

For example, an exhaustive Marxian analysis of a work's involvement in the ideological structures and class conflicts of its time may seem incomplete and superficial to a formalist critic who asks how a work takes up existing stylistic conventions in order to renew them or innovate against them (and, of course, the reverse is also true). A Freudian critic may claim to have revealed a text's depths by uncovering how the text unconsciously appeals to repressed desires within us thanks to disguises at the level of its formal features that put our censoring faculties off guard. A Jungian critic, however, will find radically different but equally unconscious depths—not libidinal impulses that are ordinarily curtailed but, rather, healing and redeeming forces of the collective psyche that seek to correct the imbalances and one-sidedness of consciousness. Davidson's appeal to "a structured 'grammar' of parts and wholes" cannot decide these conflicts because in them irreconcilable notions of totality compete for our allegiance. Interpretations cannot always be ranked unequivocally on grounds of inclusiveness inasmuch as they may be based on different criteria for judging a reading's scope and penetration. An appeal to intersubjectivity cannot decide which reading is most complete, because different interpreters can call on different communities to support their ideas of totality.

The mode of existence of a literary work is more paradoxical than Davidson suggests. The work is neither autonomous of interpretation nor dependent on it but is both at once. My essay introduces the term "heteronomy" to characterize this paradox. A heteronomous conception of the text acknowledges that interpretation is neither a purely passive reception of meaning nor a total imposition of it. Understanding simultaneously fixes a text's meaning and lets it emerge. New methods of understanding may recompose a work in totally unexpected ways, but literary works can also react on interpretive approaches and persuade them to revise their procedures and change their assumptions. My tests for validity attempt to explain this reciprocal interaction between text and interpretation without positing a core of self-identical meaning that conflicting interpretations must share in order to claim legitimacy. To identify the constraints on understanding with pre-given textual norms would wrongly limit the degree of justifiable disagreement that can divide interpretations. But to deny all limits to legitimacy would deprive literary studies of the status of a rational enterprise. Carefully avoiding these extremes, my procedures for validation not only put restraints on interpretation but also allow it to be truly pluralistic.

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Shakespeare's Sonnets

To the Editor:

A. Kent Hieatt rests an important part of his argument in "The Genesis of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*: Spenser's *Ruines of Rome: by Bellay*" (*PMLA* 98 [1983]: 800–14) on the shared occurrence in the two works of the "injurious time"—"o'erworn"/"outworn" word cluster. Hieatt may wish to consider the impact on his thesis of the following lines from Barnabe Barnes's *Parthenophil and Parthenope*, which was published in 1593. These lines occur in a dedicatory sonnet to the Earl of Northumberland in which the poet's muse,

seeking Patronage, bold meanes doth use
To shew that dewtie, which in hart I beare
To your thrise noble house: which shall out weare
Devouring time it selfe. . . .

As the largest collection of verse of this kind published hitherto in England, *Parthenophil and Parthenope* might have been particularly interesting to a budding poet newly arrived in London like Shakespeare.

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Reply:

Gary Schmidgall's striking discovery calls the choice of strategy in my article into question. But he would not say, I think, that it much affects the case made in that article. Two strategies were open to me: (1) enumerate the verbal and thematic similarities between *Ruines of Rome* and *Sonnets* and point out that no such concentration of similarities to *Sonnets* has been found anywhere else, so that *Ruines of Rome* must have been the largest literary item in the imaginative genesis of *Sonnets*, or (2) do all of the above and then reinvestigate the bulk of the already much investigated, generically related sonnet sequences in English and the whole of Shakespeare's vocabulary outside *Sonnets*, so as to be able to say that a certain number of expressions (eight so far) shared by *Ruines of Rome* and *Sonnets* do not appear in those other places or appear there only sporadically and inconsistently. This latter strategy, which I opted for, is far riskier than the other one, because it can be pecked away at in detail by observant scholars who catch me where my attention lapsed or where the parameters of my search did not extend.

Schmidgall's brisk summons is a fair cop under the latter head (I had explicitly excluded dedicatory sonnets). Under either head, I hope that similarly obser-