivisation described by Richard Rorty: the Hegelian prophecy that "any future will be automatically transcended" (the opposite of belatedness, one could note), the Marxist prophecy of the end of individualism, and the Freudian and structuralist attacks on the concept of "man" with their inhibiting effects on aspirations of sublimity, the illusion of freedom (PR21).

(4) Theory and Evidence

It must be emphasised that almost all Bloom's justifications for these arguments are theoretical. Kabbalah and his practical criticism are supposed to provide support, but as we shall see the first is another trope, a Bloomian error; and in the second his criticism is disfigured by his theory.

Some empirical evidence for pressure towards "newness" within Romantic tradition is provided by Colin Kartindale, in terms of
an increasing use of psychoanalytically regressive images until stylistic shifts provide a release into more conscious discourse. Martindale's findings however apply more than to the more enclosed French tradition. The British one, and in any case such an analysis necessarily makes very small claims compared to Bloom's complex speculations. That the Romantics felt a pressure towards newness is not at issue in Bloom's theories.

2. ROMANTICS AND REPRESSION

It has often been shown that writers from about 1740 tended to see the past as a burden, and to see themselves also as the creative centres of their work. The former applies especially to the late eighteenth century writers discussed by W.J. Bate, and the latter was a movement somewhat earlier in origin. Both ideas are central to Bloom's theses: the "anxiety of influence", that is, and the idea of "internalization" of quest, the kind of Protestantism which is sometimes linked to the rise of the novel by other critics. Other factors are related: the increasing emphasis on concepts of sublimity and of genius, the growing dislocation between popular and "serious" writing, but Bloom generally ignores these.

The result of these movements was, as Bate points out, a kind of double-bind for the artist in which he was required both to emulate and venerate and to surpass his models. Bloom argues that this process becomes especially vicious for the Romantics because of the "internalization" above, and because of the presence of the models of Milton and later Wordsworth as "blocking agents." We shall examine this historical argument in some detail.

The centuries before the eighteenth were characterised, firstly, by a gradual dislocation of classical models and their authority. Most typically the "creative misunderstandings involved were relatively gradual, expanding or perverting models,
but from within them, and relationship with these models was often complex, even where it was a critical one. This shift is perfectly amenable to analysis in terms of "misunderstanding" or "mistaking", and a number of articles show how both Shakespeare and Milton distort their sources. Bloom however emphasises that these misunderstandings were relatively benevolent, informed by ideas of kinship. Shakespeare lives in a kind of prelapsarian age (AI11), as does Jonson (AI27); but after them comes Milton's Satan, who rejecting all authority becomes the archetype of the strong poet and who represses tradition rather than viewing it without anxiety.

From a purely theoretical view this argument is problematic. Bloom uses a whole series of vitalistic metaphors (AI58 ff.) of the poet-as-shaman, poetic-birth as human-birth, defense against death, to describe the process of poetic incarnation. It is difficult to understand how these suddenly become connected to a historical change, especially since his later theory emphasised the centrality of misprision to all linguistic change (WS394).

However it is true that for Romantic poets this relationship to tradition is one characterised by a certain amount of anxiety, and what Bloom calls "internalization". This is displayed in their uncertainty with genre for example - Shelley wrote his greatest poem as a verse drama rather than an epic; Keat's abandoned the "Fall of Hyperion" because he seemed to have exhausted its possibilities; Wordsworth created new models for the long poem, based on an inner voyage, in The Prelude; Coleridge wrote major poetry in ballad-form but left major genres unattempted. An internalization of tradition takes place in some sense too, with respect to classical motifs especially: when Keats revives Psyche, the "latest born and loveliest far / Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy," it is in "some un trodden region of the
"mind" he builds her temple; and when Shelley presents the figures of his tradition they are radically subsumed to his own mythopoeis. In part this is something Bloom describes well - his essay on The Triumph of Life, for example; demonstrates Shelley's manhandling of his sources (despite some distortions of that process), as does his essay on Milton (PR Chapt. 4, MM Chapt. 7).

Bloom's claims, however, are larger than this. He argues for a repression of sources. It is difficult to see how this is to be empirically proven. As anyone who has argued with an arm-chair Freudian knows, repression is a category difficult to deny. In Freud's work as well as that of his modern French followers the process is usually manifested on verbal slips, hidden repetitions, displacements; but in Bloom's work the possibility of such analysis is exploded because the repression is of previous texts. Consequently any verbal allusion, tonal similarity, borrowed image can serve as evidence and it is difficult to explain why the misprisions (say) of Shakespeare are not similarly deep.

For this reason the historical account again becomes important. There is a certain amount of truth in the idea of "repression of sources", especially in the split between education and acknowledgement of the Romantics. Thus Shelley could morally condemn much of his tradition in The Triumph of Life while being an incorrigible reader of the same authors; Keats could write "I am reading Voltaire and Gibbon, though I wrote Reynolds the other day to prove reading of no use;" Victor Hugo could write "The poet...should take counsel therefore only of nature, truth, and inspiration which is both truth and nature" in an essay which mentions Homer, Virgil, Socrates, Aristotle, Euripides, the Bible Tasso (and so the list goes on). Wordsworth also tended to
minimise his influences, though recent studies have re-emphasised how pervasively he was affected by his education and Miltonic or Biblical models.  

This means a degree of "repression" in some sense. Perhaps the central flaw in Bloom's argument is his insistence that this is an unconscious process. As Patrick Parrinder points out the Romantics were consciously involved in attempts to reconcile their own need for new artistic directions to the publicly accepted genres and the forces of tradition. This debate pervades their prose especially: Wordsworth's attempt to create a new mode of reading for his own work, Shelley's prefaces and A Defense of Poetry, Coleridge's meditations on influence, Keats' letters; and as Leslie Brisman shows the debate continues within their poetry. Bloom utilizes some of these sources, but only in a symptomatic manner: if they deny influence they are quite properly repressing it, if they admit it they fail, but in either case it is contained in the id rather than the conscious mind.

It is also curious that the ideas of genius and originality which informed this debate were more problematic for the poets than their public (if Bloom's theories hold poets should be better repressors, more sublime), and as Bate points out critical acclaim for works of "genius" was available and often over-hasty. When one begins to think these terms one is considering broad social movements as well as the poets who enter them: for Bloom the pressures are all internal. With respect to originality and tradition they were in fact both internal and external, a struggle of the artist with the past, with what Emerson called the "petulant demand for originality" of the public, and with the internal need for Lebensraum which Goethe describes.
Another objection is to Bloom's description of Milton's influence is that Romantic poets return to Milton rather than begin with him. Wordsworth produced Miltonic verse (in the "Prospectus" to The Excursion especially) but his early work cannot be explained in terms of a swerve from Milton, taking more from the complex "simplicity" of Cowper, Akenside, Thomson and the early influence of Coleridge than from Milton's pastoral. Similarly Kent's Hyperion is his most Miltonic poetry, and his early work a struggle (as Bloom admits, PR114) with subjectivity and with his art. Admittedly, Bloom never aspires to such practical comprehensivity, concentrating on the sublime moments where poets rival Milton, but it is worth asking how a theory can be so narrowly applicable and still have value - Bloom tends to deny its particularity, asserting both that it is a "wholly different practical criticism" (AI43) and a theory of the poetic lifecycle (AI), while only occasionally emphasising its limitations (PR23, WS405). As he says, any "strong" reading must deny its partialness (KC125).

The concentration on Milton also results in Bloom's denial is an a priori manner of influences other than those that flow down from Milton (FC18, PR117), even as he sees them in the poetry. This applies to the use of classical sources, which was a genuinely aggressive one, and in critical practice Bloom does trace these images through the tradition as a whole. The true difference between the use of classical allusion by Shakespeare and by the Romantics is one of a public utilization of a common discursive possibility (in a fairly careless manner) verses a more personal "mythopoetic" use of those possibilities; something Bloom demonstrates but obscures by his over-insistence on repression and anxiety. Attitudes changed, surely, but for both Miltonic and
Post-Miltonic writers the past represented a set of available theses, topics and structures rather than a monolithic godhead; and in this sense Romanticism marks an extension of the Renaissance breakdown of the authority of those models rather than a radical discontinuity.

Finally, Bloom's view is a mythologization of the discontinuities that do occur into the meaning of that poetry, as we have seen. This is a travesty even of the Freudian metaphor: Freud did not insist that every act of human behaviour is Oedipally determined. When Romantic confront their "parents" directly they do display feelings of Freudian complexity (Blake on Milton; Shelley on Wordsworth and Coleridge; Coleridge on Wordsworth); but one can no more reify this into the telos and arche of every poetic action they made than one can assume that all men are Oedipus. One can if one chooses, of course, but only at the price of producing what Roland Barthes calls "a world...without dept, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident...a blissful clarity" which abolishes the complexity of human acts and ignores their reality.

3. REIFICATIONS

We now move on to discuss some of the features of Bloom's mythologising and the characteristic tropes it employs. The most important are a set of reifications made for the purpose of theorising about the "essence" of poetry.

(1) Poets

The first reification applies to the poetic subject, especially in The Anxiety of Influence (1973). There are "poets as poets", "the poet in every reader" (AI25), "the aboriginal poetic self"
(AI11) and so on, consequently generating the assumption that poetic psychology is different from human psychology in a radical way. The mixed nature of any examination of people-as-poets, the biographical specificity that W. Jackson Bate insist upon, is eliminated and the way cleared for a reductive account of inter-poetic relations. The subjects are cleared of the dross of history (apart from Bloom's version of poetic history), of a concrete location in society.

Paralleling this reification of the poet-within-a poet is the use of the same move from the "human" to the "poetic" in other matters. An example of this is the examination of "the dialectic of accommodation and assimilation" (MM52) in Freud and Piaget. Children, he argues (from Piaget), assimilate the not-me and accommodate the vision of others, but poets accommodate less while assimilating more. This depends, he adds, on the intertextual covenants between poets. There is no justification for this, other than it is characteristic kenosis or internalization (rhetorically a metonymy) and it depends upon the premise that the world of poetry is sealed-off and intertextual. All the poet assimilates is other poets, hence they are all he reacts to or accommodates.

(2) Tradition

The idea of "tradition" is expressed in two ways in Bloom's work. In earlier theories it is associated with the Blakean "covering cherub" or "demon of continuity" to be repressed by the poet seeking incarnation (AI Chapt. 1). In later work it is "a daemonic term" and "without a referential aspect" (KC98), akin to the Ein-Sof or Infinite Godhead of the Kabbalists, and
thus stands over the artist as source and inhibitor.

The hypostasis of an entity known as tradition is perhaps the most important move Bloom makes in his criticism. It enables him to discuss the artist struggling "against" art or tradition (AI99) rather than with art, within a tradition. Literary studies can only be seen as determined by this struggle if tradition is both something prior and acts in a cohesive way upon the artist. The question is somewhat tricky since "influence" itself is a trope and not causal (KC114), especially in later theory, but somehow provides the "governing dialectic" of poetry (again the empirical/rhetorical oscillations of Bloom's theory hinders interpretation).

The effect of this conception of "tradition" as something akin to a father-figure (AI) or a godhead (KC) is to deny the presentness of the struggle with language and the past. According to the Kabbalistic model influence flows downward (again, a hydrological metaphor) to the various Sefirot, whose internal patternings and relationships (Behinot) are fully determined by them, since they are all "emanations" of the one God. The consequences are, for literature, that the poet with his forming intention vanishes and is replaced by the patterns of these emanations - a result reductive and distorting in the extreme. In Bloom's practical criticism this reductiveness is often apparent and affects his findings, as another section will show.

4. ORIGINS AND AIMS.

The alternative account is of the artist involved in a struggle within the present moment, and the relationship with the tradition is not a static archeologically determinable one at any point (as Bloom's analysis make it) but describable only as a
developing praxis, a series of "beginnings" which engage that criticism and the intention to create anew without the regressive journey to origins Bloom describes in every poem he encounters. This is developed by E. W. Said in *Beginnings: Intention and Method* at some length. It has the advantage of not referring to any "deep" structure, an unavoidable monolithic tradition, but rather to the complex mixture of concrete historical factors, psychological pressures, and aims involved in any attempt at meaning-creation within a formal medium. Bloom's theories fail to account either for intentions (since overt intentions are irrelevant and usually counterfactual for him) or for the formal nature of the medium (since surface or formal considerations are irrelevant to the deep structure of influence) and resolves both into an archeology (or pathology) of composition.

Said, in discussing Vico, emphasises the difference between a "hebrew" approach to writing and a "gentile" one. The first involves concepts of an ultimate "authority" or origin, located by moving backward in time, - the second involves concepts of "beginning" or intentionalized activity directed towards the creation of meaning, with the recognition that all such activity participates in the human and arbitrary rather than the sacred or thaumaturgic. Bloom interprets Vico differently and in doing so reverses Said and asserts that poets seek to incarnate themselves, and that the concept of "tradition" serves as a godhead whose influence must be repressed. Consequently works are not governed by the creation of meaning but by pressures that operate in poetry that force a regressive movement to a "scene of instruction." Thus "the price of internalization, in poetic as in human romance is that aims wander back towards origins" (MM106). However in later theory the idea of "meaning-creation" becomes more important: the three stage dialectic of creation is aimed at it,
and it is inter-trophaic as well as intertextual (intertextuality of course implying a backwards movement in Bloom rather than a synchroic 'universe of texts'). Moreover ideas of 'coherence' have already appeared in Bloom's theory in the criteria of "strength" which direct strong poems towards a Gestalt, so Bloom's theory contains both regressive and progressive formulations, though the latter are less visible.

As we have earlier mentioned this tension exists in the clash between Freudian and linguistic formulations. In Bloom's Freudian theory the mother is identified with the body of language (or state of original creativity), the father with the precursor(s) or body of texts standing between the poet and creation. Thus in order to create the poet must move back (psychically) to origins. Creation however involves in forward movement ("a cast of the spirit", MM100), moving from the body of language into a new meaning (which is then amenable to analysis). Consequently Bloom's account of the "dialectics of creation" sits strangely beside his inter-poetic account directed at origins.

More practically, the result of Bloom's theory of origination is a distortion of literary history, in the last century especially. This is drawn out in Said's book, where he argues that modernism is dominated by non-linear concepts of "adjacency" which replace the linearities of earlier literature: "whereas an origin centrally dominates what derives from it, the beginning (especially the modern beginning) encourages non-linear development, a logic giving rise to the sort of multi-level coherence of dispersion we find in Freud's text, in the texts of modern writers..." Bloom argues that this is not true for the real (i.e. strong) literature of the twentieth century because it merely internalizes and represses
the origin-dominated linearity of earlier tradition, paradoxically heightening its effects; but in order to support this case he must either ignore or mythologise the complex structures of modern works. Said's examples include the modernist canon and the modern novel (which Bloom avoids), but the thrust of his argument is towards the fact that no single image can be created which will unfold the text (the passage of time, the quest, the Family Romance etc), but that it must be understood in terms of an intentional activity within a paradigm that more closely resembles that of "the library" (Foucault) than the family-history. Consequently writers such as Eliot, Joyce, Pynchon are not simply flooded with the anxiety of influence, or standing in parodistic relationship to it (as Bloom asserts) but operate within a paradigm that Bloom's theory cannot recognise because it is committed to an archeology of composition. The paradox of this is that poets who do not conform to this theory must be ignored or dismissed. As we mention elsewhere with respect to Eliot, an account that emphasises the work involved in acquiring and interacting with a tradition avoids this necessity, as well as the latency of meaning Bloom must derive from the ideas of origins and repression which govern his thinking.

Finally I want to take a more theoretical perspective on this debate, claiming that it is partly a result of a blurring of demarcation on Bloom's part. Said argues that we cannot fully account for a work in terms of one hermeneutic, but only as an intentional structuring activity, a synthesis. Bloom claims priority for his hermeneutic but his own formulations deconstruct it as a theory of composition; however useful it might be for tracing elements of influence. The spirit is that of Kierkegaard's famous remark: "We live forward, we understand backward". If we accept it we move once more from origins to intentions, from "scenes of instructions" to "beginnings".
5. CHOICE

As we have seen the ideas of tradition as godhead or as Freudian father create the imprison of an inescapability, and this is reinforced by Bloom's theories of creation with their dialectics of continuity/discontinuity. We shall explore in this section some of the consequences of this and its relation to the different paradigm of "choice."

The analogy for 'receiving' a tradition is to birth (AI) or to being created rather than self-made (KC). This contradicts part of Bloom's theory: he suggests that the problem of many writers is that they compulsively revise without repression which means in turn that they have no tradition (or birth?). This emphasises Eliot's point, that a tradition is only something obtained by hard work, even if somewhat 'given' in the process of education. Bloom does link the revisionary tradition to education (MM32) but in a way that reifies it and makes it impossible to describe the specificity of any one education (admittedly he is generalizing for the sake of theory). Neither, can his reifications allow for the change in reading patterns in the twentieth century (though again he is theorizing), and the effect of that on poetry.

The lack of specificity outlined above is a result of the way tradition operates in Bloom: as an inner transference. He is forced to assert "All continuities possess the paradox of being absolutely arbitrary in their origins" (MM33) and there is no way Bloom can explain the affinities that do occur (he says), in terms of the poet's temperament, social background, interests. Such an approach also results in a good deal of violence to the text, though in his practical criticism Bloom tends to contradict this (as we shall see), asserting that he finds "deep or true influence rather than the easy transmission of image, idea, diction and metric" (FCI234) but necessarily using such "surface"
criteria to locate influences.

In order to de-mythologise this account of influence one needs a category fine enough to account for all the small influences, ideas, stylistic shifts that Bloom claims are superficial. The idea of "choice" does this, but more importantly it avoids the source—product relationship of Bloom's metaphors, re-emphasising something which he describes occasionally but often ignores the implications of. This is the way that present poets affect our reading of earlier ones: Eliot's idea of retroactive influence. Thus in Bloom: "Then J.S. Merwin and Richard Wilbur wrote in the Line of Wit, then Donne was much wittier. Now that Whitman is our contemporary again, and Donne is a more archaic classic, poets like Merwin and Wilbur have moved..." (KC68). This rather suggests that influence flows from the present backward (something Bloom allows for occasionally in "apophrades") but also that poets choose their ancestors, even if that choice is partially determined by current trends or personality. What the choice is not determined by is the past itself.

The idea of choice as a fine structure of influence applies even if one does use the hypothetico-deductive method (as we called it earlier). Bloom's mythologising often leads him to minimise the declared influences of the writer (Ammon's to Taoist thinking; Ashberg and Steven's to French models) in favour of the 'deep' ones which he says structure their thinking, and at one point even asserts that a putative influence across a language usually disguises one within a language (JS5). Such a stance dismisses the possibility of the kind of fertilization that Schwab's La Renaissance orientale points out in the influx of Eastern ideas into Europe in the nineteenth century; or even of the interaction with the "Nouvelle Critique" which informs Bloom's
own work, something which is a positive response rather than a repression.

Finally, a number of texts suggest the necessity for poets of choice, of the possibilities it offers. This applies to Schwab's study which emphasises that cultural renewal takes place as a result of poets seeking out new influences (again returning us to Eliot's ideas). A recent response to Bloom on territory even closer to his own makes the case that Romantic poets were aware of their influences in a way which Bloom does not allow. Leslie Brisman states, "Using direct citation: Wordsworth shows his relationship with Milton to be a matter of conscious choice, not unconscious influence with its attendant anxieties about discovery and inadequacy" and argues moreover that the role of "chooser" moves the Romantic poet beyond the solipsistic self-assertion and defensiveness of Milton's Satan (related to the points we made earlier about Bloom's denial of self-consciousness to the Romantic Poet). Brisman and others argue that conscious choice does not imply a weak poetry but one more concretely connected to its real influences, located in the world.

Finally, the idea of choice enables an integrative as opposed to a repressive account of art. As a number of studies show the Romantic poets were capable of integrating a number of influences or sources in their work, and as Bate points out a sideways movement into new fields also took place - children, the poor, the geographically remote, dream, landscape. The particularity which Bate associates with Romanticism is also ignored in Bloom, since description of nature simply reduces to a troping of Milton (KC102).
6. POETRY AND SOCIETY

Bloom, as we have shown, suggests a poetic world closed off from the extra-textual world and informed by internal pressures. Consequently any account which attempts to link literature to outside influences has got its priorities wrong, he claims. This is not to say that he does not have a sociology of some sort. He emphasises, for example, that interpretive traditions necessarily remake meaning under the pressures of change: Kabbalah sought "to open an ancient text to the experiential sufferings of contemporary men and women" (KC46), and to accomodate "scripture and even received commentary to their own historical sufferings, and to their own, new theological insights" (KC34). His account of the cultural changes that result in the characteristic of post-Renaissance poetry is based on scholars such as Auerbach, Van Berg, Bate, Curtis and fairly commonplace ideas of "Geistesgeschichte." Cartesianism is seen as creating the located (isolated) ego; the literary tradition from the Greeks based on the unity of teaching and practice; the eighteenth century inaugurating an internalization of this which is manifested in its opposite (the anxiety of influence) through repression, and so on. Bloom occasionally refers his readers to writers like Bate and Curtius on this, since he is concerned not with the history of ideas but with criticism.

This however does not detract from the centrality of interpersonal relationships within his theory, and of his own categories. As he says "this is a historicism that deliberately reduces to the interplay of personalities" (MM71), and the systemic accounts of Structuralists, Marxists, Freudians are discounted because they are not specific to poetry. The result is that their categories are sometimes subverted to poetic ones, as when the accumulation of
capital becomes a version of Orphism: "To call the Emersonian Henry Ford a master of divination, and so a major American Orphic, does not discredit the native strain" (FCI76). This is paralleled by the reifications we have already discussed, which reduce the "human" to the "poetic".

All these supposedly occur in the service of an account of influence. What are the consequence of such an account? Firstly, we have seen how Bloom's use of influences is determined in an a priori manner which asserts that poets are influenced rather than choose. A sociology of literature will emphasise the determinants on that choice, but they are social rather than literature-specific as they are in Bloom. Influence in life tends to flow from the extrinsic to the literary and within literature is determinable only in a post-hoc manner, which is to say that "Tradition" is a construct. Poets may be influenced by their education as one of a number of factors by other works, but that does not justify the reification of those aspects.

It must be noted here that Bloom's claims are partly that forces in poetry govern poetry. This empirical claim depends mainly on the structural pattern of the "map" but some support is also offered for it by work such as that of Colin Martindale, which we discussed earlier. Here we concentrate on the losses of such a theory of reading. As E. W. Said points out Bloom's mythologization involves a loss of any awareness of 'cultures' anonymous and institutionalized supports which simply go on and beyond individual efforts or life-spans," of the way in which the possibilities of any discourse is rooted in the collective modes of signification which Foucault calls the "enoncé." It also produces the arbitrariness of influence—relations we noted earlier: as Frederic Crews remarks "it is...an absence of feeling for historical dynamics that allows some scholars to account for
one author's work merely by the "influence" of another's, as if his life situation did not contain features that readied him for one sort of guidance.\textsuperscript{34} Thus the Romantics were aware of Milton (consciously aware) but were also rooted in their time, in its various debates, upheavals, cultural movements. To take a random example, Shelley had a conscious philosophy of the role of poetry in social change which effects his works and their idealism. In Bloom this is explained in terms of the "split nature" of Shelley's personality (RT Chapt. 7) but this idealizes what was a complex culturally-determined role-playing into a psychic attribute. The same applies to Browning's monologues, which are explorations of conflicting systems of values, perspectives, rather than primarily expressive (Bloom uses Childe Roland as the centre of his Browning-criticism, a dream-fragment more amenable to his criticism than more self-conscious poetry). Poetry for Bloom is not a nexus within which a number of elements (social, psychological, rhetorical) coexist but a gesture whose meaning is discoverable by a "hermeneutics of desire."

7. TELEOLOGY

Bloom's theory has a number of implied consequences for the future of poetry, and for critical practice. We shall examine each in turn.

(1) Poetic Entropy

The theory of influence suggests that poetry is a state of decline, from the original and central energies of Milton especially, but also with the increasing "inwardness" of Western thought. Belatedness, like entropy in the second law of thermodynamics, is increasing. Consequently the difficulty of projecting
oneself into earliness, of overcoming the anxiety of influence, is also increasing, and the rare occasions on which a poet achieves the depth of repression required to achieve the sublime mode are becoming even more "astonishing."

This theoretical difficulty, which Bloom holds also as an empirical truth, results in paradoxical formulations in the face of what is a flourishing body of contemporary American poetry. Thus the mixed feelings of (darkness and light, though whence comes the darkness is hard to tell, since it is the darkness of Blooms' theory) "The (present) generation includes formidable accomplishments... the whole body of work by poets now in their prime in America is immensely heartening, particularly at so dark a moment" (FCI 150). The darkness Bloom includes here is partly that of the "Rabblement of the New Sensibility" (FCI150) but within Bloom's system this becomes associated with the dilemmas of belatedness in what is, it has often been pointed out, merely another version of the myth of the "Decline of the West." Thus we currently enter decadence: "for us, creative emulation of literary tradition lends to images of inversion, incest, sadomasochistic parody" (MM31), and in late days "Revisionism, always in Romantic energiser, has become so much a norm that even rhetorical standards seem to have lost their efficiency. Literary tradition has become the capture of the revisionary impulse..." (MM36). Such arguments confront the truths of his own criticism: that he is arguing for continuity rather than discontinuity, but within a critical framework which emphasises discontinuity within continuity as the creative power of poetry. Finally, this Spenglarian myth also results in the kind of nostalgic identification with Emerson we saw earlier, with the Visionary Company of poets.
How much truth is there in Bloom's myth? Here as elsewhere I would suggest that Bloom is not the person to ask about the truth-value of his assertions. Various critics have claimed that for various reasons "poetry" is an art becoming increasingly distanced from the mainstream of life. Such suggestions however are backed up by much more respectable arguments than Bloom's broad appeals to "internalization" etc: by reference to changing reading patterns, to the relationship between education and societies' expectations, to the rise of other media, by the movement of poets into the academies and so on. Clearly the desire for "newness" is one factor that poets face, but within Modern American poetry at least this seems presently a lessening influence. Since the debates of the Pound/Williams schools in the 1950's the field has been characterised by a more relaxed tolerance of a variety of styles, and the resurgence of a discursive poetry.

(2) The Leveling of Discourse

Bloom also claims that as time passes criticism and poetry move closer together, resulting in what is known as the "levelling of discourse." This will be discussed in a later section, but it is worth noting that the idea involves an increasing enclosure of poetry in a world of its own, sealed off from mimesis. While this is true for some of the continuators of "writing about writing" it is not obviously true for a good deal of contemporary poetry, as a number of studies show, and in fact it is not even true of the poets Bloom examines. Not even he can disguise A.R. Ammon's appetite for reality, or the way John Ashbery re-vitalizes language both in and after removing it from reality, and in fact his practical criticism tends to underline the more mechanical applications of his dynamics.
8. EVALUATION: CANON FORMATION AND STRENGTH

Bloom's central aim, in the "middle period" at least, can be described in his own words as an attempt to create "a theory of literary history as canon-formation" (KC63). He attempts to identify and to describe the forces operating within canon-formation and to make these forces the central concern of literature, and within this paradigm the idea of "strength" becomes central as an evaluative criterion.

1. Canon-formation

Canon-formation is the larger struggle which informs the anxiety of influence, and operates as a blindness between "poetry and the history of poetry" (KC57). Bloom quite correctly points out that poetic history is only determined in a post-hoc manner, and that poets may worry about this. Consequently the dialectics of canon-formation are determined by the battle to achieve "strength", a battle urged against the precursor poets. Again this involves a willed blurring of demarcations: canon-formation is a process which takes place after production of a text and Bloom projects that into the text. Consequently the real processes of canon-formation (which depend on socially accepted values, expectations, the existence of sympathetic critics, of a "relevancy" and so on) are rejected in favour of something held within the poet himself. Such "essentialistic" concepts of value have increasingly come under attack in recent times (the locus classicus perhaps being W.T. Kennick's 1958 article 38), and in Bloom it produces an inscrutability of these criteria which determine canon-formation.
(2) Literary Value: Two Criteria of "Strength"

As we have suggested "strength" is the main criterion of value which Bloom uses. We shall examine, firstly, the two levels on which this value-term operates, and secondly relate it to the two criteria which he uses to demonstrate strength. This is not easy because despite its centrality Bloom provides little explanation of what "strength" is, and much of this is circular in procedure.

"Strength" operates both as a sweepingly generalized term in Bloom's theories and as a specific, localized judgement. As the first it is something "in" poets, that which determines their interaction with their tradition. As the second it is applied to juxtaposed passages, allied to words like "powerful," "extraordinary", "superb" in a fairly subjective way, and supposed to be a qualitative evaluation of misprision. It is also a dialectical term in a sense, just as in the first sense it is an essentialistic term (again Bloom's dialectical/empirical stance).

Two general criteria of strength can be isolated, however, from Bloom's criticism. The first is simply that of survival. A strong poem is one which survives in the inter-textual battle of canon-formation: "A poem is either weak and forgettable, or else strong and so memorable. Strength here means the strength of imposition. A poet is strong because poets after him must work to evade him. A critic is strong if his readings similarly provoke other readings"(KC125). This is reiterated elsewhere (e.g. MM70).

This definition is related to the second use of the term above: it refers to poets and their poetic survival. Most importantly, it is circular in that it is only locatable in a post-hoc manner.
It gives we who operate within the power-struggles of history no operative criteria other than subjective ones. At times this is linked to the idea of "imaginative need" and the poems which feed our internal discourses, but again this is a circular argument since Bloom tells us which poems this applies to. The use of the term "strong" must thus be either purely descriptive (Paradise Lost has survived) or purely subjective (this poem feeds me, I want it to survive).

The more detailed use of the term brings us to one of the more revealing points in Bloom's whole theory. The properties which enable a criticism to survive are described in a coherential theory which valourizes the "Unity", "wholeness" and organizing power of a reading: one in which "the criticism can seem to have more unity, more form, more meaning" than the poem (KC121), so that "A strong reading does not say: "This might mean that, or again might mean this". There is no "this" or "that" for the strong reading. According to the strong reading it and the text are one..." (KC125). In an earlier text "such a reading is compelled to assert its uniqueness, its totality, its truth." (MM70). Consequently strong readings are judged by standards curiously similar to those of the New Critics: unity, coherence, totality. The critics who are most valued are Wilson Knight (pioneer of "spatializing" the iconography of Romanticism with a Bloom-like flair for organization), Empson, Burke.

Ultimately however this criterion reduces to the first one - to a Viconian eloquence which Bloom asserts guarantees survival. The link is unjustified, because there is no reason why coherency should ensure survival (do we value Chaucer for this?), and as de Man or Marxist critics often point out it may be precisely for its disunities that we value a text. Bloom claims that
good poems must both assert their unity and deny it by repression, by their misprisons (very much the case with his own criticism). This essentially reduces to saying that the biggest and most eloquent lies are best, as long as they swallow all the previous lies, and while this may be true in some sense (if we extend the use of 'lie' somewhat) we have suggested that as a theory of poetry it can only result in a mythologised criticism, an unhelpful lie.

CHAPTER VII

PRACTICAL CRITICISM

This chapter will examine Bloom's practical criticism, attempting to show the results of some of the conclusions arrived at in his theory, but also the very real sense in which his critical method differs from his theoretically promulgated procedure.

1. LOCATING AND DESCRIBING INFLUENCES.

(1) Locating Influences

In Bloom's practical influence studies what we have called the "topics", the thematic concerns he isolates, become especially important, because they serve as the foci for the "deeper" network of influences he discusses.

In influence studies the most common way of linking texts is through the use of similar ideas, plots, verbal allusions or stylistic features. Bloom's claim is that these are "superficial" (especially verbal allusions) since they operate only on the level of the words rather than on the level of psychic interactions.
This is a little ingenuous: all influence studies operate with texts and what Bloom is saying is that his hermeneutic (connecting the latent content to manifest or verbal content) is superior. Consequently one must focus on how he identifies influences. Somewhat paradoxically this cannot proceed from the centre of his theory, the intertextual latency of meaning, because this requires that influences first be located and then be used to read the poem. This means that "influence" and "intertextuality" are not convergent, as he sometimes claims they are in later theory, because the "intering" of influenced texts is established by criteria connected to other concerns.

What are there criteria? Often they seem to be the purely verbal allusions that he decries. Bloom's last book often reads as if it were written with a concordance in hand. He traces, not unfaithfully, the word "beyond" in Stevens' verse in order to "venture the formula "beyond" means "beyond the First Idea" " (WS98); and traces "mere" similarly to demonstrate a connection to it and the "first idea" (WS371). This applies to inter-poetic influences, where he follows for example the word "palm" through Blake, Valery, Yeats, Wordsworth as well as Stevens' own work, without making any obvious point (WS372); and quickly goes on to link the "fangled/dangled" of the poem under discussion with other internal rhymes within the body of Stevens' work (WS373). Underlying this is the implication that small verbal repetitions do matter and that larger-scale hypotheses can be built up by tracing their development, an idea not uncommon in New Critical analyses and the type of influence — study Bloom often attacks. In practice Bloom's theory thus moves closer to a "superficial" analysis, simply because the "surface" in any text is the primary data.
This also applies to earlier work. The "another race has been" of the final stanza of Wordsworth's *Intimations Ode* is referred somewhat arbitrarily back to the "race" in Milton's *Areopagitica* "where that immortal garland (Wordsworth's "other palms") is to be run for, not without dust and heat" (MM149). This is curious because most of the preceding passage is related to *Lycidas* (a more traditional juxtaposition).

Wordsworth is particularly subject to this word-labelling, reaching its apotheosis in the assertion that "blind man's eye" and *Hermit* of *Tintern Abbey* are (who else?) John Milton. The resulting impression is that the decision that literature is intertextual generates these readings because otherwise they make no sense at all. This is the wrong way around because Bloom always insists that his practical criticism proves his theory and not vice versa.

Similarly, Bloom's tendency to deal in thematic analysis and in topoi in his practical criticism serves to locate intertextuality where normal critics would less easily find it, but by methods which are more traditional than he suggests. Topics such as the 'merkabah' or *Chariot* of God are traced from Biblical sources down through Milton, Shelley, Keats, Stevens with the assertion that there is a psychic relation between the passages (PR Chapt. 4), or the "fiction of the leaves" is traced from Homer to Milton (MM135) and through the American tradition. This kind of analysis is remarkably similar to E.R. Curtius, but as it has been pointed out with respect to the latter's work there is no justification for assuming conscious or repressed emulation in any particular case. Bloom justifies his links by referring to his theory, so any attempt to "prove" it in his criticism is circular, and influences, as we have seen, are
exhumed by methods that are less "deep" than he suggests.

(2) Describing Influences

The same duplicity is involved in the way Bloom describes various influence-relations. Geoffrey Hill is found by Blake (despite surface resemblances to American writers, FCI Chapt.11); John Hollander is found by Kabbalah, by a variety of obscure American Pre-Raphaelites, but by no-one in particular (Bloom merely juxtaposes a number of quotations, FCI Chapt.12). Merwin "joins" a tradition that includes E.A. Robinson and Frost but his "true precursors" are Longfellow, Mac Leish and Wilbur (FCI Chapt.7); Ammons is linked to Emerson on account of cognitive categories (centre/periphery etc., FCI Chapt.10). These various links are not a unitary one, but in fact a whole range of possibilities, from stylistic similarities (Merwin and Wilbur) to overt borrowing (Hollander and Kabbalah) to a deeper bond or shared set of topics (Ammons and Emerson). Tradition thus imposes itself in a much more multifarious way than he allows, even in his own theories.

Finally, sometimes the influence—links Bloom does find seem absolutely wrong (though usually they are useful, at least). An example is Geoffrey Hill, whom Bloom insists of linking to Blake in an otherwise perceptive essay. This is despite finding resemblances to Richard Eberhart and the late Yeats, and to Allen Tate in diction (FCI234), and despite a passage which elsewhere would possibly suggest a reference to Steven's A Rabbit as King of the Ghosts and its visionary over-expansion (which is an occasional Bloomian topic). Hill:

"I waited for the word that was not given,

Pent up into a region of pure force,

Made subject to the pressure of the stars...

And fell until I found the world again"
This, he insists, is to be related to Blake's "Tyger" as a lament for the inadequacy of language to demonic influx (which is wrong, because "word" here is the influx which does not fill Hill). Bloom's arguments are suggestive because Hill is, like Blake, an intensely prophetic poet, but suggestion is reified into the bond of influence. And as a reader's juxtaposition many of his 'influences' make sense (or coherance), but we have suggested throughout he attempts to empiricise this vision into a fact of composition.

2. REGRESSIONS

Bloom's theory of reading, it has often been pointed out, leads to an infinite regress. Poets can only be read with respect to their precursors, who can only be read with respect to theirs in turn, and so on. This also applies to the psychological (and hydrological) ideas of strength and influence he employs, since there are isomorphic with meaning: if strength requires a precursor then it requires further precursors, ad infinitum. The argument must be mitigated inasmuch as Bloom claims that such a regressive focus applies only to poets since Milton (though occasionally he extends it further back: MM46, 77), hence is an empirical rather than inevitable fact. Thus the Euripides/Aeschylus or Virgil/Homer misprisons are different only "in degree, rather than in kind" from post-Miltonic ones, but "this is nevertheless a true difference for reading, and for the pragmatics of interpretation" (MM77), because influence for the post-Miltonic artist is an affliction rather than a problem that could be overcome by Bacon's "reasoned optimism" (MH78).

At certain points Bloom does push influence - relations back beyond Milton, and the regression thus occurs in his practical
criticism. The examination of Milton (who was in The Anxiety of Influence (1973) identical with the "Covering Cherub") in A Map of Misreading (1975) necessarily pushes the influence-relation back to Spencer's Guyon of The Farie Queen Book ii in order to antithetically read Milton (HM128 ff.). Spencer then becomes the initiating force of Romanticism, but plainly the regress does not end there, because Bloom's theory is a theory of reading as well of writing. In order to read Bloom must resolve texts into other texts, even if the pathology of influence is missing.

At least one critic has pointed out that the ultimate pattern for Bloom's interpretation is the Biblical one with New Testament as completion of Old. More specifically these possibilities are: irony and Fall (or Creation, Blake's terms); synecdoche and covenant; metonymy and the "backsliding" of the historical books; hyperbole and the prophets; Jesus and the incarnation as askesis; metalepsis as Resurrection. If one agrees with M.H. Abrams that Biblical structures inform Romantic thought the parallels are at least suggestive.

Bloom moves in this direction only partially. Petrarch is "the first strong instance in Western poetry of the anxiety of influence" (PR23), he touches on Homer and Virgil, and for all the Romantics (excluding Keats):"there is a greater sublime poetry behind Milton, but as its author is a people and not a single poet, and as it is far removed in time, its greatness does not inhibit a new imagination, not unless it is taken as the work of the Prime Precursor Himself, to whom all creation belongs" (FCI5). However, Bloom tends to emphasise the idea of instruction rather than Biblical priority in generating this regression: "Literature, and the study of literature were in their origin a single unified concept" (HM34), so that to write is to teach and be taught, both
language and stance as poet. This idea co-exists, with a
number of other arguments for the psychology and rhetoric of
belatedness, as we have seen, but the general result is that
Bloom is forced backwards in search of analogues, sources.

3. BLOOM'S CANON

Bloom's criticism consciously creates a myth of the
"Visionary Company" of strong poets, gnostics all, which
excludes a large number of poets. In the twentieth century
this is especially noticable since it is here that we are
involved most heavily in the battles of canon-formation:
"however diffidently I give the answer, I am engaged in canon-
formation, in trying to help decide a question that is ultimately
of a sad importance: "Which poet shall live?" (KC96) The way he
answers that question, however, is heavily influenced by his
critical myths; most centrally the idea that poets must recognise
(participate in) tradition and repress it in order to gain
"strength". Practically, this causes him to ignore a huge body
of fine poetry (fine because thousands decide it is, though
Bloom holds to no such conception of value), especially modern
poetry.

(1) The Canon

Bloom's theory is based on Romanticism. Johnson is mentioned
as a watershed-mark and a realist of influence, but Pope, Dryden,
Cowper, Swift not at all (this is especially significant in the
case of the latter writer, since he saw himself involved in a
more traditionally conceived "battle of the books"). All the
major Romantic poets receive consideration. In the twentieth
century Bloom espouses Stevens, Crane, the late Penn Warren,
Merwin, Ammons, Ashbery, Strand, Geoffrey Hill, Hollander, and a few others. Sometimes he admits writers are "in the canon" whether he likes it or not, but those he suggests are failures include (overtly) Eliot, Pound, Auden, Roethke (with reservations), Ginsberg, Shapiro, O'Hara, and covertly any number of others. Within the corpus he does employ moreover, he only utilizes a small number of poems, concentrating on the most sublime and expressionistic passages. This is partly because the "Map of Misreading" applies only to the Romantic lyric, but as we have seen his theory makes larger claims than that.

4. **OMISSIONS**

It is the contention of Roland Barthes, along with a tradition that goes back to Freud, that it is where the gaps in the garment show provides the greatest interest. What a writer doesn't say is often more important than what he does say, and this is so for Bloom, especially on the topic of "tradition" and the complex relationship of some works to it. Reductive (or mythic) accounts in criticism always function by discarding a great deal of data.

(1) **Modernism**

It is ironic that Bloom disassociates himself from "modernism" as a distinctive movement. In at least two of its disparate components, both the antipassatismo of Marinetti, and in the discussion of influence amongst the Pound-Eliot-Williams schools, it provide evidence for a shift in perspective on the past away from the Romantic ones. Bloom's claim is that the modernist poets subvert the anxieties of
influence by ignoring it (making a religion of "newness") or over-idealize it and displace the epiphany of the sublime repression into the religious:

"The neo-orthodox, from Hopkins through Eliot to Auden, vainly attempted to restore Pater's "moments" to the religious sphere, yet gives us only what Eliot insisted his poetry would not give, instances of "the intense moment/Isolated with no before and after," the actual art (such as it is) of Four Quartets even as it was of The Waste Land." (FCI25).

Consequently modernism involves a false canonization (MM28) and is in fact continuous with Romanticism (MM33), partly he adds because we cannot know where we are (MM33). Canon formation is a semi-blind battle, and hence there is the element of rhetoric in Blooms' own pronouncements (such as his most infamous, a reference to Eliot and Pound as the Cowley and Cleveland of our age).

How well does this account stand up to the evidence? There have been a number of works on the 'continuity' of modernism in recent years, but none the less the editors of a recent overview find that it does make a real change in sensibility and that "we are concerned with more than a swing back to the spirit of Romanticism" in the Post-Modernist era. It marks a shift, among other things, towards a whole new concept or logic of form, as E.M. Said tries to explain; and as D.H. Lawrence demanded: "Our idea of time as a continuity in an eternal straight line has crippled our consciousness cruelly." This characteristic synchronicity and the "act of fictionality" is what Bloom terms an evasion of influence, and idealization of it; but it would be more accurate to say that his theory simply does not explain the
complexities or the inner dynamics of the movement. How, for example, can Eliot use tradition conspicuously but in a way that defuses it? More pertinately, how is this linked to Bloom's own conspicuous use of influence in his "severe poem".

An example of this "modernist" attitude to influence is James Joyce, whom Bloom doesn't refer to (apart from calling Spencer's syncretism "Joycean" MM128). J.S. Levine shows how Joyce draws attention to the problem of reconciling oneself "to one's own limitations, to a point of origins that is simultaneously fascinating and repelling." This is a Bloomian topic, but Joyce's conclusions are closer to those of E.R. Said than Bloom's, according to Levine, since he makes us (by the use of such devices as spurious footnotes and creatively employed cliches) "increasingly skeptical about the truth of origins." Moreover Joyce emphasises, ultimately, the image of the artist-as-thief perpetually compromising with his medium and relying on others' work (as he literally did for Finnegans Wake) in a way that is totally opposed to the Romantic repression of sources Bloom outlines. Modernism, it has often been argued, takes its image from the library rather than the family, even if it is Canetti's blind professor feeling his way through the labyrinth of literature by a process of chance discovery. In any case, Bloom skirts the labyrinth of "modernism" (become a "sibboleth" for him) in favour of the "new transcendentalists" (Ashbey, Ammons, Merwin etc.) who are, he says, a resurgence of the American Sublime, and informed by the same anxieties of influence.

(2) Bloom and Eliot

Bloom has good reason to swerve away from Eliot, who is one of his closest precursors - whether it is in the adage that good poets steal where weak poets borrow (which Bloom echoes in the
opening of *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), p.5), or in idea of retroactive influence which Bloom utilizes, or in the concept of a unified tradition which Bloom reacts against a Eliot but affirms in himself. Here for example is Bloom's version of one of Eliot's ideas on tradition and the individual talent:

"In just fifty words Ammons has extended an intoleribly wealthy tradition, and compelled inferiority to yield him some room. There are not many poets, in any generation, who can edge a mountain of meaning over, ever a notch." (FCI227-8).

Compare Eliot:

"for order to exist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, value of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted."\(^{10}\)

Despite Bloom's emphasis on the dehabilitation of tradition, such passages sound uneasily like Bloom. Consider, for example, the following with "apophrades" in mind:

"we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. And I do not mean the impressionable period of adolescence, but the period of full maturity."\(^{11}\) Similarly Eliot's theory of meaning comes close to Bloom's own: "No poet, no artist of my art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead."\(^{12}\)

Eliot's "idealization" lies chiefly in the description he sometimes utilizes of European literature as a simultaneous order. We have argued that this characterises modernist thought, whether Bloom likes it or not, and it was not attached to any idealization
of the effort involved in writing in a tradition. For Eliot
a tradition was something acquired and not given, which as we
have argued earlier is probably a better description than Bloom's
passive "birth" into it, one that emphasises agency rather than
pathology.

Finally, in Bloom's own discourse allusion is conspicuous and
the whole of Western literature is used as a "museum" in which
Plato co-exists with Art and as material for transumption. It
is difficult to see how he distinguishes this from Eliot's (or
Milton's, for, that matter) use of sources, other than the fact
that Eliot footnotes his.

(3) Other Omissions

Revisionism is a modern preoccupation, as Bloom says it is and
also a Romantic concern. Bloom's objections to what Harold
Rosenberg calls "the tradition of the new"¹² arise within his
dialectic of continuity and discontinuity. Poets who worship
"newness" avoid influence by refusing to repress it, and thus
do not produce "strong" poems, which operate by repressing
freedom (PR26), a discontinuity within continuity. Consequently
Bloom cannot criticise poets who display an awareness of influence
and with whom the submerged battle is a programme seeking to cope
with their acknowledged influences (the problem is somewhat akin
to a psychoanalyst with a patient who has recognised and
lives with his own neuroses). This results in something of a
loss with respect to the fertile subject matter of Pound, for
example, who called his tradition and what Bloom would call the
Great Mother of language "a blood prison...you need to fight the
disease day by day".¹³ This was part of the dialogue on the
subject between him and Williams in which Williams accused Pound
and Eliot of "rehash, repetition in another way of Verlaine,
Baudelaire, Maeterlinck - conscious or unconscious... men
content with the connotations of their masters." 14 Williams
also wrote on the astrology of influence in a way that one
suspects is also a little too de-idealized for Bloom, who
prefers Steven's unsustainable pieties: this is from Patterson II
"Without invention nothing is well spaced,
unless the mind change, unless
The stars are new measured, according
to their relative positions, the
line will not change..." 15

It is possible to suggest that Bloom cannot antithetically complete
this, since it displays an awareness both of newness and the
repression of tradition ("relative positions") that is too close
to Bloom for him to grapple with. And this itself is a feature
of modernism in a way that is characteristic also of Bloom, a
heightened awareness of tradition and stance that he would find
in his own criticism if he read it.

Finally, I want to mention another revealing Bloomian omission,
that of Hopkins, who also shows a characteristically modern
awareness of the interplay of tradition and making in his own
work. It is interesting because Hopkins displayed a highly dev-


developed Freudian relationship with his work, but one antithetical
to Bloom. The text in Hopkins' description is the result of
creative-sexual powers, his progeny, and thus partially independ-
ent. Bloom never considers this use of the Sexual Metaphor,
the fact that we grow up and become begetters in our own right.
Perhaps this is because it is biological rather than a question
of influence (another mistaken nineteenth century metaphor of
organic creation?), but it is interesting that other writers see
their work in this way also. The sexual-creative metaphor
emphasises creation (an intentional act, aimed forward)
rather than influence (a retrospective relationship dependent
upon having been created), and it is significant that in the
first case it is the work that is created; in the second the
artist and only secondarily the work (unless 'influence' is used
as a purely rhetorical category). The omission indicates the
alternative account which Bloom avoids.

(4) Poetic Adversaries

Bloom's identification with tradition causes him to reject
a number of poets, as we have seen. In the present this places
him in opposition to a number of movements, in particular to
black poetry, women's poetry and (so-called) "beat poetry" (MM36,
FC1 51, 248). The criteria that cause him to do so are, as we
have emphasised, a priori ones, and consequently a poet like
Adrianne Rich (who deliberately avoids patriarchal ideas of
hierarchy) stands outside his theory. The possibility that
a poet can cater for our "imaginative need" without conforming to
the rigors of repression is disallowed.

5. REFUTING BLOOM: TEST CASES

Bloom's work has already generated a large body of literature
on "influence" which acknowledges a debt to him but often criticises
his handling of the topic, either explicitly or implicitly.
Especially important are alternative accounts of either the general
nature of the concrete operation of "influence". The most common
arguments are, firstly, that Bloom's universalization of these
relationships in the map of misprison distorts the subleties of
influence in actual cases; secondly that influence is often a
more conscious and less hidden a relationship than he makes it, a matter of choice rather than being chosen; thirdly the relationship is often a more benevolent and fertile one than the partially crippling and increasing burden he describes. We shall analyse a few well documented cases of influence (since a more systematic and wide-ranging analysis is beyond this work) and try to assess the gains and losses of Bloom's approach.

(1) Two Poets: Coleridge and Wordsworth

Coleridge provides an especially interesting and well-documented case of poetic influence, in his relationship both to Wordsworth and to the German Romantics. Bloom invokes him both as a theorist of influence and as poet, so we shall begin with his work on Coleridge.

As theorist Coleridge is described as one of the "great realists" of Influence (AI50); but since this is a capitulation it is liked to his poetic yielding to the "Covering Cherub" of tradition. Bloom's essay on Coleridge focuses on the question of why he failed as a poet (FCI Chapt.1), which is explained in terms of the "disabling hunger for the absolute" (FCI4) which resulted in his organic metaphor for poems (among other things). As usual Bloom's approach to the problem is oblique, via an etymology of the word "Desultory" (which Coleridge applied to "Religious Musings"), in order to show that it "vaults" or aims too high. He quotes the passage that climaxes the poem and points out the influences traced in it (Unitarianism, Berkley, Hartley, Newton, Neo-platonism, Milton) only to swerve away from this analysis, asserting "Milton counts here and the rest do not" (FCI8). Bloom examines each of the ratios as demonstrated in
Coleridge's work, according to the earlier "poetic life-history" theory (AI) chronicling, primarily, the influence of Milton. The ratios of "limitation" predominate: Kenosis is "almost obsessive" (FCI13) in the repetition—compulsion of the Ancient Mariner, demonization occurs in "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel" (since here he confronts the daemonic, especially in the lust for paradise in the former and Geraldine's lust in the latter). Askesis occurs in the "Dejection" Ode which is linked (without justifying argument) to "Lycidas" and the "Intimations" Ode. Apophrades is largely denied him because, Bloom claims, he refused to sacrifice his need for love, for an "eternity of generosity between poets" (FCI15), to the demands of misprision, and Coleridge's error is the over-idealization of the organic analogue which de-emphasises the poet's need "to develop at the expense of others" (FCI16).

There are several things to notice about this criticism. The first is that it is very hard to attack (the description of The Ancient Mariner as repetition—compulsion, for example, is interesting but tells us little about the poem). The second is that it is reflexive. Bloom himself "completes" Coleridge by describing the poems he would have written, after first swerving from him over his use of the organic analogue. Thirdly, it proceeds by mythic thinking: linking of Coleridge's ultimate inability to continue writing with his false idealization depends on an acceptance of the link between this and his desire for a generosity of spirit. In fact it is quite possible that Coleridge could have idealized this relationship and still remained strong, since elsewhere Bloom argues that it is precisely this organicity that poems must claim for themselves, despite the fact that it is a lie (KC125). Consequently Bloom's own arguments fail to answer his first question, which is "why does he fail?", since he uses
Coleridge's overt theory in a way that elsewhere (but not here) requires "antithetical completion" or reversal.

Nevertheless the ratios as stages in the poet's lifestyle work well enough to be suggestive. It is possible to interpret Coleridge also in terms of Bloom's later theory, applying the six ratios to one work - if, for example, we considered Wordsworth as a precursor we could focus on his treatment of Wordsworth in the Biographia Literaria. It is valid to do this independently of Bloom because he emphasises that his is a theory which can be taught (AI43, PR25). The resulting interpretation would be something like this:

(1) Clinamen. As Patrick Parrinder comments "The argument commences with a diversion"; a discussion of the Renaissance lyric (Chapt. 16) which is an implicit rebuke to Wordsworth's simplicity because opposite to it.

(2) Tessera. Restoration of language as bearer of culture, which is a completion by antithesis of Wordsworth's theories of spontaneity. Chapt. 17.

(3) Kenosis. The self-emptying of reducing poetic perception to philosophical perception, wounding both himself (as poet) and Wordsworth, but contracting to his own point of strength. Chapt. 18.

(4) Daemonization. Coleridge discusses the great poem of the Imagination which Wordsworth should write, freed from the encumbrances of his own theory. Wordsworth's word is now Coleridge's as articulator of the philosophical sublime.

(5) Askesis. Coleridge formally moves outside of this stance in order to emphasise Wordsworth's solipsism (images of inner and outer). In Chapt. 22 this movement occurs at times before the fourth ratio.
(6) Apophrades. Coleridge ends projecting his full task into the future, saying that he will merely quote a few examples and "render his analysis" later. This is only partially successful, since Coleridge is left trailing in an ineffective present, faced with Wordsworth in all his strength.

What are the gains and losses of such an analysis? The advantage is that generated by the subjectivist stance: that it allows us to "strongly" (i.e. coherently) interpret Coleridge in his swerves away from Wordsworth. It is also suggestive with respect to Coleridge's failings in that he locates the sublime in the previous poet, with himself as corrector (these conclusions loosely parallel those of W.J. Bate). The disadvantages are more apparent if we shift to the empiricist stance and begin to see in what sense our reading of Coleridge is determined by the theory.

The first group of objections centre around the meaning of Coleridge's prose. The theory of influence completely ignores the specifics of what he says because these are meaningful only as swerves in the various directions given by the ratios. The only true meaning is the latent meaning located by that theory. The meaning (say) of Coleridge's discussion of poetic verses natural language, within the context of the romantic shift from rebellion in the name of the "common man" to an isolated stance with the poet as guardian of higher values, is ignored. This applies in turn to the structural patterns in the poetry: they are not dictated by the on-going nature of an examination of Wordsworth's theories but by the invisible rhythm of creation. This is a distortion since Coleridge's argument does proceed by a series of topics that suggest each other: a discussion of the value of philosophic over poetic perception and "the knowledge of which consists our dignity and our power" leads to a discussion of
how this relates to poetry: the real essence of thought lies not in poetic diction (what Wordsworth emphasised) but in "ordonnance" or syntax and the ordering of thought. This is a swerve away from and completion of Wordsworth (clinamen/tessera) certainly but its movement is dictated not by Bloom's dialectic but by its meaning. It follows (untheoretically) a passage which Bloom would probably designate a dualizing "askesis": "For facts are valuable to a wise man chiefly as they lead to the discovery of the indwelling law which is the true being of things...etc", leading to images of inner (truth) and outer (mere facts).

This leads us to the second group of objections, concerning the way Bloom's theory must be applied in order to fit the facts. As we have seen above it ignores the small-scale movements and concentrates on locating each ratio as the theory demands it. This in turn leads to a great deal of discarded matter, and while Bloom's theory may claim to trace the large scale psychic movements it only does so by its own selection of relevant details. In the passage we designated a "tessera" for example (Coleridge's completion of Wordsworth's theories of language in Chapt. 17) there is also an elaboration of Coleridge's own theory of the clerisy which is not a swerve but a consequence of an early swerve away from naturalistic theories of poetry, and thus more correctly belongs in the later stages of Bloom's "map". Similarly the opening swerve away from Bloom not only contradicts Wordsworth but contains its own distinctively Coleridgean movement which cannot be split in terms of a dialectical movement: as Parrider remarks the rebuke "establishes the context of philology and literary history within which the Preface is to be discussed". No such recourse to "context" can occur in Bloom's theory because all contexts are the same in poetry and criticism, so a crucial opening point Coleridge's reading of Wordsworth is missed.
Finally, it is possible to make a reading of Coleridge which allows for many of the forces of distortion which Bloom attempts to describe, without the reductiveness of his structuralism. It is illuminating to compare our Bloomian account at some length with that of a critic of more traditional stance, in order to emphasise the different results obtainable with a more open methodology. Patrick Parrinder describes the relationship between the two poets as "a telling realization of that conflict between author and critical authority which is implicit throughout literary history" and adds "their close association during the writing of the 1800 Preface makes some of Coleridge's later misunderstandings seem wilful and perverse." Parrinder's account describes this indebtedness in terms of a close reading of the work itself, and a sense of its genesis which does not simply work on the linguistic surface (as a Bloomian account does) but which allows for development. Thus Coleridge's work is both "brilliantly ingenious discussion and hard-hitting debate, out-flanking the positive abstract rationalism of the Preface and all but overwhelming it," and also almost totally dependent on Wordsworth for its impetus: "The second half of the 'Biographia' is dominated by his obsession with contradicting Wordsworth, correcting his views and stating the terms on which he may be accepted as a great writer. That kind of personal and creative symbiosis had gone on between Wordsworth and Coleridge, we can only guess; but judged simply as a book the 'Biographia' more than any other critical classic invites the strict biological sense of the word 'parasitic'... there could be no more graphic demonstration of the clash of interests in criticism and the power-struggle that ensues when poet and critic meet, to use Coleridge's phrase, in a war embrace." The Bloomian account, as we have seen, tries to specify exactly "what kind of creative symbiosis" goes on in a way that is
textual, but does so at the expense of the text. It is paradoxical that the organic metaphor works best here ("parasitic") because Coleridge's creative relationship with Wordsworth is only describable in these rather vague terms, or else in terms of concrete disagreements in the text, the only link between the two being via interesting but unanalysable metaphors such as Livingstone Lowe's "deep well of the unconscious" or "Hooked atoms of association." Bloom's criticism in all cases attempts to steer a middle course between there that links influence-relationships with tropes, denying the organic (or psychological) nature of the former and the verbal (ordinary meaning) nature of the latter, and as such joins a long line of failed attempts to concretize the fluid movements of the psyche.

(2) Two Critics: Moore and Richards

John-Paul Russo, stimulated by the reductive nature of both Bate and Bloom's work, constructs a "warning paradigm" in examining the complexities of the influence-relationship between G.E. Moore and I.A Richards). He emphasises that understanding the relationship is dependent both on understanding Richards' character and circumstances and those of Moore. He also emphasises that the relationship operates on different levels: Richards early on rejected Moore's terms and concepts, but was more pervasively influenced by his modes of operation, and even more deeply by Moore's character and what Bloom might call the 'incarnation' of the critical quest.

Again this analysis asserts the difference in what Bloom maintains the unity of, language and psychology, and the various types of analysis applicable to each.
Bloom's criticism of American poetry is less dominated by the idea of the "map" than his other criticism, and is in many ways his finest work. There is however an alternative myth which he applies to it and which governs his readings, the idea of "American Orphism." These poets, he asserts, seek godhood in a more intense and solipsistic way than British poets, repressing rather than swerving from their origins. The category is derived from Emerson and is akin to shamanism (FCI74) and is radically gnostic: "We have in us what Plato calls "the Titan Nature," our original sin, and we have what was never nature's" (FCI75). It is applied indiscriminately however, and this leads to misreading, conflation and paradox. Here is Bloom on Dickenson: "like the Orphic poet in Emerson's Nature, she tells us powerfully but largely by her example that reality is consciousness, and this is unconsciousness of three things: poetic ecstasy, love, and the necessity of dying...Life is solipsistic transport, extended to the Bacchic command through her poems. Life again is the rapture or cruelty of Eros...and life, finally and yet without paradox, is the confrontation with dying...as the final exercise in divination" (FCI83).

Such criticism (a mechanical application of the three "governing deities" of Love, Ecstasy, Fate) is unhelpful, and elsewhere he similarly over-generalizes or contradicts himself: Orphics seek priority but also worship Time (FCI81), seek to overcome death but invoke Ananke (FCI83, 90, 93), if they are not overtly Orphic they deceive themselves (FCI144), are repressing it (FCI85, 131, 138) or are spent (FCI87, 142) - and so on. As Charles Altieri points out his misreading of Emerson is perhaps the most unusual: the poet who is normally
seen as the most "eclectically dependent" is free from anxiety about it, and hence strongest, though perhaps Bloom's reading is more faithful to the spirit of Emerson than Altieri allows.

Typically Bloom's method is one of tracing these categories (Orphism, Ananke-Dionysis-Eros, Emerson's "transpherency" etc) through poet's careers, combined with skillful juxtaposition (of which he is a master). Often this concentrates on tone (e.g. "the dominant tone of Mercian Hymns...is a kind of Wordsworthian sober colouring," (FC1245) and stance (Blakean, Stevensonian etc.), and poems are "dark" (Stevens, Mark Strand) or "radiant" (Emerson, Ammons). Again these descriptions reduce differences, conflate various accounts of poetic selfhood, create the illusion of a more cohesive tradition than really exists. It also concentrates the subjects of poetry in to a small number, in the spirit of Emerson's remark that "the history of literature is the sum of a very few ideas, and of very few original tales:".

The gains of this are of course an allusiveness, and the coherency which characterises a "strong reading." This can be fascinating (especially, I believe, as a teaching device), but ultimately must be falsified by the reader: this is what his criticism demands and in this sense it is a plea for a response to literature, a corrective to the atomizing of explication. If one looks for knowledge from Bloom however rather than stimulation then his best insights are often made despite his theory. In Figures of Capable Imagination he often shifts away from theory only to assert that it is there somehow - for example on Mark Strand "some of the parables in Reasons for Moving read like scenarios by Becket or Pinter, but the book's best poem... is harrowingly unlike its overt analogues and likely sources" (FCI153), or of Ammons "there are no strong twentieth-century
influences upon him, despite the affinities of his metric with the early work of Pound and Williams" (FCI151).

The criticism is, finally, full of sudden insights - identifying a quality he calls "intensity of quietness" (FCI189) with John Ashbery, or emphasising that Ashbery seeks continuity-in-consciousness rather than sublimity but that it comes anyway in a minimalist sense. His exploring of A.R. Ammons' imaginative project is similarly perceptive (and has also stimulated Ammons himself). Often however he over-theorizes and fails to use plain language: Ammons, for example, uses an epistemology that asserts a poem's music imitates nature in its disorder - "the music/in poems... resembles/what, moving is" - and that this involves the mind - "Art is not nature/but the flow brooklike in the mind/is nature." Bloom nowhere approaches articulating this, but emphasis Ammons' "prophetic voice" (which is there) and his "central vision" (which is there). Consequently some of the human is washed away from the poet, for Ammons is perfectly capable of letting himself down from loftiness (as we emphasised earlier with the Romantics). The result, as often happens in poetry, is a belly laugh on the part of the poem at the critic: true priority -

"the present allows the reading of much old material: but none of it need be read: it says itself (and said itself) so to speak perfectly in itself."^31

CHAPTER VI

STRUCTURES

Critics are confronted with texts. These texts are usually collocated within groups attached to people (poets) whose psyches, we normally assume, are problematically connected to those texts.
The result is a gap between the two entities, corpus and poet, which most critics assume is unbridgeable: the psyche shapes, but how we do not know. In influence studies this result in a discontinuity between influencing text and influenced ones which cannot be causally overcome: as K.K. Ruthven remarks "causality eludes us in literary matters, for even if we succeed in rounding up all the putative influences on a certain book, we have no way of showing how they acquired the shape they now take: they stand around it, awkwardly, while we talk about creative "fusions", "sea-changes"...or whatever process-metaphor happens to appeal to us."¹

Bloom however, tries to make some account of this process of "acquiring the shape they now take." This is not, he argues, a causal account (since causality is itself a trope) but a "philosophy of composition" (AI117). As we have seen the ideas of "tradition" and "influence" as either causal or immanent, somehow "in" the process of misprison ultimately are unsustainable. One comes consequently to the map itself, and the structural properties of the mind-in-creation it implies; the real linking of psychology and rhetoric within Bloom's theory.

The aims of this section are to examine the "Map of Misreading" itself in its movements and the categories it uses, the six "ratios." This will involve relating it to his whole theory, discussing its application both to literature and to Bloom himself, and the way it influences the testability of his theories. Finally, we shall examine Bloom's attempt to link it to Kabbalah as the paradigm case of an interpretive tradition.

1. INFLUENCE IN THE RATIOS.

Bloom's account of the between the interpoetic relationships of influence and the ratios is important, especially because at one point he makes the claim that the complexities of
the map are what prevent it becoming merely a semantic interplay, an account of deviation (MM77). This is because it is meant to be a fine structure of a defensive interaction as well as a rhetorical one, and influence thus acts as the referent of each ratio and that which generates it.

This dual function is outlined in *A Map of Misreading* (1975) where each ratio becomes a trope for influence: kenosis is a metonymy for influence (MM72) which "conveys an emptying out of a prior fullness," and psychologically "influence as a metonymy defends against itself by repression" (its defending "against itself" while being a trope "for" itself, admirably illustrating its dual function.) Influence is simultaneously "a six-fold trope for the act of reading" (MM74) and an "involved, six-phased notion of a Scene of Instruction" (MM59; PR27).

Influence is thus both structure and origin in the Map. The two discourses are connected by a family of process metaphors: influence "conveys," "takes," "becomes," "performs as," "comes to mean," "acts as," "removes," "refers back" and so on; where the lack of precise meaning of these terms serves to disguise its ambiguity. The sense in which a trope can act is difficult to understand - as Paul de Man points out it is important to be aware of the sense in which the "actions" in literature are lies, of the way in which psychology in poems must be related to their fictionality.² Bloom literalizes this relationship in order to treat rhetoric as psychology (a point this thesis makes often). Consequently the best analogue for Bloom's use of influence in the ratios is his Kabbalastic model: here influence is equated with the Godhead and the ratios as channels which direct its emenation, a principle both immanent and transcendant and thus
quasi-religious. The difficulties this metaphor entails will be outlined in the discussion of Kabbalah which follows the analysis of the ratios.

2. THE RATIOS.

We shall examine the ratios each in turn, looking at the way Bloom describes them, the way they are applied to literature, and the consequences of the emphasis he places on their different features. We shall also apply each one to Bloom's own discourse, continuing the reflexive reading which is an element of this thesis.

(1) Clinamen

Clinamen describes the opening swerve a poet makes away from his precursor (AI); marked by images of presence and absence, rhetorical irony, and psychologically by reaction-formation (MM97). The identity of the defense and trope are argued for on the grounds that "a reaction formation opposes itself to a repressed desire by manifesting the opposite of the desire" (MM97). However in irony the opposition of overt meaning to truth exists in the text (truth and error exist simultaneously) rather than in the surface/depth relationship of Freudianism. Curiously Bloom admits this: "The poem, in order to open in every sense make its initial limitation with some considerable sense of relief... as though the illusio said: "Accept absence as presence and begin by falling, for otherwise how can you begin?" (MM97-98). This is a formula that relates to poems and to Said's sense of 'beginnings' and their ambiguity; to an intention to mean rather than a repressed desire. Even if we admit that a reaction-formation is a subset of ironies in Freud's writing (since he describes both desire and verbalization) the reverse does not apply, and all ironies are not reaction-formations.
In Bloom's practical criticism the concept yields some insight. He points out, for example, the duplicities and reaction-formation in Childe Roland's opening assertions (MM108) that "My first thought was, he lied in every word" etc. This poem, however, is particularly amenable to treatment as expression, and in other analysis Bloom tends to use the category of reaction-formation less and concentrate on images of presence and absence. In his analysis of Wordsworth's Intimations Ode he correctly points out images of absence ("There was a time..."); an irony which is less securely identified in that Wordsworth, he says, fears that a glory has passed away from himself yet says it is gone from the earth (1.18); and the reaction-formation one against Milton's powers as exemplified in Lycidas (MM145). Unfortunately the irony applies only to one line of the opening (the rest is exposition), and only then if we interpret Wordsworth's statement (if, for example, the world as perceived by the poet is the world, as Bloom sometimes asserts, then the glory has passed away from the earth). Moreover the reaction-formation in the poem does not overlap with the irony, they occur in different sections (and hence aren't isomorphic). The reaction-formation itself is dubious: the first two stanzas seem remarkably obvious and "self-distrust" (MM145) seems absent (if it is seen to apply to the powers of Milton: this becomes especially obvious if we decide the poem resembles not so much Lycidas as On His Blindness; and emphasize the humility of Wordsworth's loss).

Other examples of his use of clinamen emphasize this rather forced fitting of the poem to all of the categories he uses. On Shelley's The Triumph of Life for example he asserts Shelly says "dawn" but means "twilight", which is nonsense; and says he reacts against Wordsworth's "natural piety," which again is difficult to see (PR99). He adds that a "deeper irony" is
implied by the "presence of natural sun and absence of stars (poets) preparing for overwhelming presence of Chariot of Life, a presence blanker than any absence" (PR100), a formulation which actually pulls the irony back from further in the poem and puts it there by a kind of anticipation (and reduces "absence" to meaning the non-mention of anything you can think of). The point about Shelley's opening is its sheer lack of irony, which only develops as we move into the dream-vision of the poem's centre.

These examples could be followed by others. Generally clinamen works better than the later ratios because many Romantic lyrics do open equivocally, especially the various "loss of vision" or "return to the spot" poems and Steven's self-conscious creations. Keat's The Fall of Hyperion also comes to mind, with its distinction between Fancy and achieved poetic production, "the shadows of melodious utterance or "fine spell of words" that saves the imagination. Many poems however do not open so equivocally, like Shelley's (above) or like the following opening lines, which Bloom perceptively identifies as a resurgence of "the old line," a sublime and archaic mode after half a century of modernism (FCI246) - the contradiction being that "sublime" implies daemonization and not clinamen:

"Against the burly air I strode
Where the tight ocean heaves its load
Crying the miracles of God".

Moreover, where an opening irony and awareness of presences and absences is discovered, it is more easily connected to the sense of beginning in language than to a desire reacted against, especially a desire located backwards in a precursor. Said calls
this "the inner crisis of self-knowledge that each man must face at the very beginning of any conscious undertaking", an interplay between beginning and beginning-again (repetition) which emphasizes the intention to create anew but recognizes the human limitations imposed on creation. Consequently the muse invoked is the formal one, a focus rather than a suppressed glory or origin, and the paradox of creation is the paradox of language: whether Wallace Stevens' opening pietism

"Begin, ephebe, by perceiving the idea
of this invention, this invented world,
The inconceivable idea of the sun"?

or John Ashbery's more melancholic invocation:"the disquieting muses again: what are "leftovers"? Perhaps they have names for it all, who come bearing

"Worn signs of privilege whose authority
Speaks out of the accumulation of age and faded colors
To the centre of today..."?

Finally, Bloom himself displays the swervings characteristic of clinamen and which repress their opposites. One example is the sweeping generalization: "Poets, who congenitally lie about so many matters, never tell the truth about poetic influences" (FCI 173), or simple misreading of other passages which are quoted (presence) and then misquoted (absence).

(2) Tessera.

Tessera involves "completion and antithesis" (AI), "imagistic substitution of whole for part" (MM98), synecdoche; and psychologically a turning against the self akin to masochism (MM98), or a reversal which fantasizes or internalizes reality (MM72). Again justification is problematic: turning from active to passive in
the expression of instinctual aims is a completion by antithesis, he argues; but this does not prove that any formal antithesis is a psychic one also. Bloom argues that fantasising is a microcosm/macrocosm substitution but as he applies it in his criticism he seldom utilizes it these terms. In Browning's poem for example, his 'test case' (MM Chapt. 6: "Testing the map") he states "a quest for failure is a synecdoche for suicide", a weird mixture of Freud and rhetoric which seems only vaguely a "completion" of the opening lines. It also raises the question of Bloom's formal categories' relationship within the dialectic: what is completed within the "part for whole" substitution is not something in the previous trope, but anything that can be found to fit the categories. How is Roland's initial reaction-formation against the cripple, for example, to be related to the idea of suicide? Here as elsewhere there is much less coherence on the psychological level than on the rhetorical, since Bloom uses the rhetorical categories to locate the ratios and then works backwards to defenses which depend on content which often doesn't fit. In his analysis of Keats' The Fall of Hyperion he has Keats reacting against Wordsworth and "the anxiety of Wordsworthian presence ", completing Milton (Book I of Paradise Lost) and externalizing parts of his own Ode to Psyche; and entering the poets' purgatory ( a turning against the self) - an account that reads like a roomful of conflicting brain—children rather than the harmonious and isomorph set of categories it is supposed to be (PR127-8).

Perhaps this is to over-literalize Bloom, but it must be pointed out that his descriptions of what happens in poetry can only work if one relaxes ones standards of discrimination somewhat. Reflexively, Bloom produces many examples of completion - by antithesis, or substitution. A favourite method is to quote a
critic and substitute a term: Nietzsche is quoted several
times, for example, and the word "poem" substituted for "idea"
or "thing" in Nietzsche's polemic against the "an sich"
(KC 112-117) in order to demonstrate the point that poems
(part) are as dialectical as concepts are (whole) in language.
More generally, Tessera may involve the reversal of the meaning
of a whole poem as it is read by previous critics (examples of
this are his treatment of Yeat's Cuchulain Comforted and of
Paradise Lost). Similarly, he tells us to read Binswanger
"backwards" (AI 105); and "antithetical criticism" itself is
a (rare) antithesis-completion (perhaps therefore a metalepsis)
because Bloom doesn't at all mean what Yeat's meant by the anti-
thetical - a cast of the spirit which engages and completes rather
than misunderstands and reverses.

(3) Kenosis

Kenosis is "discontinuity and repetition" (AI), a self-
emptying movement which shows elements of repetition-compulsion
or the Freudian defenses of regression, undoing and isolation
(MM72), images of reduction and the trope of metonymy (MM98).
His description of this ratio is especially vague one: it is a
process in which "past actions and thoughts are rendered null
and void by being repeated in a magically opposite way" (MM99) -
a formula that sounds very like tessera; and as isolation it
"seperates thoughts and acts so as to break their connecting
links" (MM99) by "breaking up temporal sequence," a description
which contains elements of what he later ascribes to the ratios
of askesis and apophrades. The defenses are only tenuously
connected to the ratios (how is regression, for example a
substitution of "the external aspect of a theory for the thing
itself "(MM99); and how is it equated with the loss of temporality
of repetition-compulsion?). And in his practical criticism again Bloom tends to use the imagistic and rhetorical categories instead of the psychological. Where he does find a 'regression to origins' of sorts; in Tennyson's *Tithonius* 32-42 ("A glimpse of that dark world where I was born") the origins are not poetic origins, and the trope a "metonymy of the Wordsworthian glimmer or gleam" (PR166) in Tennyson's poem (which is obscure) and adds (quite the most important poet of the passage) that it has "a direct eroticism that derives from Keats" (PR166). Keats apart (and lines like "And beat the twilight into flakes of fire" seem pure Tennyson) this seems to have little to do with regression or self-emptying or repetition-compulsion, and in fact "That dark world where I was born" is not really a regression because Tithonius uses it only to refer to a place, and not to the past time. The poem moves into something more like a regression in the lines which follow the passage Bloom quotes (presumably daemonization): "days far-off, on that dark earth..."; but then again so do lines 11-17.

Kenosis applies to Bloom as the regressive movement of etymologising, among other manoeuvres, a return to origins which Bloom often uses to empty out both his own powers as critic and his precursors (and to avoid rational discourse and the continuities of logic). It thus involves "making momentary concessions only to empty out the law of contradiction and free the theoretical critic from stubborn data", as Charles Altieri puts it in a penetrating (though somewhat over-eager) Bloomian analysis of Bloom's work, quoting as example the following passage: "The root meaning of 'desultory' is 'vaulting', and though Coleridge consciously meant that his poem skipped about and wavered, his imagination mean vaulting, for *Religious Musings* is a wildly
 ambitious poem" (FCI7).

(4) Daemonization

Daemonization is the Romantic trope par excellence, the "counter-sublime" of repression (AI) characterized by hyperbole and images of height and depth, of "excess or overthrow" (MM100). It produces the Romantic Imagination which "is a sublime trope or hyperbole, a cast of the Spirit"; but may also appear as its inverse, the grotesque. In The Anxiety of Influence (1973) "the mind is wholly happy to be thrown back upon itself" (AI101) and negates death, so that daemonization becomes a temporarily achieved Romantic heaven; and the loss of this is the "middle ground" between repression and expression that is ordinary life. The description of daemonization is generally rather muddled: at one stage he seems to be confusing it with kenosis, saying it "is a self-crippling act, intended to purchase knowledge by playing at a loss of power" (AI109); and at a later point he associates it with oxymoron, contraries (MM91), which one would put more logically under clinamen.

The idea of repression as central to poetic expression rather than sublimination is rather dubious one (as an earlier discussion showed). The application of it works reasonably well because Romantic poems do often have their sublime passages in the middle of the poem. In the past this has often been explained in other terms: M.H. Abrams, for example, points out that poems begin in a location, move out into imaginative space, and then return; and later links this to a three-stage pattern which is informed by secularized Biblical ones. Bloom makes little attempt to explain it, except that once a poem has emptied out as far as it can go it must begin its repressive sublime, completing the self-limiting
passage by a restoration of meaning. The reasons for this remain obscure, and historical accounts such as Abrams' have the benefit of explanatory power, whether in terms of narrative exigencies or the morality of the meditation that initiates that narrative.

Bloom's determination to "write in praise of repression" (MM99) and its "glory" (MM100) results in a valorization of that state and its solipsistic blisses, especially in the American tradition. This emphasis on solipsism results in readings which tend to remove the poetry from a human context. An example of this is Bloom's commentary on a passage from Steven's Auroras which is intended to show that Stevens" is the poet we always needed, would speak for the solitude at our center" (FCI109). The passage begins:

"There is a human loneliness
A part of space and solitude"

and moves to

"That which keeps as the little that we are,
The aid of greatness to be and the force."

Bloom's gloss on the passage (in which the first-person plural occurs four times) is "there is nothing communal here" and continues "Stevens celebrates an apprehension that has no social aspect whatsoever," concluding "his true value for his readers appears to be that he reminds us of our own moments of solipsistic bliss, or at least of our aspirations for such moments" (FCI110). This is typical of his theory in its application to American poetry: it is true that Stevens is talking of a mood of solipsistic joy, but Bloom's description isolates Stevens within that state. It emphasises the personal sublime, the heights and depths (but not the "human") of
"To speak humanly from the height or from the depth
Of human things, that is acutest speech"

Consequently our relationship to Stevens (or other poets) as reader is one of isolated subject to isolated subject, of poetic envy and aspiration. What is more true is that Stevens attempts a return to community himself (without priest to his god-like utterance), rather than remaining the figure of solipsism. Bloom reifies the Romantic epiphany into its governing deity (i.e. poets are Orphic gods), and ignores a dialectical moment which carries poetry back into ongoing time (at least in his description of 'what poets are': his rhetorical theories de-emphasize this absolute solipsism). Consequently Bloom's own stance is one of interpreter (or priest) pointing out that the Romantics are potentially isolated, mistaken; where they often recognize this themselves. Stevens' mariners return to the land of the elm trees with "an alteration / Of words," his poet speaks to the soldier of his interior battles, and the "later reason" which Bloom emphasized in his earlier theories (RT Chapt. 20) is de-emphasized in his book on Stevens.

This reading partially distorts Bloom, both because of the immense sublety of his criticism of Stevens and because his dialectic does allow a retreat from solipsism (as we shall shortly see). The point is however that both his value-terms and his theory of the poetic character are centered around the idea of strength-in-isolation, of poets as self-incarnated gods, and the critic as interpreter between a kind of poetic heaven and earth. The consequences of what does happen in poetry "A letting-down / From loftiness" as Stevens called it, moves us to a discussion of askesis, which is a crucial ratio in the dialectics of influence.
Before this however, a brief application of daemonicization to Bloom. His daemonicization is most centrally the idea of tradition itself, which lies both above the poets and the work is a kind of godhead, and below the surface of the text in informing its structures and latent principles. Exactly as he predicts, the "middle ground" of human ambitions, compromises is omitted. Once again Bloom's use of this is "heuristic": he takes the stance, he claims because it is characteristic of his tradition; but in reading him it becomes obvious that this idea itself is a result of his tropes, and the tradition can only be fitted to his ratios by first assuming that the categories exist, utilizing them and (not undersurprisingly) rediscovering them in the reading that results.

Daemonization is thus central to Bloom's theories, just as we shall argue aprophades is central to his method.

(5) Askesis

Just as Bloom's conception of "daemonicization" involves a conscious swerve away from Freud, "askesis" involves a swerve away from canonical criticism (NM73). Askesis is "purgation and solipsism" (AI), a curtailment of vision that "compensates for the poets' involuntary shock at his own daemonic expansiveness" (AI120) by yielding up the reality of other selves (this is a little paradox because in daemonicization the "communal is already expunged: (FC1 119) "an American Lucretius...will have lost all sense of the communal in his ecstasy"). In A Map of Misreading (1975) the emphasis is shifted to the "perspectivism" of metaphor, a sublimation that creates images of inside and outside (NM73). The link is that metaphor "condenses through resemblance" (NM101) and sublimation "also transfers or
carries a name to an inappllicable object," an argument which would work equally well for reaction-formation, for regression, for projection (on the psychological side); and for metonymy and synecdoche on the rhetorical side (since they also operate through resemblances between inapplicably identical objects). He concludes with a value judgement, which is never substantiated: "in a poem the inside-outside spectrum of images is never very successful" (WA101), and this is because subject and object cannot be unified (if they are of course we have the telos of daemonization, a world of words to the end of it.)

Part of the problem is that Bloom's use of "metaphor," even more than all the other tropes, is idiosyncratic. Much of what he subsumes under "hyperbole" is couched as a traditional metaphor, but is assigned to the sublime because of its tone or image-content - consequently the "limitations" of metaphor exist partly by exclusion of their opposite.

As a movement in the poem after the sublime Bloom sees metaphor as a necessary failure. Patrick Coleman points out that this asksesis re-located the poet with respect to his discourse. ¹¹ As a "letting down/from loftiness" (in Stevens' terms) it enables the poem to enter ongoing time, and a number of critics emphasise the gains of such a procedure. ¹² As Coleman emphasises it is an awareness that the discourse comes from elsewhere as well as from the poet, but Bloom stands opposed to such curtailment or "rational dualism" (PR211) such as Freud's, linking it to systemics and the loss of the subject. The point is one of valuation: Bloom casts his lot with the sublime; but in so doing he ignores the fact that Romantic poets do return to the situation of "story-telling" and that consequently this is as characteristic of their work as hyperbole, or pure imagination. This is a humanizing use Abrams emphasises, ¹³ and it is moreover
the situation of art. Poems open by knowing themselves as fictions, and poets present as well as emanate their visions, and in so doing free themselves because they evaluate their own visions, standing above them. This is the movement Bloom calls a "limitation," possibly as Coleman suggests because to do otherwise would imply reading himself and admitting the mythological nature of his own theories (Bloom of course does do this at times, but not in this context, where he is not being dialectical). The result of accommodating metaphor would be to recognise an "anthropology" of communication rather than a pathology. Coleman suggestively links the debate over poetic autonomy in the late eighteenth century with the rise of a systemic analysis, a speculation Bloom takes up gladly in later work linking associationalism with modern structuralism. His speculation is that Romantic poets used (and reacted against) these categories of thought in re-asserting their freedoms (WS397-9) and trying to achieve a "balance" between ethos and pathos, or between systemic thinking and expressive thinking. Bloom's later thinking, as we earlier emphasized, is marked by a more systematic "anthropology" on one hand and by a more humanized psychology on the other, so that the rifts between them which relate to the "limitations" of his metaphors are more transparent, and perspectivism is reasserted.

Finally, we shall examine Bloom's practical application of "askesis." In The Anxiety of Influence (1973) it is merely muddled. At one point he quotes the following passage from Wordsworth as askesis (AI126)

"...that my song

With starlike virtue in its place may shine,

Shedding benignant influence, and secure (etc)"

- a passage which could equally be daemonic (high and low), or even metaleptic since it echoes Wordsworth's earlier description of Milton:
"Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea
Pure as the naked heavens..."

In his own "test-case", Browning's poem, he arrives at askesis and asks "What are we to make of Roland's perspectivism, his metaphoric juxtaposition between inside and outside?" (MM112). This itself is difficult since the passage referred to is not particularly 'metaphorical' in any conventional sense, and the inside/outside juxtaposition exists only as Roland's self-accusation verses the landscape—an interior/exterior dialogue which has taken place throughout the whole poem. The passage is this

"Burningly it came to me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;
While on the left, a tall scalped mountain...Dunce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight"

— but the previous passage (called hyperbolic by Bloom) is also a metaphor for sudden realization

"Then, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts - you're inside the den"

This emphasizes the fact that Bloomian tropes are already interpreted rather than purely rhetorical categories. Bloom calls this "hyperbole" because of its content, because it is a "climatic recognition" (MM111); and he calls the next passage metaphor despite the fact that it is isomorphic (there is no crossing here), continuing as it does Roland's apprehension of what Bloom suggestively calls the "Scene of Instruction."
Bloom continues "The Tower is Dark because it stands for the possibilities and therefore also the limitations of metaphor as such, which means for the blindness of all inside/outside perspectivisms. The paradox of perspectivism...is that it depends wholly on the subject/object dualism, while attempting to be a way of seeing more clearly." (WM113). What does this mean? If perspectivism is limited what is the alternative, since all seeing presupposes a subject and an object (and consequently the tower cannot stand for blindness in anything but a "paradoxical" way)? Bloom goes on to argue that "the effect of all perspectivism is to bring about a subjective dissolving of all knowledge" but as we emphasized earlier the effect of traditional metaphor is a re-emphasis of the processes of de-subjectivization in language, and a location of the writer within his own metaphors. Bloom also argues that "The Dark Tower lay in the midst, but for Roland there can be no midst". If this is so it is not because of metaphorical solipsism, since the metaphors quoted earlier enable Roland to see the tower after the imaginative barrenness and isolation of the earlier stanzas. "Midst" in the poem refers to the point between the hills and mountains, found by a cartesian perspectivism rather than isolated, and hyperbole would much better suit Bloom's aims here since it dissolves all direction (WM100) into pure non-referential voicing.

Finally it is interesting to note that Bloom quotes part of this passage in The Anxiety of Influence (stanzas XXV - XXXI) as an example of "askesis", an interpretation that contradicts once more the assertion just discussed that askesis begins at XXX. This merely emphasizes the often arbitrary nature of the location of the ratios.
(6) Apophrades

In Bloom's early work Apophrades is the "return of the dead" (AI), the precursor poets, in colours not their own. The Freudian defenses of projection and introjection are added to these, the trope of metalepsis, and images of earliness and lateness (MM101-2). At times it both introjects the past and projects the future (PR78), at other times it "chooses between" them (MM103); at times metalepsis constitutes a "metonomy" (MM102), at others a trope that tropes upon an earlier figuration or image in the poem (PR139). Again, the connections Bloom claims exists between all these formulae tends to be forgotten in practical criticism, where the means of identifying the ratio seem rather arbitrary. At one point it becomes broad enough to include plagiarism (MM126), and the distinctions between this and Miltonic "conspicuous allusion" as metalepsis (MM142) indicates the looseness of the category.

Primarily apophrades is characterised as being more or less "happy", depending on the strength of the poet (examples he produces are "equivocally glorious" MM158, "not a convincing substitute" MM149). The loss he usually emphasizes is of the present moment (PR 78, 139; MM156) to purely imaginary compensations, such as Wordsworth's entrusting himself to future memories in his sister, or Tithonius anticipating his own death. In the last poem the need to locate "apophrades" causes him to emphasize the line "Thou sees all things, thou wilt see my grave" and emphasize Tithonius' "paranoid" solipsism and "unconscious cruelty" (PR167-8) in the final passage, a misreading which indicates once again that Bloom locates the apophrades within the subject. What characterises this passage in fact is a
perspective that locates Tithonius between the world of Aurora's cold "lights" and the world of "happy men that have the power to die," and projects him into that system in order to become "earth in earth", so that he rejoins (in imagination) the greater community of the poems' opening: "Man comes and fills the fields and lies beneath." It is thus not so much a return of the dead, who have been lost in the poems middle passage, but to the dead, away from solipsism.

Apophrades is a ratio which applies to Bloom, both in theory and in his practical criticism. In the former his principle apophrades is the claim that he is already in the poetic universe - a bootstrap logic that projects him into earliness and ejects his critical precursors into lateness. Thus "criticism teaches not a language of criticism (a formalist view still held in common by archetypalists, structuralists, and phenomenologists) but a language in which poetry already is written, the language of influence..." (AI25), a claim that is a little strained considering Bloom's terminology.

In Bloom's critical practice apophrades is a better description of his procedure than hyperbole (which some critics claim is his characteristic trope). As it is described in A Map of Misreading (1975) apophrades is the mode of conspicuous allusion perfected by Milton, in which the writings of past authors are echoed in "a voice not their own." As we have seen the use of quotation, borrowed topoi, allusion is characteristic of Bloom's method, and these buried voices are always subservient to his own argument. At one point in his work this nears self-description, in his discussion of Milton:

"he also raised rhetoric over dialectic...for his farfetchedness (Puttenham's term for transumption) gave similitudes the status and function of complex arguments. Milton's wit, his control of rhetoric, was again the exercise of the mind through all her
powers, and not a lower faculty subordinate to judgement." (PN 143: my emphasis).

One can speculate that this is Bloom's critical ideal: in his espousal of rhetoric over dialectic (WS393), in his use of juxtaposition over argument, in his insistence that logistic theories such as structuralism deny the central power of mind, as in all these Milton's method he describes it parallels his own.

It is doubtful that apophrades occurs in poems in the way that Bloom claims it does. In Milton it does to a greater degree because here Bloom modifies his claims and does not apply it to the final movement (the ending of Paradise Lost Bloom always says is what Stevens called "a tragedy for the imagination," a falling-off in Milton, AI22) but to Milton's mode of assimilating his traditions, which is conspicuous as an echoing of the "voices of the dead" (perhaps Thomas Gray is therefore also a master of apophrades). This makes it close to meaningless, since Romantic passages at all points in the "map" can be shown to echo earlier work. The one writer to whom apophrades applies unequivocally is Bloom himself, and it is a characteristic assimilation of others, a solipsism; rather than the desubjectivised participation we suggested apophrades can be in poetry; as a Wordsworth, disburdened of 'childish' blank misgivings:

"The Clouds that gather around the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won." 15
3. CIRCULARITY

We have emphasized that Bloom's procedure tends to be circular, using his interpretations to discover the ratios in poems. The multiplicity of the ratios contributes to this. What began as a six-stage process develops into the $6 \times 4$ matrix of (supposedly isomorphic) ratios, image-categories, psychic defenses, tropes, as well as a plethora of other critical terms (limitation/restoration, ethos/pathos, the various topoi). Consequently Bloom has little trouble in fitting his theoretical framework to most poems: if he cannot locate an 'opening irony' he searches for images of 'presence and absence', or a reaction-formation; if there is no metonymy he searches for images of emptying, or regression, or isolation a self-wounding (or even repetition-compulsion: all are subsumed under the category of "kenosis" at some point). Since in normal usage a reaction-formation isn't at all identical to a metonymy, and one may be present without the other, Bloom's theory allows for a great deal of discarding of the particular categories which don't apply to any one situation and selection of other features which do.

This in determinacy of the ratios applies especially to the psychic defenses, since it is largely a matter of interpretation whether a certain movement in a poem is a kenosis (emptying out that also empties out the precursor FCI10) or an askesis (self-purgation which intends the attainment of a state of solitude FCI11), and the difference between them turns on a difference between "emptying" and "truncating" or "curtailing" which is never obvious and which is never utilized in practical criticism. The decision is made, in fact, on the basis of the dialectic itself:
after kenosis comes daemonization comes askesis, and interpretation proceeds along a predetermined line. An example of the flexibility of Bloom's theory is provided by Bloom himself when he reads the same line - "look in the terrible mirror of the sky" - from Steven's Blanche McCarthy as three different tropes as it reappears in the poem (firstly as the irony of looking outwards to the sky in order to look inwards, secondly as an "undoing" of the sky, thirdly as referring to Blanche herself as concealed inside herself, WS21). As a rhetorical analysis this is incomprehensible, since it depends on an idiosyncratic assignment of categories according to already interpreted content.

4. KABBALAH: THE PARADIGM STRUCTURE

Bloom takes as model for a "revisionist" tradition, and consequently analogous to the Romantic tradition since Milton, that of the Kabbalah. In Kabbalah and Criticism (1975) he seeks to link his own theory to the structural patterns developed within the Kabbalistic tradition, finding therein confirmation of the pervasiveness of those patterns within interpretive systems.

This analysis begins with the 'Seferot' or emenations of God, which are "like poems, in that they are names implying complex commentaries that make them into texts" (KC25). The Kabbalistic tradition is seen as an "over-rich" one which dwelt on origins and their priority, with a consequent "emphasis on interpretation" (KC33). The six 'Behinot', or aspects within the Sefirot which provide their inter-connections, parallel the structural categories of Post-Renaissance poetry (the ratios) providing we translate them into terms psychological, linguistic or imagistic (KC36-7). Similarly, we may derive a theory of
poetic creation a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity, from the Kabbalistic model (that of Rabbi Isaac Luria), a triple process of contraction, the "breaking of the vessels," restitution.

This analysis has a number of historical and logical objections, even though the parallels Bloom explores are interesting. Firstly, the Kabbalistic system is one whose aim is to explicate and to channel the manifestations of God's power in the world, and its concepts of priority are focused firmly on the Godhead and (temporally) on Creation. The idea of unity governs this conception (as in the great prayer which asserts divine Authority: "Hear O Israel. The Lord our God. The Lord is One.") This seems to conflict with Bloom's account of the disunity of Romanticism (of Universe and consciousness especially). Secondly Bloom's dialectic of creation conflicts with the more traditional Kabbalistic account, which describes a "lightening flash" which zig-zags its way down the "tree of life" from its source. What he describes as the "Kabbalistic theory of creation" is in fact the theory employed by Isaac Luria to explain the fall of Adam from the unity of Eden (and refers to a fracturing of the vessels below the supernal triad of Keter, Hokhmah and Binah). Bloom uses this to describe a "dialectic of creation," which he transposes to refer to various interactions between the Behinot (a theory which belongs to the writings of another Kabbalistic writer, Moses Cordevero). The Lurianic dialectic works well for Bloom's purpose because it is an account of deviation (which is the roof of the hebrew Khata, or sin), but this does not prove that creation is deviation in Kabbalah as it is in Bloom), only that creation involves a letting loose of sin, a falling from unity.
A further example of the way in which Bloom rearranges Kabbalah to his need is in his description of the Sefirot.

True to form, he cannot resist comparing one of the emanations to the "imago of the mother" in Freud (KC29), another to "mother nature" in the Western Romantic sense (KC31), and so on. When one compares this to the analogy between Sefirot as poems and Behinot as ratios developed later the result is utter confusion, since Bloom is comparing structural similarities without reference to the inner coherence of Kabbalah. He breaks it and reforms it, so to speak, in his own image.

Finally, and most importantly (since the above considerations are rather technical and obscured by the complexity of Kabbalah), the differences between Kabbalah as an interpretive system and Romantic poetry are obvious. The structures Bloom extracts each belong to one writer rather than pertaining to the system as a whole, which is a massive elaboration of a certain number of basic ideas. Thus the Kabbalists are not so much Romantic poets as Bloomian critics obsessed with interpreting previous writers and the world in a structural way (Bloom even calls Cordevero "the first structuralist", KC37). They cannot be called upon to describe the structure of poetry because they are neither talking in poetry nor about it, and as interpretive system the tradition of Kabbalah displays a massive complexity which anything approaching a Bloomian analysis. Bloom's use of Kabbalah is consequently trope rather than argument, a projection of himself into priority.

4. THE DIALECTICS OF CREATION

This section will examine, briefly, Bloom's theory of creation in general; and then the three-stage dialectic he claims to discover in the processes of creation in language.
(1) Creation

Bloom's early accounts of creation are governed by ideas of repression and creation-as-defense. The idea of "creative misunderstanding" developed by Paul Valéry is used, but not in a systematic way (there is, for example, a continuum of creative misunderstandings from typographical errors of the type that produced Nashe's famous line "Brightness falls from the air" through to the kind of misconception that inspired Surrealism). For Bloom there are no random errors which prove fruitful, because all errors are determined not by "making" or even mistaking, and "poems are actually stronger when their counterintended effects battle most strongly against their overt intentions" (PR25).

This theory is a thoroughly lococentric one, determined by what is essentially a dialogue between primary-process and conscious intentions, and the results are thus interpretable. There is a language of influence. This sort of approach may be opposed to a theory which emphasizes what we have called the "integration" of artworks, and psychologically the production of "dense" structures of meaning. Jung on Freud underlines this:

"(Freud's) are not true symbols...they have merely the role of signs or symptoms of the subliminal processes. The true symbol...should be understood as an expression of an intuitive idea that cannot yet be formulated in any better way." 18 Jung is thinking of mandalas, tarot cards and other iconic signs (to use Peirce's terminology) but recent accounts of literary creation emphasize the synthesis and universalization of themes in art, what Albert Rothenberg calls 'Janusian thinking," 19 and discovered by analysis of theory-creation in other fields. 20 These recent studies, Alan Roland 21 suggests, provoke a reassessment of psychoanalytic criticism in that they psychologically support the validity of what Lukacs called "objectifications" 22 and de-emphasize the importance of primary process thinking. This
amounts, in psychoanalysis, to a recapitulation of the objections to the reductiveness of Bloom's theory which many critics make on aesthetic grounds.

(2) The Dialectics of Creation

Bloom's account of creation in language centers around a three stage dialectic which is adumbrated as a Kabbalistic one; as the triad limitation - substitution - restoration in rhetorical terms; and is a bewildering and often slightly inconsistent collection of triads in practical criticism (Fate-Freedom-Power in Emerson, it must be abstract, it must change, it must give pleasure in Stevens, and so on), finally arriving at the formula ethos-logos-pathos.

We have already discussed this process under the topic of meaning. Tropes of ethos mark a withdrawal from meaning and also are associated with language as system (ethos394), the synchronic order. Logos marks the aphoria or freedom from this system, the state of linguistic freedom, and pathos marks a restoration of meaning, of the power of will in language. This theory is superficially similar to a number of others as a dialectic, for example to that put forward by Paul Ricoeur in a recent forum on "metaphor"23 or even to the earlier theories of Kris et al. It differs radically however in that this is not the process underlying figuration but the process of figuration as it appears in language, projected onto its surface.

The displacement of language into its own is typical of Bloom, but is nevertheless interesting as a description of what happens in certain moments in poetry. Thomas Jeiskel describes it thus, expounding Kant's theory of the sublime: (1) the mind's determinate relationship to reality (2) the astonishing breakdown of that determinate relationship (3) the mind's recovery of balance through the constitution of a "fresh relation between itself and the object such that the very indeterminacy that erupted in phase two is taken as symbolizing the mind's relation to a transcendent order." 24 This is
very similar to Bloom and his valourization of the Logos of what he sometimes calls "Freedom or the second chance" (WS22), the sign of the imagination. The concept has its application (as Jeiskel shows) but in Bloom it is further elaborated and incorporated into his total system in an attempt to create the kind of unified theory which de Man suggested was possible. Meaning is created between poems, as defense, within poems and between tropes as the dialectic above; but he often insists that these descriptions are not only of the processes of creation but of what poems actually say. Finally, his theoretical over-elaboration risks distortion in practical application, as we shall see.

(3) Application

We shall examine Bloom's analysis of Stevens' The Idea of Order at Key West, which he decides to interpret "rather rigorously" (WS93), and the dialectic of limitation and restoration he discovers therein.

According to Bloom the first stanza marks a withdrawal from meaning because it frees us from the pathetic fallacy and thus all we understand of the sea is that it is not our own. The fact that the sea's is a "mimic motion" and that its cry moves from "made" to "caused" heightens this, he argues, since mimetic theories of language withdraw meaning where expressive ones restore it, and causally is a topic of limitation. The overall description is of "contraries, opposing the woman's cry to the cry of the sea and opposing to each other the sea's palpable presence and its truer limiting absence" (WS99). There are a number of flaws in this argument: firstly it ignores the poems' opening line "she sang beyond the genius of the sea" - "beyond" being a word Bloom associates with restoration elsewhere.
Secondly "made" is associated with limitation in stanza 5 later in his interpretation, and thus not an expansion of causality. Thirdly the "limitation" of the sea applies equally to the second stanza, which repeats that the sea is beyond comprehension (the only difference being the balance of sea and singer in each stanza).

The second stanza features a restoration since "all masking falls out of the mimic motion" to be replaced by expressiveness. This is partly time but the whole stanza is defensive, with its "Even if", "It may be", "But". In the third stanza he argues that the sea is metonymically undone into one of its aspects and adds obscurely "The cause ought to be the spirit, yet the question 'Whose spirit is this?' undoes the cause" (WS100). This is surely not correct, for the question seems to signal an awareness of the singer and her central place in the imagination: it is a rhetorical question which generates the long series of answers which extends across what Bloom calls the poems' next disjunction. Moreover Bloom only makes the stanza a "limitation" by switching his attention from singer to sea (in the previous stanzas it is "gasping" and "grinding," also reduced to "one of its aspects").

The account of "restoration" (stanza 4) again distorts: ignoring its tentativeness, though it does produce images of low and high, and the fifth stanza produces the "limitation" of the metaphor of the singer as artificer of her world. Bloom claims she sublimes "her deepest intentions or desires for utterance" (WS102) and that the metaphor "tries to emphasize the resemblance between inner voice and outer ocean, at the expense of the dissimilarity" (WS102). Firstly, if this were true it would be a repression not a sublimation; and secondly Bloom ignores the key phrase "whatever self it had" (he quotes around this to suggest that she tries to unify sea and song), for this bespeaks an awareness on
the part of the narrator that all that is "self", or human, of the sea is that which is sung. Bloom also emphasizes her solipsism, and ignores the narrator and his stance, a characteristic emphasis in his account of "askebisa": the human gains of "perspectivism" are ignored.

Finally, the third crossing is the "restoration" of metalepsis. Curiously this final stanza bespeaks a power in sight (it should be voicing: WS404) and the night is enhanced by her light voice (which was earlier set against the "dark voice of the sea" ). Bloom however continues to theorize: "Stevens introjects the singer's solitude and freedom and projects the ocean and night, the "Whitmanian cosmos" (WS103) and adds his own apophrades, calling it Tennysonian, Paterian, a reversal of "Whitman etc. This is a rather loose description: night is not "cast away" as he claims but "deepened" and the effect is exactly the same as that in the previous stanza where her voice "made/ The sky acutest at its vanishing," though as he says now in the narrator. For that reason it is a communal awareness which allows him to address Ramon Fernandez and objectify his insights, to both sing and know in the poem's famous coda, and not a matter of "priority."

Thus Bloom's insistence in this poem on the application of all his theoretical apparatus tends only to encumber his criticism (for there is a subtle dialogue in The Idea of Order which he partially identifies and partially obscures. The idea of such a dialectic may yield insights as the mind weaves about its subject, but in a more empirical spirit than that which he employs.26
CHAPTER VII

METATHEORETICAL CONCERNS

This final chapter continues the reflexive reading of Bloom and then moves on to discuss the implications of such a criticism; of Bloom's attempt to unify creative writing and criticism; and of his attempts to explain his own somewhat ambivalent stance in terms of a new critical procedure.

1. REFLEXIVITY

We have emphasised in earlier chapters how Bloom's theories apply to his own writing rather than to that of others. In this section this idea will be developed as a way of providing an overview of his influences and method. Discussion of the implications of this will be reserved until the third section of this chapter.

(1) Bloom and His Influences

Another application of a reflexive reading of Bloom is in his use of and conscious relationship with his sources and influences. This displays all the evasions, expropriations, repressions that his theory claims is true of poetic discourse.

(a) Quotations and References

As E.W. Said remarks quotations emphasize the nature of writing "as encroachment, as a disturbing force moving potentially to take over what is presently being written. As a rhetorical device, quotation can serve to accommodate, to incorporate, to falsify (when wrongly or even rightly paraphrased), to accumulate, to defend, or to conquer - but always, even when in the form of
a passing allusion, it is a reminder that other writing serves
to displace present writing..."¹

This serves as a good point of departure for a discussion of
Bloom's use of quotations and references to other writers, since
it is a marked feature of his style (in one page of The Anxiety
of Influence, for example, one finds references to Freud, Pascal,
Descartes, Valentinius, Hans Jonas, Heidegger, Yeats, and Keats),
and in fact much of his thinking proceeds by the linking together
of a series of allusions to various positions held by writers from
the early gnostics through to contemporary critics.

As we have already noted Bloom does not use formal references.
This often enables him to quote out of context. For example, he
quotes E.M. Said as a means of advancing an argument about
influence-anxieties in Vico (PR3), where Said's discussion at
this point is directed towards an explanation of the way man's
ability to project a vision of himself beyond the natural world
(and not beyond the given of tradition or, a Vico's case,
Cartesianism).² This often applies to the use Bloom makes of his
more potentially dangerous critics, especially where he quotes
by paraphrase. There are any number of examples (I choose the
ones I do out of familiarity with their sources).

(1) Wittgenstein: Bloom uses a Wittgensteinian remark (what
the solipsist means, not what he says, is right) constantly in
order to justify a link between what he calls the deep intentions
of a work and his own antithetical criticism (ignoring the surface
intentions). This constitutes a gross distortion of Wittgenstein
since the remark was part of an argument designed to prove the
impossibility of a private language rather than to examine
egocentricity (AI121). All languages, according to Wittgenstein,
are public, which is an assertion completely contrary to the Viconian myth of primitive poets creating their own poetic language.\(^3\) The quotation which Bloom employs is merely designed to show that a solipsist can never formulate a language ex nihilo, and in fact Wittgenstein's answer to any assertion of a mythical origin was to simply "look at the (linguistic) facts," not beneath the surface.\(^4\)

(2) Popper: Another example of misreading is Bloom's use of Karl Popper. Potentially a strong foe of Bloom's, Popper is invoked as the arbiter of dialectical processes (PR 15-16) in order to promulgate the Kabbalistic account as "a genuine dialectic or dialectical process," and Bloom adds (emptying out his opponent's successes) that "neither Hegel nor Marx passes the Popperian test." This is nonsense: Popper's essay\(^5\) is not on Hegel or Marx, nor on dialectic for that matter, but an attempt to describe and evaluate "dialectic" as an adequate account of the growth of scientific knowledge. Popper makes no attempt to say what a "genuine" dialectic is, and indeed goes on to attack any account of dialectic which involves contradictions that are tolerated as being irreconcilable.\(^6\) He thus stands diametrically opposed to Bloom's schema with its irreconcilable dualisms. The Popperian argument that "A theory which involves a contradiction is...entirely useless as a theory"\(^7\) is ignored, and he is made to further Bloom's ends quite illegitimately. Bloom simply makes Popper say what he wants him to say.

(3) Vico: Bloom uses Vico probably more extensively than any other source, yet his own interpretation of the Neapolitan philosopher is highly problematic. Vico's gentile poets, according to Bloom, who had no divinely authorized access to origins, had to authorize (in both senses) their own origins by imagining them,
and he uses this to justify the account of a primal fixation which governs the opening dialectic of Romantic poetry. This is very different from the account given by E.L. Said, following Vico much more closely, of Vico's distinction indicating not a need to create origins but to simply explain present phenomenon. Vico emphasises the difficulty of beating a beginning to gentile poetry and also that the need to do so is not a result of a Freudian desire for confrontation ("election" in Bloom) but rather a desire to prevent a regression to unformed savagry. The work of forming human history is enabled by a divination which enables that work to take place, authorizes it, but which has little to do with paternalistic inheritance (this belongs to the other, Hebraic tradition or to the notions of transgression which Bloom uses). Bloom in fact mixes Vico's sociological concern with his own religious metaphors (Tradition as godhead, displaced protestantism etc).

The same argument applies to the Viconian principle of "verum factum." which Bloom utilizes constantly in order to justify his arguments over subjectivity and the need to internalize the poetry we read. Again this distorts Vico, who was arguing for a vision akin to the modern one, which sees value-structures, knowledge as a made thing rather than something immanent, essential.

The necessary subjectivism which Bloom imputes results only from shifting the emphasis from the collective "we" to the generic, and ignoring what Said calls "Vico's ambition to understand himself and others in terms of a collective fate." Vico himself claimed impartiality, speaking without "the desire to diminish the prestige of a colleague or to place myself in the spotlight," and his central criteria for discourse is not Bloom's strength of misprison but a more generously described "eloquence". Said, moreover, suggests that Vico may be seen to anticipate the language-centred
ideas of Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, Derrida, rather than Bloom's solipsism. Paradoxically a humanism based on Vico's awareness of the contingency of systems is more liberating than Bloom's ideas of the will-to-power, an ego-centered appropriation of imaginative fodder. Vico never said, as Bloom does, that our origins are inescapable.

(2) Acknowledged and Unacknowledged Influences

Bloom's use of his sources is, as we have seen, evasive and defensive. This also applies to the choices of sources of his ideas he does acknowledge and those he chooses not to.

(a) Acknowledged Influences.

The sources Bloom acknowledges include those his theory most obviously depends upon for its intellectual parent-hood: Nietzsche, Vico, Freud, Emerson and Yeats especially. Often however this is a matter of a chosen parenthood since all these writers are suitably distanced, and the more uncomfortably close influences are distorted. This becomes obvious when Bloom willingly extends this influence-bond backwards, for example, to Greek rhetors: "I am delighted to find a precursor in Hermagoras...I am a properly unscrupulous ephbe" (WS396), to the Gnostic Valentinianus (PR12), the Kabbalistic interpreters Corduvero and Luria (KC64-86), and so on. This willingness to find distanced and safe precursors seems to be in conflict with the accusations he makes against the "idealizations" of Yeats, Graves, Lawrence and Frye:

"We can observe...their revealing placements of First Romantics. For Lawrence, they were the Etrascans; for Yeats, the Byzantines under Justinian; for Graves, more persuasively, they are the Sufis, and the Provencal and Celtic romancers..." (RT9); elsewhere he accuses these poets and others more directly of refusing to confront their true Romantic influences (as in MM30-40).
(b) Unacknowledged Influences

Who then are Bloom's true influences? We have throughout said that Bloom's criticism results from a displacement of structuralist ideas into a more traditional criticism. The latter exists in Bloom's teacher M.H. Abrams, and in the older generation of scholars he sometimes refers to: Auerbach, Curtius, etc; and in his early work he displays a willingness to seek similarity-in-difference, to map inner quests in terms of Romantic categories, which is characteristic of Abram's work. Eliot's influence is seminal, as we have suggested, as is Bate's.

The real problem in a discussion of Bloom's references is that he often simply does not acknowledge them, or the history of critical speculation on his subject. This goes back as far as Sainte-Beuve and his question "What is a classic?" and idea of the "late-comer" in terms of what seem to be overt borrowings; and as Bate points out the debate on "belatedness" has always existed in some sense: Longinus' On the Sublime was written during the same century as Velleius Paterculus' pessimistic diagnosis (which Hume resurrected in the 1740's). Bloom however claims priority in his topic, and thus a necessary solipsism.

2. DEMARCATION

This section concerns itself with the demarcation between poetry and criticism. Bloom contends that the demarcation is a false one, the two processes being governed by the same psychological mechanisms (or later, linguistic rules). The argument for the unification of the two is centered around the idea of "misreading."

(1) The Identity of Criticism

This is argued for by both Bloom's theory and his method. According to the theory "reading...is a belated and all-but-
impossible act, and if strong is always a misreading... The influence-relation governs reading as it governs writing and reading is therefore a mis-writing just as writing is a mis-reading. As literary history lengthens, all poetry necessarily becomes verse-criticism, just as all criticism becomes prose-poetry" (MM3). This is argued throughout A Map of Misreading (1975). Reading and writing are linked by the need to internalize texts, to make them one's own, which according to Bloom involves re-writing them (they cannot, he argues, be apprehended in any other way). They are linked too by the process of canon-formation since texts are written in order to reject previous texts and impose themselves on us in turn. Thus Bloom's own criticism is a "severe poem" and the poetic ranks of the nineteenth century are expanded to include Freud, Nietzsche, Pater, Emerson (in his prose) and so on, though Bloom is a little reticent about calling the "tropes" of Derrida, de Man, Frye etc. poetry.

The levelling of discourse combines (somewhat paradoxically) both Romantic and structuralist thinking. The former appears in the consideration of poetry as the essence of imaginative discourse (compare Shelley: "The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error" and the latter in a fundamental logocentricity which tends to ignore what could be called the "music" or participating aspects of poetry in favour of an interpretive logocentricity which tends to resolve all stylistic features into meanings, and all discourse into "language." These claims are partially a polemical (and quite justified, I think) plea for a recognition of creativity in criticism which has been obscured by a pretense of "scientific" criticism, and a rather barren over-proliferation of explication. We shall
return to their place in Bloom's theory as a whole in section 3, but it must be noted that such theories exist most easily where notions of intertextuality govern thought. The original artist is thus dependent on the conventions of writing, his sense of 'aftering', just as the critic is. He does not just sit before 'reality' and produce ex nihilo. To this extent Bloom is correct: there is no theoretical demarcation.

However, this does not mean that empirically the assumptions of criticism have been the same as those of creative writing: they have in fact been dominated by ideas of repetition, accountability (rather than purely coherential theories of meaning), and most importantly have been formally directed towards the text. This is not so for primary production, unless one believes Bloom that writers write as critics. As critics we more usually face the problem of one text rather than the whole body of language (obviously this depends on the type of criticism, and there is a whole spectrum from explication to vast speculation). Bloom ignores this problem of focus.

In the paradigm advanced by writers such as Derrida, Lacan, texts consequently become pretexts, points of departure rather than foci, and all criticism become reflexive. Criticism (an activity focused on books) tends also to become psychology and sociology in their linguistic guises (activities focused on the reading subject). Consequently, the specificity of the text is often lost, the very qualities which make it literary. Bloom displays something of this stance, but also a more empirical attitude to literature, which we shall now examine.

(2) Earlier Theory

In The Anxiety of Influence (1973) the radical claims of the later work are less strong. Implicitly, some distinctions between criticism and the writing of poetry exist.
The first distinction is made on the basis of different traditions (vs the later unified tradition). His "own evasions" are compared to those of a critical tradition (and to formalist and Archetypal criticism) rather than to the burdens of Romanticism. As I shall later argue this is eminently sensible, since the disjunction between critical and poetic practice has been a major factor in criticism since the early nineteenth century, and can only be explained on a broader sociological basis than Bloom's reductive account provides.

The second distinction is made on the basis of the rhetorical stance of the critic verses the poet. In The Anxiety of Influence notions of a "more adequate practical criticism" (AI5) dominate over self-incarnation and thus the critic never aspires to the quest for poetic identity:

"Our sorrows as readers cannot be identical with the embarrassments of poets, and no critic ever makes a just and dignified assertion of priority...In relation to the poets we are not ephebes wrestling with the dead, but more... nearly necromancers, straining to hear the dead sing" (AI65).

The suggestion here is that the difference is a failure on the part of critics to enter the dialectical process of poetic "incarnation". Instead they desire to read more accurately, a suggestion also made in Kabbalah and Criticism where the demarcation stems out of an implied difference in traditions: he searches for "an accurate, meaningful critical observation" (KC67) and states" critics, meaning all readers, must have paradigms, and not just precursors" (KC87). He goes on to trace this succession of paradigms from Aristotle and Plato down to Frye and the "Nouvelle Critique". Consequently, some demarcation is recognised.

In later theory Bloom's own stance shifts and the progressive unity of poetry and criticism is espoused. However the split in
Bloom's own critical system widens: Bloom analyses tropes as empirical critic, poets encounter psychological crises, and this tends to deconstruct his empirical claims. These claims are, finally, very much a matter of demarcation: reading is writing, writing is reading. The split in his own discourse between psychology and rhetoric thus tends to reinforce the idea that different languages must be used to describe the psychology of writing and the process of trying to describe the work itself.

(3) Differential Application of Bloom's Theories

An interesting point is that Bloom's theories work differently with respect to criticism and poetry. The theory of family romance is more applicable to poets than critics, probably because the sense of vocation is stronger in poets. Critics tend to be identified with the humanities and broad paradigms, poets with isolation and identification with precursors (this appears of course in some inter-critical relationships: Richards and Moore, Spitzer and his teacher Keyer-Lubke and so on 16). Conversely, the rhetorical or linguistic metaphor applies better to critics, who focus often on a previous theory, swerving away from it, completing it (quite consciously). Criticism is in a much more specific sense an aftering, further from the creative centre of language and bound by rules of operation. 17 This tends to reassert the idea that some demarcation is required, because the psychological terms work better for writing, the rhetorical for reading.

(4) Discussion

There are a number of objections to be made to these ideas of the unity of reading and writing, some of which have been voiced above in theoretical terms. More concretely, Bloom's
ideas lend to a loss of the sense of exactly what kind of a relationship has existed between criticism and poetry in the past. This applies to individual poets: Wordsworth's criticism is related to his poetry in a highly revealing way (revealing not for its unity); and to critics and poets. The relationship between critics and poets in the nineteenth century was one of a growing rift (as Patrick Parrinder shows) with quite different sets of pressures (the myth of the leisured connoisseur etc) governing each, different types of "authority" assumed for each.

This is not to entirely discount Bloom's assertion that critical discourse is trophic and subjective, within its own tradition. Recent work such as that of Hayden White and David Bleich's Subjective Criticism have emphasized tropes and motivational explanations of critical practice. However Bloom makes this, like his "Viconian" truth that we only know our own knowledge, into the governing factor of critical discourse rather than the fundamental human limitation which it is. If the will-to-power (strength) is made the telos and arche of all writing then all ideas of what Bleich calls a "negotiated knowledge" which seeks to reduce common ignorance disappear. For Bloom this is partially true, but we have argued that this applies to his own solipsistic stance rather than to other critics or poets.

3. DIALECTICS AND STANCE

Bloom's discourse is above all a self-conscious one, and most of its contradictions are willed ones: he often addresses himself to them, and emphasizes that the gain is one of "stance" (WS14) or a heightened rhetoricity on the part of the reader (KC117). Undoubtedly this is true: reading Bloom forces one to examine one's own stance for the will-to-power involved in reading,
to ask questions like "who taught me to read?" and "what is the aim of my reading?" This itself recommends it (I think). However the response is not necessarily one of agreement and an examination of Bloom's own stance (for he does have one) underscores the weakness in the theory he does build.

(1) Bloom as a Romantic

The idea that Bloom writes criticism as a Romantic is an appealing one. Patrick Parrinder, writing about Romantic attitudes to influence, produces what sounds very like a description of Bloom's work:

"For Goethe and Young, the great classics were natural obstacles to be circumvented; but for Keats and Flaubert they were to become locked repositories of secret and almost magical powers, available not to the reader but to the devotee and future poet. Such attitudes must lead either to total subjectivism of response or to a hermeneutic mode of criticism proclaiming the secret and recondite properties of literary works as their artistic essence."22

Both Bloom's subjectivism and his dependence upon the quality of "strength" are thus characteristically Romantic. The idea of "strength" itself is close to that of "Power" which became a jargon-word among romantic critics and reviewers, and received serious consideration in de Quincey's work. The distinction of a 'literature of power' becomes one in which the latter is the only true literature: de Quincey writes "All that is literature seeks to communicate power; all that is not literature, to communicate knowledge" and Bloom similarly valorizes "strength" and excludes knowledge: "There is willed knowing, but that process does not produce poems" (Pr25).
The same Romantic mode of thinking informs the rest of Bloom's critical vocabulary, which is often borrowed from Yeats, Stevens, Emerson (as we have seen), and his style with its buried quotations, loose generalities and so on. Even more important however is his conception of poets as engaged in a battle with past and present, a struggle he attempts dubiously to extend into this century and which he sees himself as joining. Often this produces an identification with the poets he is discussing (FCI59,63); and the rhetorical fervour of his prose matches the tone of any number of Romantic prefaces. From this point of view one can agree with Jonathan Culler that "influence" is a device to save a Romantic thematics from a structuralist framework.24

Bloom's own stance is characterised by an increasing valuation of the imaginative capacity and solipsistic strength of the poets he discusses. In early essays he stands with Freud as a corrective (AI86) and insists that poetry include "a catharsis that is more-than-rational but first includes the rational" (RT9), distinguishing between invention and phantasmagoria. The latter "seeks not the heterocosm, but actual power over nature" (RT10) and results in the "Shamanism" of later Yeats, Graves, Lawrence. In later works however he espouses these anti-natural powers as the cure for our "imaginative need", and analyses the phantasmagorical (John Hollander's The Head of the Bed, FCI Chapt. 12). The value in poetry is shifted from the humanistic to the imaginative, and Bloom's stance shifts correspondingly from the analytic to the prophetic.
(2) Bloom as a Structuralist

As we have emphasized Bloom's categories constantly threaten to revert to the acausal and structural, and his thinking is pervasively influenced by structuralist modes of thought. This applies to the ratios themselves; to the dissolution of the subject into "poetry"; to the Lacanian identity of psychology and rhetoric, to his use of intertextuality, and to his logocentric theories of meaning which convert language into the subject of the discourse. Linguistic attributes become a part of the structure of mind in a way that Bloom links with associationism. In earlier books he attacks structuralist critics for their anti-humanism and denial of psychology, but this also applies in part to his own work. In later theory he seems to be moving towards the more common criticism of structuralism (which Culler agrees is a necessary one) that it cannot provide an account of meaning-creation except in a post-hoc manner, and Bloom casts his lot with the will which creates rather than the system which describes this: his own. This involves finally a shift in his late theory from "logos" (substitution, or intertextuality: PR270) to a "restoration" of meaning through the emphasis on the concept of will. However the major structuralist affiliations remain in his work despite any such claims, for Bloom's humanism tends to engender its opposite.

(3) Divided Stances

Bloom's stance is thus fundamentally a divided one: between poetry and criticism, rhetoric and empiricalising argument, will and determinism - and discontinuity even (the necessity of swerving) and continuity (the necessity of tradition), all these pairings being connected through the various strands of
his criticism. Bloom asserts that this duality begins with poems - poems are mutilated parts but assert their presence and unity - and is duplicated within his criticism so that he adopts the stance of the poets.

Let us examine the argument, firstly, that poems both "empirically reify" and "dialectically ironize" (KC111). This receives support from critics who argue that art both contains an awareness of its own fictionality and asserts the reality of its illusion (perhaps the best known of there is Murray Krieger's image of the window and mirror). E. W. Said presents this argument powerfully in terms of "authority" and "molestation." Bloom however differs from these writers in that he asserts that what poems authorize and molest is their status as poems with respect not to reality but to the body of other poems from which they spring; thus transposing "reality" into "literature" once again, and making every poem refer to itself in a way that we have already seen the consequences of.

Some attempt can be made to save this argument, however, by appealing to the idea of demarcation once more and separating reader from text. James Kincaid does this in attempting to reconcile the "deconstructionist" school of Hillis Miller et al. to the more traditional approaches of Abrams and Rader. Kincaid sees the idea of wholistic and determinate meanings as a need for readers, but also that texts are not intrinsically coherent and contain the possibilities of a number of cohabiting interpretations. "Texts are duplicitious and promiscuous; readers are monastic." Bloom pursues a line of argument similar to this one, asserting that poems are not wholes but must claim (to their readers) that they are (KC112); but Bloom's argument proceeds from radically different premises, the whole/part relationship
being one of reification/dialectical entity rather than of uninterpreted plurality/monistic interpretation. This however is in the more radical text (KC) and is an earlier text he argues that meanings in post Miltonic poems is underdetermined, so that they must be "filled" by interpretation, and the strength of these interpretations is determined by the coherency arguments we examined (PR140). This argument is valid as long as the demarcations are kept: Bloom blurs this by saying that poems both reify and ironize in the stance they take, but there is a certain point to what he says.

Finally, the problems of reflexivity, demarcation and stance come together when Bloom discusses his own stance and attempts to justify it. He attacks the problem in Kabbalah and Criticism (1975) of his own theory "with its self-contradictory mixture of empirical and dialectical presuppositions" (KC108) and goes on to say that he seeks "to adopt the pragmatic dualism of the poets themselves, as I can see not the least relationship of what we have called poetics to the actual problematics of reading poetry. A theory of poetry must belong to poetry, must be poetry before it can be of any use in interpreting poems." (KC109). Consequently, for his own criticism as well as for strong poetry the stance is inescapable: "A strong poem starts out strong by knowing and showing that it must be misread, that it must force the reader to take up a stance that he knows to be untrue" (KC111-112). Elsewhere he adds the claim that his is the only stance which is not superceded by a poetry which he says (quoting Kenneth Burke) "is always beyond the last formula", so that in his own criticism "poetry has become the last formula" (PR21). The unity of doxa and praxis, he claims, produces a more accurate criticism, a criticism mimetic in its stance rather than its content (since mimesis of content
in post-Romantic poetry is a doomed enterprise).

This is an eloquent and interesting plea, though not without precedent in the modern critical situation (especially with respect to the breakdown of the demarcation between original work and work of a genuine critical value). The true context for such theories is that of structuralist thought - works which emphasize the duplicative aspects of their ideology. The assumptions are well expressed by Engenio Donato, writing on Lévi-Strauss but equally applicably of Bloom: "his treatment of myths is nothing but another version of those myths. It is as if through the language he lends them the myths interpret themselves...it is impossible...to separate myth and literature, science and interpretation, and analysis and criticism."34

Unfortunately such remarks apply to works, as E.M. Said says, without a center, without a hermeneutics for the retrieval of some originating energy which provides the centre of critical discourse.35 In Bloom this applies on the level of stance itself: works do not repeat some original myth but dialectically swerve in a manner which is itself archetypical. As we have seen these structures tend to be interpreted into the texts Bloom directs himself at and consequently his pronouncements on stance fundamentally repeat only his own evasions.

More pragmatically this results in a conflict between his (empricising) hermeneutics and his dialectical claim to be repeating poems antithetically. He consciously maintains the stance of the Romantic poet, he argues, but the poets themselves are obliged not to display this awareness, to repress it in fact, so that the standards he applies to criticism are different to those of poetry. Critics cannot both repress and be critics, and Bloom wishes to remain one in some sense, to provide a
discursive account of the ways of error while writing poetry himself, both to represent and repress tradition. However if Bloom's criticism is a "strong" poem then it itself stands in need of interpretation as a misprison, and this inaugurates an infinite regress. He thus denies the existence of metalanguages but does so under the presuppositions that a "hermeneutics of desire" is possible, enabling the original theory to be set up.

Finally, one could make the rather Lacanian suggestion that what Bloom does repress in his own evasions is the true nature of creative repression: which his own theory exemplifies. He creates his multilayered and stimulating (for many) discourse by swerving in a way that combines critical intention and methodology rather than repression: a persuasive and eloquent re-aiming, balanced by a recognition of the massive tradition which it depends upon but which it wilfully and quite consciously swerves from. This (which quite deliberately parallels Said's description of Vico) is the real Bloom. As Steven Melville remarks, "We are not faced in Bloom with a theory in any significant sense, but with something like an imaginative and imaginary machine," and a machine which converts criticism into poetry in a way that exemplifies rather than describes: a machine "works or doesn't work; it does not explain." Bloom's machine is somewhat self-destroying, but it may be illuminating and have its own fascination as an imaginative project.
CONCLUSION.

In the twentieth century attempts to write anything like a unified theory in the arts have been rare, discouraged by a very real appreciation of the complexity of discourse within the "sciences of man", and especially of the multi-layered possibilities of language as it is applied to psychology, sociology, philosophy, literature. Bloom's work always threatens to become such an attempt, despite occasional self-limitation - an attempt to encompass writing, the literary "object" itself and reading within a model which describes the on-going dynamics of poetic history. As we have seen this is achieved at a massive loss: a failure to account for the complex facts of literary history (IV 2, V 3, 4) of the psychology of influence (V 5) and the nature of influence-relations (IV 2, 3), of criticism and its relation to primary composition (VII 1). More importantly it is an approach which seals off literature from the wider body of discourse; from the world itself (III 1, IV 3, 6, VI 5). It also denies the prospective nature of the creative act, the way that it both frees itself and fails to free itself from the past (IV 4, 5); and the conscious nature of any imaginative undertaking, returning it to a world of suppressed desires. (IV 1, VII 2). Its criteria of value are contradictory and result in an unwillingness to accept alterations in poetic paradigms (IV 7, 8, V 4).

We showed, however, that Bloom's theory is not static, and especially that recent theory has become more realistic (III 3, 4), returning to some sort of demarcation between psychology and rhetoric and relating figuration to the idea of "imaginative need." This tends to undermine the solipsism central to the theoretical framework which contains it, and the original ideas of defenses and
the anxiety of influence became less central. Much of the argument against Bloom was conducted by reductive and absurdum, by literalizing his often polemical claims. This is necessary because he works in the irrefutable happy-land between reality and pure idealism, a world of hypostasizations and nonce-characters (IV 3). Consequently his theory is often impossibly flexible and borders on irrefutability (VI 3).

We attempted to see Bloom within the modern critical tradition, and his consciously taken stance as instrumented in some way. This stance is a profoundly solipsistic one (III, VII 3), and within it Bloom attempts to duplicate the stance of the poets he describes (VI 2, VII 2), but at the risk of his own description failing in its accuracy. The inconsistencies in his theory cannot be discounted by an appeal to the levelling of discourse because he does take a metatheoretical stance within his own work (VII 3). However, a positive result of this heightened rhetoricity is an awareness of these stances in criticism. More important to his own practical criticism is the idea of tradition, a re-emphasis on literary history which serves or corrective to the New Critical isolation of texts, and an insistence on this being central to reading (though one could suggest that there insights could be gained in another way.) His attempt to preserve the dynamics of the processes of history (canon-formation) stands opposed to the idealizations of Frye's criticism; but as we have seen this process itself becomes mythology (VI). The Ratios are ultimately a typography whose application is dubious (VI), and even where they do work one is left with the problem of all typographies, that once one has holed all the pigeons there is little else to do. We have tried to emphasize that the process of literary creation is something intrinsically unamenable to Bloom's type of analysis (V 5), and one of synthesis rather than repression (IV 4, 5, VI 5).
Finally, we saw Bloom's work as a response to the structuralist assault on the academies in the 1960's, in their own terms. His attempt to save the subject from dissolution into "difference" is only half successful (III 3), and results in a reification of that "difference" into the meaning of poetry. I would suggest that this is an unnecessary desperation: the approach is fundamentally logocentric and the analogy of a poem to a word that it utilizes is a dubious one. Poems are both more than words (more complex, more a nexus of themes, meanings) and less than words (less capable of ostensive definition, of a total newness, of an a-literary significance). The identity of poetry and rhetoric rests on the possibility of treating a poem like a sentence and reducing it to its components which are then translatable: the result is the loss of the poem itself of that which makes poems primary acts of creation.

Bloom's own discourse has its own creativity (though ultimately it becomes repetitive), but this does not come from its theory. His practical criticism is notable for its duplication of the subtle processes of artistic misprision (in a sometimes exaggerated way) and highlights those processes. Its final gain is an allusiveness and sense of the richness of tradition which undermines his own distortion and inflexible categorization of that tradition; which achieves its best insights despite itself. Bloom is a fine critic, but a fundamentally misguided one: his power is gained only by a loss of knowledge.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

Abbreviations Used

CI  Critical Inquiry
CL  Comparative Literature
CR  Chicago Review
HudR Hudson Review
JAPA Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association
JHI Journal of the History of Ideas
NLH New Literary History
PMLA Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America
SEL Studies in English Literature
SLI Studies in the Literary Imagination
SR  Sewanee Review
YFS Yale French Studies
YR  Yale Review
I. Introduction


CHAPTER II

1. Both The Ringers in the Tower (1971) and Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate (1977) have indices, but none of the intervening five books do.

2. See pp. 107-111 hereunder.


6. See E.D. Hirsch "Deep Metaphors and Shallow Structures", SR, 85 (1977), 153 ff; perhaps the most virulent of all the responses to this critical oneupmanship.

7. See pp. 54-57 hereunder.


10. For a fuller discussion of this point see pp. 98-99.


CHAPTER III


5. ibid., p. 107.


7. See for example Stanley Fish, "How Ordinary is Ordinary Language?", NLH, V no. 1 (Autumn 1973), 41-55, and the
subsequent debate in *Critical Inquiry*.


9. ibid.,


    *CI*, 5 no. 1 (Autumn 1978), 158.

11. ibid., 159.


13. ibid., 275.

14. This is something of a misprision of Schopenhauer, since what Bloom sees as "the idea of order" is the world of Necessity; a "limitation" for him. Schopenhauer saw it as a nirvana-like state in which "we keep the sabbath of the penal servitude of willing", rising above the world of will.


16. Compare D.M. Rasmussen on Husserl: "First, language as potentiality is that large body of discourse that can be conceived in terms of a self-related system of signs. Second, language as actually used by human subjects",


CHAPTER IV


3. K.K. Ruthven, *Critical Assumptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), Chapt. 5. All page references to this book are to the manuscript version held in the English Department of the University of Canterbury, Christchurch.


Any number of works on Shakespeare's use of influence are available: see for example Emyrs Jones' *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
20. Mary Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment in Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads" (1798)*.
25. See Section 8 of this chapter.


34. Frederick Crews, "Do Literary Studies have an Ideology?", *PMLA*, 85 (1970), 423-428.


37. An essay of my own on John Ashbery draws this point out.


CHAPTER V


3. Patrick Coleman, "Beyond Hyperbole" *Diacritics*, 7 no. 3 (Fall 1977), 44-53.

8. ibid., 112.
11. ibid.
16. Paul Valéry for example. Subsequent writers have used a variety of metaphors — Joyce that of defecation, the surrealists that of free-association, others "bricolage".
23. ibid., p.75.
24. ibid, p.75.
25. ibid, p.81.
26. ibid, p.81.
29. Charles Altieri, Review of *Figures of Capable Imagination*.

CHAPTER VI

2. Paul de Man, Review of *The Anxiety of Influence*.


11. Patrick Coleman, "Beyond Hyperbole", 47.


23. Paul Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition Imagination, and Feeling".


CHAPTER VII


2. ibid., p 365


4. Wittgenstein was one of the first to apply "myth" to Freud's writings.


6. Like Einstein, Popper could never reconcile himself to the (so-called) incommensurability principle in physics.

7. ibid., p 78.


9. ibid., p 78.


15. See Marie-Rose Logan, "Towards a Tropology of Reading", NLM, IX no. 3 (Spring 1978), 623.


20. David Bleich, Subjective Criticism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978); Morse Peckham had earlier made similar points.


22. P. Parrinder, Authors and Authority, p33-4.


24. Jonathan Culler, "Reading and Misreading".


27. Frederic Jameson, "Metacommentary".


33. David Bleich, "Negotiated Knowledge...", p84.


36. ibid, pp.369-370.

37. Steven Melville, "Reading Bloom", CR, 28 (1976-77), 139.
APPENDIX I: BLOOM'S CRITICAL PUBLICATIONS

The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry

Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument (New York:

The Poetry and Prose of William Blake (commentary only) ed.


The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in the Romantic Tradition

The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry (New York:


Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens

Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate (Ithaca: Cornell
APPENDIX II: THE MAP OF MISREADING

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