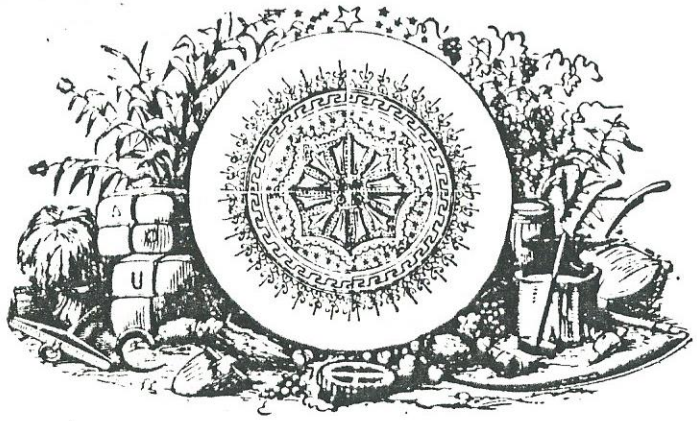
NOTES

[1] Mary Ann O'Donnell, "News and Notes," *Literary Research* 11 (1986): 215.

[2] *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) and *An Introduction to Bibliographical and Textual Studies* (New York: MLA, 1986).

[3] Eugene P. Sheehy, et al., *Guide to Reference Books*, 10th ed. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1986).



ENDING THE COLD WAR: LITERARY THEORY AND THE BIBLIOGRAPHY AND METHODS COURSE

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The Conflicts of Criticism

> Literary criticism is rather like a laboratory in which some of the staff are seated in white coats at control panels, while others are throwing sticks in the air or spinning coins. Genteel amateurs jostle with hard-nosed professionals, and after a century or so of "English" they still have not decided to which camp the subject really belongs. (Eagleton 199)

While Eagleton's amusing description of the current state of literary studies is all too painfully accurate, the basic conflict of the last hundred years has been not so much between "amateurs" and "professionals," but as Gerald Graff notes in his excellent new book, Professing *Literature*, between "critics" and "scholars" (14). That is, between those who think the backbone of literary study is "scholarly research," the establishment of "facts" of literary history and biography, textual editing, bibliography, etcetera, and those who study literature for the "meaning of meaning," for the complex role literature plays in broad cultural questions of politics, philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, and so on.

As Graff shows, neither of these positions can claim to be the "traditionalist," the "humanist," or the "revolutionary" one--for in the history of literary study, both have functioned in all these ways. A standard move in many recent essays by "theorists" is to attack the New Criticism for its naive, non-reflective, conservative humanism. But, of course, Douglas Bush attacked the New Critics in 1948 precisely for being inhuman, theoretical, willfully ahistorical "strong readers"--just the characteristics any avid post-modern follower of Harold Bloom's anxieties of influence would admire today.

And today, as Graff writes, ". . . the charges current traditionalists make against theorists are similar to those of an earlier generation against what is now taken to be traditional literary history" (248)--that it, too, was pretentiously "scientific," elitist, abstract, inhuman, and interfered with 'students' direct experience of literature: "In an institution with a short memory, yesterday's revolutionary innovation is today's' humanistic tradition" (249).

The history of literary studies, in sum, shows that from its beginnings the field has been rent by divisions, and contests about its methods, meanings, and morals. And it shows further that these debates have always been rooted in larger cultural debates about the social meanings and purposes of knowledge produced by the University. Today once more, from Allan Bloom, E. D. Hirsch, and William Bennett to followers of Derrida and Foucault, the humanities curriculum is under seige; the only thing both the Left and the Right seem to agree upon is that the present structure of humanistic studies is incoherent, oppressive, and immoral.

Bibliography and Methods

The introductory graduate course in English, often called Bibliography and Methods, is probably the most sensitive barometer to these debates about "the profession." (Once, while speaking informally to a professor of screen writing in the Department of Communication, I made reference to "the profession," and he surprised me by asking, "*Which* profession?" "English Studies," I answered, suddenly realizing the latent narcissism and defensiveness about our professionalism this very phrase implies. Of course, in Los Angeles, his field is referred to simply as "*the* industry.")

The aim of the graduate course in Bibliography and Methods is, indeed, the "professionalization" of the beginning student. So what we deem the necessary contents of this course reveals what we (covertly or overtly)

believe the advanced study of literature to be all about . . . answers to questions such as: What does "research" in literature mean? What, in fact, is literature? What are the available "methods" for understanding it? What is the rationale for these methods? How does one mediate amongst them? How do/should "professionals" talk about literature? What is the nature of a literary argument? How does one decide what an adequate interpretation is? What counts as evidence? How does one find it? What are the contexts of texts? How do we decide on appropriate context? How do we decide on appropriate texts? What counts as "success" for a literary professional?

In all too many versions of this course, however, answers to such questions are simply assumed or "given" by virtue of what readings are picked and what assignments are made; the course is not used to debate the questions themselves, to inform the student of past and present raging disagreements over alternative answers, and to help students begin--amidst all the possibilities--to articulate their own positions. Instead, we tend to conceal or downplay these painful but exhilarating disputes "like a family in which parents hide their disagreements from the children" (Graff and Gibbon, *Criticism* 12).

To some, these questions may seem philosophical, the province instead of "literary theory," and the place to consider them is an elective course in theory. Bibliography and Methods, on the other hand, is often taught as a course in descriptive, enumerative, and analytical bibliography, and textual editing through practical exercises in the library. But, of course, the choice to make this material the bulk of such a course is itself a "theoretical" one--resting on certain assumptions about the nature and purpose of literary study that have been successively contested by generalists, New Humanists, literary journalists, culture critics, New Critics, and "theorists."

And as readers of this journal know all too well, traditional bibliographers and textual critics have lost much of the prestige they held in earlier generations when their methods were thought to be the *sine qua non* of literary study. No one needs to be reminded that today there is simply no consensus either within the academy or outside it about the nature, value, and purpose of literature and literary study. Nor is there any longer a culturally homogeneous group of students undertaking the study of English.

Indeed, much recent post-structuralist literary theory abhors the very notion of "coherence" or "system," contests what works should be included in the canon, and the standards used for evaluation, asserts that "meaning is context-bound, but context is boundless" (Culler 123), claims that there is no definable "essence" to literature, and that the real literary

"text" is all of culture since culture is constructed through language and signs. Abolish English Departments, advises Eagleton, and replace them with the study of cultural "signifying practices" from "Moby Dick to the Muppet Show" (207). "Literature" has become somewhat like Garrison Keillor's mythical town of Lake Wobegon, Minnesota, about which he said, "Lake Wobegon is a real place--as long as you don't go looking for it."

A Conflictual Model

How, then, can one construct the course in Bibliography and Methods when the field is so fractured? Graff's answer, one with which I strongly agree, is that we ought not try to resolve or foreclose these conflicts, for they are ancient, fruitful, part of a democratic educational system, and themselves a critical aspect of "literary research." Moreover, "literature itself" is historically and pragmatically far too complex and disparate to be reduced to any one conception or closed set of methods. The real problem, in Graff's view, is that by virtue of the "field-coverage" model of the literary institution, whereby every "field" is blocked off and isolated from the rest (with the student playing a solitary game of "fill in the blanks"), these conflicts are isolated, neutralized, and not themselves made a part of the educational system (6-7).

Graff's central thesis is that the *content* of literary studies today is constituted precisely by these very *conflicts*, and that students and instructors at all levels need constantly to acknowledge and expose them, and reattach them to their larger cultural contexts. In other words, *every* course from the sophomore survey to the graduate seminar in semiotics is in a way a course in "methods," but methods conceived not only as a quantifiable set of library skills, but as the contested ways of reading and thinking about what literature and criticism are all about for students, scholars, and society.[1] This is not to argue for some indecisive paralysis; it means, rather, that the interpretive position the teacher has chosen must always be made clear, debatable, and placed in a context of legitimate challenges to that view.

This conflictual model, I think, is essential to reconsidering the nature of the introductory graduate course in Bibliography and Methods--even if one is not a theorist, or disagrees with much of recent criticism. That is, the course itself cannot simply be another isolated unit of study without any relation to the varying senses of literature which inform the teaching of the rest of the department--and the ways literature is now discussed by the rest of "the profession." Because of such isolation, the Bibliography and Methods course has been seen by many students as a taxing, irrelevant game of Trivial Pursuit, functioning like a vestigial appendage in most graduate

curricula: it's still there, but has lost most of its vital function for the rest of the organism.

I do not mean that theorists simply need to give more grudging acknowledgement to the importance of traditional bibliographers, or that textual editors should save a few sessions for Foucault. On the contrary, theorists' preoccupation with the nature of "textuality," with the ways in which the assumed unity of a text as given to a reader is often deceptive and inaccurate, with the difficulty of ascertaining authorial intention, with the collective modes of producing literary texts, with their reception, with the way social factors impinge on them, with the recovery and reissuing of lost and unappreciated texts by women--all these are issues which directly intersect with the practices of traditional textual scholars.

Both scholars and theorists severely criticize the "otherworldly aestheticism" of the New Critics and the myth of an autonomous text standing apart from its material history of production and reception. To use Paul Ricoeur's famous phrase, both also share the "hermeneutics of suspicion" and seek to undermine the naive reader's unexamined trust in any given printed page. Their "ideologies" as to the *meanings* and uses of these literary phenomena may differ drastically, but they share important concerns.

As Patrick Scott writes,

> . . . textual bibliography only earns its privileged place in the graduate curriculum when it escapes from the unreal literary-historical pastoral of the common research text books and exploits its unique position at the intersection of many separate intellectual debates. Textual bibliographers have been far too reluctant to make public the real disputability and uncertainty that underlies their craft, partly because they have been too involved in the limiting service activity of editing stable and stabilized texts. In my own experience, nearly all the thrill of textual work comes because texts *aren't* stable, because there isn't a single intellectually respectable way of rendering them perfect, and it is in exploring and debating such uncertainties that we find the real pleasure of the text, not in the premature closure of the debate we must impose on ourselves as we edit (61).

Again, this means no more hiding of disagreements from the children, or refusing to take seriously or enter into "the children's" passions

and arguments. As William Proctor Williams writes, one of the reasons for the current lack of attention to bibliography and textual matters is in part that "bibliographers and textual critics have never bothered to talk seriously about their subject to anyone but themselves, or, when they have talked to others about it they have only seen fit to ridicule their non-bibliographical colleagues for their errors" (76). The whole energy of current literary theory comes from serious and long-standing philosophical questions about the relation of "fact" and "interpretation," "history" and "criticism." It's not just McKerrow, Tanselle, Greg, Bowers, Gaskell, and Altick who are important to read on this problem, but, yes, Heidegger, Derrida, Rorty, Thomas Kuhn, Robert Scholes, and Stanley Fish.

Alas, however, Williams, despite his recognition of the need to talk to others, thinks of the conversation more in terms of missionary evangelism than even inter-faith dialogue: "We must begin preaching to the unconverted" (76). For he is worried about "selling out a form of scholarly inquiry which dates more than two thousand years to the days of the Alexandrian library, or the academic prostitution of trimming courses to meet the 'needs' of new and transient subspecies of academic investigation" which he exemplifies by most major schools of criticism from Matthew Arnold's "touchstones" through Deconstruction. "Bibliographical studies," he points out, existed before all these "and, if we do our work properly, it will exist after them as well" (78). This seems to me a kind of "We will bury you" argument that will do bibliographical and textual studies as much intellectual and political good as it did for Nikita Kruschev. In the meantime, there are a lot of people who are now trying to torch the library, or worse, who really don't think the library worth bothering about at all.

But there remain a few who love books--our graduate students. It is not "prostitution" to help the student interested in reader-response criticism and reception theory learn how to find and analyze contemporary reviews of a work; nor is it "prostitution" to show the feminist critic how to edit a newly-found manuscript by an unknown woman author, or to teach him or her about the economic and social aspects of book publishing that contributed to womens' difficulties in getting published. The deconstructionist will love the numerous variants in unstable texts that a textual editor agonizes over (of course, the deconstructionist will not want to finalize or "authorize" any one of them); the Marxist critic will be fascinated with the mass of data on how influential the material modes of production (the "base") are on the idealized, "autonomous" poem ("superstructure"). And the bibliographer and textual critic might even see his or her own work in a new light by learning why reader-response critics are so interested in how a reader creates a work as much as its author. Part

of being a "professional" means remaining abreast of changes in one's field, and being responsible for periodically questioning one's assumptions and practices in light of new challenges.

Apart from the philosophical and ethical reasons for doing so, it is also our practical professional responsibility to give graduate students some broad overview so they can simply survive and meet all the intellectual and interpretive demands different seminars--and "the profession"--will make. There is no longer any one consistent and coherent type of literary scholarship, and I fear that students trained in only one type of scholarship (be it the most recent post-structuralist theory, or the most traditional form of textual editing or New Criticism) will eventually find themselves somewhat like the legions of unemployable blue-collar workers in our post-industrial economy.

In any case, discontent with graduate curricula is widespread, and the whole idea of elaborate historical "coverage" as the model for graduate study is being abandoned.[2] MLA statistics compiled from responses to its own survey of the doctoral programs show that two-thirds of the respondents (comprising 86% of the 139 doctoral-granting institutions) reported that they had substantially changed the Ph.D. examinations since 1975 (Denham 2). Such is the case at my own University, where the massive Ph.D. exam reading lists have been modified and the need for more interpretive and critical skills stressed. In the rest of this essay, I would like to use the concrete example of the changes made in our graduate program in the last few years to exemplify one response to issues about the introductory course which I have been summarizing here.

601 at Maryland

Until 1984, our introduction to graduate study, entitled "English 601, Bibliography and Methods" had gone unchanged for many years; it was oriented almost exclusively to analytical and descriptive bibliography and textual editing. (Some sections concentrated more on enumerative bibliography, depending on the interest of the professor.) Students reported, however, that they found much of this information irrelevant for the kinds of work they later did in their seminars--(few of which at that time involved the latest fashions in literary theory). Moreover, many of our graduate students complained that they would go to MLA and other professional meetings and not understand what many of the talks, which assumed knowledge of new methods and theory, were all about; they felt deprived and also at a disadvantage compared to other students on the job market.

And it is also true that few careers today are begun or made in textual editing or bibliography. In 1986, the largest number of vacancies on the MLA Job Information List were in "rhetoric and composition," 169 out of 854; creative writing (50); Restoration and 18th century (52); and "generalist" (49). Even the student hired as a specialist in Restoration comedy will find himself or herself spending many years teaching introductory courses, composition, surveys, and the like.

In response to these challenges, we completely revamped English 601. The course description, written by members of the Graduate Committee and approved by members of the Graduate Faculty, now reads:

> The objective of this course is to give incoming graduate students an overview of the different kinds of work that have and can be done in our discipline, in order that they may have some informed basis on which to choose their subsequent graduate courses, and the *beginnings* of a critical and theoretical vocabulary. It aims to *introduce* the student not only to different methodologies, but also to the premises about the nature of the discipline that underlie them, making it clear that while the changes that have taken place in critical method are in a sense historical and sequential, the selection of a particular method or branch of the discipline is also a matter of personal preference.

Six topics were chosen as essential: historical criticism, textual studies and editing; New Criticism; semiotics and structuralism; poststructuralism; deconstruction and reader-response; feminist and socio-political criticism. The idea was to introduce these topics in as broad a manner as possible, to have students "learn *about* these methods, and to learn them from the most succinct and lucid sources," which in some cases (for instance, deconstruction) would be the short explanatory guides rather than texts like *Of Grammatology*. Having taught the course once, I now would also recommend beginning the semester by having students read a good overall history of literary study such as Graff's, adding a few chapters or essays from more polemical studies such as Eagleton's or Ohmann's.[3]

"Historical research," then, would itself be studied first of all "historically"--in the context of the changing ideas about what "literary meanings and facts" are. One exercise in historical criticism using a text of the student's own choice would give the student a *general* grasp of basic research tools and problems. This, then, would be contrasted with the New

Criticism through examples of critical essays from each genre. And this would lead to the most current blaze on the literary scene, the so-called "New Historicism." I would place an "old historicist" essay on Shakespeare next to one by a critic like Stephen Greenblatt --one of the representatives of the latest "revolution." For once again, here the "material practices of literary production" have come to the fore, though the entire concept of "history" has gone through the post-structuralist wringer, and been reconnected to questions of political "ideology" and struggles for "power."[4]

But the New Historicists have been attacked for being unskilled and poor "historians." They may have read their Greenblatt, Foucault, Althusser, Gramsci, and Raymond Williams, but do they understand how to find, evaluate, and use documents? This raises in a vital new way the question of establishing the "scholarly accuracy" of texts, documents, and contexts.

Textual studies in our new context means an essentially elementary introduction to issues such as correct editions, editorial interventions, and copy-texts. Our assumption is that most students will not be going on to do extensive textual editing, but they need to know how to choose any major edition they might work with in the future, and to determine what its editorial assumptions are. Again, if these issues are discussed in terms of the current theoretical debates about the "death of the author," the political effects of social and material modes of production, and what different ideologies of a "correct" text reveal, the traditional topic of textual studies takes on new life. Jerome McGann's approach to the problem in *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* is an example of the approach I am advocating; indeed, he is a paradigmatic example of how textual criticism can engage literary theory in a way that is intellectually exciting and productive.

The other course topics introduce at a very basic level the ways recent changes in linguistics, philosophy, and political ideology have entered literary discourse over the past twenty years and challenged all the older methods. And if this were not enough, instructors are also advised that in addition to these core topics, they might want to introduce additional topics of particular interest to them, including, to quote the new course description again "hermeneutics, psychoanalytic criticism, canon formation and revision, cultural anthropology, formal bibliography, biographical criticism, speech act theory, scholarly reviewing."

Student Profiles

By now, the course might sound like "Mission Impossible." But with great hopes, I began to teach one of the first sections of it in the Fall of

1985 to a group of eighteen graduate students who represented the typical mix of our Department--and probably the mix in most large state universities with Ph.D. programs. There were a few 21 year-olds fresh out of college who were there because they "just liked to read," not at all sure whether they wanted to make this a "career," and terrified that they might not have the "right stuff" to do it.

There were several seasoned high school teachers from local schools working on terminal M.A's, or occasionally a Ph.D. There were also some foreign students, one of whom was terribly lonesome and homesick, and whose entire experience in analyzing literature had been to "talk about characters and themes." There were several older students who had worked or were still working at other jobs or careers. Some of them now knew they wanted a life in which they devoted themselves to what they really loved, literature; others were tentatively exploring that possibility; others were doing it for enrichment. One was a "creative writer." Another was a refugee from a graduate program in Political Science who decided he wanted to pursue a more "humanistic" field. A transfer student or two were there from other universities. Some of these students were brilliant; others mediocre. About half held Teaching Assistantships which required them to teach two sections of Freshman Composition per semester (with 22 students in each class), in addition to taking two graduate seminars. These students, especially those in their first semester of graduate study, were in a constant state of fatigue, stress, and anxiety.

The backgrounds and desires of these students were as disparate as the topics we were to cover. Only perhaps a third of them either desired or were able to go on for the Ph.D. But it is the mission of a state university such as ours to serve the needs of all these students. Few were sure about what they wanted to specialize in, but almost all of them cherished the idea of teaching, and were intensely concerned about how to do it, how to share what had meant so much to them with others. I suspect that most graduate students enter the program with this same motivation--it's the unusual student who knows right off what his or her primary research goal is, has the field and topic in mind, and doesn't change it two or three years later. Except for some of the second-year students who had delayed taking the course (a common problem), most were afraid and very insecure about their ability to succeed in this strange new world.

The emotional tenor of this group of students was typical for first semester graduate study. I learned how deep their emotions were only a year later when I decided to send them each a questionnaire about how the course had prepared them for their subsequent graduate studies. The lapse

of time, I thought, would give both them and me a good perspective on the value of the course and how successfully it had helped their graduate careers. Few of them had revealed to me at the time, or on the initial course evaluations, how scared, overwhelmed, and apprehensive they were throughout the semester. About half of the questionnaires were returned, and the comments were wonderfully illuminating. Here are some of the most relevant:

> The first semester of graduate study can be harrowing and bleak, so much so that even highly qualified and motivated students can begin to question their ability. But the one thing a serious student does have to keep him or her going is enthusiasm. This is precisely what is tapped in a theoretical overview, in a way traditional bibliography and textual editing cannot claim. Theory broadly conceived represents the various energies which are brought to literary studies; studying theory in a relatively non-threatening way can energize a student at a very beneficial time. . . . Because a beginning student hasn't yet specialized so much, he or she can (and should) become aware of central prejudices and predilections. And, on the opposite side, bibliography and textual editing will benefit from the more specialized closeness to literature which comes later in a graduate student's career.

I especially would stress this student's last comment. *In my view, the real place for the extensive bibliography and "research" methods course is precisely when the student begins a dissertation, or advanced specialized seminar and is about to embark on intensive library work.* At this point in a graduate student's career, the deeper intricacies of bibliography and textual editing may become relevant, exciting, and helpful. And since by this time in a graduate career, the student is so often isolated, coming together to share the problems of research with others would be a welcome relief. The course could be entirely oriented around the students' dissertations or seminar paper topics. The instructor would then be seen as a mature source of advice and guidance instead of a cruel taskmaster inflicting a series of irrelevant tasks on an oppressed student.

In another seminar, I once asked students to write about their best and worst learning experiences, and it was no surprise to me that one of the best and most hard-working wrote:

> My worst learning experience was the first course I took as a graduate student--Introduction to Graduate Studies [This was at another University; she had transferred.] . . . Our intellectual work consisted mostly of exhausting hours spent in the library trying to find answers to trivial questions and putting together a bibliography of the debate about Shakespeare's authorship.

It's clear here that the passionate philosophical, cultural, and intellectual debates which originally energized "traditional scholarship" so long ago have been completely cut off from the "methods" being taught, and those "methods" do not address themselves to the new debates either. For an entering student without any background in this history or any permission to participate in these debates, the exercises in "methods" are utterly meaningless.

It takes a great amount of hope and enthusiasm to decide to take a graduate degree in English today. The job market, though better, is still highly competitive, friends and relatives generally disparage literature study as impractical, and there are no immediate financial rewards --penury and sacrifice, rather, for many years, and no assured job at the end of training, and even with a job, no assured career with tenure. At the least, we ought to do our best to encourage and inspire those beginning students who still believe in the importance and value of literary study, so that when they do have to endure some of the tedium of those long hours in the library later on, they can fight off despair about their future, and retain their sense of confidence and joy about their choice, and a sense of the worth of what they are doing.

The first student I quoted put it better:

> My work, I can honestly say, has been helped immeasurably by awareness of theoretical concerns operative in the field today. A students *needs* this "Big Picture." A graduate student in the field of English has chosen a strange career, and must know why that choice is a worthwhile one. Otherwise, the specific tasks can overwhelm him or her. Every grad student knows how to deal with a text, a term paper, and a library. What the grad student needs is a rationale for dealing with literary study in general, and the various approaches of literary theory represent a powerful tool in this regard.

Now this is not to say that coping with all the demands of the topics described in our new 601 course above was inevitably a pleasant and joyful experience for graduate students. As the first student also wrote, it was overwhelming: "The reading is difficult and cannot be covered very quickly without confusing people," and this, too, can be "disheartening." Some of the weaker students, and the "I just like to read" types, strongly resisted having to question and analyze so hard, and were discouraged and bewildered by all the arguments about literary meaning and interpretation.

Nonetheless, after having a year's more experience in graduate study, most of the students who complained thought that in the end everything was important, and did not want any element of the course dropped. One who did not have a very strong undergraduate preparation and had been out of school for several years wrote that he had felt as if he were having "the rug pulled out from underneath me when I really didn't even have the floor underneath the rug yet," but now "I see the value of having that course as I breeze through journals and read articles and reviews and have a basis for understanding who and what they are writing about."

Despite the difficulties, and the discomfort of having to question values and assumptions, the students expressed gratitude for the sense of "freedom" the course gives them --freedom to know what their options are, and where the critical approaches they had often been taught as "*the* truth of the text" had come from, and how they were debatable. These benefits, too, were easier to appreciate for those who had already had a semester or year of study when they took the course. A second-year student wrote:

> . . . 601 provided a significant boost to my self-confidence. While my critical approach during the first year of graduate study amounted to a confused conglomeration of my undergraduate teachers' perspectives (which I could not distinguish to save my life, thinking that the ideas they generated were things *inherent* to the text, things that *only I* could not see), I've found that 601 has made me much better equipped not only to *sort* the obfuscating flurry of critical perspectives one faces in a given department or publication, but even to *evaluate* their usefulness in a given context. . . . It seems like learning the footwork of research methods is 'aproductive' without a reasonable grasp of literary theory. . . . I almost feel as if my first year was wasted; I doubt I could trust my confused notes from my initial course work when preparing for future examinations (orals, comps).

Pedagogy

One solution to the problem of the overwhelming mass of material would be to use the venerable "case method" of study. That is, choose only *one* literary work to study for the entire semester, and illustrate all the problems and methods through that work. Students could work individually or in rotating teams finding, reading, and reporting to the rest of the class one week on the work's textual problems, the next on biography, another on how the New Critics read the work, another on what feminists have had to say about it, another on a reader-response interpretation, and so on.[5] Or, one could allow the student to choose his or her own favorite text to use as a touchstone for the various methods, writing a brief paper each week or two applying methods or testing theories against the chosen text. Sometimes this approach would involve library research and sometimes not. Needless to say, it is only through example and practice that any of the ideas or methods under consideration are really to be understood.

Another way to help students grasp the material and engage them is by raising pedagogical issues. As I have noted, virtually all of my students wanted to teach and were excited about the prospect; many of them were also already grappling with the problems of teaching freshman composition, high school English, or introductory literature courses. Whenever I would raise issues of how a given approach would affect what they might do in an undergraduate classroom, the students became especially alive and interested.

Pedagogical issues, though, are not simply gimmicks to arouse interest. Rather, they reconnect us to the meanings of the entire enterprise of literary study. Clearly, one of the worst problems in graduate study today is that we give students no help or preparation whatsoever for actually going into a classroom and teaching literature to the average recalcitrant undergraduate. What tacit assumptions underlie that failure? The old Arnoldian confidence in the great humanizing mission of literary study may be shaken, but that is no excuse for refusing to ask what, in the end, English studies are for? And to whom are we responsible? Or as Richard Ohmann puts it, "Is humanity being served by the Humanities?"(5)

And why, with the 44,000 scholarly articles on literature indexed every year in the *MLA International Bibliography*, with the thousands of books, and millions of dollars paid in salaries, does the average high school student come to us still intensely disliking "English," and knowing little about it, while the average undergraduate leaves four years later in more or less the same condition? There is a limit to the blame we can pass off onto

television, rock videos, a philistine culture, or high school teachers (who, in fact, are only passing on in a watered down way what they learned from us, usually in the mode of the New Criticism).

When we fail to take pedagogy seriously--as an important part of "professional training" all the way from the introductory course through the special seminars--we are implicitly telling the next generation of English professors that their obligations are to no one but themselves and specialists in their fields; we are assuring them that "teaching doesn't count," that teaching is something you just somehow pick up along the way while trying to get your grants and time off to pursue your research interests. It's a bit like restricting medical education to textbooks, and never helping or supervising medical students and interns when they actually have to deal with real patients.

As Ohmann points out, "Departments are thought of as ultimately responsible to the discipline, or to 'literature' not to the college or even to the students" (238). The University is fractured with no coherent vision of what a liberal education is; differing specialists within departments rarely engage each other intellectually, let alone communicate with professors within other Departments. As Allan Bloom puts it with his gift for infuriating but accurate metaphors, "the student must navigate among a collection of carnival barkers, each trying to lure him to a particular sideshow" (339).

Again, with Graff, I would urge that all these painful issues about the larger role of "English" in the university and society themselves be made a constant part of our studies. We cannot assume everyone knows how and why literary study is important, or will assent to financing whatever special interests and ideas we may have; the majority of articles in the popular media about our conventions and preoccupations are, in fact, sarcastic and ridiculing. Yet liberal education is a topic of such intense popular interest that E.D. Hirsch and Allan Bloom made it to the best-sellers list and stayed there for months along with Bill Cosby, John Madden, M. Scott Peck, and Stephen King.

And it is especially important to raise these issues when our students are just beginning, and trying to intuit and adopt what they perceive to be the values, beliefs, and roles of "the profession." (I spent the last day of class in my 601 seminar by inviting in a few other faculty members and having them talk about the progress of their own careers, the ways they made their choices, and how they regard those decisions from their current perspective. Students found this immensely helpful.) Nor should the

Introductory Course be seen as the necessarily painful "rite of initiation"--the more arduous and discouraging the better, with the aim being "the survival of the fittest."

A constant theme of this essay so far has been the attitude and ethos of the course. And this was something my students stressed as well. In their state of confusion, anxiety, and naivete, they needed to be assured that they were not immediately expected to become through this one course alone accomplished and perfect practitioners of criticism; that the purpose was to orient and introduce them, to allow them to test, experiment, and question. We often forget how long it takes, how many years of experience and practice are required for us to become competent and effective scholars. On the old *Amos n' Andy* radio show, Amos once asked the Kingfish how he had acquired such good judgment. "From experience," answered the Kingfish. "And how did you get your experience?" asked Amos. Answered the Kingfish: "From bad judgment."

Our students also need to be cautioned not merely to ape one or another critical style, but to evaluate and proceed thoughtfully, and try to find their own voices. This seems to me to be one of the most serious problems in much graduate work. Students think the ticket to success is to mimic one theorist or critic or another, so they write critical clichés as if they were newly discovered and original truths, and they clot their prose with jargon.

Here, for example, is a sample of a letter of application sent last year to our department for an assistant professorship in the History of Criticism:

> My dissertation explores questions of text, subject, and ideology in the production of meaning and seeks to outline those determinations which structure and condition the ways in which texts are differentially mobilized ideologically inserted within and articulated with different cultural practices, and constitute the site across which struggle of meaning (and hegemony) is conducted.

To my ear, these numbing words are like a mindless dogmatic confession of faith ritually repeated as some magic incantation. Here is another:

> My dissertation . . . examines rhetorical strategies in both romantic figurality and contemporary critical theory (such as deconstruction), the basic character of which, I would argue, has emerged in a confrontation with romantic writing. What interests me is the structure of a "moment" (whether in literary or critical texts) that, by force of its rhetorical staging, reveals literary strategies to be bound up with critical ones and vice versa. In my study, the "sublime" as a rhetorical category, attempts to characterize the textual movement of such a discourse.

For a writer interested in "rhetoric," this applicant has little sense of how effectively to address himself or herself to a particular audience. I gave these samples to my 601 class as warnings, and I would in the future do even more with samples of student writing to help them understand just what makes for a good literary essay. One of my very best students wrote that she needed "an answer to the question of what a reasonable seminar paper is. Apparently I am still trying to write Masters Theses for seminars, and, terrifyingly, I do not know how to stop." In fact, the overall perspective of 601 might just be that of "rhetoric," rhetoric as the study of language use in social contexts, as the study of how arguments are constructed, and how they might be evaluated.[6]

Interestingly, the one thing almost all contentious theorists agree on today is that "rhetoric" is one of the best available models for understanding literature and criticism. The radical Marxist, Terry Eagleton, who defines rhetoric as study of a text to see "how its discourse is structured and organized, and examining what kind of effects these forms and devices produce in particular readers in actual situations," concludes his recommendation of rhetoric as the central method for cultural studies by noting that "Like all the best radical positions, then, mine is a thoroughly traditionalist one" (205-6). Thus, once again in literary studies radical and traditionalist stances exchange places. Or, as the saying goes, "If you stand in one place long enough, eventually you will find yourself at the head of the parade."

Conclusion

I have ranged widely in this essay; it may even seem as if I have used the Bibliography and Methods course as an excuse to examine all the woes and wonders of literary study. But that is precisely what I think this course should begin to help students do. No single course on its own, of course, can bear all the responsibility for such an enterprise. But the Introduction to Graduate Study, like any "literary introduction," must entice, must persuade the audience of the importance of the topic, must break ground and give an overview of what is to come. As one of my students who originally had great difficulty keeping up with the course later wrote, "[I

realized] that theory changes not just a person's opinion about a work, but the whole subject matter of a discipline and one's whole outlook on the world and humankind." Isn't that, in the end, the goal of literary study and the very function of books, and why we care so much about them? As Robert Scholes puts it, the goal of literary study is to give us "a way of discovering how to choose, how to take some measure of responsibility for ourselves and our world" (73).

So in the complicated and chaotic state of literary study today, this course should be the place where we bring our conflicts into the open. It should be the mirror in which we look at ourselves with all our blemishes and beauty. And by being forced to stand side by side to look in that mirror together, "scholars and critics" might just be able to end their cold war.

NOTES

[1] The model of classroom practice which Robert Scholes proposes in *Textual Power* does precisely this. The three goals of pedagogy in his view are what he calls "reading," "interpretation," and "criticism." "Reading" involves gaining the basic background in historical information; "interpretation" depends on the "failures of reading," that is, the sense of incompleteness the reader feels in sensing the excess of meaning in the text; and "criticism" depends on the excess in the reader, the reader's need and ability to critique the themes or codes of the text, which opens the path to the "social text in which we live." Otherwise stated, "reading" is producing "text within text;" "interpretation" is "text upon text;" and "criticism" is "text against text" (21-24). The teacher's job is "not to produce 'readings' for students, but to give them the tools for producing their own." (24) The point of teaching is not to "usurp the interpreter's role, but to explain the rules of the interpretive game, the codes of interpretation as it is practiced within the institutionalized sedimentations that threaten to fossilize us all" (30).

[2] In the 1987 Report of the Executive Director of the MLA, Phyllis Franklin reviewed the results of the recent conference on the future of doctoral studies in English held in April with representatives of 62% of the Ph.D. granting departments: "Although much was left unresolved, many agreed that 'the principle of coverage' no longer provided the proper foundation for the graduate curriculum, that the traditional literary canon has been called into question by current literary theory and practice, that future models for graduate education should attempt to integrate literary study and writing, and that staffing undergraduate courses places too heavy a teaching burden on graduate students" (2).

[3] In addition to Graff, Ohmann, and Eagleton, several other books and essays have appeared recently which deal with the history of literary study and criticism, and also the effects of these issues on the classroom. Among them are Cain's *The Crisis in Criticism*, Atkins and Johnson's *Reading and Writing Differently*, and Nelson's *Theory in the Classroom*.

[4] See, for example, the essays in Dollimore and Sinfield's *Political Shakespeare* and the Louis Montrose and Jean Howard essays in the special issue of *English Literary Renaissance* on the New Historicism.

[5] In fact, this case model is advocated by Jeffrey Robinson in *Radical Literary Education* for the *undergraduate* major's introduction to "Critical Writing About Literature." He describes his aim as the discovery of a "work of literature as an event both making and made by various histories and contexts" (3). Robinson used Wordsworth's "Intimations" ode as the *only* primary text of his undergraduate course, first reading the poem itself closely to discover the poet's reasoning, values, images; then reading other chronologically arranged odes of the tradition from Pindar through Keats to understand the genre and the problems of originality and tradition; then looking at different manuscripts and published versions of the poem to see the changes as responses to pressures of history, biography, psychology; then turning to contemporary reviews by Hazlett and Coleridge; and so on through the semester.

[6] I am indebted to Professor Michael Marcuse for helping me formulate the issue in this precise way.

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