

Housekeeping: A Response to Robert Wood's Critique of "The Promise of Postmodernism"
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I begin with my original assertion that the textualization of an increasing number and type of interpretive objects amounts to a (protestant) sacralization of the same, a suggestion which Woods variously characterizes as egregious, glib, and invidious. In defense I plead my acknowledged unoriginality. Few contemporary accounts of the disciplinary development of the humanities in general and of modern literary critical technique in particular have failed to note the complicity between Protestantism's location of ultimate meaning in both the textual and the previously secular, and the development of modern interpretative technologies which consequently extend our concepts of both the textual and the sacred (as I cite in my original essay, Vassilis Lambropoulos' *Rise of Eurocentrism: The Anatomy of Interpretation* offers the most complete tracking of this process). If I could make any claim to originality at all with regards to this matter, it would be in my assertion that this dynamic remain true within those disciplinary hybrids of the social sciences and humanities that make the social or cultural text their object of concern. Even so, the way for such an understanding has been clearly paved especially within folklore, which has been admirably self-conscious for generations of the ideological motives for both its elevation and textualization of "low" cultural texts. It also helps that folklore's practitioners tend to be very familiar with Max Weber's arguments about the Protestant extension of sacred meaning to secular life, and through a strained proximity to departments of English, somewhat suspicious of the disciplinary development of literary theory.

Woods is correct to note that I deliberately omit discussion of the supposed end phase of deconstructive technique, whereby binary opposites are no longer simply inverted and challenged but eliminated altogether. I do this precisely because I do not think such an *eschaton* possible. After Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and other second generation deconstructionists, I would argue that the inversion of binary opposites in an attempt to liberate the oppressed term is like housework (and possibly church work) in that it is work which must be started anew without ever being completed. Hence when Woods suggests that it is inappropriate of me to speak of the "divine" and the "sacred" because presumably Derrida would not speak in terms so easily reappropriated, he intuits half my purpose. Unlike Derrida I do not believe in any "messianic" aspect of deconstruction that would deliver us beyond difference, which is why I feel free to deploy such concepts strategically precisely while understanding their own inevitable vulnerability to deconstructive technique. Indeed it is exactly the messianic aspect of Derrida's work that leads me to conclude the presence therein of an untheorized moment, a moment that betrays for me the Protestant complicity of even the most radical of (post)modern interpretive methodologies. Woods critiques me for affirming Derrida's slippery formulation of difference as older than being or God when the slippery nature of this formulation was the object of my critique not my affirmation. My point is not to speak as Derrida would, if it is even at all meaningful to speak of intentionality in this age.

Woods wonders if I am unable or unwilling to follow Derrida's thought far enough to make it clear that deconstruction would involve a radical rethinking of Unitarian Universalist principles and practices. While the point of my article was the consistency in both epistemology and purpose between and Unitarian Universalists theology, I do admit to being incapable of fully teasing out all of the implications

of a postmodern Unitarian Universalist practice. Hence my gratitude for all serious contributions to a dialog on such a subject as this.