

[*20] In *Rereading Poets: The Life of the Author* I propose a tripartite “systems-level” paradigm for how reading-related habits change over time, at least in the American academy. Every literary-critical system, I argue, must account for the three primary “actors” in the interpretive moment: the author who crafted the text, the textual artifact itself, and the reader who receives it, all cultural constructions. One of these three, as I see it, always ends up being privileged in relation to the other two. The New Criticism (and Modernist systems generally) privileged the text, demoting the author via what was called “the Intentional Fallacy” and the reader via “the Affective Fallacy” to relative irrelevancy. In each case biography and history were, in effect, dismissed as heretical to the reading process. Postmodernism shifted the reader to the apex, calling into fundamental question any stable conception of either the author or the text. My own preference, which I detail in *Rereading Poets*, and the system I believe is coming to the fore these days as an alternative to the now played out postmodernist approaches, privileges the author, more though as a personal force than as a source of authority, as was common in the latter half of the 19th century, the last time an author-oriented economy of reading was in effect.