

The Graduate Student Advocate

The City University of New York

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Behind the Bookshelves: CUNY Libraries & the Budget Crisis

By Caroline Pari

For CUNY college libraries, it seems that budgets are designed with the intention of maintaining, not expanding, their collections. When students seek new publications at various CUNY libraries, they often do not find what they need, because the budget deficit has forced librarians to impose a freeze on the purchase of books and periodicals.

The fiscal year begins July 1. At this time, the presidents of the CUNY colleges submit their budget requests. By mid-summer these requests are consolidated and budget decisions are made. For example, the City University budget report shows that decreased enrollment for certain senior colleges, including Baruch and Hunter, is projected for the 1990-1991 academic year. Because the budget allotment to CUNY libraries is based primarily on the enrollment in the individual departments of each college, the libraries of these schools will endure a loss of funds.

Kristin McDonough, the Chief Librarian of Baruch College, admitted to feeling budget "angst" during a recent interview. "There is the sense that there is no money at the beginning. It is the time to process requests. If the state's estimates are low, they impose freezes which affect the payroll at the end of the fiscal year." The City University is currently operating under a freeze which was imposed in February and will last until June 30th. Dr. McDonough emphasized that in the beginning it appears that money is unavailable, although this often proves not to be the case. She believes that "the financial situation is not bleak," but she does not want to be called a "Pollyanna," because the outlook could be much better.

Continued on page 13.

CUNY Professor's Opinions Denounced

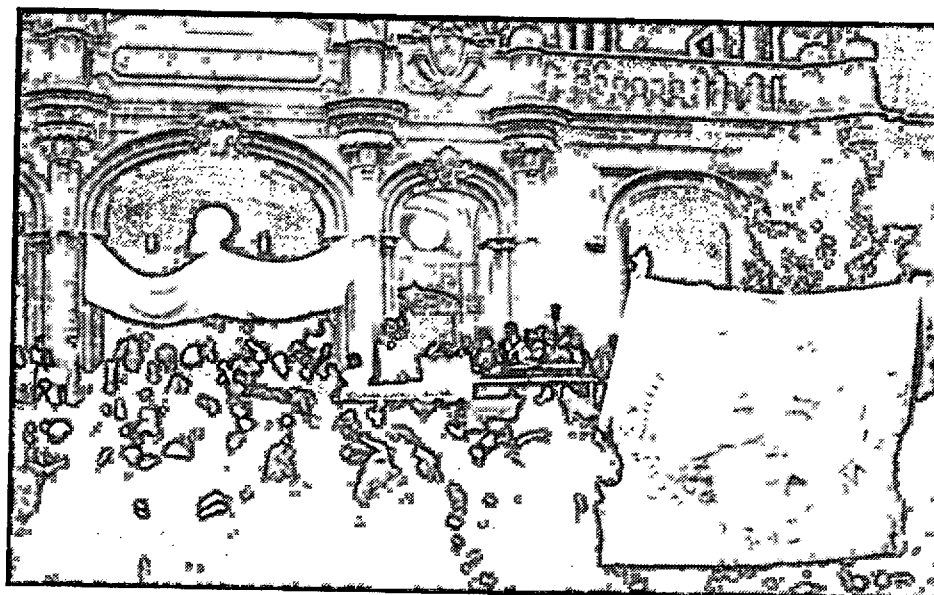
Graduate School Philosopher Accused of Racism

By Christine Hutchins

Dr. Michael Levin, Professor of Philosophy at City College and the Graduate School, has sparked what has become a highly-publicized controversy. Professor Levin became the center of a furious debate over the limits of academic freedom when his views on racial discrimination came to the attention both of the students at City and of the general public.

The Friday, April 20th edition of *The New York Times* featured a lengthy article on Professor Levin and Dr. Leonard Jeffries Jr., Chairman of the Black Studies department at City College. Professors Levin and Jeffries both subscribe to theories of racial superiority which have elicited varying degrees of controversy in the academic community. Levin has published several studies in which he argues that blacks are intellectually inferior to whites. Professor Jeffries, according to the article in the *Times*, subscribes to the belief that "an abundance of the skin pigment melanin gives blacks intellectual and physical advantages over whites." Professor Levin's views in particular have become the focus of wide-spread attention, prompting W.C.B.S. News to include a brief interview with him in their Friday night report.

The debate surrounding Professor Levin is based on his contention that the under-representation of women and minorities in disciplines such as philosophy and engineering is due not to discriminatory practices, but rather to a disparity between their innate intelligence and the intellectual abilities of white males. Professor Levin has espoused the view that academia, and society at large, has suffered from recent attempts to promote the participation of women and minorities. According to Professor Levin, intellectual standards have been lowered in order to make such pursuits accessible to these groups. In a recent letter



Students on strike at John Jay College, Spring 1989.

CUNY Student Strike? See page 3.

to the *American Philosophical Association Proceedings*, Professor Levin responded to the APA's survey of minority enrollment in the profession by stating, "Unfortunately, such findings in the current climate of opinion generally lead to calls for 'affirmative action,' i.e. preference for blacks, accompanied by media campus on the part of whites participating in the activity from which blacks have been found to be excluded. It should therefore be good news that whites are not responsible for this under-representation. It has been amply confirmed over the last several decades that, on average, blacks are significantly less intelligent than whites."

Professor Levin has published similar opinions in the past. His classes were picketed in 1988 by the International Committee Against Racism (INCAR) and the City College Faculty Senate voted 61-3 to censure his opinions; in 1989, he was forced to withdraw from teaching introductory philosophy classes mid-semester. Nevertheless, his letter to the *APA Proceedings* is the impetus for much of the recent publicity he has received.

Professor Levin's theories on intelligence and affirmative action have generated a significant amount of anxiety at City College, whose student body is nearly 40 percent African-American. At the beginning of the semester, Dr. Paul Sherwin, Dean of Humanities at City College, mailed a letter to students informing them of Professor Levin's "controversial views on such issues as race, feminism, and homosexuality" and announced that, "wishing to permit informed freedom of choice

for students," another section of his introductory course would be opened for those "who choose to switch" sections. Nine students withdrew from Professor Levin's philosophy course.

Students also staged a protest last month, marching across the campus and disrupting Professor Levin's class. The City College student newspaper, *The Campus*, has run several articles about Professor Levin, and called for his resignation in the March 12th issue. The editorial attacked the philosophy professor for his "generalizing, superficial approach" and for drawing his conclusions "not based on reality, but on existing stereotypes." The editorial also stated, "Since you insist on propagating white supremacist values, you should think about teaching at a college where there aren't any 'intellectually inferior' students."

There has been no suggestion that Professor Levin has actually engaged in discriminatory practices in the classroom. The philosopher has limited the majority of his statements to published opinions. The *Times* article describes the Professor Levin as "enormously popular" with students and states that "even [his] black students said he is a brilliant and riveting teacher." The front-page article in *The Campus* of March 12th, however, expressed student outrage, as well as fear that Professor Levin's opinions necessarily influence his ability to teach. One student is quoted as saying, "From what he has written, my understanding is that he is a racist. Don't you think he would carry those

Continued on page 11.

Heaviest Element Discovered

The heaviest element known to science was discovered a few years ago at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and the news should be officially released sometime in 1992. The element, tentatively named Administratium, (Ad), has no protons or electrons, thus it has atomic number 0. It does, however, have 1 neutron, 75 associate neutrons, 125 deputy associate neutrons, and 111 assistant deputy associate neutrons. This gives it an atomic mass of 312. The 312 particles are held together in the nucleus by a force that involves the continuous exchange of meson-like particles called memons.

Since it has no electrons, Administratium is inert. Nevertheless, it can be detected chemically, because it seems to impede every reaction in which it takes part. According to Dr. M. Langour, one of the discoverers of the element, a very small amount of Administratium made one reaction, that normally takes less than a second, take four days to go to completion.

Administratium has a half-life of approximately 3 years, after which time it does not actually decay. Instead, it undergoes an internal reorganization in which associates to the neutron, deputy associates to the neutron, and assistant deputy associates to the neutron all exchange places. Some studies have indicated that the atomic mass actually increases after each reorganization. α

—From the newsletter of the Department of Biology, University of Utah.

Inside

Around & About The Center...2
Editorials & Letters.....4
Reflections & Commentary.....5
World.....7
Arts & Events.....9
Announcements.....16

Tom Burgess on the Surreal Top 10.....11
Thomas Glynn on the Food Chain.....5
Mark Goldblatt on Loaded Canons.....10
Brian Guerre on Communism.....8
Ed Marx on the Interdisciplinary.....5
Binita Mehta on Nepal.....7
Thomas Smith on Socialists Scholars.....5
Mr. Update And Much More

Around & About The Center

An Open Letter from Art History Students

April 2, 1990

The students of the Ph.D. Program in Art History of the CUNY Graduate Center oppose the proposed addition of specializations to the current program. Since its formation just two decades ago, the Ph.D. Program in Art History at the Graduate Center has established an international reputation for its concentration and excellence in areas of scholarship neglected by other institutions. According to the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Higher Education of December 28, 1970, the program:

...is the result of an exceptional growth of interest in Modern and American Art. Universities have not yet made adequate adjustments to meet the demonstrated need in these two areas of concentration. Consequently there is an acute shortage of scholars and teachers in these fields.

Far from diminishing, the need for scholars and teachers in these areas of concentration has grown dramatically in recent years. The Ph.D. Program in Art History trains many of the professionals who fill prestigious posts in museums and universities across the nation. Nevertheless, the Program has yet to fulfill its original mandate to meet the "demonstrated need" for scholars in Modern and American Art and Criticism. In fact, the strictures of the current system-wide budget crisis severely limit the program's ability to expand its curriculum in areas essential to the fulfillment of this original mandate.

The Program is now being asked by a small committee drawn from the art history faculty of the senior colleges to consider expansion into other areas of art history, areas which have long been richly served by other institutions in the region. Moreover, while funding for the existing Graduate Center Art History Program is already limited and certainly could not be stretched to support the additional faculty, students, and educational resources that expanded specializations would require, the committee's proposal does not address budgetary considerations. The lack of a funding plan naturally is a source of grave concern to faculty and students alike. We are further concerned that prematurely implemented specializations would undermine the program's current stature.

The distinguished faculty and students of the Ph.D. Program in Art History are deeply committed to preserving and strengthening the concentrated scholarly focus of our program whose unique contribution to the discipline of art history is internationally recognized and clearly enhances the Graduate Center's institutional standing.

—Students of the Ph.D. Program in Art History
City University of New York

Distinguished Professor Linda Nochlin Bids Adieu

Ph.D. Program in Art History

April 16, 1990

Dear Students:

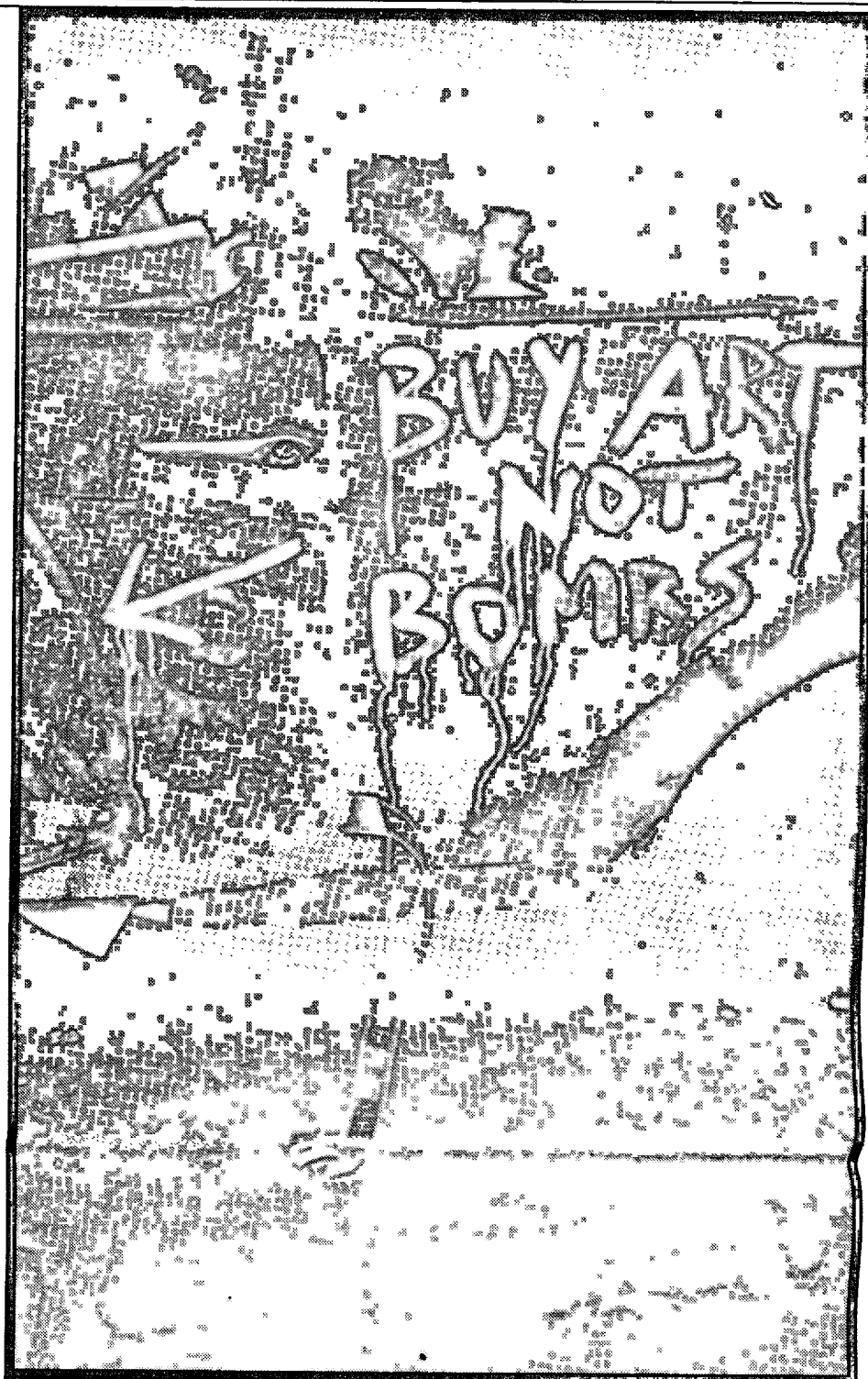
As you have probably heard, I am leaving the Graduate Center next year to take up a professorship at Yale. The decision was a very difficult one and took a long time to make. Finally, however, I decided that, after ten years, it was time for a change; also, it seemed to me important to establish a beachhead for feminist art history at one of our major universities, on the undergraduate as well as the graduate levels.

What made it especially hard to decide on Yale was of course my attachment to my students at the Graduate Center. I have loved being here because of the high quality of the graduate students in the art history program and my feeling that we were engaged in a common enterprise of the intellectual exploration, criticism and discovery. When I say that I learned a great deal from you, I am not merely repeating a cliché; I mean it very seriously, just as I mean it seriously when I say that your friendship and support has meant a great deal to me and my work over the course of the years: many of you, whether you know it or not, have had a profound impact on the shape and direction of my own work. I doubt that I will ever find a group to equal the variety, intellectual and political engagement and sheer interesting-ness, of the students here.

Contributing to the uniqueness and high quality of the art history program at CUNY has of course been the fact that it is a program specializing in the art of the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe and America, theory and criticism. Students who came here did not come here for a general education, although of course they were expected to be familiar with art history as a whole, but for a particular kind of specialization and a more adventurous methodological approach which only the Graduate Center could offer. It is no accident that at a time when all art history programs are experiencing a greatly increased enrollment in the modern field, a growing interest in new and divergent methodologies, and in non-Western field [sic] of art and a commensurate decrease in demand for the earlier periods of Western art history, our institution should attract the outstanding group of students that it has.

I certainly do not intend to sever my connection with the program. I will, of course, continue to work with those students whose doctoral dissertations I am already committed to directing until these dissertations are completed. I hope to maintain an informal relationship with many of you and with the program as a whole. The Graduate Center has been an important part of my life and I will miss it very much.

Sincerely,
Linda Nochlin
Distinguished Professor of Art History



C.C.S. \$

The Committee for Cultural Studies has four non-renewable Cultural Studies Fellowships for doctoral students, and is accepting applications for the 1990-1991 academic year. Candidates are expected to demonstrate a serious interest in Cultural Studies and to participate in the intellectual life of the Cultural Studies community, as well as to perform various administrative tasks. The intellectual commitment is very important for sustaining many of the activities of working/reading groups, and for providing a certain stability to the sometimes fluid formations of these groups. The administrative work includes arranging conferences, preparing the C.S. newsletter, participating in committee meetings and providing copies of important documents to all interested C.S. members.

Although the amount of the C.S. Fellowships will not be determined until after the 1990-1991 budget is approved, the fellowships are expected to pay from \$4,500 to \$5,000. Any matriculated level II student who does not already have a Grad. A, Grad. B or other fellowship may apply. Students should include a statement of purpose, as well as a resume and curriculum vitae. The deadline for applications is April 27th. The fellows will be selected in May. ☺

Correction

Last month, due to an editorial error, Michael Shenefelt's article [Newsweek, 3/5/90] was misquoted in an aside entitled "Educated Bias." The quotation should have read: "The most disturbing trend now is the the [sic] demand that students should read the literature of non-Western civilizations. The very idea of it fills me with dread."

Around & About The Center

Women in War and Peace: The Space of Female Heroism

By Margaret Logreira

The Women's Studies Certificate Program, the Center for the Study of Women and Society, and the Feminist Students Organization brought together a distinguished group of speakers and performers for a conference on March 16, 1990, entitled "Women in War and Peace." The conference presented a great diversity of topics: Russian-American relations; military spending, weaponry and nuclear war; anti-racism and anti-colonialism; as well as global unification and hope for the future were discussed by the speakers.

The conference was conceived by Rosette Lamont, Professor of French at the Graduate School who is currently conducting a seminar entitled, "Women and War in 20th Century France: the Space of Heroism in Women's Writings." When Professor Lamont suggested a lecture based on her seminar to Professor Judith Lorber, coordinator of the Women's Studies Certificate Program, her idea blossomed into two full-day conferences, of which the March 16th event was the first. The organizers of the conference, Professors Rosette Lamont, Judith Lorber and Sue Rosenberg Zalk, think that the topic of women in war and peace is a timely one, given the recent events taking place in the Soviet Union and in the Eastern Block nations. The month of March is also devoted to Women's History.

The day's events began with the first of two panel discussions. "Women in the Peace Movement" were discussed by Barbara Omolade, Tatyana Mamanova and Chong Won Cho. Ms. Mamanova, an exile from Russia and Visiting Scholar at the Center for the Study of Women and Society, pointed out that the world's superpowers spend billions of dollars annually on both conventional and nuclear weapons, money which could be used more productively for the housing, feeding and clothing of the poor. After providing a brief history of the peace movement in the Communist



Rosette Lamont

countries, Ms. Mamanova expressed an inspirational thought. "Peace begins with us," she said. "We the people, in our grassroots efforts, have successfully begun the process of peace between the two superpowers."

Barbara Omolade, from the Center for Worker Education at City College, spoke on African-American women and their perspective of the peace movement. Ms. Omolade believes that racism and colonialism should be fundamental targets of the peace movement. In an insightful dialogue, she poignantly stated, "The peace movement has traditionally been 'white' in its organization, participation and the way in which the question is framed." Thus the peace movement has encouraged above all the involvement of white people, and has neglected people of color. "For people of color," Ms. Omolade added, "racial and economic war takes place daily in this city."

The final panelist, Chong Won Cho, of the New York Presbyterian Peace and Justice Unit, told of a twenty-one-year-old Korean woman who sacrificed herself for the unification movement of North and South Korea. In August of 1989, this young college student from South Korea sought to attend the Thirteenth World Festival of Youth and Students, in North Korea. After a circuitous route to North Korea, she sought a more direct re-entry into

Continued on page 14.

Will CUNY Students Strike?

In April of last year CUNY students rallied together to prevent a \$200 tuition increase for New York residents. This year, once again, the Speaker of the Assembly, Mel Miller, has proposed a tuition hike for the upcoming school year. In response to this proposal, Gregorio Mayers, the Chairman of the University Student Senate, held a joint meeting and press conference on Thursday, March 29 at the Graduate School. Mayers indicated that students would seek to prevent a tuition increase through lobbying efforts, discussion with administration, and even renewed activism if necessary.

In an open letter to all CUNY students, Mr. Mayers has called on students to "band together to stop, by any means necessary, any attempt to further hinder the education process." Mr. Mayers has asked Governor Cuomo, Assembly Speaker Mel Miller, and Majority Speaker Ralph Morino to retain current tuition rates, and to work towards the reinstatement of City University's policy of free tuition.

Mr. Mayers and other student leaders believe that increases in tuition are contrary to the goal of state-funded education.

Until 1976, City University offered tuition-free higher education. CUNY's original mission was to provide higher education to all New York City residents, regardless of their economic background. Free tuition meant that socio-economic groups that were traditionally barred from higher education could afford to attend CUNY. With the fiscal crisis of the late 1970s, however, City University was forced to begin charging tuition. Since that time, the cost of a CUNY education has been gradually increased until it has reached the current tuition levels.

Opponents of the tuition hikes point out that the elimination of the free tuition took place at a time when large numbers of minorities and economically less privileged residents had begun to enter the system. They feel that paid admissions had a chilling effect on this trend towards diversity. In the September 1989 issue of *The Advocate*, Sean McCann pointed out that during the first year tuition was charged, ten thousand students dropped out of CUNY. Subsequent tuition increases have arguably pushed the cost a CUNY education even

Continued on page 15.

Six Years At the Bottom of the Food Chain: Life as a CUNY Adjunct

By Thomas Glynn

The correct way to describe the life of an adjunct in the English Department is to write a 1500 word essay (due the next day) whose controlling thesis is clear, whose organization is logical, whose strategy is compelling, and whose diction is consistent and believable. The development should, indeed must, flow easily and naturally from its thesis, like warts on a walrus. Of course, no mistakes in grammar will be tolerated.

But who in their right mind, once free of the confines of school, would write that way? So I shall write with a vague purpose, questionable organization, a spotty and erratic development. In other words, I shall follow my instincts and write the way most professional writers do.

After six years of teaching gifted and ungifted students at La Guardia Community College, Brooklyn College, Hunter College and John Jay College for Criminal Justice (in addition to Pratt Institute and the New School), I am on the verge of graduating into a full-time, adult job, with a pay check one can actually cash. This, it might be appropriate to collect some memories, not necessarily as a guide to the uninitiated, or as confirmation for the experienced, but frankly, just for the hell of it.

Adjuncts are a strange breed. We are situated at the bottom of one food chain, but with life or death powers over another. We tend to be enthusiastic and thwarted, open and secretive... teachers who know more than we realize and usually haven't worked long enough to be jaded to what we are doing. Because of our openness and enthusiasm many of us love to teach.

But because of the rancor and hostility of some full timers who think we are taking jobs away from "legitimate academics" we are secretive and cunning, revealing ourselves only to other adjuncts. Our hopes for permanent, full time work are perpetually dashed, time and again, yet we try to read the "signs" in our department to see if we will be allowed to work the following semester, for sub standard wages, doing the same work that many full timers do, sometimes doing it immeasurably better, sometimes worse, just for the "honor" of existing in the academic world. We secretly thrill when our students, ignorant of the elaborate and arcane hierarchy of that world, call us "professor." For the briefest of moments we are lifted into this dry, rarefied strata.

My first adjunct position was an evening class at La Guardia Community College. Nestled in the industrial environs of Long Island City, La Guardia Community College throbs to the sound of gigantic stamping presses that bend thick sheets of steel and caravans of tractor trailer trucks that rumble over the cobblestoned streets. The students work during the day and come

Continued on page 13.

DEAR
MR.
UPDATE

Dear Mr. Update:

I called up a file in Microsoft Word on one of the Macintosh computers at the Computer Center the other day only to find it filled with all sorts of strange characters. It took me hours to get rid of them all! What happened?

Macstudent

Dear Mac:

Documents created by word processors always consist of a combination of your text—what you actually type in at the keyboard—and codes that your program inserts in response to your formatting requests—double spacing, running headers, typeface, footnotes, etc. Generally speaking, on the Macintosh you can only retrieve a file with the program that created it, and that program will recognize those codes for what they are and follow the formatting that they indicate. However, at the Computer Center we have two different versions of the Word program—Word 3 and Word 4. Because version 4 is the more recent, it recognizes Word 3 documents and converts them automatically. However the converse is not true: Word 3 does not know what to do with a Word 4 document and will choke on it, displaying the formatting codes instead of acting upon them; hence the weird things in your document. If it happens again, simply quit without saving, then re-open the program. You can then either stay with Word 4, or you can save your file in Word 3 format, quit again and revert to the earlier version of the program.

Dear Mr. Update:

I have had a submission to a journal returned because it wasn't on disk as an ASCII file. What does ASCII mean, and what is an ASCII file?

Thwarted and Unpublished

Dear T & U:

ASCII stands for "American Standard Code for Information Interchange," and it is one of the standard schemes for encoding information in a binary form for computers. In the DOS character set—used on IBM compatible PCs—the first 32 (0 to 31) are "control" codes (used to control the "beep," carriage returns, line feeds, and so on; they appear on the screen as tiny faces, musical notes, etc.). The next 96 (32 to 127) include the standard typewriter character set and a few more. The remaining 128 characters (128 to 255) are called "extended ASCII" and consist of about 30 accented vowels, commonly used Greek and Math symbols, and about 50 graphic characters.

If the file is destined for a mainframe computer it should consist only of characters from 32 to 127, i.e. the standard typewriter set, no accented vowels or graphic characters. If the file is destined for another PC program you can include the extended characters (accents, graphic characters) but not control characters.

Saving in an ASCII format is simply a matter of stripping out the control and other codes used by the program to format your document. In WordPerfect CTRL-F5 brings up a menu to do this; in Nota Bene choose F1-FILE-OTHER-EXPORT; on the Macintosh choose "Save as..." and then set the file format to TEXT ONLY. ☞

Editorials

Hey! Hey! Hey!
Ho! Ho! Ho!

Levin and Jeffries Gotta Go

According to *The New York Times*, CUNY Professor Leonard Jeffries, a historian of African-American culture, has distributed "booklets to his students that argue that an abundance of the skin pigment melanin gives blacks intellectual and physical advantages over whites." Caucasians, Professor Jeffries is alleged to believe, are imperialistic "ice people"; Africans are peaceful "sun people." The *Times* also reported that an investigation of Professor Jeffries' performance in the classroom, inspired by articles published in *The Campus* of City College, was dropped because "the student refused to testify."

CUNY Professor Michael Levin has published works in which he has argued just the opposite point of view, most recently a letter to the *American Philosophical Association Proceedings*, Vol. 63 NO. 5. Professor Levin wrote, "It has been amply confirmed over the last several decades that, on average, blacks are significantly less intelligent than whites. The black mean IQ is slightly more than one standard deviation below the white mean."

Although Professor Jeffries' opinions in class have provoked no public outrage, Professor Levin's opinions, and the protests against them, were even picked up by WCBS. [See article, page 1.] Professor Levin told the camera that Asians are the most intelligent of the human species, then Caucasians. African-Americans are last on the good professor's list.

Not surprisingly, the City College administration's censure of Levin's discourse has become another flagpole around which tenured professors fly the flag of violated academic freedom. The petition defending Professor Levin's right to express controversial opinions denounced the "Nazi-like tactics of the student thugs who invaded Professor Levin's classroom" and recalled the Weimar Republic. In the letter accompanying the petition, however, the writers compare the City College administration's actions to the horrors of the McCarthy era. "What is clear," they write, "is that the attack on Levin is an attack on the academy. It takes us back to the bad days of the 1950's [sic] when it was thought sufficient to fire professors for holding unpopular left-wing views."

Close, but no cigar. Faculty members who lost their tenure during the 1950s were repressed by the Cold War Congress for their *political* opinions, not for the arrogant assumption that empirical science—as represented by IQ and psychometric tests—has found the means to differentiate ultimate levels of human intelligence across so-called racial lines. Although the twisting of data to support racist ideology is as old as modern science, scientists have definitively discredited biological determinism, the sole theoretical foundation for the CUNY professors' diametrically opposed opinions.

Jeffries and Levin, sounds like a comedy team. No doubt they kept their mouths shut long enough to earn tenure; now that they're safe, they feel the urge to indulge their ignorant fantasies. Signers of the petition defending Professor Levin will demonstrate only their failure to understand that academic freedom is an oxymoron.

For the Chic of the People

"I never criticize my students' syntax," an adjunct lecturer of English composition said recently. No one encouraged him to defend what appears to be a highly questionable teaching practice. Why? He would have argued that "correct" usage of language is merely an ideological construct created by the timeless patriarchal system, or just another discourse of capitalist propaganda professing artificial cultural unity in order to eliminate ethnic and sexual (but not economic) difference. In short, he would have said, to teach syntax is to impose conformity, to repress social identity, to put students in their place by advocating that which they are not—beneficiaries of the superior advantages enjoyed by members of the white male power structure. The goal of English composition is to encourage students to write of, by and for themselves, *not* to tell them what to say nor how to say it, above all *not* to change their identity by forcing "proper" English down their throats. Only hypocrites and fools, he would have concluded, explode in self-righteous anger at, or faint from the sheer horror of, a writing class without syntax.

Does such "radical" pedagogy translate into subtle political repression, during the English composition class, where syntax is not to be criticized? If English is the language of power in the United States, doesn't it make more sense to equip students with all of the tools necessary to understand and manipulate that power? To refuse to teach syntax, like the notion that the acquisition of traditional English as a second language and culture presupposes the elimination of one's first language and culture, is irresponsible.

Letters

English Program: Whose War?

To the Editors:
Traditionalists?
Relativists?
Asterisk?

Or, one anonymous perspective of a program in the midst of change?

The article, "War on the Fortieth Floor," which appeared last month, presents recent events and continual difficulties in the English Department in a way which we find to be exaggerated, simplistic, and potentially damaging to those students who have a real interest in promoting necessary changes and greater communication in our department. The English Students Alliance has existed for a year now, and in that time, we feel we have made significant improvements in the student-faculty dialogue. The article mentioned, however, only serves to break down that dialogue and re-establish the rift between students and faculty which we are trying to close.

Presenting our department in such an alarming and demeaning way, this article exhibits all the classic and cliché flaws of journalistic propaganda. The major focus was the most recent comprehensive exam. Indeed, this was a serious problem and a traumatic experience for many students who took it, but the basic facts about the exam itself and the ways in which the crisis was resolved were misconceived, if not entirely untrue. The author attempts to explain the revision of the recent exam in a way which makes the students seem simple-minded. A single glance at any exam from recent years is enough to realize that any student who simply studies "one-word quips on flash cards" would certainly be traumatized whether the exam was changed or not. Students who took the recent exam were prepared for full quotes of poetry and prose. The real problem was the enlarged percentage of these types of questions and the format in which answers were to be given. Additionally, we find the description of subsequent ESA and departmental meetings to be inaccurate, and the suggestion that students "lost their steam" and "succumbed to the continual fear of retaliation" to be entirely untrue and extremely insulting to the entire student body. Many students were quite outspoken at the general program meeting and, incidentally, spoke without anonymity.

The article continues with an attempt to get at the root of our difficulties by drawing a line between students and faculty, labelling them respectively as "Relativists" and as "Traditionalists." To label *all* faculty members as being "tradition-bound" is narrow-minded and unfair to many faculty members who engage in contemporary theoretical practices and who have made efforts to broaden the scope of primary literary materials. Also, there are many students who consider themselves "traditional" and would be quite surprised to find themselves lumped in with "more innovative" students under a single label. Though it is natural that younger students will more likely be less interested in "tradition," it is the diversity of *both* students and faculty which is [at] the root of current progressions and continuous heated debate. To ignore diversity in any sociological group (whether it is racial, religious, economic, or academic) is dangerous because it leads to the very kind of sweeping generalizations and narrow-minded perspectives which permeate this article. This kind of labelling and name-calling is damaging and historically ineffective in any cause.

We would not be so alarmed at this article if the departmental issues presented thus far and in the ensuing gripe-list of the article did not have *any* true basis. Many of the complaints cited toward the end of the article are real difficulties which must be rectified. Presenting these problems in the context of such a flawed and abusive argument, however, creates a hostile environment which is uncondusive [sic] to potential change. The English Students Alliance exists to defuse this very hostility and we find this article to be entirely antithetical to our purposes. Furthermore, to publish such an article under the veil of anonymity is unprofessional and unfair to every member of our department.

Sincerely,
George Guida
Caroline Pari
Bob Timm
Steering Committee,
The English Students Alliance

* replies: The ESA, fortunately, represents only a tiny fraction of the total student body in the English program. Anonymity, as any student of English literature should know, is an author's historic right.

Confessions of a Survivor

April 6, 1990

Dear Editor,

I was not even delighted to realize that the three sample short answer questions from the English Program's latest written comprehensive examination, cited in "War on the Fortieth Floor: The English Comps Affair" [*The Advocate*, 3/21/90], were utterly, instantly familiar to me—and not necessarily because I once had to cram, using flash cards and other paraphernalia common to rote "learning," for that damned test. (I passed the short answer section on my third try, though I was not someone who had had "difficulty with the program before," as Professor Stevens, the English E.O., was reported to have said recently

["English Program Moves to Change Requirements" [*The Advocate*, 3/21/90]. In fact I believe the program to have been more rigorous at that time than it is now; in any case I was then and believe I am now one of the "strongest students in the program," of a type Professor Stevens allegedly claimed would do well in the exam, while, we may presume, the other *types* miserably fail and bemoan their fates.)

My ambiguity about how I came to be so familiar with terms and phrase like "aporia," "Slough of Despond," and especially Milton's "Nine times the space that measures day and night / To mortal men, he with his horrid

Continued on page 15.

The Graduate Student Advocate

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Letters

Reflections & Commentary

Mystery Homophobe Exposes Self

To the Editor:

I am the mystery homophobe of the 10th floor. I am a mystery because I am not alone. There are several of us working together. I admit to ripping several of the posted meeting posters off of the bulletin board, but I also seem to be getting some help, for there was an occasion when I wasn't quick enough and someone apparently beat me to it.

It is a sad and tragic fact that the culture of the West is on the decline. I and I am sure other people who are too *intimidated* to act and speak out are sick and tired of you people shoving your sexuality in everyone's faces. Having the audacity to announce meetings for people like yourselves is *stupid*. It is bad enough that one cannot take a lovely leisurely stroll through Greenwich Village anymore without seeing two people of the same sex holding hands and kissing. Who really cares? Why do you shove your sexuality in everyone's faces" [sic] Who really cares what you do in your own home in your own bed with whom you will? It is not as if we are in the 18th century. There are bars by the hundreds, neighborhoods etc., where the "gay" people feel it necessary to announce their sexual activity in a bad, tasteless way to anyone, I might add, who will give them a glance. It seems to me obvious that a woman who is heterosexual does not wear a button saying "I like a penis" and a man doesn't walk around with a button saying "I like vaginas." This would be equal to how the gays behave. It is in bad taste, for not only heterosexual but also homosexual couples, to have blatant shows of affection in public. We are in a society which is at the height of technology and progress in all ways, do you see men and women who are heterosexual incessantly saying, "Let's have a meeting because we like the heterosexual sex act?" That is asinine, and so is the meeting of the homosexual community at CUNY. You all argue that homosexuality is not an abnormality and who, I say, who the hell is stopping you from participating in any kind of way that you prefer in the privacy of your own bedroom? Why do you find it necessary to form a social and political organization founded on nothing else but to show off and take pride in who can bring you to an orgasm? Homosexuality has been around since the beginning of time. You are acting like it's a Greenpeace organization or something. It apparently means a lot to you to introduce yourselves not as human beings capable of the dignity of thinking, cognition, perception and abstraction, but simply on the act of copulation. How many times in a conversation, when I am discussing something about the opposite sex maybe even remotely concerned with the sex act, will the homosexual say "I'm gay"? I do all I can to stop from laughing, what the hell does that have to do with it? I am not interested in this particular person and the subject had nothing to do with their sexuality, yet they will look at me with this challenging look as if to say "I dare you to be civilized." If you want to participate in cunnilingus and other acts in your beds do it, none of us really care, but why form a political organization out of it?

Yours truly,
Mystery Homophobe

Bondage and Disciplines

In Search of the Interdisciplinary at CUNY (and Elsewhere)

By Ed Marx

In principle, the university is an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, in all of its forms. The notion of academic freedom is frequently invoked to show that scholars may pursue their interests without fear of reprisals.

In practice, however, the university consists of individual departments, disciplines, each dedicated to a particular set of practices and a "body" of texts. As a result, it is difficult, particularly for students, to pursue questions which fall outside the domain of one's department, or even questions which "straddle" departments. Despite this difficulty, or perhaps as a result of it, interdisciplinary study is increasingly and paradoxically valorized within various disciplines, as if the discipline secretly desires what it cannot have: its other.

In the Modern Language Association's *Profession 89* publication, which includes a special "presidential forum" on interdisciplinary issues, former MLA president Barbara Herrnstein Smith diagnoses a "radical destabilization of the domain of literary studies as a discipline and the opening of its borders to traffic to and from all directions; most obviously, perhaps, to and from other disciplines... but also, as the borders of those disciplines themselves dissolve... to and from various newly emergent hybrid, and-to-some-of-us, barbarous or barbarous-sounding disciplines, such as hermeneutics, ethnohistory, communications theory, and media studies."

Smith is even willing to suggest, from her position as Braxton Craven Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Duke University, that "the discipline of literary studies—if it is, even now, a single discipline or has ever been one—will be effectively and undeniably undone."

Nor are literature departments alone. History, Anthropology, Philosophy, Psychology, and Art History, to name but a few, have of late been experiencing radical changes in their own internal structure and relation to other disciplines. Are these disciplines also likely to be "undone"?

Smith qualifies this bold assertion by acknowledging that she does not see this happening in the near future; and this brings into question the uncomfortable position of students who are currently enrolled in programs which have yet to hear Smith's prophetic call. If students are not being taught interdisciplinary approaches, where will the new breed of scholar for this brave new world come from?

The most conspicuous sites for interdisciplinary work at the Graduate School are the dozen or so interdisciplinary concentrations administered by the Committee on Interdisciplinary Study and Research. Students can obtain a certificate in most of these programs, but not a degree. According to the Graduate School Bulletin, "Stu-

dents interested in interdisciplinary work, like all other doctoral students, are enrolled in one of the 29 programs offered, and are expected to fulfill the requirements of that program." Most (though not all) programs will count a certain number of credits from courses taken in other disciplines, as well as Interdisciplinary Seminars (IDS) toward a student's degree.

The model of interdisciplinary studies promulgated here is one where members of a discipline are permitted to import from other disciplines so long as it does not endanger their own disciplinary practice. But even Stanley Fish, who argues in *Profession 89* that "the imperial ambitions of a particular discipline may be just what the doctors ordered," has some problems with it. He asks:

"does the practice of importing into one's practice the machinery of other practices operate to relax the constraints of one's practice? ... The answer I would give is no, because the imported product will always have the form of its appropriation rather than the form in exhibits 'at home.'"

But for Fish, this problem is an insignificant one, because there isn't any real interdisciplinary work being done anyway; those who claim to be doing it are either "engaging in straightforward disciplinary tasks that require for their completion information and techniques on loan from other disciplines, or they are working within a particular discipline at a moment when it is expanding into territories hitherto marked as belonging to someone else... or they are in the process of establishing a new discipline, one that takes as its task the analysis of disciplines, the charting of their history and of their ambitions."

Fish's argument is the usual one that there is never really anything new under the sun: "the American mind, like any other, will always be closed, and the only question is whether we find the form of closure it currently assumes answerable to our present urgencies."

The weakness of Fish's argument, and of the "importation" model in general, is that it gives a false picture of what actually happens when disciplinary practices are combined. True, if minds are "always closed," then disciplinary exchange is nothing more than an exchange of texts and methods. But if in fact these exchanges produce something more than the sum of their parts; if in fact our ways of understanding the world are in a constant, and open, process of change; if, in fact, people do occasionally come up with new ways of understanding the world (some of which are not immediately concretized into disciplines), then the concept of the interdisciplinary begins to appear possible, likely, and necessary.

So let's suppose that the interdisciplinary exists (at least in theory). Let's even suppose that change is desirable, or at least that the disciplines as we know them are not the final answer to human knowledge. With these assumptions, what sort of programs would we want, in order to allow students and professors to pursue the elusive interdisciplinary? What would an interdisciplinary studies program look like?

Continued on page 14.

Socialist Scholars On Parade

By Thomas Smith

The Eighth Annual Socialist Scholars Conference was held on April 6th, 7th and 8th at Borough of Manhattan Community College. As always, the conference was sponsored by the Democratic Socialists of America, particularly by members of our very own Graduate Center branch, such as Sociology Professors Bogdan Denitch and Bill Tabb. The theme of the conference this year, understandably, was the recent developments in Eastern Europe, although the panels focused on a wide variety of themes, such as the environmental crisis, feminism, black politics, the Dinkins mayoral victory, and cultural politics.

A few notes of criticism. First, the conference was tremendously crowded, because enrollment swelled to about 3000. I missed almost all the panels I wanted to see on Saturday, even though I came 15 minutes early. It is time the conference moved on to larger dwellings, with bigger rooms—a place like Hunter, for example, with its many ample auditoriums.

Second, I see the plenaries as useful ways of pulling people together, fragmented as they are most of the time into hundreds of panels. But the plenaries don't really offer a genuine debate. The leaders of this year's movements from Eastern Europe and Brazil, for example, were invited to relate their experiences, and that was that. Most of the panels—where debates occur—are created to push the agenda of some political group on the left against other leftist groups. The panels are typically created to enable members of the DSA—who believe that the "only practical strategy" for the American left is "working within the Democratic Party," as if Jonah invaded the whale in order to improve his swimming—to argue against other groups, such as the DSA's own left wing, headed by Barbara Ehrenreich, who doesn't want to be swallowed.

What a stale, boring, depressing debate. It would make me happy to see the DSA pull out of Tweedledumville, but until that happens, the conference could serve a useful function as a means of setting up debate on the left about *strategic*, practical issues instead. How can the left effectively respond to the environmental crisis, or the U.S.-sponsored war in El Salvador? What should our strategy be in our own economic sphere: the financial crisis in education, the adjunctification of university faculty? How can we use our role as educators to challenge the ignorance, militarism, racism, sexism and commercialism fostered by the nuclear family, the church, the educational system, the media, and capitalist society in general? In other words, *what do we need to do?* There might have been a few panels here and there that were concerned with these issues, but that hardly constitutes sufficient emphasis. The plenaries should be the place where such issues are discussed.

The Socialist Scholars Conference will probably never be organized along these lines unless and until the DSA pulls out

Continued on page 12.

The Advocate welcomes letters. Please include your telephone number for verification. All letters are subject to editing in the interest of clarity and to meet space requirements.

Letters

March 21, 1990

To the Editors:

Although I found much to disagree with in Karlton Hester's article [*The Advocate*, October 1989], Susan Betz's rebuttal entitled "Whose State of the Arts?" made Mr. Hester's polemics seem comparatively reasonable. For those readers of *The Advocate* who missed the February issue I have selected below a few quotes from Ms. Betz's letter.

Ms. Betz writes that, because of the budget deficit, "There is no extra money to fund any artist" and that, "Neither Robert Mapplethorpe, nor any other artist, has a 'right' to my hard-earned tax dollars. He did not have any 'right' to the tax dollars of our fellow citizens either. It was a gift from our capitalistic government, a gift, like many others, which we can no longer afford." And further on, "Government debt is destroying the economic foundation of our nation. Hard choices have to be made. Homeless people have to be sheltered. The sick need medical care. Children need day-care. Prisons must be built and staffed, yet the art community continues to whine about the nerve of the American public wanting to have a say about how their tax money is spent." In her peroration Ms. Betz writes, "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the real world, if only for a moment. The Golden Age of the Government Gravy Train is coming to an end. Long live fiscal sanity."

What is one to make of such an attitude? Let us first try to give the devil her due. It is certainly true that through the will of the people, as executed by our elected representatives, we are saddled with what Ms. Betz calls a "Massive Budget Deficit." It is also true that hard choices must be made, that the homeless must be sheltered, the sick cared for, and children looked after—as for the need to build and staff more prisons which Ms. Betz finds so essential, we can agree to disagree about that. What I find "arrogant, intolerant and

ignorant" (to quote Mr. Hester) about Ms. Betz's diatribe is that it assumes that art is something at best to be relegated to the bottom of the list of our society's needs.

Reading Ms. Betz one could easily come to the conclusion that she believes art and, by extension, the people who make it are entirely dispensable. To quote Ms. Betz again, "Anyone may photograph, paint or write what they choose here in America. However, if they choose to do so at the taxpayers' expense, they must accept that the taxpayers' representatives, like Jesse Helms, will expect to have a say in how these funds are distributed. If political interference from those outside the art world is so distasteful, why is the money not also rejected?"

Ms. Betz may not realize it, but artists need to eat just as much as other people and they are willing even to accept "political" money in order to do so. Ms. Betz should remember that the taxpayers' representatives are the people who decided originally that there would be government support for the arts, just as they decided that there would be government support for highways, bridges and tunnels. They decided to support the arts because they believed that the arts were important. If, as Ms. Betz contends, government support for the arts is "a gift from our capitalistic government" then what is government support for housing, education and the arms industry?

In recent years there have been several unsuccessful attempts to abolish the National Endowment for the Arts. On the state and local levels the allotment of funds for the arts has always been a contentious issue and, in these times of fiscal hardship, funding for the arts has tended to be among the first casualties of budget cuts. Lately the government seems to feel along with Ms. Betz that the arts are not so important after all. Funding for art and music educa-

tion in our public schools has been reduced to a bare minimum. It may be that the so-called "corporate sponsorship of the arts" has filled some of the gap left by reduced government spending, but corporations have dubious taste in art and have no interest in fostering innovation. It is hard to see how the situation over the past fifteen years could be described as, "The Golden Age of the Government Gravy Train"—for bankers and politicians, perhaps, but not for artists.

It so happens that the small percentage of artists who do receive funds directly from the government have to go through the same sort of bureaucratic procedures as any other recipient of government funds, including writing proposals, filling out lengthy application forms, providing work samples and references and finally submitting to the judgment of an appointed committee of "experts." Anyone who has applied for an NEA or NYSCA grant can testify that the application process is painstaking and time-consuming. As I understand it, the reason for this elaborate procedure is to ensure that the taxpayers' money is well-spent and that the work commissioned will be done by a qualified professional.

Of course, the system of peer review is imperfect. Political considerations often enter into the appointment of review panels and, consequently, the most worthy artists are not always selected for awards. The government's administration of funds for the arts is not immune to corruption and political shenanigans. But, at least up until recently, moralizing Philistines did not try to legislate what artists could or could not do once they had qualified for a government grant. The current situation is not only an abrogation of First Amendment rights, but also an affront to the professionalism of all artists. As long as government-appointed experts decide to award a government contract in the manner prescribed by law, it is

not a Congressman's place to interfere with the carrying out of that contract. I doubt that Jesse Helms would presume to attempt to interfere with the design of a guided missile. Of course, the experts can and do make mistakes. Richard Serra's "Tilted Arc" was regarded by many people both inside and outside of the art community as such a mistake. But a mistake such as "Tilted Arc," when compared to governmental errors such as, to take only one of many instances, the "Star Wars" project, is trifling.

As far as I know, the consensus among qualified observers remains overwhelmingly in favor of the work of both Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano. Jesse Helms and Susan Betz disagree with the experts and that is their privilege. This does not imply, however, that they are themselves qualified to set up as experts. Our elected representatives should do a more professional job at what we pay them to do, instead of scapegoating the art community (which has never received more than an infinitesimal percentage of the national budget). It is, after all, the fault of our public servants that we are in our current mess. If not for their abuse of the public trust, there would be no massive deficits and we would have more money for everything, including the arts.

If Ms. Betz and her ilk could have their way, there would be no government support for the arts. I have no doubt that the arts would survive without governmental support. After all, most homeless people manage to survive without government support. ~~There are always begging, can-~~ collecting and those reliable "points of light" to fall back on. But driving a wedge between the government and such perceptive and influential people as artists tend to be, will only serve to exacerbate a bad situation.

Ben Yarmolinsky

The writer is completing his dissertation in music.

Just a few criticisms and recommendations with respect to Gary Paul Gilbert's article "Toward a Critical Writing Pedagogy." [*The Advocate*, February, 1990] Gary recommends teaching students how to read avant-garde literature in order to "get them to see the arbitrariness of social relations under the market economy." Gary no doubt means to have students recognize how cultural (or socially engineered) the "natural" distinctions in language, thought, and value really are. However, having students read avant-garde literature, instructive and politically correct though it might be, seems somewhat limited.

If Gary really wanted to go out on a limb, he would deconstruct the false opposition, with its consequent power relation, between teacher and student. A first step might be questioning the social forces that have given him the "right" to assign his avant-garde reading list. Another step, one recommended by many process-oriented pedagogies, might be to have papers or rough drafts he has written critiqued along with student papers, further obliterating the line between teacher and student. These steps suggest a far more radical pedagogy than Gary's recommendations because they upset the power-relation inscribed within the classroom itself.

Another opposition worth noting is Gary's distinction between clear and ob-

scure writing. However, instead of breaking it down in his article, Gary simply inverts the hierarchy by privileging "obscure" over "clear" writing. Frederic Jameson would maybe approve of this move, but not Derrida. Gary performs half of the breakdown by arguing that obscure (avant-garde) writing actually makes something clear, namely the nature of discourse. If this is so, then clear writing, in turn, must make something obscure, namely again, the relationship between reality and discourse. So clear writing is obscure, and obscure writing is clear. But this theoretical maneuver means nothing unless we can fit it into a practice. Gary's article does half of it, by incorporating avant-garde writing into the teaching of English composition.

But what of the other half: what of the teaching of both the reading and writing of "clear" discourses. I don't think we can do away with it. "Clarity" is a form of empowerment for the student. It is a discursive practice which, when rightly understood, allows students to exert some control over what they may want both to reveal and hide in their writing. An example of a clear document, whose clarity is integral to its obscurity, is the political statement. No doubt hiding something through or within

Revisions:

A Critical Writing Pedagogy

one's writing may seem obnoxious. It can certainly be malicious. But have we the right to deny students that type of rhetorical power?

Perhaps we should, since for Gary, that type of power is an illusion. It presumably participates in that "intentional fallacy" the New Critics so dutifully pointed out. If we were true to writing, we would teach them that writing takes on meanings of its own. No doubt true, but if we teach students that intention is an illusion, why bother to teach them how to "control" their writing, or intend a meaning at all? Why shouldn't all classes just be free writing sessions? Or, indeed, why have writing classes at all? It's bad enough that students are relatively powerless in the classroom; now we will deprive them of their writing, and the sense of personal power over it, because "it represents a reification of the bourgeois individual subject of Self."

I too am no believer in the unity of the Subject, but I do believe the relationship between Subject and the forces that inhabit it are dialectical, and not simply unidirectional. Yes, students should be taught the impossibility of being *totally* understood. But they should also know that they can at least be *partially* understood. And this is

why they must, and hopefully, will, always try to write better. No, they may never be completely understood, but that they can be somewhat understood is enough to provide the impetus to be *better* understood.

This is, at least, my answer to why write, and why teach writing. I agree essentially with most of Gary's article. I only ask that he, and others interested in such critical pedagogies, consider some of the implications of their views. Some of my points perhaps argue with deconstruction; but some of them partake of it. A true critical, deconstructive pedagogy should always be on the lookout for overlooked oppositions, in this case, between teacher and student, clarity and obscurity, and unity and plurality (or Subject and non-Subject). Hopefully I have done this and have communicated it successfully. No doubt I will be misunderstood or misrepresented here and there. Indeed, I have probably misunderstood or misrepresented Gary's piece in the course of this essay (for on rereading what I've written, I see that many of my points are made from inferences assumed from absences in Gary's own article). Yet even though the words "misunderstand" and "misrepresent" may have no meaning in a deconstructive practice, still I assume somewhere along the way I will be somewhat understood. For if not, I would not have written this piece in the first place.

Bennett Graff

World Update: Nepal

By Binita Mehta

After months of demonstrations and protests in which hundreds of Nepalese were killed, the ancient Himalayan kingdom of Nepal is taking its first faltering steps towards becoming a full-scale democracy. On Sunday April 8th, 1990, King Birendra of Nepal announced on national television that political parties which had been banned for thirty years would be allowed to participate in the political process. On April 16th, within a week of the lifting of the ban, King Birendra asked the opposition parties to form the first multiparty government which will include the country's communist leaders. On April 19th, Mr. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, the 66 year-old leader of the Nepalese Congress Party was sworn in as the new Prime Minister along with his 11-member coalition cabinet.

Opposition Bands Together

Manjula Giri, a Nepali journalist for ten years who is currently a graduate student in Sociology at the Graduate School, has been watching very closely the events taking place in Nepal over the last few months. Ms. Giri was also one of the organizers of a rally held in Washington D.C. on March 16th, by the Community of Concerned Nepalese in the U.S. Citing human rights abuses by the Nepalese government, the protestors presented a memorandum to President Bush, as well as a letter to King Birendra through the Nepalese embassy, demanding the lifting of the ban on political parties. Ms. Giri spoke to *The Advocate* about the changes taking place in Nepal. "In Nepal, in contrast to the movement in Beijing's Tiananmen Square last year, the movement was well organized by the opposition parties. At least eight opposition parties, including the Nepalese Congress Party, calling themselves the United Front, joined together in January 1990 to force the King to restore democracy and the multiparty system."

From 1950 to 1960, political parties were allowed in Nepal but did not participate in elections. A democratically-elected government was formed in 1959 and 1960, but was dismissed by King Mahendra, King's Birendra's father, who also banned political parties and introduced in 1961 the Panchayat system of government "which is a several-tiered series of village, district, town and national councils." [*The New York Times*, 4/14/90]. All political parties are banned according to this system, and the National Assembly is hand-picked by the king.

A People's Movement

Democracy day, called *Tribhuvan Jayanti*, is celebrated in Nepal every year to honor on the birthday of King Tribhuvan, King Birendra's late grandfather. On democracy day, February 18th, the United Front launched a major pro-democracy demonstration throughout the country. Before the demonstration, top opposition leaders were arrested by the government and several political activists had been forced to go underground. On February 18th, thousands of Nepalese took to the streets. The police opened fire and killed unarmed demonstrators. Government sources say that only twelve people were killed during the demonstration, but casualties in many rural areas, often buried by government troops, were not accounted for. Since the Democracy Day demonstration, the protests have continued. On April 6th, the king dismissed his Prime Minister, Mr. Shresta, and appointed the unpopular Mr. Lokendra Bahadur Chand to take Mr. Shresta's place. An estimated 200,000 people from all parts of the country gathered outside the royal palace in Katmandu to protest the king's new appointment, waving party flags and shouting slogans, "We want democracy" and "We want a multiparty system." Both the police and the army were called in, and they opened fire on the unarmed and peaceful demonstrators. The King imposed a curfew on Friday. When the Nepalese people, who have almost no experience with curfews, left their homes to get drinking water, they were shot by the troops. The exact number of casualties is not known. *Newsday* reported 300 dead [4/11/90]. "We hope that the correct figures of the number of people dead will finally surface after the formation of the interim government," Ms. Giri said.

The King sent his newly appointed Prime Minister to negotiate with the opposition leaders, but one of the principal opposition leaders, Mr. Ganesh Man Singh, a senior and respected member of the Nepalese Congress Party, refused to talk to the Prime Minister and demand to speak only with the King. The king agreed to meet opposition leaders, which resulted in the lifting of the ban on political parties.

Recent press reports [*Le Monde*, 4/9/90] suggest that the pro-democracy movement was restricted to the large cities and that people in the rural areas respected the king and did not participate in the movement. When asked to comment, Ms. Giri said, "This is not true. It was a mass movement. In fact, according to my sources, the movement was so strong and the people were so powerful that in the Tarai districts such as Siraha (my district) and Janakpur on the Indian border, the government had to start bombing the area."

Human Rights Abuses

The movement for political liberalization is just one of the many dilemmas facing Nepal. The Nepalese government under King Birendra committed numerous human rights violations in 1988 and 1989. According to a *New York Times* op-ed ["Bush's Blind Eye on Nepal" 4/31/90], since February 18th "the Nepali regime has arrested more than 7,000 peaceful demonstrators and democracy activists including 66 lawyers. Hundreds of those arrested have been tortured and a number of female students suspected of democracy activities have been gang-raped by the police in front of police crowds. At least 50 people have been shot or beaten to death by the police."

The numbers, however could be higher. On April 11th, Patricia Gossman, a Research Associate who was recently in Nepal as part of delegation reporting for *Asia Watch*, was interviewed by Ms. Valerie Van Iler of the program *Undercurrents* on WBAI Radio, New York. Ms. Gossman said that her delegation was able to confirm the arrests of the political opposition, as well as thousands of arrests of doctors, lawyers, artists and students. The reported torture of political detainees who were subsequently denied medical care was also confirmed. Ms. Gossman further stated that both the U.S. Embassy in Nepal and the State Department had made public statements protesting the human rights violations and the shooting of unarmed demonstrators, and requested the Nepalese government to release all detainees. Ms. Gossman said that the statement from the State Department was made a little late: the major public statement was made April 2nd, although the pro-democracy movement began in February. Ms. Gossman also said that they were trying to confirm reports from doctors from the Nepalese Medical Association, who said that they were being stopped by troops from transporting people to the hospitals. "The lifting of the ban on political parties is a welcome step, but only a very first step, toward really re-establishing respect for human rights in Nepal," said Ms. Gossman. "The government really should establish independent investigations into all reports of torture and into reports of shooting of unarmed demonstrators and should really take steps to ensure that all detainees have access to family members and that people are not detained for merely exercising their right of freedom of speech and freedom of association."

Role of the U.S. & India

Over the past nine years, both the Reagan and the Bush administrations have supported King Birendra's government. From 1980 to 1989, Nepal has received \$800,000 in military aid, \$21 million in economic aid, \$24 million in food aid and \$146 million of development aid from the U.S. [*The New York Times*, 4/31/90]. Despite this aid, the Nepalese economy is deteriorating, inflation rates are high and the trade embargo with India has only made things worse. Barbara Nimri Aziz thinks that the current challenge facing the king has its roots in last spring's economic crises. "When Nepal began over a year ago to strengthen ties with China to the north, it angered its huge southern neighbor. India retaliated with a huge economic blockage" [*Nepal's Monarch is Teetering* *The Christian Science Monitor*, 4/21/90]. Landlocked Nepal, which depends heavily on India for fuel and luxuries, was tired of Indian domination and took to the streets in March 1989 calling on King Birendra to hold firm against India. King Birendra answered the protestors with gunfire [*The Christian Science Monitor*, 4/21/90]. Ms. Giri also said that the trade embargo imposed by India is linked to the

present movement. However, she sees a difference between the protests last year and the current demonstrations. "The demonstration in March 1989 was not united," Ms. Giri said. "The opposition was more united and organized for the demonstration in February this year."

The World Bank, which financed \$65 million in projects in Nepal last year, and other nations who form the Aid Nepal Group (West Germany, Japan, Great Britain, Switzerland and Canada) warned King Birendra that aid would be discontinued if he refused to agree to the democratic changes proposed by the opposition parties. The World Bank plans to finance \$120 million in projects over the next five years [*The New York Times*, 4/19/90].

King Approves Opposition Government

On April 13th, King Birendra met with the senior Nepalese opposition leader Mr. Ganesh Man Singh and approved the formation of a new government that will be led by the opposition. This will be Nepal's first multiparty government in thirty years. The meeting took place two days after the opposition prepared a list of eight demands, including the dissolution of Parliament [*The New York Times*, 4/14/90]. "The interim government will form a Constituent Assembly and will most probably rewrite the Constitution, keeping the king on as a constitutional monarch, like in England," said Ms. Giri. "The monarchy has had such a strong influence on the Nepali psyche that despite his authoritarian rule since 1972, the Nepalese would still like to see King Birendra as a constitutional head of state. The people see the king as a symbol of unity, and tend to blame his corrupt government for atrocities committed during his rule," Ms. Giri said.

On Sunday April 15th, thousands of Nepalese impatient with the slow process of change surrounded the building in which formal talks were being held between the government and the opposition parties. Demanding the resignation of the Cabinet and the dissolution of the Parliament, they prevented Prime Minister Chand from leaving the building for 15 hours. After the meeting, Mr. Prasad Upadhyaya, one of the opposition leaders, told reporters that the Prime Minister had agreed to only five of the eight demands made by the opposition—"the repeal of anti-democratic clauses in the existing constitution, the disbanding of the council system of governments at the district and village levels, the nationalization of all council property, the release of political prisoners, and compensation to the relatives of people killed in the protest movement." The three demands they did not concede were, "the resignation of the Cabinet, the dissolution of Parliament and the establishment of a special constitutional panel." It was up to the king to decide on these three demands [*The New York Times*, 4/16/90].

King Agrees to Dissolve Parliament

In a broadcast to the nation on April 16th, King Birendra announced both Prime Minister Chand's resignation and the dissolution of Parliament. The new Prime Minister, Mr. Bhattarai, said that elections will be held before next April [*The New York Times*, 4/17/1990]. Mr. Bhattarai announced the names of his eleven-member cabinet on April 18th. Important economic posts such as Industry, Commerce, Agriculture, Tourism and Land Reform were given to leftists. Mr. Dhirendra Raj Pande, an independent economist and human-rights organizer was given the post of Finance Minister. Aides in the Nepalese Congress Party were given the portfolios of Home Affairs and Water Resources. Mr. Bhattarai will be both the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defense and Palace Affairs. Once a new democratic constitution is written, King Birendra will stay on as a constitutional figurehead [*The New York Times*, 4/19/90].

Like the pro-democracy movements in Eastern Europe, the movement in Nepal has been spontaneous, brought about by the people. Within a week Nepal moved from a country under autocratic rule where political parties and fundamental freedoms were prohibited, to one with a multiparty government formed by the opposition. After three decades of political repression, the Nepalese are enjoying the benefits of free speech, rallies and street demonstrations. Changes have taken place with such rapidity in Nepal that it will be interesting to see how the people and the new government deal with their newly acquired political freedom in the months ahead. ☞

Binita Mehta is a contributing editor to *The Advocate*.

Can "openness" and "democratization," "restructuring" and "modernization" solve, or even contribute to the solution of, the many gross material and social problems besetting those societies which historically have achieved communism—to a degree—from Cuba to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea? (By "communism to a degree," or socialism, I mean the public ownership and control of the societal means of production, central planning, the socialization of the "social surplus," or profit, comprehensive social welfare, etc., rather than the private monopolization by an extremely small minority of super-rich and rich families of the natural resources and of the major productive properties of society.) This question assumes that a global movement for economic and political democracy in the form of a prolonged "transition" from capitalism to communism, including the related processes of class struggle, revolution, and counterrevolution, is taking place internationally. Nations such as Poland or Grenada are still "in transition" because the socialism they achieved was undermined by the prevalence of international capitalism; because the peoples of these societies, and all societies for that matter, have an objective need for the economic stability, security, and egalitarianism which only communism can afford them; because, more now than ever, capitalism requires social control; and because the Eastern European economies probably will remain "mixed," while proletarian class struggle forces more and more economies around the world toward socialism.

Is There a "Crisis of Marxist Theory"?

In 1846, Marx and Engels explained in *The German Ideology*, that "communism... can only have a world-historical existence." Communism, or socialism as practiced by a few of the less powerful nation states, must become prevalent within the international system in order to supplant capitalism. Otherwise, within communist societies emerging from capitalism, "privation, want, is merely made general, and with want the struggle for necessities would begin again, and all the old filthy business [of anti-Jewish attitudes and movements in Eastern Europe] would necessarily be restored." In the global process of transition from capitalism to communism, although nations that manage to supplant capitalism with socialism liberate their people—to a degree—from immediate and direct subjugation to international capitalism and imperialism, they remain "dependent on the revolutions of others" for the security and integrity of its socialist revolution and construction.

According to this classic Marxist perspective on "world-historical" social development, communism is a system which emerges out of the long-standing, capitalist world-order, and during the long period of unresolved transition from the latter to the former, the two systems are *interrelated*, each affecting the other's development profoundly. The existing more-or-less socialist "systems" are in fact "subsystems" which, taken together, constitute an incomplete international socialist system. The problems of socialist-system functioning and construction may be seen to be rooted in the continuing existence and impact of imperialist capitalism upon the existing and emerging transitional societies. The problems of communism are not to be solved within those societies—they cannot be—but rather are to be solved within those capitalist countries where the problems of communist development have their origin and in which the struggle for economic and political democracy—the proletarian class struggle—has yet to mature.

Conditioned by Capitalism

Although it is widely assumed that what the peoples of the socialist societies need is "democracy" in order to be able to solve their socio-economic problems, consider for a moment what communist nations have been up against historically, and what it is going to take to enable the peoples of transitional nation-states to overcome the tremendous imperialist economic and military barriers to their existence and further development as socialist societies. In 1948, George Kennan, one of the "liberals" in President Truman's Democratic administration, produced an internal memorandum as the head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, which reads: "We have about 50 percent of the world's wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population. ... Our real test in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will

Communism, Democracy & U.S. Imperialism

By Brian Guerre

permit us to maintain this position of disparity. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford... the luxury of altruism and world benefaction... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratization." Twenty-five years later, in 1973, while the political leadership of the U.S. ruling class was waging the devastating war against the peoples of Indochina, and the CIA engaged in covert, brutal aggression against the peoples of Chile, Guatemala, Bolivia, Greece, Italy, Iraq, and Australia in the name of "Freedom" and "Democracy," President Nixon declared: "We use 30 percent of all the [world's] energy... That isn't bad; that is good. That the richest, strongest people in the world and that have the highest standard of living... This is why we need so much energy, and may it always be that way." Since then, the American ruling class and the allied ruling classes of the other major capitalist states have maintained their resolve not to give up or share one bit of the unconscionable portion of the world's resources and wealth that they alone own and control.

Under these circumstances, we should recognize that "democratic choice" in countries around the world is not being made "freely" at all; rather, it is being heavily conditioned by the pervasive influence of inherently and grossly undemocratic, monopolistic corporate capitalism and active imperialist intervention. For example, the goal of the liberal-left Hungarian Free Democrats now "is a thorough Westernization of Hungary," but as a spokesperson has stated: "We know that new inequalities, new oppressions, and new censorships arise from a capitalist system. The fact is that we have no choice."

During his recent trip to Europe, Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu announced a \$2 billion "aid" package for Poland and Hungary. Speaking in West Berlin at the German-Japan Center (formerly the embassy of Imperial Japan during the Nazi period), Kaifu said: "We are ready to support the democratization of Europe and help them bring about a new order." The "four core grantees" of the so-called "private" National Endowment for Democracy (National Republican and Democratic Institutes for International Affairs, AFL-CIO Free Trade Union Institute and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Center for International Private Enterprise) funded in part by Congress, have been actively undermining progressive social revolution, human rights, and democracy in Central America; now these groups are shifting their foci to the countries of Eastern Europe, where they are intervening with millions of dollars and technical assistance in support of right-wing resurgence and in the interests of U.S. capitalism.

Nevertheless, any democratically elected and capitalist-oriented government that comes to power in any of the transitional countries will succeed only in further crippling its economy and corrupting its society by merging more closely with the dominant capitalistic system, capitalism itself being in an increasingly acute historical crisis when perceived from the standpoint of the international working class. The Polish "Solidarity" government, including leader Lech Walesa, which is largely under the direction of the same Western financial institutions that have been exploiting Poland for years, is an example of such a government. Democratization and openness, presumably involving the rule of law and protection of individual rights, and supposedly leading to less alienation, higher morale and creativity will not enable any nation turning toward capitalism to "produce" their way out of their problems through "competitive success" in the global capitalist marketplace.

Then too, if a democratically constituted proletarian, communist government were to come to power in any of the communist countries, it still would not be in control of its own national economy. There would be no possibility of "complete workers' control, through workers' councils,

of the state and industrial production"; it would be unable to establish policies that would enable the people to solve the socio-economic problems imposed upon them by imperialism. Such a government would find itself as dependent upon international capitalism as the regime it replaced, and subject to the same concerted imperialistic economic, diplomatic, and military pressures aimed at the restoration of capitalism.

How American Imperialism Causes the Problems of Communism

Historically, imperialism has adversely affected the development of communism around the world in four general ways. First, just the objective existence of the major capitalist economies (especially the U.S. economy, given its voracity on an order of magnitude without compare among all other capitalist economies) places the most severe limitations upon the economic development of the transitional societies. U.S. capitalism commands, consumes and for the most part squanders from one-third to well over half of the world's natural resources, even though we comprise are just five percent of the world's population. In terms of consumption of output per capita, it would be necessary to utilize *over 200 times* the present output of the planet's fast-disappearing, nonrenewable resources in order to reproduce globally the American standard of living for the rapidly growing world population of over 5.2 billion people. Although the "American way" of capitalist production and distribution presently condemns at least 50 million Americans to lives in poverty; the U.S. consumes more electricity for air conditioning during the three summer months alone than does the entire population of the People's Republic of China.

Second, as Marx and Engels explained long ago in *The Communist Manifesto*, "the bourgeois, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production [and the] cheap prices of its commodities... batters down all Chinese walls... It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves." All of the transitional-socialist societies, few in number and materially backward, poor and weak in power-capability terms relative to the advanced capitalist ones, are necessarily and against their wills dependent upon international capitalism, in particular on the American economy, for trade, credits and technology, as well as raw materials and food. Transitional societies must participate in the capitalist-dominated, international marketplace, and therefore remain subjected to advanced capitalist competition, exploitation, and the ramifications of recurrent capitalist economic crises—"stagflation," recession, or worse—as well as subjected to economic warfare, ideological campaigns, military attack and political destabilization.

Third, the ecological destructiveness of capitalism must be understood in terms of technologies like nuclear power, petrochemicals, synthetics and plastics which, although generally used by both capitalist and socialist societies, are characteristically "capitalist technologies," developed after World War II in the capitalist countries in order to create and dominate new markets and maximize rates of return on investments. Only later were these technologies introduced and necessarily adopted by the Soviets and others communist nation-states. With economically rapacious and increasingly aggressive international imperialism still dominant in the world, the nascent communist societies are in no position to make the needed, radical and sweeping changes from their use of capitalist technologies to environmentally benign ones; they have been, and will remain, dependent upon these harmful technologies in order to compete economically with, and to defend themselves against imperialism.

Fourth, the U.S.-led ruling classes historically have confronted the USSR and the PRC and all other emergent socialist societies with unrelenting military-financial pressures, imposed in order to destroy them outright or to cause them economic privation, thus generating internal political and military conflicts. The early U.S. government nuclear superiority, and repeated threats against both the USSR and the PRC, necessitated the development of nuclear arsenals in these countries. Socialist self-preservation from U.S.-led imperialist aggression has required an increased allocation of social resources to the military,

Continued on page 12.

Arts & Events

Qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons!

—La Marseillaise

Cultural Counter-Terrorism

*Tenured Radicals:**How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education*

By Roger Kimball

Harper & Row, 204 pages, \$18.95

By George McClintock III

The exclusion of aesthetics from politics is a common ideological practice professed by many conservative polemicists. Roger Kimball's new polemic, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education*, is a violent denunciation of university professors whose purpose "is nothing less than the destruction of the values, methods, and goals of traditional humanistic study." Kimball aims his attack at virtually anyone who, while attempting to emulate the aesthetics of Marx, Freud and Nietzsche, adheres or has adhered to the "deconstructions" of philosopher Jacques Derrida or to the "discursive practices" of the late historian Michel Foucault. Kimball read several critical essays and attended a number of conferences, from which he quotes liberally. Kimball also profits from the fact that the discourses of contemporary literary theory seem illogical or obscure in practice, as if individual theoreticians were engaged in a collective "free association"; when taken out of context, such theoretical discourses often sound as absurd as daydreams.

Cultural Terrorists

Like his heroes William J. Bennett and Allan Bloom, Kimball distinguishes between popular culture and the "tradition of high culture embodied in the classics of Western art and thought,"—an archaic dichotomy that the author defines by quoting *ad nauseam* Matthew Arnold's immortal words, "the best that has been thought and said." Voilà Kimball's first premise: the social and cultural hierarchy separating popular culture from "high" culture is determined by moral values which reflect the traditional authority of conservative political ideology. Apparently wealth and power have nothing to do with segregation, aesthetic or otherwise. "In one sense," Kimball explains after citing the Arnoldian cliché for the seventh time, "this view of the humanities can be said to be exclusive or elitist, because it presupposes a rigorously defined notion of what it means to be educated. But in another sense, it is deeply democratic for it locates authority not in any class or race or sex, but in a tradition before which all are equal." Perhaps Kimball has forgotten that the Declaration of Independence defines equality as an *unalienable Right* of the people, not as an authoritarian tradition of the elite.

Who are these monstrous educators who have abandoned the "ideals of objectivity and the disinterested pursuit of knowledge" in order to disseminate radical, anti-humanistic propaganda in the classroom, at colloquia and throughout their countless books and scholarly articles? Quoting Sidney Hook quoting Richard Rorty in the *National Review*, Kimball, who excels in the art of using the words of others to launch his assault on the humanities, explains that "a new American cultural Left has come into being made of deconstructionists, new historicists, people in gender studies, ethnic studies, media studies, a few left-over Marxists, and so forth. This Left would like to use the English, French and Comparative Literature Departments of the universities as staging areas for political action." Departments of Western European art and literature, those bastions of American "high" culture, have been occupied since the 1960s by leftist professors whose propaganda, disguised as literary theory imported from France, has persuaded American universities to install "the entire radical menu at the center of their humanities curriculum at both the undergraduate and the graduate level. Every special interest—women's studies, black studies, gay studies, and the like... has found a welcome roost in the academy, while traditional curriculum and modes of intellectual inquiry are excoriated as sexist, racist, or just plain reactionary." Voilà Kimball's second premise: that which is not the study of "high" culture is the study of popular culture; therefore, what Kimball calls "the contingencies of race, gender and the like" do not merit, as representations of popular culture, the status awarded to what he calls "high culture and genuine learning."

Kimball also distinguishes between "elite institutions—places like Yale, Johns Hopkins, Brown, and certain campuses of the University of California," and less prestigious universities: "Increasingly, second- and third-tier schools are rushing to embrace all manner of fashionable intellectual ideologies as so many formulas for garnering prestige, publicity, and 'name' professors (and hoping thereby to attract more students and other sources of in-

come) without having to distinguish themselves through the less glamorous and more time-consuming methods of good teaching and lasting scholarship." Kimball's example of a second-tier school buying fame by spending a fortune is Duke University, whose humanities departments employ a number of high-powered, well-paid leftist and feminist scholars. Voilà Kimball's third premise: elite universities are elite in spirit; hoary academic traditions can be desecrated at Harvard, but not purchased at Duke.

Kimball's "hitlist" of "tenured radicals" includes Brown University's Robert Scholes, Columbia's Carolyn Heilbrun and Michel Riffaterre, Cornell's Jonathan Culler, CUNY's Rosiland Krauss, Duke's Fredric Jameson, Stanley Fish, Frank Lentricchia and Jane Tompkins, Harvard's Barbara Johnson, NYU's Annette Michelson, Princeton's Elaine Showalter, U.C. Irvine's J. Hillis Miller, University of Pennsylvania's Houston Baker, Yale's Peter Brooks and Geoffrey Hartman, etc. These scholars, among others, are duly quoted and ridiculed. Indeed, Kimball's sole rhetorical device is the sarcastic aside, which he deploys constantly, occasionally to humorous effect, whenever the discussion turns to questions of class, gender, ethnicity or sexuality. "Or take Christine Brook-Rose's essay, 'The Dissolution of Character in the Novel.' ... we read that 'characters are verbal structures; they are like our real-life relationships but have no semblance of a referent. More and more swollen with words, like stray phalluses they wander our minds, cut off from the body of the text.' Those phalluses! They crop up everywhere these days." Not chez Kimball, however, who writes like a metaphorical lover *délaissé*. Contesting Geoffrey Hartman's assertion that "there are no dead metaphors," Kimball takes the literary critic seriously and declares that the hypothesis "can be refuted by anyone who ever uttered the phrase 'that depends' and bothered to consider its etymology: The metaphorical sense of something 'hanging down' is indeed 'dead' in most everyday uses of the word." Kimball is horrified that a graduate seminar conducted by Duke's "radical feminist" Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explored "female and male homosocial, homosexual, homophobic, and cross-gender relations"; confronted with such questions, Kimball's sarcasm goes limp: "Nor, apparently, is this sort of thing out of the ordinary for Professor Sedgwick."

America, Love It or Leave It

Although Kimball's editorial disdain for "tenured radicals" pollutes every page of his polemic, his chapter devoted to *October*, the journal of contemporary art criticism founded and edited by CUNY Distinguished Professor Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, presents the polemicist at his cattiest. According to Kimball's diagnosis, no academic journal "is more political, more opaque, or more influential in certain 'advanced' circles," thus *October* shows all the symptoms of the plague presently annihilating the humanities: "the *October* syndrome not only involves a loving embrace of cultural Marxism... but also,

it is not in the power of philosophy or literature to prevent the degradation of the human spirit, nor is it its main function to warn against this degradation....

—Paul de Man

as a kind of corollary, a violent attack on middle-class culture and society, especially in its American varieties." Citing a passage from the journal's inaugural issue of Spring, 1976, Kimball deplores the editors' penchant for the rhetorical absolute, as well as what he calls their "snobbery and class prejudice." The editors of *October* wrote: "Art begins and ends with its own conventions. We will not contribute to that social critique which, swamped by its own disingenuousness, gives credence to such an object of repression as a mural about the war in Vietnam, painted by a white liberal resident in New York, a war fought for the most part by ghetto residents commanded by elements drawn from the southern lower-middle-class. These ignorant assertions notwithstanding, what outrages Kimball is the notion of an aesthetic revolution supported by the art critics, whose journal "commended itself because of its association with a moment in which art was enlisted in the service of Communist ideology and propaganda." That American political campaigns continue to employ the techniques invented seventy-five years ago by Russian cinematographers and other artists of the avant-garde is not pertinent to art criticism, thinks Kimball, who chastises *October* for publishing articles about ideological aesthetics: "Perhaps a future issue of the magazine will be devoted to explaining why *October* deigns to avail itself of funds from government agencies representing a political system they consistently vilify." [sic]

Voilà the fourth premise of Kimball's polemic: to generate a discourse influenced by Marx's commodity fetishism, Freud's Oedipal complex or Nietzsche's will to power is to personify Stalin. It's one or the other for Kimball, either you are or you ain't. The only difference is that Stalinism, American-style, profits from affluent hypocrisy. Kimball cites a particularly embarrassing passage from the 10th anniversary issue of *October*, in which the editors appear to be whining about their personal participation in the gentrification of Soho and the Lower East Side. Here Kimball stoops to conquer with a vicious *ad hominem*. Recalling an article in *The New Yorker*, in which "Rosalind Krauss's loft" was described as "one of the most beautiful living spaces in New York," Kimball wonders: "Or is this merely an illustration of the old adage that living well is the best revenge?"

Imaginary Radicals

Ironically, Kimball seems unaware of the inevitable conclusion any objective reader will draw after reading Kimball's counter-terrorist propaganda: the "tenured radicals" he hates so much may be tenured, but they are not radicals. If they had been radicals some twenty years ago, they never would have allowed their unions to trade hours in the classroom for wage concessions. The disastrous effect of this unethical decision is well-known. For example, what used to be a five-hour foreign language course for undergraduates has become three credit-hours of bureaucratic baby-sitting, and the students know it. Students know when their teachers think, as Kimball put it, that "teaching and writing about literature is a profession like any other, concerned more with self-perpetuation and self-aggrandizement than with the disinterested pursuit of knowledge." Above all, if Kimball's "tenured radicals" had been radical political thinkers, they never would have allowed the university system to maintain the exploitative conditions imposed on lecturers and assistant professors, conditions that they themselves tolerated as they earned their tenure. The fact that *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* soars over Kimball's petite tête.

The Bottom Line

There are many words for individuals who ingratiate themselves with their superiors. Roger Kimball is managing editor of Hilton Kramer's well-funded conservative journal, *The New Criterion*. Gushing about Kramer's "editorial guidance and unstinting intellectual generosity," Kimball dedicates his book to his boss. Thus *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education* is nothing more than an exercise in ax-grinding academic self-immolation. Which just goes to prove that vice is nice, but incest is best, metaphorically speaking, of course. ☞

Loaded Canons

By Mark Goldblatt

Given the radical *chic* climate in the humanities at the moment, the suggestion that the literary canon serves a vital and legitimate function is unlikely to get heads nodding. Still, in the interest of balance, I'd like to respond to the recent canon-bashing in the March 1990 *Advocate*. In an essay entitled "Canon Fodder," Gary Paul Gilbert drops his usual quota of French names and, in the end, sides with those critics who have argued "that the literary canon, along with the very notion of literature, constituted a form of propaganda to underwrite the emerging nation-state, patriarchy and Western imperialism."

To answer this rather hackneyed charge, let me begin with a concession. "Ranking" works of art, which is what canons purport to do, is an unseemly and perhaps futile enterprise. To set one work *definitively* above another, it would be necessary to define once and for all the purpose of art. And to define the purpose of art, it would be necessary to define once and for all the purpose of life—and that definition is simply not forthcoming. (When and if Marxists ever grasp this last point, the world will be a much quieter place.) Thus it is pretty useless to contend that people who prefer Harold Robbins to Shakespeare are "wrong." The reader who prefers Robbins is apt to list different priorities than one who prefers Shakespeare; but even if the two readers are after the same thing, the fact that one finds it in Robbins and the other in Shakespeare depreciates neither experience. The canon question is not whether Shakespeare is better in some ontological sense than Robbins—that's only an ancillary issue—but whether an institution such as the university has the right to embrace one and to shun the other.

This is no mere intellectual exercise. Last year students at Stanford University picketed the administration to abolish their "canon course" requirements. Their memorable chant was "Hey hey, ho ho/Western Civ has got to go." Their argument, much like Mr. Gilbert's, was that the canon reflects a historical bias towards European males—and thus should not be required for a university degree. This ain't no "phenomenological reduction," we're talking about here: there are recognizable real-world consequences of how we answer the question: does a college *have the right* to impose a canon-based curriculum upon its students?

My gut feeling is that it must have this right.

Notice, however, the word "feeling." Unlike epistemological debates, where principles of logic can be invoked and arguments ruled out, aesthetic controversies always boil down to gut feelings. Gut level, my sense is that Shakespeare delivers a philosophical depth that Robbins does not, that Shakespeare provokes in us questions that Robbins cannot, and that Shakespeare manipulates language to pre-conceived effects beyond Robbins' gifts. But in this run-down of critical criteria, I've predetermined who comes out ahead. If my priority was who's easier to masturbate by, the results would likely be different. And since the question of whether it's more important to think philosophical thoughts or to masturbate cannot be an-

swered except by defining the purpose of life, the establishment of aesthetic criteria must end in dogmatism. God gave us genitals as well as frontal lobes.

So is aesthetics therefore relative?

The number of academics nowadays who would answer "yes" to this question is surprising, given the fact that academia itself has a historical, not to mention financial, stake in cultivating positive aesthetic judgements. After all, if students' opinions are as good as teachers', what *does* justify a required literature course? Why listen to a professor hold forth on Milton when your friend's views are just as valid? (And please don't say that the professor's years of study qualify him. If expertise elevates one person's value-judgement over another's, then the historical fact of the canon, and its propagation by learned men, becomes its own justification.) Last semester, after sixteen lines of *Oedipus the King*, a student of mine named Kevin raised his hand and declared, "This sucks." His evaluation, in a world of aesthetic relativism, must weigh as much as 25 centuries of academic reverence for the play. From Aristotle to Freud, *Oedipus* has been an object of study and (to borrow Gilbert's word) "veneration." But Kevin has decided it sucks: *ergo* it sucks. Who am I to inflict the rest of the play on him?

For that matter, what real purpose is there for a "professor of literature" (in the literal sense) in a world of aesthetic relativism? The notion that a person should be rewarded with an audience and a salary for the hours he's logged in a library sounds downright puritan. Should we also tenure housepainters to explain that blue is a prettier color than yellow? Why pay anyone for his opinions when expertise is an illusion?

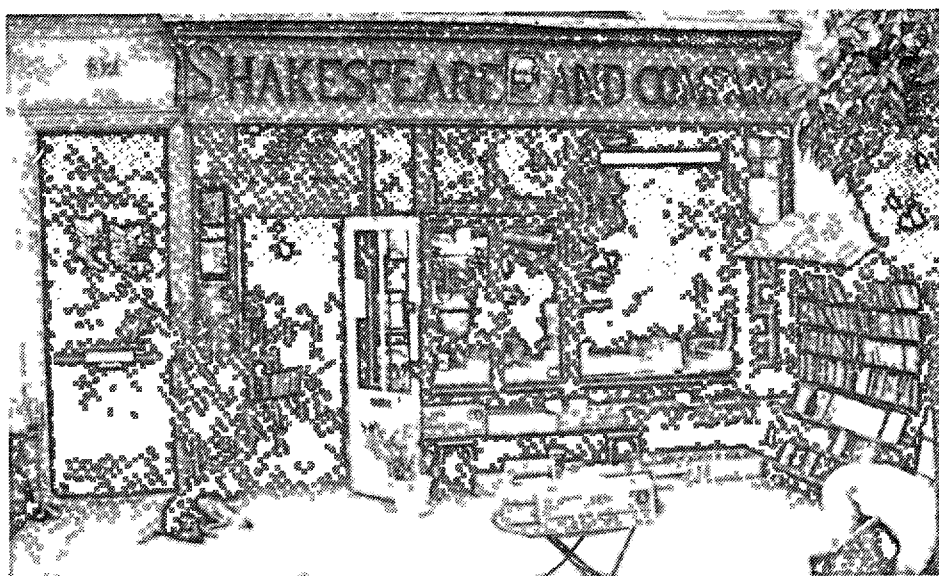
Perhaps the fact that people *want* to hear him? Why not give the students what they want to study?

All right, let's pursue that. Let's imagine ourselves as the hiring committee for the College of Aesthetic Relativism—CAR, for short. Three people apply for one position to teach a course in literature for the Fall semester. Professor A posts a syllabus of Shakespeare's tragedies. Professor B posts a syllabus of Post-Structuralist Criticism. Professor C posts a syllabus of fiction from Hustler Magazine.

Whose course do you think is going to fill up first? Which course should we run?

Never mind, we've got another headache. Jesse Helms is after us to axe our resident artist. Threatens to cut our public funds if we keep him on staff, all because our guy used a textbook that features Mapplethorpe photographs. It was those damn Mapplethorpe photos that upset Helms in the first place, remember? The sight of homoerotic acts and all that. *We* think it's art, but who's to say? Why not bend a little, since Helms' opinion is as valid as ours anyway? Maybe let's open up the issue of homoerotic images to a general referendum, coast to coast. Get a few million of those bible-belters in on the grant allocation process, what do you think?

But that's photography, not literature... so it's not our headache. Thank God. And, anyway, why *should* Mapplethorpe's work be displayed to begin with? Because



it has intrinsic worth? (At CAR, we know better.) Because a committee of "experts" deem it worthy? But that's just the kind of mentality that's used to prop up the canon.

Come to think of it, that museum on Fifth Avenue *would* make a great parking garage.

Gut-level, then, it seems to me that the canon is at worst a necessary evil. If it is *chic* in certain intellectual circles to argue that intrinsic worth is a fiction, that nothing inherent in one work of art elevates it over another work, that does not *ipso facto* obviate the need for expertise. On the contrary, expertise becomes even more essential, a last refuge against lowest-common-denominator aesthetics. For if all art is worth the same, and all judgement is worth the same, what barometer remains save popular consensus? Which is exactly what Helms is after: art by popular consensus. Museums stocked with Grant Wood and Norman Rockwell. Anthologies by Hallmark. Perhaps there would still be an avant garde. But with no cash to underwrite it, you can be sure of that.

Which returns us to the principle of expertise, and its visible manifestation, the canon.

If human beings led infinite lives, then choices about what to read and what to set aside would be unnecessary. There would be time for Shakespeare, and for Robbins, and perhaps even for Hustler Magazine. (Those lines at the vomitorium get long.) But we do not lead infinite lives. We die. And we die with more books unread than read.

The role of an expert is by nature a social one. He is what he is only in contrast with non-experts. (It's the kind of subtle hierarchy on which deconstructionists really go to town.) And it is the expert's recognition that his expertise is underwritten by non-experts that must move him to a secondary role, which is that of *guide*. Since non-experts are often just people whose expertise lies in other areas, they need and expect the experts in a given field to guide them towards worthwhile choices. To speak in more specific terms, the most valuable thing a professor of literature does is not setting one book above another; it is suggesting that the books he assigns in a class have a certain value that he and, usually, other experts have noticed and commented on. He makes a case. He tries to convince his students that reading Shakespeare is not a waste of (finite) time. He does this by virtue of what he and his predecessors have found in the texts. If he succeeds, he has fulfilled his role as a guide. What the student then does with his "Shakespeare experience" is up to him.

The fact that professors tend to teach canonical texts is in part because those are

the safest recommendations. Not safe in a political sense, for many canonical texts are revolutionary—in form *and* in content. But safe in the sense that fellow scholars have found elements for discussion, have corroborated the professor's sense that here is a work that will not waste the students' time.

No one I've ever known, and I want to stress this, has held that the canon is fixed. That's a caricature of the traditional pro-canon position, a straw man propped up to be knocked down. If the canon were truly *fixed*, then nothing written in the future could find its way in. Rather, the canon evolves over the course of time. It evolves because critical perspectives change, because scholars are tied up in the politics (national, religious, class, sexual) of their eras. It is no coincidence, for instance, that the visionary poetry of William Blake enjoyed a special vogue in the 1960s. The pursuit of altered states of consciousness, so trendy back then, had a literary, as well as a pharmacological, aspect. For a short while there, Blake seemed to dominate the Romantics.

The case of Blake is one where a previously-canonical writer was bumped up a few notches on college reading lists. But there have been cases where a more obscure writer has been "canonized"—as when T.S. Eliot helped to champion John Donne in the 1920s. Whatever his motives, Eliot had us convinced that Donne, and not Milton, had succeeded Shakespeare as the great genius of English letters in the 17th century. Since Eliot's death in 1965, both he and Donne have seen a bit of a decline, anthology-wise. That's the nature of the game. New generations of scholars take up the causes of their favorites; and since scholarship gradually alters the status quo, those whose scholarship is convincing also bring prominence onto themselves.

To be sure, the canon is biased. That white males predominate is a reflection of the centuries of racism and sexism in Western Culture. But that does nothing to diminish the legitimacy of the canon. The possibility of Shakespeare's "sister" would not alter what each generation, including ours, has found in Shakespeare's plays since his death: for what they have found is something of themselves. The Marxist critic, Terry Eagleton, argues: "we may in the future produce a society which is unable to get anything at all out of Shakespeare. His works might simply seem desperately alien, full of styles of thought and feeling which such a society found limited or irrelevant. In such a situation, Shakespeare would be no more valuable than much present-day graffiti." Perhaps this is so. But would such a future

Continued on page 12.

Sinead O'Connor & The Cowboy Junkies

By Paul Casciani

Sinead O'Connor and The Cowboy Junkies are welcome departures from the usual bland stuff you hear when you turn on your radio. Each has a unique style which differs significantly from the formulaic pop music which dominates most music charts and radio playlists. Performers such as these have a style that changes and becomes more singular and noteworthy as their careers evolve. "Caution Horses" by The Cowboy Junkies and Sinead O'Connor's "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got" are the second major label releases by these artists, and each is worth a careful listen.

The Cowboy Junkies' current album, "The Caution Horses," is technically their third or fourth album. Their first album, "Whites Off Earth Now," was released on an independent label and did not earn the band much recognition. Their second album, "The Trinity Sessions," was released on the RCA label and attracted a following to the band, if not much airplay. A third album was recorded after "Trinity" but was scrapped by the band as unacceptable. "Caution Horses" picks up where "Trinity" left off, and the result is a mixed blessing.

"Trinity" was recorded live in a church in Canada without the benefit of overdubs or drum machines. The music combines the country twang of Hank Williams and Neil Young's gritty lack of couth. When lead singer Margo Timmins performed Hank Williams's "I'm so lonesome I could die" you just had to believe her, and the band's rendition of Lou Reed's "Sweet Jane" could give you goose-bumps. What made this album such a standout was the "unproduced" feeling that the band captured. The live recording allowed them, as polished as their music is, to sound raw and emotional. "Caution Horses" was recorded in a studio, but once again it is a "live" effort. A quirky collection of off-the-wall love songs, the sound of this album is not as sparse as the effect created by "Trinity." The lyrics are more ambiguous, incorporating both the light and dark of life in general, and of

romance in particular. One song, "Cause Cheap Is How I Feel," opens with the lines "It's the kind of night that's so cold, when you spit it freezes before it hits the ground." A cowboy in a bar is described as "Just another lonely country boy grown weary of the night. Just another boy with a sink full of dirty dishes." The songs are mostly about dubious relationships, and suggest that anything is better than nothing at all. Not exactly cheerful stuff, but if you feel like having an existential cry in your beer, or listening to music that departs from the interminably happy Top 40 drone, "Caution Horses" is it.

Both "The Lion and the Cobra," Sinead O'Connor's first album, and "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got," her second album, were produced by Sinead O'Connor. She also wrote most of the songs on these albums. Sinead is from Ireland and, like a couple of other bands from Ireland, including U2 and The Pogues, her music provides a mixture of political polemic and love songs.

Sinead demonstrated on "The Lion and the Cobra" that she can use her voice like no singer since early Robert Plant: now droning, now keening like a banshee. There was an anger and an edge to such songs as "Jerusalem" and "Mandinka" and a fiery sexuality to her hit, "Put Your Hands On Me."

Her second album, "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got," is both a step forward and a step, well, sideways. Like the Junkies, Sinead's second effort is more polished than the first. But with the polish she has lost a little of the edge. "Nothing Compares 2 U," a song written by Prince, is climbing up the Billboard charts right now, and is as annoying as its title suggests. The title track is equally dreary. It would seem that someone told Sinead that she needed to control her voice, to tone it down a little. This she does, and it's a damn shame.

Whereas "The Lion and the Cobra" grabs you with its intensity, "I Do Not

Want What I Haven't Got" refuses to take chances. "Black Boys On Mopeds" is a potentially powerful song which boldly compares Margaret Thatcher's regime to the recent carnage in Beijing and describes England as "the home of Police who kill black boys on mopeds." But it somehow ends up sounding as inane as a protest song by Phil Collins. Don't get me wrong, there is some strong stuff here. "Jump In The River" and "The Emperor's New Clothes" are fairly solid pieces. "You Cause As Much Sorrow" is a good song about a dead lover. "You cause as much sorrow dead as when you were alive" is part of the refrain. But Sinead fails to use her voice to its full potential, and the final result is disappointing. Compared to her first album, "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got" is sung in a virtual monotone.

Two songs from "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got" have received a fair amount of radio play: "The Emperor's New Clothes" and "Nothing Compares 2 U." "The Emperor's New Clothes" has been aired primarily on college and alternative radio stations. But "Nothing Compares 2 U" has been at the top of Billboard's pop charts for a couple of weeks and the album itself is topping the charts. Unfortunately, neither of these hit songs represents Sinead's best efforts.

The one song on the album which does show off her talents is a cheerful number called "I am stretched on your grave." A background track funky enough for George Clinton powers what could be a medieval ballad. "Do you remember the night we were lost in the shade of the blackthorn and the chill of the frost," she asks her dead lover as she lies across her grave. Once again, however, this song could benefit from some of the vocal pyrotechnics heard on Sinead's first album.

"I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got" opens with the Serenity prayer: "God grant me the serenity to..." and this album does indeed seem serene compared to "The Lion and the Cobra." If you want an album that will shake you out of your own serenity, try "The Lion and the Cobra." But if Sinead O'Connor's next album is as serene as "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got," forget it. ☞

Paul Casciani hails from the Ph.D. Program in English.

CUNY Professor Denounced

Continued from page 1.

prejudices into the class?" Other students voiced similar concerns.

Because there is no evidence demonstrating that Professor Levin's views have affected his ability to teach, he is protected in the name of academic freedom from punitive action by the City College administration. Thus the issue in this controversy has become one of academic freedom and the limits, or the rights, of tenured professors to express unpopular and inflammatory viewpoints.

"I don't agree with Professor Levin's opinion as stated in that letter," Dr. Steven M. Cahn, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at the Graduate School told *The Advocate*, making no comment about the issue of academic freedom. Professor Arthur Collins, Executive Officer of the Ph.D. Program in Philosophy, however, defended his colleague's right to express controversial views. Other faculty have also rallied in support of Professor Levin's academic freedom. A petition stating that Professor Levin should not be deprived of the right to express his view is currently being circulated throughout the academic community.

The petition, written by Barry R. Gross, professor of Philosophy at York College, and Stefan Bauer-Mengelberg, communicates the signers' "growing alarm" at Dean Sherwin's "increasing encroachments on the academic freedom of Professor Michael Levin" and his "peremptory removal of [Levin] from his classes." Recalling the Second World War, the petition states: "Though you may not have intended it, your actions give encouragement to the Nazi-like tactics of the student thugs who invaded Professor Levin's classroom, to the dismay and the disgust of his own students. Such an outrage bears too close a resemblance to escape comparison with the beginnings of the downfall of the great German universities some sixty years ago."

Dr. Bernard W. Harleston, President of City College, called for an ad-hoc committee to investigate Professor Levin's conduct in class when the *APA Proceedings* letter was brought to his attention. President Harleston was quoted in *The Campus* of April 2nd as saying: "At the center of all of this—here's some of my own values now—is we've got to be sure that there's an environment here where students can learn. [Levin] has expressed views that simply, to me, are defined as racist and sexist and indeed an expression of white supremacy. [Levin's] views are offensive to the basic values of human equality and decency and simply have no place here at City College." The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate rejected President Harleston's request for an ad-hoc investigation, arguing that Professor Levin's published opinions, however unpopular, are protected by the statutes which guarantee tenure in all cases except those which exhibit instances of gross misconduct.

Professor Levin is scheduled to teach a seminar on Epistemology at the Graduate School next Fall. ☞

Surreal Life Top 10

By Tom Burgess

#1 Christy Moore

May 10 @ Brooklyn Academy of Music. Expect a sell-out concert for this ex-member of both the Bothy Band & Moving Hearts. No sell-out himself, Moore is the favorite *independista* of Ireland.

#2 15th ANNIVERSARY PARTY for the club that picked up NYC's share of the rent for New Orleans R&B. These featured performers are extended family of the more nuclear Neville Bros., but equally explosive.

@ Tramps, now located at 45 W. 21, 727-7788

May 10-12 The Meters: If Funk was rooted in James Brown & Sly Stone, a 3rd root tapped into Art Neville's group.

May 16-19 Allen Toussaint: Little Feat listened.

#3 Bang on a Can Festival

@ RAPP Arts, 220 E 4th, 439-1103. Tickets at 416 W 42.

May 4-6 Harry Partch's Awesome Instruments: 8pm.

May 11 Terry Riley & Khayal: Who says minimalism isn't pretty? 8 & 10 pm; Kronos Quartet will join the late show.

#4 Mingus Dynasty

May 1-5 @ Fat Tuesday's, 3rd Av off 17th, 533-7902, 8 & 10 w. wknd. late show. George Adams joins other Mingus alumni like with a tribute to the bassist's compositions.

#5 Der Ring Gott Farblonjet: A Masterwork

Now playing @ Der Ridiculous Theater Co., 1 Sheridan Square off 7th Av, 691-2271. A Reader's Digest of Wagner, as con-

densed by Ludlam, becomes the *mythomoteur* of the 20th Century. The entrance of Harry Koutoukas, as the Goddess Eartha, brought the audience to its knees!

#6 Cry Baby!

Now playing @ theaters everywhere! In John Water's latest homage to nostalgia, Iggy Pop (the former Mr. Stoooge) & Polly Bergen (the former panelist) both appear. Do they duet?

#7 Ricky Skaggs

May 11 @ the Ritz, 54th west of B'way, 8 pm, \$19.50/\$21. Emmy Lou Harris' main man on many an album, now a C&W star in his own write. Unlike dudes like Dwight Yoakum, and dude ranchers like Alabama, he was born this way.

#8 Gary Burton Reunion

May 24-29 @ the Blue Note, 3rd east of 6th Av., 475-8592, 9 & 11:30 w. wknd. late show. Pat Metheny will be the big draw here, so make reservations.

#9 The Ron Carter Nonet

April 26 @ Columbia's Miller Theatre, B'way & 116th, 854-7799, 8 pm, \$20/16. From duet to nonet, he steals the show, & still looks like the perfect sideman.

#10 Brave Combo

Upon perfecting their craft in Denton, Texas, these weirdos received a Purple Heart for playing the Purple Haze Polka at L'Amour. ☞

Lose
Something?
Check the
Lost & Found

Communism, Democracy & U.S. Imperialism

Continued from page 8.

leaving less and less available for domestic production and human needs, slowing and distorting their societal development, and lessening their capacities to assist the less-developed socialist and non-aligned nations and national liberation movements.

Keeping the World Safe For "Industrial Democracy"

Inside the U.S. today, with a population of 250 million people, the top one-half of the richest one percent of the people (420,000 super-rich households) own and control over 35 percent of the nation's wealth; the bottom 80 percent of the people must divide just 23 percent of the wealth among themselves, while the poorest 20 percent must make do with one-half of one percent of the wealth. The top one percent of U.S. families earns as much income after taxes as the lower 40 percent of families, and the average chief executive officer of a major corporation earns about 95 times as much as the average factory worker. We are expected to believe that these basic, material facts are "not relevant" to all that is wrong with U.S. society. Yet as difficult as it may be for Americans to accept, production of profit and luxury for the few at the expense of the many, under a social system that is characterized by the systematic exploitation and waste of natural and human resources, extreme and growing inequalities (including inequality of opportunity), poverty, economic and psychological insecurity, sexism and racism, militarism and repression both at home and abroad, rather than democratically planned production and distribution to meet the basic human needs of the masses, is the cause of the world's socio-economic problems.

Internationally, capitalism would collapse within a few years (it would have collapsed long ago) if not for direct U.S. military intervention as well as U.S. government sponsorship of fascist-military governments, paramilitary terrorist organizations, and death squads targeting anti-imperialist and pro-socialist worker and peasant movements. Hundreds of thousands of people around the globe have been slaughtered in the years since the Vietnam War. International capitalism has been working less and less well for a larger and larger proportion of the world's people; at the same time capitalism has been interfering with the functioning of the transitional communist societies, in particular with their abilities to formulate viable socio-economic policies. The popular response has been the reform and revolutionary movements for economic and political change, and such movements certainly will continue to expand throughout the interrelated capitalist and communist societies. But unless and until we change our social system from capitalist to socialist, we may be certain that the transitional societies will continue to sink deeper into the morass of U.S.-led imperialism, and our own socio-economic problems, which are caused by capitalism, will overwhelm us. ☞

Brian Guerre is a member of the GSUC staff, a Vietnam veteran, and a Marxist activist. For documentation, references, discussion, write Brian to the Personnel Office or telephone extension 2059.

Socialist Scholars On Parade

Continued from page 5.

because right wing DSAers use their involvement with the Democrats as an excuse to avoid developing serious strategies. And even if they do pull out, I think a genuine change along the lines I have indicated could only come about if the DSA seriously opened up planning for the conference to other groups on the left. Despite the risks of "sectarian" infiltration, this would truly give the left in general a chance to come together, "democratically," which is what the DSA is *supposedly* all about.

On to the shining light of the conference: the Friday night plenary, entitled "World Wide Struggles for Democracy." This was well-attended and featured some very important speakers on the left, including Boris Kargalitsky, a Soviet dissident organizing a new democratic socialist labor movement in the Soviet Union which has won 43 seats on the Moscow City Council; Ruben Zamora, a leader of the Revolutionary Democratic Front, fighting heroically against the military thugs supported by the U.S. government who tyrannize and terrorize the people of El Salvador; Maria Alves, member of the Workers Party in Brazil, which would have won the presidency last year if the bus companies had not refused to bus working people to the polls; and Daniel Singer, the French correspondent for the *Nation*, and author of *Prelude to Revolution*, the best study in English of the French student and worker revolts in May 1968, *The Road to Gdansk*, probably the best study of the Solidarnosc movement in Poland, and most recently the book, *Is Socialism Doomed*.

While the media throughout the West and now the East are portraying the new developments of the East as proof that Western "democracy" is better and more efficient than Eastern "socialism," these speakers were of the opinion that there is no more genuine democracy in the capitalist West than there was genuine socialism in the Stalinist East. Danny Singer, who appears at these plenaries every year and usually earns a standing ovation from me for his words (you may have guessed by now that I'm a big fan) summarized the consensus on the podium. For Singer, the collapse of the Stalinist empire, literally "falling to pieces," should be cause for joy on the American left, since now socialism can no longer be identified and confused

with the "repression of the Soviet tank." Socialism, he said, "is not dying in Eastern Europe, since to die you have to have lived." But these upheavals, he added "have not happened in the way we might have hoped." It is invigorating to see people entering "the stage as actors in their own fate." This revolutionary, democratic element, so evident in the initial upheavals, is what was absent, Singer implied, from the "really non-existent," Stalinist perversion of socialism. It is this absence—among other, more horrific elements such as the concentration camps, that completely disqualified Stalinism from its claim to the title of genuine socialism. Yet the alternative so far accepted by the Eastern European peoples has been a move to fully embrace capitalism, the "new specter haunting Europe today."

But the abolition of Stalinism does not mean that capitalism has proved itself the perfect system. The peoples of Eastern Europe will soon discover that the brands of capitalist development they have to choose from will be neither the welfare state heaven of Sweden, nor even the "hell" (relatively speaking) of Thatcherite Britain. Instead, given their overwhelming economic problems now, along with the increasingly desperate thirst for profit by the crisis-bound Western economies, the societies of Eastern Europe will reenter the capitalist world market in order to be underdeveloped by the United States and West German imperial powers. Rather than being offered a new and very costly "Marshall Plan" by a West which can by no means afford it, the choices faced by Eastern Europe will be between Mexico or Bolivia.

Faced with such developments, possessing as these societies do a strong commitment to social justice, and the recent memory that "outworn institutions cannot stand forever" in the face of popular revolt, the people of Eastern Europe will now let "history stop" with capitalism, as many in the West would like it to do. Capitalist institutions will be seen to have worn themselves too, and genuine democracy, "invented" by the people themselves at every level of society, will become a real and revolutionary possibility. ☞

Thomas Smith is a contributing editor to The Advocate.

Loaded Canons

Continued from page 10.

state even be recognizable as a *society*—a group of people banding together for purposes of survival and community? For Shakespeare concerned himself with these very issues, survival and community.

But even if we concede Eagleton his point, and even if we acknowledge the manifest bias that has historically characterized the canon, does it necessarily follow that the intent of a canon is oppressive? As academia (which is where expertise is formally validated) has become less a clique of white males, the canon has come to reflect the shifts. Thirty years ago, an intensive survey course in English Lit might have included Jane Austen, George Eliot, a Bronte or two, Emily Dickinson and maybe Virginia Woolf. That is changing, obviously. Black literature, in 1990, is more than Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright. The cause of these changes is not a sudden quota system, nor an aesthetic affirmative action policy, but the gradual appearance of a body of scholarship to recommend the new works. New expertise, in other words, has demanded their inclusion on reading lists. But since people still live the same three score and ten, gradual inclusions require gradual exclusions. Among the list of those going or gone are Longfellow, Skelton, Kipling, Jonson and Shaw. All white males, incidentally. Not because a group of department chairpersons got together and decreed that these guys were out. The truth, as usual, is far less conspiratorial. They're out because no one's writing about them. No new dissertations. No fresh insights. Nothing new and exciting to talk about in front of a classroom—hence, no reason to assign them. The less they're assigned, the less likely they are to be read and explicated. Their exclusion, thus, comes to perpetuate itself. It's a natural and inevitable process.

Part of our function as graduate students, as it happens, is to fiddle with the canon. By the quality of our doctoral work, we can revive interest in canonical authors or provoke interest in new or neglected ones. In other words, the scholarship that we produce serves either to consolidate or to instigate the process of canonization. That we are sometimes discouraged in the latter enterprise should be taken as a challenge, not a roadblock. The nature of the doctoral faculty is, and must forever continue to be, conservative: professionally, their stake is to *conserve* that which they recognize as the canon. That will be our stake when we succeed them: to see to it, perhaps, that Toni Morrison remains "dissertationable." And perhaps even to discourage the skinhead in the back of the lecture-hall who wants to write about Kipling.

No, it's not a perfectly fair system. But those who want to argue that the system is designed to suppress worthwhile writers are forced to concede that there is such a thing as a "worthwhile writer"—thus justifying the canon's continued, and continuously evolving, existence. Those who want to argue for a pure aesthetic relativism should think long and hard about the consequences. As long as human beings live finite lives, as long as lifetime reading lists have to be circumscribed by three-score and ten, it's the only workable system we've got. ☞

Mark Goldblatt will defend his dissertation on Richard Hooker in May.

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Behind the Bookshelves

Continued from page 1.

William Myrick, City University Associate Dean for Libraries, is not as optimistic as his colleague at Queens. There is a difference in funding sources of the senior and the community colleges. "Up until the late 1970s, during the budget crisis, the City University was supported by the city with some state support. That's when the state took responsibility for the senior colleges almost completely. The community colleges are predominantly funded by the city. It's a strange anomaly, dealing with these two funding agencies, the state legislature and the city council—it's a double-edged sword. Ever since the state took over, there has been a budget crisis annually. Every year it ranges from being rocky to calamitous. This year it's calamitous."

The Higher Education Data Survey (HEDS) report covers the library budgets and holdings for every CUNY college. Between the 1987-1988 and the 1988-1989 fiscal years, the "Expenditures for Library Material" show a total decrease of \$1,058,422. Queens College is the only senior college to have received an increase in its budget (\$99,456).

Fortunately, the CUNY library staff copes effectively with the annual fiscal problems. The state's budget crisis, expected to worsen in the next few years, has forced CUNY college librarians to seek supplementary funds. According to Dean Myrick, "There is a \$300,000 matching grant for research collection development available for the senior colleges. It is divided among the college that offer graduate courses. For example, both Baruch and Brooklyn have come up with \$30,000 through private means such as Board of Trustee Funds which will be matched by the state. Hunter College came up with

\$55,000 and Staten Island raised \$11,000. But there is still approximately \$67,000 left in this fund so these figures may be augmented. It is not a good solution." Barbara Higginbotham, the Chief Librarian of Brooklyn College, expressed similar sentiments. "We should not be matching funds," she said. "They should be given to us to support graduate studies."

There is also the Coordinating Collection Development Aid, mandated by state law for all academic libraries, which provides a modest supplement of \$5,000-15,000. However, this allocation has been eliminated in Governor Cuomo's proposed budget.

Professor Stanton Biddle, Administrative Services Librarian at Baruch, emphasizes access to information, rather than large collections, in order to cope with limited funds and space. He suggests that CUNY libraries should continue developing the cooperative inter-library procedures employed by the nation's major research libraries. Even the Library of Congress has been forced to identify its strong areas of international publications in order to carefully select its purchases. Dr. McDonough agrees with Professor Biddle. "These libraries can no longer afford to acquire everything," she said. "There is a national emphasis on access over ownership." Dr. McDonough believes that it is inaccurate to continue using the term "book budget" to describe the library's budget. Saying that there is no money for books is also misleading, because a library's budget includes monies allocated for periodicals and staff, as well as for the expanded computerization planned for the CUNY system. Currently Baruch, John Jay and Brooklyn Colleges are connected to

CUNY + (Plus), an integrated on-line catalog system. Eventually all of the CUNY libraries, whose collections contained 5,821,554 volumes in 1989, will be linked to this system.

Dean Myrick, like many CUNY librarians, blames the skyrocketing cost of periodicals for taking larger and larger portions of the budget. In addition, libraries rely on foreign journal publishers and these costs have been greatly affected by the exchange rate. A recent article in *Publisher's Weekly*, "The Serials Pricing Controversy," states that journals published by foreign houses rose from an average of "\$82 in 1985 to nearly \$150 in 1988." Charles Hamaker, in an article published by *American Libraries* stated that "since 1986, no more than 10% of journals consume 50% or more of the serials budget and that as few as 20% of their subscriptions swallow 72-75% of the serials budget." For example, periodicals such as *Chemical Abstracts* cost approximately \$15,000 per year. The *Publisher's Weekly* article reported that the New York Public Library had to cancel its 1989 subscription of a much used *Beilstein Handbook of Organic Chemistry* because its could no longer afford to pay the \$23,021.95 subscription fee.

Because the cost of keeping expensive scientific journals may result in the cancellation of many less expensive titles in the humanities, the liberal arts and the social sciences, CUNY librarians have become creative when dealing with the serials budget. Baruch's faculty was asked to participate in such a tradeoff when the library sent letters to them requesting suggestions for de-acquisitioning periodicals related to their disciplines. In September 1989, Brooklyn College was forced to cancel \$50,000 in journal subscriptions, of which the majority were scientific journals. The CUNY libraries have a policy of avoiding

the cancellation of a journal that no other college library holds. Senior colleges such as City College, Queens, and Hunter are beginning to use electronic transmission to cut the waiting time for journals from days or weeks to 48 hours. Ironically, by sharing, libraries reduce subscription bases, which is considered one of the reasons for rising periodical costs—a bibliographic catch-22.

Alternatives have also been devised for coping with the entire library budget. Brooklyn College recently implemented an aggressive internship program for upper-level students to offset staff shortages. The students work on special projects for course credit. Dr. Higginbotham said that today there is one-third less part-time staff members than there was two years ago. The Brooklyn College library is also developing a five-year plan which will emphasize improving services and collections for graduate studies.

Many services are available for graduate student use throughout the CUNY libraries. There is a document delivery service available to reduce waiting time for journals. It can only be used for items not available in the CUNY system. A similar service available for inter-library loans costs about \$9. Graduate students have borrowing privileges at all the CUNY libraries, the New York Public Research Library, and the private universities around town. Students can obtain a Metro card if they need material which is available only at a private university. Students may also request a "hold" or "recall" of material on loan.

In honor of National Library Week (April 22-28), Governor Cuomo is sponsoring a "Night of 7,000 stars" on April 25th. CUNY colleges are coordinating writing contests and book giveaways. *Caroline Paré studies English literature.*

Six Years At the Bottom of the Food Chain

Continued from page 3.

to class weary but serious and eager. Most of them are older; this is their chance to escape a no-option job. They resent the "college kids" who go to school during the day.

I was asked to teach *Introduction to Literature*, simply because I had written and published a novel and short stories. Frankly I was overjoyed that someone would actually pay me to talk about literature in front of college students. I had always loved literature in college. That's why I majored in philosophy, since I knew I would read everything on my own that would be assigned to an English major.

Together, the students and I approached Malamud and O'Connor, Kafka and Joyce with fear and trembling. I never told them this was my first teaching experience. I pretended to know what I was talking about, even half convinced myself that I did. Discipline was never a problem, nor was lack of class discussion. The students couldn't wait to talk. I was probably the first person in their life who listened to what they had to say. Their textual interpretations were awkward, inspired, enthusiastic, weird, and full of wonder. They argued with each other, and with me. I was enchanted. My class observation was positive. But I was never called back. Never told why. I did what any sensible person would do in this situation: I wrote a novel. Then I got another adjunct position.

It was the second job that taught me to

be aware of the need to read the department "signs" correctly because I was fired from it. This took place at Hunter College. Having just published a novel that had received some critical attention, and thus in dire need of money, I applied to Hunter for a job as an adjunct. In a moment of weakness (no M.A., no M.F.A., no Ph.D.) they hired me. I was ebullient. I was asked to teach *Introduction to Literature* once again, which I did with what I thought was great enthusiasm. My observation was, I thought, good. That summer I was asked to teach *The Search for Self in Modern Literature*. It was an intense course in which I, in my ignorance and enthusiasm, assigned too much reading. The students grumbled, but seemed to appreciate the spirit in the class. For me, it was a fantastic high. Something marvelous, unexpected was happening. Each day got better, until by the end of the course I felt transported to another plane, some sort of stratosphere of teaching. I was getting high on teaching books that I loved to students who reciprocated that enthusiasm. Something, of course, had to be wrong.

I found out what it was the following Fall. A very proper voice called me up and announced that he was going to observe me, telling me however that he didn't believe in one-class observations and thought that one should set no store by them. We set a day. He arrived in class looking very white and very distinguished, wearing a

well tailored suit and impeccable tie. I on the other hand arrived looking somewhat white, wearing a Hawaiian Shirt and rumpled white pants. The topic for the day was *Kubla Khan*. The class was disastrous. I was trying something different, and it was not working. I now know there are certain professions in which one is not allowed to make a mistake: bull-fighting, mountain climbing, automobile racing, and adjunct teaching. He berated me for not being attuned to the "incantations" in the poem. He was right. I did not mention this. Instead I suggested to them that perhaps they might treat the poem as pornography, albeit enlightened pornography. That was a no-no.

Next came the department chairman. He "observed" me in my other class by not observing me, by asking questions about it. It was a class in English composition. I said, proudly, that one of the essays we were reading was Plato's *Crito*. He frowned. "This is a course in English Composition," he snapped. I had been under the mistaken assumption that writing was somehow connected with thinking. At the end of the "interview," smiling his best Post-Modern smile, he informed me that the results of our conversation would be written up, along with the results of my "observer's" conversation, along with my rebuttal, if I wished any, and placed in a file—available for inspection, he emphasized, by anybody. Naturally I was relieved

and gratified to think that anyone could look in my file.

Humbled, distraught, frantic at the prospect of no job and no paycheck, I again did what any irrational person in my circumstances would do: I wrote another novel. Again good reviews, again no money. To avoid being divorced by my wife I managed to get "hired" again as an adjunct at Brooklyn College.

Brooklyn College has a real campus... grass and trees... buildings that don't drop down into the bowels of the borough like something shameful, or hover ominously over it with false importance. These are brick structures with real ivy, proper college buildings. One gets the feeling that students do what college students are supposed to do: have fun, get drunk, lie to their teachers, and waste their time reading books that aren't assigned for their courses.

Adjuncts are dumped into one largish room, sharing desks that were used at the barricades in the Paris student riots of 1968. Wastebaskets are sometimes emptied once a month. The chairs are decorated with malignant coffee rings and ancient pizza stains. The bathrooms, those that are unlocked, seem to flood regularly, though they never did issue a schedule when this occurred.

Students came in for conferences in this huge room. Some would bare the innermost recesses of their soul. The other

Concluded on page 15.

Bondage and Disciplines

Continued from page 5.

At present the one degree-granting program that is interdisciplinary in nature is the Liberal Studies program, which is also the only program which offers only the Master's degree. Liberal Arts claims to be "designed to meet the needs of persons who have completed the undergraduate degree and who have the ability and desire to engage in advanced study, but for whom the traditional graduate curricula are too restrictive." Nevertheless, the student is required to select one of a small selection of "programmatic themes," in which he or she must complete at least two courses offered by the department.

The Liberal Studies program, which offers most of its courses in the evenings, is primarily geared toward people who would like to take a course or two after work and who will probably not go on to further graduate study. This is both its strength and its weakness; in serving the needs of the adult education community, it tends to offer courses which are of relatively little interest for Ph.D. students in other programs, and in which the students often do not have the same level of sophistication.

So Liberal Studies doesn't look like the place to go if you want to be *seriously* interdisciplinary. Nor should one look towards other Liberal Studies programs for anything different. There are numerous similar programs around the country (including, in New York, NYU, the New School, and one that just opened at Columbia), virtually none of which grant Ph.D.s. The question, "Why can't I get a Ph.D. in Liberal Studies?" is generally answered, "Who would hire you if you did?" It is a peculiar contradiction: everyone wants the interdisciplinary, but not in excess: that would be "unprofessional."

Part of the reason for these negative attitudes is that the survival of individual disciplines in their present form could be endangered by the potentially undermining effect of the interdisciplinary. As Fish sees it,

"as soon as disciplines are fully established they come quickly to believe in the priority of their own concerns and turn from their larger mission to the training of professionals for whom those concerns are not only prior but exclusive."

From within the disciplines, the interdisciplinary is seen as a threat "out there" that could become an "enemy within." Fish does not trouble himself to analyze the economic structures which preserve the intactness of disciplines. We might call attention to the fact that disciplines stay the same because nobody wants to graduate af-

ter ten years with a Ph.D., only to find out that their discipline no longer exists, and that no professor is likely to publicly acknowledge that his work is no longer of interest or use to anyone. Students invest their time and money into this system, and disciplines protect those who have invested in a particular method and set of texts.

It takes only a comparison to the educational model of the sciences to see how absurd this really is. If someone came up with a workable theory which invalidated, say, physics as we know it, no one would argue that such a theory should be ignored because it jeopardized faculty jobs. Now, it will be argued that new approaches in the Humanities are not like scientific theories that can be proved or disproved. This is true enough, but it is an argument that cuts both ways: the argument that students should be required to learn the traditional methods and texts of their disciplines rests on the highly questionable assumption that since these methods have somehow withstood the test of time they therefore have some intrinsic validity.

One emergent discipline that seems to be aware of its own history and its problematic status in the university is that of Cultural Studies. The Graduate Center has recently approved a Cultural Studies concentration, which is at present applying for approval to become a full Ph.D. program. Surely, if the program is approved, one could be seriously interdisciplinary there?

Well, yes and no. Cultural Studies, though newly born as a discipline, does in fact already have a history as well as a set of valorized texts and methods. Cultural Studies grows out of Marxist Cultural Materialism, and thus has fairly strong ideological leanings. True, Cultural Studies has been willing to open up its range of vision to include cultural artifacts from popular culture which seem as barbaric to some literature scholars as English Literature itself seemed to the classical scholars who dominated literature departments a hundred years ago. But the theory, and not the opening up of the text, is the *raison d'être* for Cultural Studies; I say the theory rather than simply, theory, because it is clear enough that not all theories will be tolerated in this new discipline. For example, those who wish to use more traditional critical methods, such as New Criticism or psychoanalysis, are not likely to feel at home. Cultural Studies, despite its name, is not simply a place to study culture, but rather it is a place to study culture in approved, disciplinary ways.

In 1987, the Middle States Evaluation Team's report stressed the need for the

Graduate School to expand its commitment to "interdisciplinary, problem-centered work" such as "the newly invigorated program in social research that will involve doctoral students across a range of the social sciences in problem-focused surveys of trends and developments in the New York region." The evaluation team found that, while the Graduate School's primary goal of becoming a front-rank academic doctoral training center has "to an impressive degree succeeded,"

"the ironic result of a single-minded pursuit of excellence is that a strikingly non-traditional university, one long responsive to the needs and opportunities of a unique city, has created a graduate school that is strikingly traditional."

One area where the Report found the Graduate School lacking was in the area of ethnic studies. The report cited "the distinctive and remarkable opportunity presented to the Graduate School and University as a whole to train future faculty who can help to diversify the nation's doctorate-holding faculties in racial and ethnic terms." President Proshansky strongly opposed this charge, saying, "we simply reject the implications of the statement that 'while somewhat better than the national norm...[the record of minority faculty appointments] in most fields is still dismayingly poor, and we heard too little concern about this in our days at the Graduate Center.'"

But while there is substantial weight to Proshansky's claims that minority enrollments and recruitment efforts at the Graduate Center are well up to par, the fact remains that the Graduate Center has no Black or African-American Studies program and few other interdisciplinary ethnic studies programs, and that this lack remains an obvious reason why recruitment efforts in many departments fail.

The Graduate School has, however, had significant success in Women's Studies, for which there exists an interdisciplinary concentration (one can also pursue a Women's Studies "theme" in the Liberal Studies Program). But it is worth noting that such programs do not spring up by themselves; they are sustained by the commitment of individual programs, acting partly in their own interests and partly in pursuit of a common goal.

The interdisciplinary topics I have covered here are not easily assimilable into a single conclusion. Nor should they be. To "tie up" this article would be just the sort of bondage I have argued against. But I would like to close by making two general observations about the state of interdisciplinary studies here and elsewhere.

First, until the university (if not Stanley Fish) begins to recognize interdisciplinary studies as a valid area (or non-area) of study, the interdisciplinary student will be forced to remain a "double agent." The student must keep up the pretenses of disciplinary allegiance, making use of only what has already been safely imported into his or her discipline in his or her work.

Second, new disciplines like Cultural Studies, Feminist Studies, and Ethnic Studies are a step in the right direction, and interdisciplinary "concentrations" are better than no interdisciplinary programs at all. But until the profound questions of boundaries that professors have shown themselves willing to raise in the safety of classroom are taken into account in the institutional structure of the university, we are not likely to break much new ground. *A*
Ed Marx studies English literature.

Women in War and Peace

Continued from page 3.

her homeland, across the Demilitarized Zone. She was arrested and imprisoned. As Ms. Cho eloquently said, "As a young woman, not quite six feet tall, she has moved 80 million Koreans, on both sides, towards their longing hope, reunification."

The second panel of the day, entitled "Women and Nuclear Theater," was comprised of Judith Malina, co-director of The Living Theater, Melinda Guttman, actress, author, critic and Associate Professor of Speech, Theater and Media at John Jay College, and Eve Ensler, playwright. Ms. Malina's lecture was filled, as one member of the audience member described it, with a "lovely energy which comes across very movingly." Ms. Malina spoke of hope for the future, stating, "What I think is important for women, for artists, for people who want to make progress in the world, to do right now is to look at the dream, ... and then ask yourself, 'What is a real path from where we are today to that vision?' Are there means? Are there methods? Are there possibilities?" Ms. Malina believes there is great hope for the future, hope that can be achieved by the people.

Following Ms. Malina, Ms. Guttman spoke on the Nuclear Arts, artistic works dealing with the Nuclear Age. She discussed its origins, energies, and cited several works, including Eve Ensler's play, *The Depot*. "How does an artist represent a dead planet where there are no survivors?" Ms. Guttman asked. "How does an artist create a character or human image, even if there are survivors?" Numerous works have been created which seek to portray the outcome of nuclear war. Ms. Guttman explained that the Nuclear Arts have contributed to "the destruction of the traditional separation of women and men and war." Through art, women have crossed the masculine lines of war.

Concluding the panel discussion, Eve Ensler read from her play, *The Depot*, described by Ms. Guttman as "a fictionalized work based on the struggles in a women's encampment around missile silos." Ms. Ensler explained, "Part of the process of the whole piece was politicizing and waking up people, particularly women all around America, to what they can do to stop nuclear war." The protagonist of the play evolves from a naive, uninvolved woman into a more productive and revolutionary activist. *The Depot* is successful in its goal of motivation. The climax of the play, which is somewhat of a cliffhanger, leaves the audience with profound food for thought.

The conference ended with a performance of *Life and Fate*, by Vassily Grossman. Adapted by Frederick Wiseman and featuring actress Deborah Lubar, the one-woman play is the story of a mother caught during the Nazi Occupation of Ukraine. When the play begins, one sees her writing a letter, her last letter, to her son. On these pages, she puts down the thoughts and feelings of a woman surrounded by war and destruction, and facing death. She expresses anger, uncertainty, and gratitude that her son, who had left the country some time ago, has been spared this fate. She is a strong, proud woman who does not fear death. Ms. Lubar's moving performance provided the perfect conclusion to the conference "Women in War and Peace." *A*
Margaret Logreira hails from the Women's Studies Certificate Program.

Doctoral Students' Council
Bagels & Coffee
Stimulating
Conversation
April 25 1:00-3:00 P.M.
Student Center

Confessions of a Survivor

Continued from page 4.

crew..." (it is Milton, isn't it?), stems from the fact that seven years after entering the English Ph.D. Program, my literary bent, my breadth of knowledge and, I dare say, every facet of the way I live my life have undergone the greatest changes.

My point is this: I may know those citations because I once had to study for an exam; like it or not, I may never be able to forget such *trivia*—and I use this word advisedly, for four lines of great verse, however great in any world, be it patriarchal or, say, Marxist, will never be trivial for me unless I am to take that term to mean *important*, as in the medieval term *trivium*, the first three of seven liberal arts. Or, I may have come to know comp-like citations simply because they are a part of a milieu, a life style I am pleased to think of as my own.

Yes! It took me three tries to pass the "trivia"! What does that make me? I don't see myself as someone who does not belong in the profession of literary studies—and if people do indeed see me that way, then they have my empathy but not my respect, because I'm good at what I do—I know it and if they had any critical abilities they would know it too. I am both a fine writer and reader. And to worry that some committee of some university is not going to hire me because I failed part of my comps (or all of my comps!) is too absurd to be worth mentioning, if the two articles in your March 21st edition had not reported the anxiety of the many students who are at present struggling with an unreasonable beast. By the time these people are looking for jobs they will have jumped many more hurdles, greater hurdles. They will be judged for who they are in their totality, who they are as writers and thinkers, as teachers and hopefully as human beings. Who (Yale? the CIA?) would ever want to know, or care, about whether a candidate for a job had failed years earlier her or his comprehensive exam? This would be like having to show some hiring committee

what color underwear you had on, as if this were a factor in your present viability as a writer and teacher.

From the point of view of someone who is now having to cope with something as difficult as a comprehensive exam, someone who is indeed living through the difficulty of exams and, simultaneously, course work (a real pressure cooker!), I know that what I have to say here may seem remote, even irrelevant. Yet I feel that my perspective, in retrospect, might add some needed balance to the present situation. As mentioned in one of your two articles, this controversy over the comps arises from the fact that in the last version of the exam there were more (and lengthier?) quotations from (now, get this) the *literature*. Great! If there is to be a "trivial pursuit," let it be chock full of such memorabilia! (I submit to you that one question we may ask about a literary work, in attempting to judge its worth, is whether or not it contains truly memorable passages.)

Seven years ago I would never in my wildest dreams have believed that the terms and lines that make up the "trivial pursuit" section of the comps would now be second nature to me, which they are. I am happy to say I have become a member of a large minority, the literary community, which is to say that I have become so immersed in literature, I am now on intimate terms with many once alien quotations and ideas. This transformation has come about as a matter of course; I would know these things had I not had to study for an exam, for they are a part of the very fabric of the literary life. They do not make me a great or even an adequate thinker, but being able to spout a lot of terms and phrases in print or at a cocktail party will not keep others from recognizing me to be a charlatan—that is, if all that I know are such trivia. Thinking, writing, teaching—well, these are other (related) matters.

Sincerely and in sympathy,
Burt Kimmelman

Student Strike?

Continued from page 3.

farther beyond the reach of less-privileged residents, making it inaccessible to the very people whom CUNY was intended to serve.

Should the discussion of a proposed tuition increase for the 1990-1991 school year continue, it is not unlikely that City University will see wide-spread student activism. Last year's proposal met with fierce resistance among students. On April 24th, 1989 a group of students at City College occupied their administrative building and sparked a wave of activism which ended only with Governor Cuomo's announcement that he would veto the tuition hike. At the height of last year's activism, administrative buildings were held by students on fourteen campuses. On May 2nd,

1989, nearly 10,000 students from sixteen campuses marched through the city to the Sheraton Hotel, where Governor Cuomo was scheduled to speak. Nearly one hundred graduate students chained the doors to the Graduate Center that same day.

It is impossible to know whether, in the face of a proposed 1990-1991 tuition increase, student protest will match the intensity of last year's strike. But if Mr. Mayers' statements are any indication, we can expect student resistance to burgeon once again on CUNY campuses as the fiscal crisis prompts officials to consider tuition increases as a solution to the overwhelming budgetary problems facing the city. ☞

A Note to Advocate Contributors:
Please submit announcements,
articles, commentaries, cartoons,
photographs & reviews
by May 10th.

Women In War And Peace II

Amazons & Saints
Wednesday, May 9th
3rd Floor Studio
6:00-8:30 P.M.

Sponsors:

Women's Studies Certificate Program
Center for Study of Women and Society
Feminist Students Organization
Committee for Cultural Studies

All Welcome.

At the Bottom of the Food Chain

Concluded from page 13.

adjuncts would lean forward, pretending not to hear but trying to listen. There's something fascinating about listening to a private conversation in a public place. It is the delight of listening to something that wasn't meant for you. Later we gabbed about what we'd heard; we ridiculed, we empathized. Those adjuncts in the M. F. A. Program would try and use what they'd heard for a short story assignment.

Students also came in to complain, usually about grades. They would exhibit anger, self-pity, or a feigned jocularity. This is the by-product of a system irrevocably chained to grades, a system that has only a passing acquaintance with learning.

Once I had a student who came in and harangued me for three weeks. The two girls who sat on either side of him, his best friends in the class, got "A"s, while he got a "B." It was all very unfair, he thought, and proceeded to tell me so night after night, in the most wretched manner possible. He had a hateful whine to his voice, like an exposed piece of skull bone scratching against blackboard. (I felt like exposing that piece of skull for him.) He wanted me to give him a special test so he could prove his "A"-ness. He went to the department chairman, who suggested I do so. I refused. He filed a grievance. My grades and my comments were looked into by a committee which looks into this sort of thing. Their comments were astonishingly nasty, almost, I felt, pathological. They said things which, even if right, I would never have said to a student. Perhaps they had

been waiting for an occasion to vent their spleen. I remember particularly one comment, "... to think that we as taxpayers have to pay for this kind of instruction" I had given the student a "B." Of the three on the Committee, two thought I should have given him an "A" while the third thought I should have given him a "C."

My two class observations were, I thought, good. I was invited back to teach, but I decided no more English 1. Too many papers to grade. Only English 2. That ended my career at Brooklyn College. If one wants to teach English 2 one must endure the travails of English 1.

What conclusions have I reached?

The best part of adjunct teaching is the teaching—in class—with the students. Unfortunately the administration seems to think this system is best served under a form of provincial colonialism. The students have become increasingly Black and Hispanic, while the teachers have remained, like me, White. A month or two of students taking over the school might change this.

What is the worst part of teaching? Besides low pay, marking papers (I hope I haven't been brain-damaged by this exposure) and having to deal with a union that makes sure most of the privileges of the system go to full time teachers. Perhaps some day the academic food chain will not stretch nearly so long. Perhaps it will be tilted slightly, sideways, so those at the bottom are not always preyed upon by those above. ☞

Announcements

Doctoral Students' Council Fiction Film Festival Spring 1990

The Auditorium
The Graduate School and University Center of the
City University of New York
33 West 42nd Street
New York City

Admission is FREE

Thursday, April 26, 7:00 P.M.

Rashomon

Akira Kurosawa (1950)

Monday, April 30, 7:00 P.M.

Blackmail

Alfred Hitchcock (1929)

Tuesday, May 1, 7:00 P.M.

The Stranger

Orson Welles (1946)

Wednesday, May 2, 2:00 P.M.

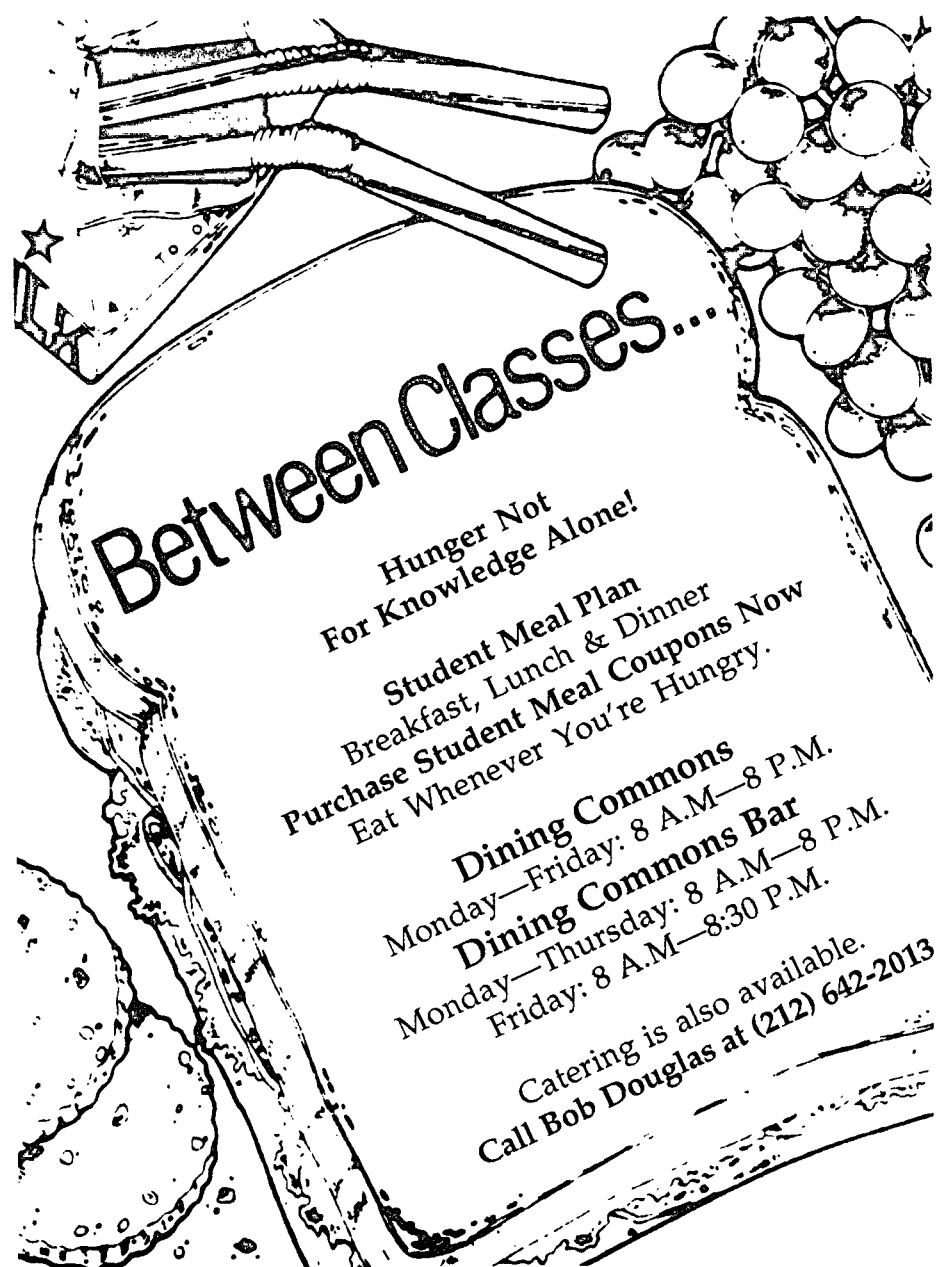
Pickpocket

Robert Bresson (1959)

Thursday, May 3, 7:00 P.M.

Way Down East

D.W. Griffith (1920)



Hot Dates

Committee for Cultural Studies Colloquia, etc.

Cindi Katz & Andrew Kirby

"Ecology Reinscribed: Nature and Everyday Life"

April 24, 7:00 P.M., Rm 1502 Grace Bldg.

Victorian Conference

"The Professionalization of Victorian Life"

May 3-4, 3rd Floor Studio

Rich McCoy & Peter Hitchcock

"Tiananmen Square, One Year Later"

May 11, Room to be announced.

Doctoral Students' Council

General Meeting: May 23; 5:00 P.M., Student Center

Steering Committee Meeting: April 25; 5:00 P.M., Student Center

International Students Association

Friday Social Hour: May 11; 5:00 P.M., Student Center.

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