Introduction: Renaissance omissions

> I have said somewhere it is the unwritten part of books that would be
> the most interesting.
>
> – William M. Thackeray[1]

When Lady Anne Bacon observed in 1613, "that the old proverbis be not
alwaies trewe, for I do fynde that the absence of my Nath. doth brede in
me the more continuall remembrance of hym," she was presumably chal-
lenging two popular contemporary aphorisms, "out of sight, out of mind"
and "long absent, soon forgotten."[2] This conventional wisdom reached
back at least to 1250 and the medieval manuscript the *Proverbs of Alfred*,
but Bacon's contrary observation, that "absence sharpens love," began to
appear more often during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as various
writers noted the perverse rewards of missing something or someone.[3] Thus
Milton's Adam agrees to work apart from his insistent consort because, as he
rationalizes, "short retirement urges sweet returne," and Ariosto in *Orlando
Furioso* accepts that "Long absence grieves," but notes that when lovers
"meet againe / Absence delights, & doth more pleasant make it."[4] Probably
Shakespeare's sonnet 39 most fully addresses the benefits of missing some-
one. While the speaker acknowledges that a young man's absence could feel
"sour" and "a torment . . . prove," he also desires such "sweet leave" so that

[1] William M. Thackeray, "To Paul Émile Daurand Forgues, 16 September 1854," in *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, ed. Gordon N. Ray, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1946), 3: 389–91.
[2] Lady Anne Bacon, "Letter to Lady Jane Cornwallis (1613)," in *The Private Correspondence of Lady Jane Cornwallis*, ed. Lord Braybrooke (London, 1842), pp. 11–12; and Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, 1950), S438 and F596. Tilley also notes the related proverb, "seldom seen, soon forgotten" (S208).
[3] See *The Proverbs of Alfred*, ed. Hellen Pennock South (New York, 1931), p. 122; and *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, 3rd edn., rev. F. P. Wilson (Oxford, 1970), p. 602.
[4] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd edn. (London, 1998), book IX, line 250; and Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso in English Heroical Verse*, trans. John Harrington (1591; New York, 1970), XXXI.1–3 (p. 250). Subsequent quotations from *Paradise Lost* are taken from Fowler's edition.

he can "entertain the time with thoughts of love."[5] Absence, traditionally associated with loss, in this poem gives the speaker something: his heart not only grows fonder, but, as the speaker retreats to create and think, he discovers he can imaginatively summon his friend.

In this book I am examining various ways that the paradoxical effects of absence found expression in Renaissance literature. But rather than addressing the absent beloved or separation as a general concept, I am interested in the interpretive implications of works with actual missing pieces. The seventeenth-century phenomenon of printing apparently unfinished works ushered in a new emphasis on authors' responsibility for written texts while it simultaneously reinforced Renaissance practices of active reading. In terms of the conflicting logic in the above proverbs, readers might not mind certain elements that an author removes from a text, or, as I show in the following case studies, readers might find the pieces an author omits especially provocative and meaningful. This book's overarching premise is that authors, like all speakers, can convey ideas by saying almost nothing; the best writers can create moments of audible silence, or as Milton envisions in *Paradise Lost*, of "darkness visible" (book I, line 63).

I have thus tried, borrowing Wallace Stevens' eloquent distinction, to differentiate between the "Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is."[6] By "Renaissance omissions" I mean the nothing that is there – Renaissance texts that look incomplete but whose deliberate holes establish an author's authority and enhance rather than diminish meaning. In a 1655 edition of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, for example, an anonymous poet pretends to restore a previously omitted verse so as to cement Sidney's contemporary reputation; in Ben Jonson's 1616 *Workes*, Jonson himself has removed part of a poem to demonstrate his control over his book and his patrons; in John Donne's posthumous *Poems* (1633), the printer and publisher use the collection's verse fragments to authorize Donne and create the illusion of his direct involvement; in Robert Herrick's *Hesperides* (1648), the poet includes two incomplete poems to illustrate the reader's role in establishing his fame after death; and in John Milton's *Paradise Regain'd . . . Samson Agonistes* (1671), the poet asserts his own authority by strategically leaving out ten lines that appear at the back of the book as an *Omissa*. Publications such as these differ from other unfinished or censored Renaissance works because their authors and/or publishers seem to want

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[5] *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Nashville, TN, 1997), lines 5, 9–14. Shakespeare would elsewhere write about separation less optimistically. See sonnets 57, 58, and 109.

[6] Wallace Stevens, "The Snow Man," in *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York, 1995), pp. 9–10, line 15.

readers to notice the imperfections. Like Lady Anne Bacon's "Nath." or the companion in Shakespeare's sonnet, all these omissions remain evocatively present; something may be missing, but its absence is palpable.

The publishing of genuinely incomplete literary works began in the fifteenth century with the introduction of printing to England: William Caxton published two editions of Geoffrey Chaucer's unfinished *Canterbury Tales*, in 1478 and 1484, which were followed by a series of black-letter folios by various Renaissance publishers. The raggedness of Chaucer's medieval canon also prompted some contemporary readers to try to complete his works. Caxton himself composed a brief envoi to Chaucer's unfinished *House of Fame* (1483) in which the speaker "*sodeynly awoke anon*" and "*remembryd what I had seen / And how hye and ferre I had been*" (lines 2–4).[7] But whereas Caxton carefully separated his words from Chaucer's – he labeled the added verse "Caxton" and announced "I fynde nomore of this werke to fore sayd" – later publishers and writers proved less scrupulous. So much spurious Chauceriana sprang up and cleaved to subsequent printed texts that readers had difficulty distinguishing imitations from Chaucer's genuine writings.[8] By 1602 the approximately 34,000 lines of Chaucer's medieval canon had swelled to almost 55,000 lines in more than forty works.[9] These addenda, including two spurious *Canterbury Tales*, were presented as omissions, works by Chaucer that previous editions had mistakenly excluded.

Probably the most well-known Renaissance response to Chaucer's incomplete works remains Edmund Spenser's attempt in the fourth book of *The Faerie Queene* to "revive" Chaucer's "labours lost" from the *Squire's Tale*.[10] Unlike those writers who tried to pass off their works as Chaucer's, Spenser openly appeals to his "renowmed [*sic*]" predecessor to help him "follow . . . the footing of thy feete, / That with thy meaning so I may the rather meete" (IV.2.32, 34). Spenser distinguishes himself from contemporary pretenders by laying claim to the "infusion sweete" of Chaucer's "owne spirit," which, he believes, "doth in me survive" (IV.2.34). Spenser's own *Faerie Queene* was also published as an incomplete text – the first two editions containing only

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[7] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Book of Fame* ([Westminster], 1483; STC 5087), d3r.

[8] Chaucer, *The Book of Fame*, d3r. As Caxton complained in his second edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, "many of the sayd bookes / whyche wryters have abrydgyd it and many thynges left out / And in so*m*me [sic] place haue sette certayn varsys / that he neuer made ne sette in hys booke." See W. J. B. Crotch, ed., *The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton* (London, 1956), pp. 90–91.

[9] Alice S. Miskimin, *The Renaissance Chaucer* (New Haven, 1975), p. 257.

[10] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. with C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr. (New York, 1978), book IV, canto 2, stanza 34. Subsequent quotations from the poem are also taken from this edition and are cited by book, canto, and stanza number.

half of the twelve books overconfidently predicted on the first title page –
and in 1609 there appeared three additional fragments that the printer
introduced as "CANTOS OF *MUTABILITIE*: Which, both for Forme
and Matter, appear to be parcell of some following Booke of the *FAERIE
QUEENE*."[11]

That England's two greatest poetic sons had never finished their greatest
poetic works presumably provided sufficient precedent for later Renaissance
stationers and writers who wanted to take incomplete works to press. Given,
too, that classical texts such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* had come down to the
Renaissance unfinished and that the ongoing practice of manuscript publi-
cation accommodated the circulation of works in progress, we should not be
surprised to find that so many incomplete literary texts were printed during
the seventeenth century. Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (1598)
appeared as an "unfinished tragedy" that George Chapman attempted to
supplement;[12] Lady Mary Wroth had *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*
(1621) published before it was complete;[13] John Davies' *Orchestra* (1622)
was printed "*Not finished*" and "*wanting some Stanzaes describing Queene*
Elizabeth";[14] William Rawley had Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1626) pub-
lished posthumously as "A Work Unfinished";[15] Milton's incomplete "The
Passion" was printed in his *Poems* (1645, 1673) with the explanation that
the verse was "*above the yeers he had, when he wrote it*";[16] John Hall had an
incomplete "Hymne" published in his *Divine Poems* (1647), "though other
occasions suffer him onely to present it in the habit of a Fragment";[17] Sir
William Davenant published a preface (1650), then only the first three books
(1651) of his epic *Gondibert*;[18] Abraham Cowley had his *Davideis* printed

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[11] Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (London, 1609; STC 23083), Hh4r.
[12] *Hero and Leander. Begun by C. Marloe; and finished by G. Chapman* (London, 1598; STC 17414).
Marion Campbell, "'*Desunt Nonnulla*': The Construction of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* as an
Unfinished Poem," *ELH* 51.2 (1984): 241–68, has challenged the status of *Hero and Leander* as an
incomplete text.
[13] See Lady Mary Wroth, *The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania* (London, 1621; STC 26051), Zzz6v.
The *Urania* ends abruptly in mid-sentence with the word "And", which may have been included
deliberately to emulate Sidney's incomplete *Arcadia*, or may have resulted from the printer's mis-
reading the manuscript's catchword as part of the text. See Wroth, *The First Part of the Countess of
Montgomery's Urania*, ed. Josephine A. Roberts (Binghamton, NY, 1995), pp. cx–cxi.
[14] John Davies, *Nosce Teipsum* (London, 1622; STC 6359), H3r, L2r. *Orchestra* is printed at the back of
the book, H3r–L3r.
[15] See Francis Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum or A Naturall History* (London, 1626; STC 1168). *New Atlantis* is
printed at the back of the book, ²A–G3.
[16] *Poems of Mr. John Milton, both English and Latin, Compos'd at Several Times* (London, 1645; Wing
M2160), B2r.
[17] John Hall, *Poems*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1647; Wing H355). The collection is printed as a double
book with a separate title page and imprint for *Divine Poems* (London, 1647). "A Hymne" appears
in this second half, G7v–H1r.
[18] Sir William Davenant, *The Preface to Gondibert, An Heroick Poem* (Paris, 1650; Wing D334A), and
Davenant, *Gondibert: An Heroick Poem* (London, 1651; Wing D324), especially Kkk1r.

(1656), never having found "*Leisure*" nor "*Appetite*" to "finish the work" or "revise that part which is done";[19] Katherine Philips' translation of the French play *Horace* appeared as a fragment at the end of her posthumous *Poems* (1667);[20] and Charles Cotton's two incomplete poems, "An Essay upon Buchanan's First Book of Sphæra" and "Philoxipes and Policrite," were printed in his *Poems on Several Occasions* (1689), each with the tag "*Caetera desunt.*"[21]

Writing in the 1690s, Jonathan Swift made satiric hay out of such omissions and what they signify. As the writer in *A Tale of a Tub* turns to the subject of religious factions, he inserts a faux "*Hiatus in MS*," and Swift playfully adopts the guise of editor in a footnote:

Here is pretended a defect in the manuscript; and this is very frequent with our author either when he thinks he cannot say anything worth reading, or when he has no mind to enter on the subject, or when it is a matter of little moment; or perhaps to amuse his reader (whereof he is frequently very fond) or lastly, with some satirical intention.[22]

Although the Renaissance writers I am examining did not share *A Tale*'s "satirical intention," they, like Swift, still appreciated the rhetorical effect of genuine or feigned hiatuses. These writers and publishers wanted "defects" in their texts not because they "cannot say anything worth reading" but because they had something to say that required, as we will see, special emphasis.

In this book I am recommending, in other words, that we take Swift seriously: during the early modern period, astute authors could communicate with astute readers through a text's omissions. While I am not proposing that the appearance of these omissions characterizes seventeenth-century literature in general, or even that they occur more frequently during the Renaissance than during other periods, a careful analysis of such missing pieces offers us more than fresh insight into the meaning of individual literary works. Scrutinizing the blank spaces in publications by Sidney, Jonson, Donne, Herrick, and Milton helps us better understand the changing conditions of authorship in early modern England: while the notion of an

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[19] Abraham Cowley, *Poems* (London, 1656; Wing C6682), b2r. Cowley's *A Poem on the Late Civil War* (London, 1679; Wing C6679) was also published posthumously as a fragment. The publisher concludes the text with the evocative explanation, "*The Author went no further*" (E4v).

[20] Katherine Philips, *Poems* (London, 1667; Wing P2033), Aaaa1r–Mmmm1v. Sir John Denham completed Philips' translation of *Horace* for its first performance in 1668; this composite text was then printed in the second and third editions of Philips' *Poems*.

[21] Charles Cotton, *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1689; Wing C6389), KK1r–KK8r, Pp8v–Qq1v.

[22] Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, ed. Angus Ross and David Woolley (Oxford, 1986), p. 29.

autonomous author was emerging, an equally empowering concept of active readers was also taking shape. The omissions I examine pull in both directions. When viewed as moments of exquisite authorial control, omissions seem to suggest that a text was created by an "author," a single individual who oversaw the production and could finesse even the most subtle poetic nuances. But, if early modern readers were then expected to make something meaningful out of a text's missing pieces, Renaissance omissions seem to imply that readers shared responsibility for the author's work. Simultaneously authorizing both writers and readers, the omissions that I address provide a unique window into English literary history: through these blank spaces we glimpse the tension between implication and inference, and between an individual author and a collaborative community.

At the core of this book thus lie two related questions, "How much authority did authors have during the Renaissance?" and "How much interpretive activity were Renaissance readers willing or expected to undertake?" Authors, we need to remember, traditionally had little power within the Renaissance book trade. W. W. Greg has located only one acknowledgment by the Stationers' Company of an author having any rights during this period, a terse stipulation that seems to require that a book's owner inform the author before having an item reprinted.[23] Prior to the Copyright Act of 1709, a member of the Stationers' Company who obtained a text by any means could secure legal ownership by publishing it in print or entering it in the Stationers' *Register* – with or without the author's approval.[24] Authors had little recourse: they could provide the printer with a good copy so as to prevent the circulation of a poorly made edition, or they could compensate the unscrupulous stationer so that a corrected version could be later printed. Thus when a "false Edition" of Katherine Philips' *Poems* was published without "*any manner of* [her] *knowledge, much less connivance*," she arranged to publish a competing version, restoring her works, she hoped, to "their native Shape and Beauty."[25] In like manner, when Sir Thomas Browne discovered that his private religious exercises had been "*most imperfectly and surreptitiously*" printed, he worked with

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[23] The exact wording is that "the author of any such copy be no hindrance thereunto." See W. W. Greg, *Some Aspects and Problems of London Publishing between 1550 and 1650* (Oxford, 1956), p. 16; and *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554–1660*, ed. Edward Arber, 5 vols. (London, 1877), 4: 421 (4 June 1638).

[24] For a fuller description of authors' legal, economic, and practical authority during the seventeenth century, see Dobranski, *Milton, Authorship and the Book Trade* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 14–26.

[25] Philips, *Poems*, A1r, A2r, a2v.

the volume's unscrupulous publisher – aptly named Andrew Crooke – to produce "*A true and full coppy*" under the same title, *Religio Medici*.[26]

That a few Renaissance authors were nevertheless compensated for their works suggests that authorial rights emerged gradually with the demise of patronage and the rise of a market system. As early as 1593, for example, Edwin Sandys paid Richard Hooker £10 for *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, Books I–IV, adding £20 in 1597 for Book V, along with an unspecified number of complimentary copies of each installment.[27] The surviving evidence is insufficient, however, for charting a steady increase in the author's economic authority during the Renaissance, in part because publishing terms depended on the type of work and its potential marketability. Forty years after Hooker's publication, William Prynne was paid in kind, with thirty-five or thirty-six copies of *Histrio-mastix* (1633), while in the last part of the century Henry More received only twenty-five copies of his Folio *Opera theologica* (1675) but had the option of purchasing either 100 additional copies at the publisher's price of fifteen shillings apiece, or fewer copies at the bookseller's price of sixteen shillings.[28] Whereas Annie Parent-Charron has located thirty Parisian contracts between authors and booksellers for the years 1535 through 1560, the author's authority developed more slowly in England.[29] The earliest surviving formal agreement of this kind remains Milton's 1667 contract with Samuel Simmons for the publication of *Paradise Lost*.[30] Perhaps most notably, this agreement seems to treat the author as the work's owner: rather than assume the publisher's perpetual right to print Milton's poem, the contract stipulates that Simmons had to compensate the poet for the epic's two subsequent editions.

Likely fueling the author's growing economic authority was the name recognition that came with the spread of print culture. In practical terms,

[26] Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (London, 1643; Wing B5169), π1r, A1v.

[27] According to contemporary accounts, Sandys agreed to pay Hooker a total of £40 or £50 for the complete work of eight books. See W. Speed Hill, *Richard Hooker: A Descriptive Bibliography of the Early Editions: 1593–1724* (Cleveland, 1970), pp. 1–17; and Charles J. Sisson, *The Judicious Marriage of Mr. Hooker and the Birth of* The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 49–60.

[28] R. B. McKerrow, "A Publishing Agreement of the Late Seventeenth Century," *The Library*, 4th series 13 (1932): 184–87.

[29] See Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford, 1994), pp. 47–50. On the terms and conditions of publishing in Italy, see Craig Kallendorf, "In Search of a Patron: Anguillara's Vernacular Virgil and the Print Culture of Renaissance Italy," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 91 (1997): 294–325; as well as M. D. Feld, "A Theory of the Early Italian Printing Firm. Part II: The Political Economy of Patronage," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 34.3 (1986): 294–332.

[30] I discuss Milton's contract more fully in *Milton, Authorship and the Book Trade*, pp. 35–36, 78, 208 n.50.

printers continued to make the essential decisions for transforming authors' ideas into their printed, public forms, but publishers began to include authors' portraits in some editions. And, as Kevin Pask has observed, composing biographical accounts of poets supplanted the medieval tradition of writing saints' lives.[31] While more than half of the items published in the 1600s were still printed anonymously, other title pages advertised books as the creation of a particular person, such as "POEMS. *By* THOMAS CAREW Esquire" (1640); "POEMS, AND FANCIES: WRITTEN *By the Right HONOURABLE, the Lady* MARGARET Countesse [sic] of NEW-CASTLE" (1653); or, most famously, "Mr WILLIAM SHAKESPEARES COMEDIES, HISTORIES, & TRAGEDIES" (1623).[32] A few writers also attempted to forge distinct authorial personae within their writings. Richard Helgerson has described this urge as characteristic of a generation of Renaissance writers who, aspiring to emulate the Italian model of the laureate poet, tried to "maintain an ethically normative and unchanging self."[33] Whereas early Renaissance poets had modeled themselves as gentleman amateurs disdaining print, the courtly tradition of authorship disappeared during the ensuing decades; by the early 1700s, as Roger Chartier has observed, the originality and thus value of a work would be predicated on the existence of a visible writer.[34]

In this book, I am examining how the publication of incomplete works contributed to the Renaissance author's emerging status. By focusing readers' attention on what writers left unsaid, these unfinished works paradoxically helped to make writers more visible: through a text's omissions, readers seemed to witness firsthand an author's poetic development. Here were works in their ore, before they had been molded and polished, before they had been readied for publication. Readers could also infer that a specific author's writings must be worth perusing if the publishers bothered to print even the unfinished fragments. As the printer Miles Flesher explains in John Donne's 1633 collection, "a scattered limbe of this Author, hath

[31] Kevin Pask, *The Emergence of the English Author* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 10–13.

[32] The statistic in the first part of this sentence is based on D. F. McKenzie's study of the items published in 1644 and 1688. I am indebted to Don McKenzie for sharing with me parts of his unpublished Lyell Lectures, 1988, from which these numbers are taken. See also McKenzie, "The London Book Trade in 1644," in *Bibliographia: Lectures 1975–1988 by Recipients of the March Fitch Prize for Bibliography*, ed. John Horden (Oxford, 1992), pp. 131–51.

[33] Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton, and the Literary System* (Berkeley, 1983), p. 9.

[34] Chartier, *The Order of Books*, pp. 37–39. See also Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1979), as well as her abridged version, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1983).

more amiablenesse in it, in the eye of a discerner, then a whole body of some other [poet]."[35]

This latter premise in particular reached beyond literary authorship and can also be found, for example, in the visual arts, where artists' increasing authority was similarly associated with the Renaissance cult of the *non-finito*. When sculptors and painters left their works incomplete, it was interpreted as a deliberate decision, testifying to – rather than diminishing – the artist's genius. Despite a painter's tremendous skill, in other words, his imagination defied material realization. Thus Leonardo left many of his works unfinished because, he believed, "the hand could never give its due perfection to the object or purpose which he had in his thoughts, or beheld in his imagination."[36]

Yet, if the visual cult of the *non-finito* paid tribute to the artist's fore conceit, it simultaneously presumed an active, resourceful audience, capable of inferring information that the artist had withheld. Audiences were at least expected to look beyond an artwork's missing pieces and, in trying to imagine the original idea, confirm for themselves the work's and the artist's greatness. If we glance back at Flesher's introduction to Donne's 1633 *Poems*, the phrase "in the eye of a discerner" similarly indicates the reader's active participation in establishing Donne's authority: only a discerning reader, the printer suggests, can grant that the poet's parts are greater than other writers' wholes.

The Renaissance omissions that I analyze in this book accordingly represent sites of authorial *and* readerly authority. Just as changing cultural conditions granted authors increased importance during the early modern period, so a convergence of conventions and circumstances encouraged readers to interact with printed texts. Renaissance omissions were only one way that such an interaction was possible. In extreme cases, as with Chaucer's fragmented canon, readers became writers and published supplements to the works that they perused. But readers, as I will show in chapter 1, could also interact with a text through such protocols as marginalia, commonplace books, and errata lists. Based on these rigorous reading practices, I argue that omissions would have similarly prompted Renaissance readers to participate in their books – to read more carefully, to review the text for possible clues to seal a rift, or perhaps to come up with their own original ideas for how to fill a text's blanks.

[35] *Poems, By J. D.* (London, 1633; STC 7045), πA1v.
[36] Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of Seventy of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, ed. E. H. Blashfield, E. W. Blashfield, and A. A. Hopkins, 4 vols. (New York, 1926), 2: 376.

All reading, as reception theory has taught us, naturally depends on such speculation and inference; without an actively interpreting reader, a literary work remains a mere collection of symbols. According to some reader-response critics, most notably Roman Ingarden and Wolfgang Iser, reading requires us to "concretize" a text so as to make it internally coherent.[37] Iser specifically distinguishes between two types of omissions: *blanks*, which mark a text's "missing links," and *negations*, which invalidate a reader's aesthetic expectations. Both of these signals stimulate the audience, he explains, "whereby the hollow form of the text is filled by the mental images of the reader."[38] But for Iser these "mental images" are always determined by the text's underlying structure, not the reader's own imagination. We do not freely fill in the blanks between apparently disconnected utterances; we must fill them in and must follow the instructions that a text provides for doing so.[39]

Other reception theories instead emphasize each reader's own power to render a text meaningful. Whereas approaches such as Iser's privilege a text's strategies and conventions as fundamentally regulating readers' interpretations, this second type of reader-response criticism assumes that texts inherently contain nothing determinate. Stanley Fish, for example, suggests that readers supply meaning themselves by applying what he has identified as shared "interpretive strategies." All communication occurs in a situation, already informed by assumptions, practices, and goals – "so habitual as to be unthinking" – which pre-determine how we will hear any utterance.[40]

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[37] This specific term is introduced by Roman Ingarden, *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, trans. Ruth Ann Crowley and Kenneth R. Olson (Evanston, IL, 1973).

[38] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, 1978), pp. 184, 212–13, 225; and his earlier essay, "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction," in *Aspects of Narrative: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, ed. J. Hillis Miller (New York, 1971), pp. 1–45, especially pp. 11, 13 n. 8. In *The Act of Reading* Iser introduces a third, more amorphous category of omission, *negativity*, which he describes as the latent "double" to which almost all "formulations of the text refer" and of which "blanks and negations are the abstract manifestations" (pp. 225–26). In terms of representation, negativity signifies a text's "unformulated background" (p. 225); in terms of reception, it represents "that which has not yet been comprehended" (p. 229). As readers begin to comprehend a text, the previously hidden elements come to the fore: "negativity traces out what is not given and enables it to be communicated" (p. 226). See Iser, *The Act of Reading*, pp. 225–31, as well as the fuller discussion in Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, eds., *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory* (New York, 1989), especially pp. xi–xvii.

[39] In like manner, Iser argues, a literary text uses negation for a prearranged effect: the text subverts our aesthetic expectations so that we are drawn in and forced to reassess habitual ways of perception. Only by temporarily shedding our familiar frame of reference can we discover a new belief system and arrive at what Iser calls a text's "virtual theme," namely, the meaning of the text that is "outlined but concealed." See Iser, *The Act of Reading*, pp. 217–21.

[40] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, MA, 1980), p. 320.