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HOW DEPARTMENTS COMMIT SUICIDE

IN MY book *The Academic Tribes* (1976), I offer a series of principles and antinomies of academic politics, which by way of introduction I shall briefly restate here. They are: (1) The Diffusion of Academic Authority: No one has the complete power to do any given thing. (2) The Deterioration of Academic Power: Real academic power deteriorates from the moment of an administrator's first act. (3) The Diminishment of Organizational Allegiance: The fundamental allegiance of the faculty member will be to the smallest unit to which he or she belongs. (4) The Luxury of Principle; or, The Third Law of Academic Motion: To every administrative act there is an equal and opposite reaction. (5) The Protective Coloration of Eccentricity: Eccentricity is not only to be tolerated in academic life, it is often a positive virtue. (6) The Necessity of Symbolism: Faculties demand the proper maintenance of the symbols of their institutions.

The Antinomies: (1) The faculty is the university; the faculty are employees of the university. (2) The Administration is master of the faculty; the Administration is servant of the faculty. In seven years no one has disputed these principles, and my antinomies have on the whole fared better than Kant's: They have the good fortune to be ignored or to be taken for granted, so I have easily mustered the temerity to offer four more principles that are this time devoted to the behavior of academic departments. These principles, unlike my previous ones, have a polemical and ominous quality that seems correct for the times. They should hold as admonitory advice to chairs as long as English departments survive, taking their places alongside the wisdom of recent decades that memorializes Parkinson, Peter, and the engineer who observed that if anything can go wrong it will. I offer my principles in logical order:

Principle the First: *An overworked and underfunded department has a greater chance for health than any other.* I do not offer this as Pollyanna, nor is it meant as a mirror in which you can all see yourselves. Rather, it is a simple fact that departments are thriving when they recognize themselves as being in a lean and hungry condition. Look at it this way: To enjoy a more saturnine state is inevitably to approach deanly dismemberment, to face the need to make appalling decisions that cause interest groups in the department to compete frantically for anything likely to remain. The impulse of each group is to develop first-strike defensive capabilities and use them on all the other kivas of the tribe. Only in the underfunded, overworked state can a department chair approach a dean and demand justice with all the weight of morality on his or her side. It is quite unlikely that anything resembling a beautiful goddess with scales in

Hazard S. Adams

hand will appear. Most deans these days, being strictly empiricists, cannot summon up mythical belief. But there is satisfaction in being able to argue with one's dean a morally sound position and to come away yet again convinced of one's moral superiority. Furthermore, the problem will have been kicked upstairs for the time being. Corollary: *Everything in administration is for the time being.*

It follows that a situation in which one is not underfunded and overworked ought not to be allowed to occur. It would be an incompetence to see the possibility of balance and not avoid it. This is as axiomatic as the rule that one should never end the academic year in the black, unless one wants oneself to become a dean by the route of sycophancy. Indeed, a slight deficit is most desirable. Anything else is bad management. This only proves once more that the rules of academic life are political, not those of business.

Ultimately more important than achieving a deficit is the capture and ownership of symbols. One must maintain the power to define the terms one employs. One must be able to declare with authority and absolutely, for example, what being underfunded and overworked means. One cannot allow one's terms to float about in such a way as to be capturable by the dean's business manager. Nor is it advisable for a definition to be borrowed from any other department or to be consistent with any known deanly working formula. There must be a certain mystery in one's definitions, particularly in questions of class size and teaching load. Let me offer an example of how the establishment of one of these symbols can go wrong, even when one's own definition of appropriate class size has been accepted. For some reason not entirely clear to me, historians seem to welcome large classes. Perhaps it is in their character to want to deliver truth in the mode of pomposity learned from the political figures they study. Perhaps they want the luxury of avoiding dealing with their students' writing so that they can continue to deplore it and the effectiveness of the English department. This tendency to tolerate large classes is, I think, dangerous. Historians may be underfunded and

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overworked, but their definition of appropriate class size tends not to reveal this and as a result there has to be a diminution of their communal sense of moral superiority, though some historians may regain it as individuals whenever they contemplate a sea of bright faces before them. This does a department no political good. On the other hand, some smaller departments find themselves by the measure of class size overfunded and apparently underworked. Since they have little hope of attracting more students in the short run, it is clear that their best hope to become underfunded, overworked, and thus in this way safe from the ax is to enlarge their scope, invent new courses, advertise them, and thereby attract new students. Involved here, of course, is a definition of what they do, a capturing of a new symbol. I shall say more about this in connection with Principle the Fourth, for there are dangers in such strategies. Clearly the important thing is for a department to be able to declare the appropriate ways in which it works. This means that some things become unthinkable or nearly unthinkable about that department. This is something that cannot be achieved overnight and must be worked on communally, which is one reason it doesn't often occur.

I might add that many science departments work communally to define teaching load and admirably mystify it in the most effective ways, though the same strategy—if it could ever be discovered and reduced to rigorous principles—might not be workable for humanists without radical and perhaps undesirable changes. A humanities faculty member's teaching load is roughly definable in terms of courses taught. Some science departments succeed in applying the strategy of absolute obfuscation on this point, to the extent that even a dean's spies infiltrated into the ranks cannot return with a clear picture. Perhaps a team of humanists should be appointed to explore the advantages and disadvantages of principles of obfuscation for their own uses. The problem here, of course, is that humanists don't tend to work very well at anything in teams.

In short, to be underfunded and overworked is to be alive, to be planning constantly to escape such a state even as one knows the dangers of any other and have constantly in the back of one's mind ways to become underfunded and overworked in the unlikely event of a stunning success. In addition to ensuring a sense of moral well-being, such activity exercises the mind, sharpens one's sense of irony, and busies the faculty, thus decreasing time for less charming forms of activity, whether mischievous or morosely introspective, as humanists are often likely to be.

Principle the Second: *The usual strategies of department self-protection are self-defeating and can lead to suicide.* (One of the ways is to become evenly funded and evenly worked, as I believe I have just shown, but there are many other ways.) This principle is designed to apply particularly to departments in the so-called

humanities and particularly to large departments like English, but I have come to believe that it holds throughout the institution. The most common and most pernicious strategy is to resist every possibility of reaching out beyond the department's so-called traditional boundaries. It must first be remembered that on the grounds of history alone English departments are relatively young phenomena and need not regard what they should or should not do as chiseled in stone. Nor did the originary department chair see the backside of God. The so-called traditional definition of what is central to a department is always passé once it has become possible to utter it in one hundred words or less, which is to say make it comprehensible to a dean. When this steady state is achieved it has already been time to move on, if only to maintain obfuscatory advantage—one of the few advantages (as I have already implied) that one enjoys over a dean. Generally some such passé notion defines the departmental major and under the standard of self-protection drives decision making. To protect the major becomes unfortunately synonymous with survival, and this in turn tends to limit opportunity for growth (if one wants that) and intellectual development (which surely one ought to want). To fall back and really rally 'round in this way is to harden into dogma the results of the violent revolutions of a previous generation of scholars and surely to lay the groundwork unknowingly for a new revolution, as violent as the preceding one, now forgotten. To build one's program and faculty entirely around protection of the major is almost certain to limit future possibilities, which are so often generated by fortunate chance or unexpected opportunities. Such closing in is found also in time to be erosive of student interest and respect. The history of classics in many institutions confirms this view. When a new infusion of imagination in classics departments led to a reaching out toward other departments and new critical approaches, classics reversed the trend. Recently, my own institution, under severe budgetary pressure, has painfully reviewed certain departments with the possibility of eliminating them. One of these departments, Near Eastern languages and literatures, was on the list. In this day and age, why? Well, the reasons for termination given by the administration turned out to be based on not very good information; upon review the decision was wisely reversed. But what caused this department to become a target in the first place? The main reasons were, of course, complex, involving basic misunderstandings and power politics outside the department, and the department's special internal history, but the department was never able to define itself in a way that helped. This internal failure generated over time a garrison mentality that saw no offensive strategy as possible. As far as I can tell the department didn't know how to demonstrate that it was reaching out and was important to the rest of the institution. Now, of course, reaching out must be done with im-

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agination and dignity. Surely the department had its opportunity in the light of the importance of the Near East in the public eye today. But under siege the department retracted rather than regrouped, and it had to be saved by a massing of friendly external forces. Each act of self-protection had made matters worse.

Well, you may say, English is simply not in that sort of fix. Probably not, at least over the short term, but in many places in recent years there have been ominous events that if unchecked would have transformed the situation radically. The short-term problem for English is not survival but how to maintain a relatively quite favorable position. That is one way of putting it. The other way is: How to play the productive intellectual roles that English can and ought to perform.

Generally, the death wish expresses itself in English departments by (a) denigration and/or trivialization, often subtle, of the department's so-called service role, (b) relegation of some departmental programs to the periphery, (c) failure to give leadership (as a large department should) in the development of general education, (d) refusal to embrace new aspects of intellectual life that might well become or in part become the province of English, and (e) refusal to lead in areas where interdepartmental cooperation makes more sense than provinciality or aggressive colonizing. Let me take up each of these points briefly. There is no reason in history or in stone tablets to assume that literary study, regarded as the study of the great works of poetry, drama, and prose fiction, should be regarded as the center of English studies. There is no reason to claim that literature as an art is the center. That claim was refreshingly made by the New Critics at a moment in the history of all this when it was rightly perceived that the notion of literature as an art was being taught nowhere or in very few places and that it ought to be. There followed a gradual victory of this view—a victory perhaps too successful for the health of English seen as a congeries of disciplines. As a result, a natural and completely understandable reaction set in. By no means a matter entirely of competing critical theories, it was the rebellion of the other disciplines housed in English against the hegemony of an aesthetically oriented criticism. In other words, it was political as well as intellectual. Significant developments in linguistics and anthropology clamored for a hearing along with certain ideological movements. There is probably always going to be this kind of jostling. Whatever values or groups seem to prevail at any moment, there is a tendency to forget or try to forget that English departments perform a general intellectual role. They should do so with a sense of professional responsibility that they will not abdicate in the face of fashion. It ought to be a task at least as important as any other. Furthermore, departments should never again fail to recognize that the teaching of writing and the contribution to the literacy of the university community are the depart-

ment's loaves and fishes in times of want. This was nearly forgotten in the heady sixties, when students were suddenly declared to have reached heights of literacy unknown to colleges in years gone by, and certainly not known since. Elsewhere I have written that freshman English (or some variation) is "our help in ages past / our hope in years to come / our shelter from the stormy blast / and our eternal home." Let our suicide not occur from our forgetting these most relevant of lines from that old hymn. Let us also declare that this is a responsibility that we had better not delegate or abdicate to other units that advertise quick and easy solutions. It would be irresponsible and it would be self-destructive. It would, of course, result in being overfunded and underworked.

There are other things that English needs to provide to the academic community and that the community needs. In today's theoretical and social climate it is difficult to articulate literary artistic values effectively and, of course, some theories reject such values as socially pernicious or irrelevant, viewing all writing as grist to the mill. From some points of view this is no doubt correct but from a point of view that does hold to a notion of artistic value or to the desire for verbal literacy and dexterity, it appears to me that Shakespeare ought to come before Winnie the Pooh. Some courses may produce the right statistics in the dean's office, but only if statistics call all the shots and only if the department wants to risk its credibility in more important matters over the longer haul. Courses in trivia send the wrong intellectual messages. This does not mean that children's literature or popular fiction should not be taught in a context of study of the verbal culture, but it does imply that they are not the best pedagogical introductions to literary study or ways of fulfilling a humanities requirement.

It is a mystery to me why we so often withhold from even our own majors systematic discussion of philosophical questions about our various subjects: What do we mean when we speak of literature? of language? Is there literature? About such questions we should have something to say. If we do not, we lose our sense of a purpose that can be explained and defended. Of course, literature, if it exists, is not our only subject. Language is also our subject—language in its theoretical and practical dimensions—though we must acknowledge that we are not alone in claiming it. We must, therefore, recognize our necessary relation to other departments with linguistic interests. No behavior involving language can automatically be ruled out of our interest, nor can the history of these matters or the teaching of earlier forms of English.

Traditionally, English departments have relegated certain of their own programs to the periphery of concern. For about forty years now, literary interpretation, roughly in the New Critical vein, has been the tacit center, though recently this center (and in literary theory

all centers) has been called in doubt. Since English departments are composed of a variety of scholars practicing loosely related disciplines, it seems to me pernicious to declare as a center any one of them. When we have done so, the declaration has held for a few years at the expense of other things, sometimes with appalling results. First but not necessarily foremost has been the effect of stultifying the methods of the so-called center so that it becomes a still center. Second, there has gone along with this the imposition on other kinds of scholars the standards of promotion of the prevailing mode. Recently in my own department, an assistant professor who specializes in teaching English as a second language and directs the program was denied tenure, not by the department, which (I am happy to say) overwhelmingly supported him, but by a higher review body that proved its own incompetence and prejudice in this case. This person's kind of activity apparently had no precedent in the body's experience. It was not "central," that is, literary in a familiar mode. This fate frequently befalls people who work in subjects like teaching English in the secondary schools and perform liaison with the secondary schools. Publication here seems to be the stumbling block. No one asks whether publication is the most desirable form of activity for such people. Possibly less important standards would not be applied as strongly if we took such activities more seriously and had more people in the department doing much-needed liaison work.

Not too long ago creative writers, so-called, were in a similar fix; and before that the American literature teachers. In my own field of literary theory and criticism, one hears cases of what can only charitably be called neglect of (malice against is a better phrase) such practitioners, and this has led to the playing out of revenge plots of such crude simplicity that no one other than a genius like Shakespeare would have considered them useful. What a waste this is.

A monolithic notion of English breeds dissension and paranoia. There will always be competition among the disciplines of English and not enough spoils to satisfy anyone. But there are interrelations, too, and interdependences of subtle kinds. Department chairs should support the interdependences. Some things will always seem more important at one time, some at another. Some disciplines may disappear or change drastically. What is important is a sense of interrelation and mutual respect. The usual strategies of self-protection militate against interrelationship and mutual respect.

Certainly large departments like English must accept a good share of blame for the abominable state of general, or as I would prefer to call it, were it better, liberal education in the universities and colleges. The wrong strategy is for a large department to try to protect itself by refusing to give up anything, no matter how trivial, for the sake of a larger enterprise. Over-

whelming size ought to allow room for some magnanimity. From the point of view of many departments English is overwhelming. English ought to lead in bringing some intellectual principle into what is usually called a smorgasbord but is more like my memory of the chow line at Parris Island, where the milk tasted of garlic, the eggs were powdered, and breakfast was consistently served at the wrong hour. English must lead because no smaller department has the strength to, though many can contribute out of proportion to their size, to their advantage, if given help. A strong program in general liberal education is the best protection against suicide that I know—for large or small departments in the humanities.

At least, an alternative to the commonly used distribution lists of courses should be developed. My choice would be a program of courses that would probe beneath what usually goes on in introductory courses in a discipline. I would like to see a package of courses of four types: First, courses that inquire into the grounds, whether philosophical or practical, for proceeding as one conventionally does in a certain discipline. This would involve reflecting critically and analytically on the assumptions generally made, their limits, and their potentialities. Second, courses that inquire into the relations between a discipline and the culture at large, including the academic culture and, in some cases, the local community. Third, courses that inquire into questions posed and approached in different ways by different disciplines and that study the implications of the differences and possible meeting points. Fourth, courses that study the history of disciplines.

In recent years, quite a few courses have been developed that do one or more of these things. Frequently they have been developed by professors who have come into touch with linguistic, anthropological, and/or literary theory; or they have been concerned with the social implications of scientific developments. This phenomenon has many sources in the culture and ought to be studied in itself. One of them surely is that the proliferation of disciplines has quite naturally set in motion an urgent questioning even of what questions ought to be or can be asked. Do the old definitions of human being suffice? What possible new ones are emerging and what do they forebode? Some people may say that these questions belong only to philosophy or to anthropology. But I believe that the questioning going on now belongs to us all and that a discipline that does not arrange to ask them risks being justly perceived as trivial.

I am reminded here of Nietzsche's recounting the argument of Schopenhauer in his acerbic *On University Philosophy*: "Non-academical men have good grounds for a certain general contempt of the universities; they say reproachfully that they are cowardly, that the small ones are afraid of the large ones, and that the large ones are afraid of public opinion; that in none of the questions of higher culture do the universities take the lead,

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but always limp slow and late in the rear." Moreover, there is much alarm if anyone succeeds in advancing to the front. Recently in the *Times Literary Supplement* (10 Dec. 1982) an interesting symposium on the subject of "professing literature" included statements by Paul de Man, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., René Wellek, Raymond Williams, and Stanley Fish, among others. It evoked a certain amount of correspondence, the most violent of which was two letters by Donald Reiman (7 Jan. and 18 Feb. 1983), the well-known scholar of romanticism, who vents his spleen against those he characterizes as "mountebanks," mainly from Yale, and specifically Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida. They have, in their disciplines, insisted on asking difficult, even embarrassing questions and questioning the asking. Reiman's claim seemed to be that these people are destroying all morality and making literary study into an elitist occupation concerned not with the "egalitarian tradition" but instead with "issues of philosophy, psychology, and rhetoric" as they define these things. This is an old cry, and it has almost always been wrongheaded and never, as far as I know, successful in stemming the tide. It has been heard about everyone who has ever come along and challenged us to think. Reiman's way of protecting the profession is but an exaggeration of the drawing in that plagues departments in moments of intellectual opportunity. It sets people against people in unproductive ways and frustrates reasoned argument. If you suspect that something is wrong with Paul de Man's argument, study it and join in the debate. It is an opportunity to think. Reiman feels that to do this would take him away from his "real work," which, apparently fixed and sanctified in his mind, is in no way to be questioned, while de Man's, he implies, is not only trivial but also evil. It is sad to see Walter Jackson Bate in a recent issue of the *Harvard Magazine* performing in an equally anti-intellectual way against the same targets.

Another unfortunate form of self-protection involves refusal to accept new forms of intellectual life that could very well become a part of English studies. We have retrieved and taught many not very good old plays (as well as some terrible new ones) on grounds of historical importance, but we have been loath, for example, to treat the filming of the better old plays. There is no reason not to have an English course on the filming of Shakespeare. (There are such courses in some places now.) The course need not address all the known questions surrounding film, but it could well formulate literary and linguistic issues and consider the relation of a performance to a text. Certainly the adaptation of novels to film is another area of interesting critical activity. In time, of course, there will be a considerable literature of television drama that will demand address as well. These are but simple and obvious examples.

Recent theorizing has raised important questions about the boundaries of literature and even the term "literature" itself. Some of us have viewed this ques-

tioning with alarm. On the whole it has been a good thing. No one had ever said that English was an exclusively literary discipline until about 1938, and then it was with the motive of pressing for the study of certain kinds of texts in a roughly contextualist fashion, not to make English departments devoted exclusively to them. We now are more able to recognize the significance of many sorts of works that were relegated to the periphery: autobiography, biography, some philosophical and historical writing, and even scientific texts. This ought to mean that we have more to say to other disciplines than we have been used to thinking, that we have a larger role to play in liberal education than we have been playing. That role jibes with the program I have suggested for a new liberal education requirement.

Finally, under my second principle, it seems to me that English departments attempt suicide when they are either self-protectively closed or aggressively colonialistic. There are many subjects taught narrowly in English departments that would be better taught in cooperation with other departments, were there a genuine spirit of intellectual give-and-take among those naturally involved. In each of my three fields—the history of criticism and theory, English romanticism, and modern Anglo-Irish literature—I can imagine different forms of cooperation. The first surely ought to be taught interdepartmentally, probably by a team involving classicists, Germanicists, Slavists, professors of French, of Italian, and of English. The history of criticism and theory is an international subject. To escape the parochial, English departments ought to take the lead in expanding the enterprise. English romanticism has its own character, different from French or German, or so Lovejoy insisted. Whether he was right or not, a course in English romanticism must refer to German philosophy and French history, at the least, and it would make sense to develop some cooperative ventures with other departments. Modern Anglo-Irish literature is deeply embedded in little-known Irish history, where a historian would be a big help. As a large department English ought to foster the intellectual relations that smaller departments are less likely, through fear, to seek. I believe that in large institutions the first step in such a program is to collect people from various departments in colloquiums on such subjects, for interrelations always have to begin with people of goodwill and common interests. In this way many of the tensions that now exist between academic units in their abstract suspicions of each other might be alleviated. No, changed to become productive rather than negative tensions. To bring off these kinds of relations is a long-range project. Many who advocate and set forth on such efforts do not grasp how different the traditions, intellectual styles, and even personality types of the various disciplines are. The aim ought to be not to level these styles but to come to understand them as vehicles

for seeing things from different perspectives; but also some leveling would not hurt.

The nice thing about my last two principles is that since they follow from the first and second ones my remarks can be brief. Principle the Third: *Too much order creates disorder*. Heraclitus said about the universe what should be said about English departments: Homer was wrong, one of his surviving fragments reads, to pray for the end of strife, because that would be to pray for the end of the universe. Still, some forms of strife are preferable to others and some are definitely pernicious. Blake knew this in his distinction between contraries and negations. In a negation, one side of an opposition achieves an unwholesome domination. In a contrary, strife exists for the sake of friendship. For the most part, in history negations rule in cyclical alternation. Whether Blake would have called deconstruction an example of the negating "idiot questioner" of his prophetic books I do not know. He was a bit of a deconstructor himself, and I think he would have thought in some cases its skepticism against blind faith in past methods a little tame and possessed of not enough indignation. The leading deconstructionist advocates examination of all one's premises and the questioning of the idea of a premise as well as the questioning of the question. Followers have quickly made a dogma here, and that is a Blakean negation. This means we must be skeptical of skepticism as faith. This is the best form of disorder I know. In the "professing literature" symposium Raymond Williams calls for diversity. He likes the idea of recognizable academic styles issuing from different places. English departments in American institutions are so large that such a notion would, if possible to be put into practice, create a series of huge monoliths, the main function of which would be the terrorizing of the most imaginative assistant professors. Large departments should themselves contain diversity. Probably at any given time some aspects of a department's activity will be most popular, be perceived (probably wrongly) as expressing its entire character, as has been true at times at Chicago, Yale, and Irvine. This will seem threatening to some people. What is most important here is that those who are at the moment popular recognize the worth of other activities and take pains to emphasize their importance. Students are susceptible to fashion, and the leaders of it should recognize transience and endlessly advocate the restoration of disorder.

Principle the Fourth: *Disciplinary purity breeds self-destruction*. As certain breeds of dog have become more beautiful, delicate, and softer of fur, so have they begun to lose eyesight, suffer dislocation of the hip, and become subject to various other genetic diseases. As classics departments at one time nearly disappeared, from refusing to exploit the relation of their literatures to modern literatures and of their methods to the methods of modern criticism, so it could be with larger departments that seek to purify their subjects. Much of

the negative response to "professing literature" in the *TLS* involved a fear that literary study was once again being perceived in foreign, mainly effete French, ways and that these ways were being taught to unsuspecting northeasterners by dangerous and insidious professors, all at Yale or trained there. G. S. Rousseau in his letter (28 Jan. 1983) trying to straighten out some of Donald Reiman's excesses and errors of historical interpretation—though, I think, sympathetic to Reiman's general fear—put his finger on the major question. Reiman, he said, "never acknowledges that the same development [the fashionableness of theory] is occurring in *other* fields as well: history, the social sciences, the natural sciences." This is, of course, quite true; and it marks a major intellectual change that English departments might see as an opportunity in ways I have implied. The consequences of rigid opposition will be, I fear, far more severe and far-reaching than opposition to any shift of past critical fashion has produced. Either English departments will have to assimilate this new questioning movement to their activities, or the kind of questioning that has been unleashed will begin to destroy the present organization of academic disciplines as we know them, taking with it, no doubt, any notion of literature or criticism in the traditional sense. Assimilation and flexibility here mean welcoming questions, accepting them in the curriculum, and questioning them. By and large the most popular new movements are social-scientific and ahistorical or, when historical, strongly antihumanistic. Yet my view, in the face of what some see only as a threat, is that the humanistic can always, with the proper ingenuity, contain such movements and that such movements cannot finally satisfactorily contain the humanistic. They never know quite what to do about it; unless the humanists close in on themselves and play dead.

In the process of assimilation, it must be remembered that students tend to fly to fashion, knowing little else, and that when departments recruit faculty in order to contain a dominant fashion they risk acquiring in a decade or so an accumulation of deadwood. The signs of New Critical deadwood have been around us for some time. Soon, the lesser deconstructionists and lesser feminists will pile up in the lumber room with them. Unlike professional sports, our profession cannot often give an unconditional release.

In my own view, the study of the history of one's subject is the best antidote to slavery to fashion. For many of us, it may be the history of criticism, for others the history of linguistics or the teaching of English, and so forth. Merely to name these histories is to see that they are interrelated and that study of one generates interest in the others. Here we find relation in difference, unless, of course, one subscribes to the popular notion that history is bunk. There we find ourselves in one of the true contraries of our time, worth a debate that would raise issues I have been speaking of in a most compel-

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ling way. Is the view that history is bunk a ground to abandon history, or is it, itself, to be perceived as a historical phenomenon? Heraclitus would have enjoyed this strife, which appears to me to be the antinomy that follows on my principles.

To resist strife in the name of purity is a philosophical mistake. It is also a tactical one in the profession of teaching. It leaves one's students unable to cope with new languages and cuts them off from fruitful debate. New languages are often offensive, new writers frequently unnecessarily obscure and full of jargon. Someone else's critical jargon is the first refuge of innocence and the eternal home of followers. Many innocents are writing theory or about theory today or applying theoretical languages where they think it will do some good (i.e., give them tenure). But there has always been innocence written large in every discipline: in all fields

of English, not just theory. And there will be, as long as universities tell young faculty to write and to write in innocence (i.e., in a hurry). At the same time, I can't think of too many writers who didn't raise the hackles of their readers at first. Most contemporary theoretical writing, I must admit, irritates me. I wish they could all write like Hume and call a spade a spade like Johnson. I admit to lingering resentment of Hegel. But I'd be a fool if I suggested to students that Hegel be avoided or declared a "mountebank." I am willing to try to discover with my students where Paul de Man goes wrong, if he does, but only after I address his argument with respect and in the process acknowledge that I know my own better for having addressed it.

And now I have finished, my principles set forth. Whether they are worth further examination is for you to decide.