

appreciate Owen's attention to certain minor inaccuracies in the Norton edition that I did study in my article. As he points out, the editors retained capitals "only for the terms 'God' and 'Nature,' and for personifications that are clearly presented by the poetry *as* personifications" (511). I would want to quibble with the Norton editors about the clear exclusion of 1805's "valley" from this rubric, especially since the word is opposite to the phrase "thy vale, / Beloved Hawkshead" in the 1799 text. Even so, my overall point about the way book 5 "emphasizes the containment of [the boy's] movements by a supervising force" (99 [1984]: 928) survives without the support of the two details Owen has removed from consideration.

As Owen suggested in a letter to me last April, it is probably advisable to use de Selincourt's edition rather than Norton's for information about the 1805 text—at least until the Cornell edition (by Mark Reed) appears, with its photographic reproductions of the manuscript—since the Norton normalizations can be misleading. Owen also advised me that his own edition of the 1850 text, with a generous list of accidentals, is being published this fall by Cornell. His contribution promises to be a valuable resource for those of us interested in Wordsworth's revisionary practices.

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Literature, Psychoanalysis, and Reader Response

To the Editor:

In "Literature, Psychoanalysis, and the Re-Formation of the Self" (100 [1985]: 342–54) Marshall W. Alcorn, Jr., and Mark Bracher have not just written a highly intelligent essay, unusually well informed with contemporary psychoanalytic thought, they have introduced into *PMLA* a kind of earthy psychoanalysis often missing from literary discourse. I probably should not ask for more, particularly since they treat my own writings generously. Nevertheless, I would like to call attention to methods beyond even their vanguard account of psychoanalytic criticism.

Alcorn and Bracher propose that recent psychoanalytic theory can buttress the belief that literature "edifies—in the root sense of that term." It *builds* us. Literature, they note, might alter not only our cognitions but, more significantly, the internal structures of the self, and it is this kind of alteration that psychoanalysis helps us understand. Literature can achieve such a "re-formation" by processes analogous to those of psychoanalysis. Literature, for example, mobilizes infantile wishes, but it can only deny their gratification, as the psychoanalyst does, or supply a substitute. By promot-

ing identification with a character or an author, literature might bring about new values, re-forming its reader's superego (rules of conduct) or ego ideal (ultimate goals).

The theory is exemplary. Parenthetically, however, I feel impelled to point out that literary critics *want* reading to have social, political, and moral efficacy. Such usefulness justifies their work. Here we should recognize that our wishes may color our theoretical account. This fact does not refute Alcorn and Bracher's claim, but it indicates that these claims, which are after all claims about the real world, deserve testing by methods more systematic than the impressions of teachers or the credos of critics.

Alcorn and Bracher use reports from actual psychoanalyses to illustrate the re-formation of self that clinicians witness. But for reading's re-formation of the self, they turn to "the" reader of particular poems by Shelley and Yeats. I would have liked more evidence from the associations of actual readers.

My momentary skepticism, however, does not extend to Alcorn and Bracher's conclusions. I think that literature does re-form ego, superego and ego ideal. My skepticism only reflects my desire for a more detailed account of *how* reading accomplishes the introjections and identifications Alcorn and Bracher posit. I do not doubt that "Both the ego ideal and the superego are thus subject to continual influence and modification through the reading of literature" (350), but I wish that a complicated psychological process were not subsumed in "influence and modification." I would like to have evidence of the changes and to know the particulars of the introjective process.

It is, no doubt, my persistent questioning of the processes of perception and reading that led Alcorn and Bracher to conclude that I tend "to understand all identification as projective identification, in which the reader projects his or her fantasies and defenses on a text but does not introject or internalize alien characteristics encountered in the text" (351). But they are not quite accurate. It is true that in my pre-1976 writings (the authors, curiously, cite nothing later) I may have overemphasized what literary critics at that time thought farfetched, the surprising extent to which readers edit texts to suit their own fantasies and defenses. Then and since, however, I have also tried to understand reading in the light of general theories of perception: how we perceive *anything*, the alien as well as the congenial. Most recently in *The I* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985), I have presented a model consisting of an identity that governs a hierarchy of feedback processes acting into the real world. This identity should be understood not only as the agency and consequence of the perceptions and actions it governs but as a theme-and-variations representation (not a *Ding an sich*). Such a model is not "solipsistic" unless most modern theories of perception are, since they also as-

sume the perceiver has top-down, inside-to-outside domination over bottom-up, outside-to-inside stimuli. An identity-governing-feedback model might dovetail nicely into Alcorn and Bracher's thesis, indicating *how* "influence and modification" take place. It could unpack such crucial phrasings as "Literature pressures the self" and "Literature promotes re-formation of the self," enabling us to sort out what the literature and the self do in these transactions and to formulate the processes Alcorn and Bracher postulate. We can image those processes in ways consistent with psychoanalysis; with recent work by perceptual and cognitive psychologists, brain physiologists, and artificial intelligencers; and with what specialists tell us about how children and illiterates learn to read.

A second thing I would wish into Alcorn and Bracher's essay is a generalization of my first question about the process of reading. Alcorn and Bracher say that literature changes the superego and the ego ideal and the balance between them. Fine. But in resting their account on the structures (i.e., long-term functions) central to the theory of ego psychology, they are doing what I call second-phase psychoanalysis. Would it not be better to replace these structures with the processes they admittedly are and thus avoid the problems of pointing to "things" or "agencies" in the mind that no one can see? Alcorn and Bracher will recognize that I am asking the same kind of question that Roy Schafer does in his critique of ego psychology's reifications, *A New Language* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976).

Like many other psychoanalytic theorists of today, Schafer points us toward a third-phase psychoanalysis, a psychology of the self, and Alcorn and Bracher say they too are taking that step. To make this move, however, we probably have to rethink such ego-psychological structures as the superego into more theoretically open processes of internalization or accommodation and assimilation or feedback. In other words, their essay evokes a fascinating and extremely complicated question. What is the relation between the structures of second-phase psychoanalysis and the account of self-processes in third-phase psychoanalysis? This query, of course, puts Alcorn and Bracher's original, bold, and vigorous essay where it deserves to be, in the middle of the challenging transitions taking place in today's clinical psychoanalysis.

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Reply:

We thank Norman Holland for his insightful comments, which point out a number of important ways in which our theory of reader response needs to be questioned and elaborated.

We are in complete agreement with Holland's observation that since critics want to believe that reading makes a difference, our hypothesis that reading re-forms the self needs to be tested in a rigorous and systematic manner. We hope that such testing can be done in the near future—by others, if not by us—both to guard against the danger of the theory's being merely a wish-fulfilling fantasy and to provide material for refining and elaborating on the theory. Of course, such a project would be difficult. In addition to the difficulty of identifying and controlling the numerous variables involved in reading and interpreting literature, there is the problem that psychoanalysis itself has been plagued with when trying to provide evidence of its own efficacy: how can one identify and measure, in an objective manner, significant changes in the self? Furthermore, any testing of our theory would need to recognize that the theory offers not so much an account of what actually occurs in the reading and study of literature as a view of what is possible as a result of reading. The value of the theory lies in its ability not to mirror the reality of the reading process but to change that reality—to explore new possibilities for reading, studying, and teaching literature.

Holland is also right in observing that we need "a more detailed account of *how* reading accomplishes the introjections and identifications" that we posit. The identity-governing-feedback model that Holland proposes looks quite promising in this regard. Our own attempts to elaborate on the process by which literature elicits structural changes in the self are focusing on Lacan's account of the roles played by language and the imaginary in structuring the self. If language—the key term missing from the theory outlined in our *PMLA* article—is a significant structural element of the self, then literature, insofar as it dislocates, manipulates, and alters language, can produce fundamental changes in the self. Moreover, by including linguistic phenomena—such as metaphor, metonymy, repetition, and disjunction—among its key terms, the Lacanian model provides clear avenues of interchange with more traditional literary critical models, including New Criticism, structuralism, and deconstruction, as well as thematic and moral criticism.

We also agree with Holland that our theory would benefit if it employed concepts that refer to (observable) processes rather than to things and agencies that no one can see. Such concepts would not only make our theory more accessible and more testable, they would also give a more adequate reflection of the nonsubstantiality of the self. We would emphasize, however, that it is impossible to do away completely with concepts referring to unseen agencies: if, as Hume pointed out, we cannot directly apprehend a cause as such, neither can we function for very long without the concept—particularly in the realm of theory. Theory, despite its etymological roots, inevitably invokes the unseen; inso-