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## Junk Bonds and Corporate Raiders: Academe in the Hour of the Wolf

CAMILLE PAGLIA

David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 320 pages, cl. \$39.95, pb. \$14.95.

John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 288 pages, cl. \$39.50, pb. \$13.95.

### I

ON the back of David M. Halperin's *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, a series of American academics tells us that this book "shakes what has long been considered the foundations of Western culture." Halperin "takes giant strides" after Foucault; his book is "an intellectual feast," characterized by "remarkable elegance of style." It is "a major contribution" that will "leave an indelible mark." It shows "the breadth and daring" that have made Halperin's work "almost legendary in gay studies."

As I read these passages, I ask myself, what profession am I in? What are its values? What forces are at work in the world that would produce such quotes for so shoddy a book? In this article I will review two closely associated new books and then analyze the sorry state of literary criticism that has produced them. Finally, I will make proposals for educational and professional reform.

*One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* is a short collection of essays that seems to have only one coherent aim: the nomination and promotion of David Halperin as a major theorist of sex. But Halperin, like most of the American academics who have wandered into sex studies, lacks the most elementary understanding of the basic disciplines of history, anthropology, and psychology necessary for such work. The exposition of these essays is tortured, bloated, meandering, pretentious, confused. Halperin's

first book, *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient History of Bucolic Poetry* (1983), is quite different. Whether its precision and clarity of argument — not to mention skill in simple paragraphing — are due to the editors of Yale University Press or to a helpful dissertation director, it is evident that in *One Hundred Years* we are getting Halperin *lui-même*.

Let me begin with the sensitive matter of the political packaging of the two books under review. On the back of each, as in the preface, is stated, to follow the wording of John J. Winkler's *The Constraints of Desire*: "A portion of the profits from the sale of this book will benefit the San Francisco AIDS Foundation." Winkler, Halperin confides, offered his help while "learning to meet and to master the challenge of living with AIDS." AIDS, like all catastrophic diseases, is a tragedy to those who suffer it and to those who must watch others suffer it. But what is its relevance to two books on ancient Greece? Why is this private medical information here, and why are donations to charity now being advertised on book covers? A scholar's theory of homosexuality is not made truer by his death from AIDS — the fate also, Halperin gratuitously notes, of Michel Foucault in 1984. Several parables of the New Testament make vividly clear, to believers and nonbelievers alike, the hypocrisy and Phariseism of public announcements of one's own charity. If this is a new fad in scholarly books, let us stop it right now. In these two cases, with the pressing emergency of AIDS that affects us all, it is subtly coercive. It is implying: don't give these books a bad review, or you will hurt sales and cause more people to die. That Halperin is donating only part of his proceeds also mixes up his personal profit with public charity in a way that should concern anyone interested in the ethics of the profession. This trend, if continued, would lead all authors suffering debilitating or terminal diseases, from Stephen Hawking to Walker Percy and Reynolds Price, to announce their afflictions and their charities on the dust jackets of their books. Scholarship must not become the tool of social-welfare causes, however appealingly humanitarian. Oscar Wilde, that gay genius, was rightly militant in his defense of art and thought against the tyrannical liberal philanthropies of his day.

Let us turn now to Halperin's preface, which states that his work reflects a new "shift in emphasis" from regarding "Greek love" as "an isolated, and therefore 'queer', institution" to an

acknowledgment that it is “merely one strand in a larger and more intricate web of erotic and social practices in ancient Greece.” This is a false claim to novelty. Greek love may have been celebrated in glorious isolation by late Victorian and Edwardian poets or by nonacademic enthusiasts producing fancy limited editions with X-rated illustrations, but the great tradition of classical scholarship coming down to us from Winckelmann has virtually always, when it dares or deigns to deal with homosexuality directly, regarded it as inextricable from the complex social and educational structures of classical Athens. What constitutes “erotic and social practices” for Halperin is, I will show, a reductive view of culture that turns Athens into a bleak political cartoon.

Next the preface lists “the three most important intellectual influences” on Halperin’s work, “without which this book could not have been written.” The first is K. J. Dover’s *Greek Homosexuality* (1978). In what respect can Dover’s fine book, for all its commonsense, plain-talk virtues, be considered an “intellectual” influence? There is nothing intellectual about it. It brought a brisk, no-nonsense, nonjudgmental approach to discussing the mechanics of Greek pederastic intercourse. But it contains few surprises—aside from its eye-opening account of “intercrural” sex. To anyone familiar with the rich scholarly record of the past 200 years, Dover’s book was a welcome clearing of cobwebs, but it was no revolution. Perhaps to someone thinking only in literary terms about the world, the sociological Dover seemed liberating. Halperin is determined in his book to date the modern Enlightenment from Dover and Foucault, whose *The Use of Pleasure* (1984) is the second of his claimed intellectual influences. In other words, the benighted world was struggling along, and we all woke up amidst a mighty thunderclap when Halperin, thanks to Dover and Foucault, lurched from his literary haze. I’m not kidding: the introduction later overtly states, “A new era in the study of the history of sexuality began in 1978.” The most outrageous aspect of *One Hundred Years* is its contemporary parochialism, its strident hypothesis, pushed through hundreds of arbitrary footnotes citing trivial hot-off-the-press articles by eager-beaver greenhorn academics, that the entire foundation of classical learning, notably in classical anthropology, is now irrelevant. Modern thought did not

begin in 1977, when David Halperin finally emerged with his M.A.

Halperin's third intellectual influence is Winkler's *The Constraints of Desire*, our other book under review. Straining to lift Winkler to Foucault's rank, Halperin lauds this "collection of essays whose combination of philological mastery, critical tact, methodological sophistication, intellectual range, and human engagement sets a new standard for the interpretation of ancient cultures." We will get to *Constraints* shortly, but the only items in this encomium that are remotely true would be "philological mastery" — which, remembering the eminent German philologists, I would amend to "expertise" — and the revealing phrase "critical tact." Winkler's sole modest distinction is that he is among the first classicists to try to start systematically applying the New Criticism to classical texts, a phase long overdue. Sad to say, Halperin, infatuated with the latest trendy thing and therefore believing the New Criticism long dead, does not recognize the small, solid virtues of his own mentor and injures him by forcing him into dizzy intellectual company, where he is painfully outclassed.

Moving now to the introduction, we must deal with Foucault, whose real field, as Halperin admits, was modern history. The truth is that Foucault knew very little about anything before the seventeenth century and, in the modern world, outside France. His familiarity with the literature and art of any period was negligible. His hostility to psychology made him incompetent to deal with sexuality, his own or anybody else's. The elevation of Foucault to guru status by American and British academics is a tale that belongs to the history of cults. It illustrates the Big Daddy syndrome, a searching for authority by supposedly free, liberal, secular thinkers. Foucault's biggest fans are not among the majority of philosophers, historians, and sociologists, who usually perceive his glaring inadequacies of knowledge and argument, but among well-meaning but foggy humanists, who virtually never have the intellectual and scholarly preparation to critique Foucault competently. The more you know, the less you are impressed by Foucault.

We will return to Foucault, but first let us deal with the account in the introduction of his alleged originality. Halperin, exposing his own deficiencies, gives us the shiny p.r. version: "Foucault did for 'sexuality' what feminist critics had done for

'gender'. That is, Foucault detached 'sexuality' from the physical and biological sciences. . . . He divorced 'sexuality' from 'nature' and interpreted it, instead, as a cultural production." Tipping his political hand, Halperin lauds the "extremely profitable alliance" Foucault thereby made between "radical elements in philosophy and anthropology." The idea that theories of sex and gender before Foucault and feminism were exclusively biologicistic is ludicrous. Halperin lacks even a superficial undergraduate-level familiarity with the major schools of psychology, several of them American, that have ruled from the Thirties to the present, virtually all of which stress the socialization of identity. These movements were a turn away from the earlier medical orientation of psychoanalysis, as it was established by Freud, who emerged from European hard science of the late nineteenth century. In this respect Foucault was a follower, not a leader. The nature vs. nurture controversy, furthermore, is a century old. Foucault did not make the first bold break from the nature hypothesis, and it is dishonest to imply that he did. His is simply one voice (and an incompletely informed one) in a long, stormy, ongoing debate about all aspects of human personality and behavior. Nevertheless, Halperin labels disagreements with his idol "Foucault-bashing," which since Foucault's death has become "the favorite indoor sport of a host of lesser intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic." There are two unsavory implications here: that criticism of Foucault is inspired by petty jealousy and, secondly, that it is really gay-bashing and therefore secretly homophobic.

Halperin gets into constant trouble throughout the book with his fumbling newfangled usages of "sexuality" and "sex," which, imitating Foucault, he tries to force into English. It won't work. It makes no sense to try to redefine and therefore to distort, for the sake of one Parisian ideologue, the standard meanings of common English words. Sometimes in the Foucault school "sexuality" means the scientific study and categorization of sexual behavior, which all competent students of the history of ideas have known perfectly well began in the late nineteenth century. But sometimes "sexuality" for the Foucauldians becomes what in American psychology is more usefully called sexual identity—that is, our consciousness of and commentary upon our own sexuality, mediated through social conventions and norms. Again, despite the screechy claims that Foucault was

the genius who told us this, scholars have known for more than 50 years that sexual identity in this sense is a product of the creation of the modern individual through and after Rousseau and Romanticism. "Sex" the Foucauldians use as a dumpster for everything else—all the tacky physical stuff, like anatomical dimorphism and sexual intercourse. Now this kind of strained dichotomy between "sexuality" and "sex" cannot be sustained. The two words naturally flow into each other. A viable sex theory cannot be constructed out of a handful of sanitized, Sovietized terms kidnapped from the common realm of discourse. "Sexuality" under the red flag of Foucault describes something like the fate of cookie dough stamped by the cutter; yet oddly enough, the dough can speak and is in fact bizarrely alleged not to exist at all except through speech. Halperin synthesizes Foucault's aim: "to trace the evolution of the régimes of power and knowledge that constituted human beings as the conscious subject of their 'sexuality'." There is an awful lot of ugly huffing and puffing here to do something very simple and already obtainable by a skillful application of conventional techniques of historiography, biography, and Anglo-American literary criticism, enhanced by Freudian analysis.

Next the introduction sketches an apocalyptic panorama of contemporary history: since 1978, "much of western Europe and America seems to have sunk into a reactionary torpor, embracing with a hollow and cynical enthusiasm the comforts of conventional pieties," but the universities, "under the impetus provided by Foucault" and feminism, have been in an "intellectual ferment," still "accelerating," with research making "great strides" and tremendous progress. In this amazing picture, like a grandiose tableau commissioned by the Czars from a sycophant court painter, the weak, silly world sinks into a new Dark Ages, while the torch of freedom and intellect is held bravely aloft by liberal academics in their dazzlingly creative enclaves. I will shortly give a quite different view of the recent academic past. One of the purposes of his book, says Halperin, building on his shaky progressivist premise, is "to tell the scholarly world the good news"—to reveal to us "the enormous scope and variety" of the "highly sophisticated and enlightening" work done since 1978 in the field of sexuality. Hence the packed footnotes, which indiscriminately suck up, in no useful order, everything that twitched in the last decade. If Halperin's motives were truly

scholarly, he would have produced a real annotated bibliography, with honest acknowledgment of the important and still relevant work on sexuality done throughout this century. But that would require real research, and it would cancel out his first commandment — that the divine Foucault breathed life into our dead brain matter. The real source of Halperin’s evangelical “eagerness” seems clear enough: the strategy of obliterating distinguished past scholarship and flooding us with minor works by callow nonentities allows him to emerge in the post-Foucault landscape as king of the pygmies.

Now for the essays. The first one, from which the book takes its title, begins by awkwardly conflating the upcoming 500th anniversary of Columbus’s discovery of America (which will be celebrated by “the patriots among us” — snidely implying there are some among us, presumably leftists, who will not be celebrating it) with the 100th anniversary of the alleged invention of the word *homosexuality* by Charles Gilbert Chaddock, a major factual error. Straightaway, in this first sentence, Halperin makes one of his characteristic slushy slides, identifying a word with what it describes: he claims Chaddock invented homosexuality itself. This is the constant monotonous point, flogged to death but never persuasively argued or proved, in Halperin’s book: that homosexuals did not exist before the word was invented which, according to the French fad, brought them into being. This is just absurd: it’s like Arctic explorers coming upon penguins for the first time and informing them, “I’m sorry, you did not exist before we named you.” There is enough evidence to suggest that in most metropolitan centers of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, as later in Renaissance Florence, Paris, and London and Baroque Rome, there were men whose persistent behavior was seen (and usually condemned) by others as what we would call homosexual. That people before Romanticism did not deeply reflect on and agonize over their sexuality or psychology is a completely separate issue, related to the breakdown of religious and spiritual authority after the Enlightenment. That heterosexuality and homosexuality as rigidly opposed categories emerged into medical discourse in the late nineteenth century is indisputable and has always been known to scholars of intellectual history. What is now being worked out is the relationship of these terms to the changing and diminishing family structure under nineteenth- and twentieth-century industrial

capitalism, which has been extraordinarily beneficial in permitting both men and women for the first time in history to choose unmarried, self-supporting, and self-fulfilling lives. Halperin makes a lot of empty, important-sounding pronouncements, but he does not even clearly see, much less help in, the intellectual task before us. He favors crutch phrases like “modern bourgeois Westerners,” big sloppy generalities, unqualified by place or time period, that indicate his naivete and inexperience as a political analyst. I heard far sharper political talk in the all-night bullsessions that were the crucible out of which my generation of the Sixties forged its rebellion.

This first essay is verbose and incoherent, with interesting points raised and then buried under sludge. It’s like the mashed-potato mountain obsessively fiddled with by Richard Dreyfuss in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. The essay steadily degenerates into a blizzard of footnoted addenda, contradicting and reversing points made on the same page. The reason for this can be detected in the essay’s genealogy: we are told it appeared in three earlier versions and was presented at thirteen different conferences or universities; 24 people are listed and thanked for their help, advice, and suggestions. Now we know what Halperin has been doing with his time, which should have been spent alone in the library. I will address the question of the conference circuit, which I think one of the primary causes of the corruption of the profession in the last 20 years. Instead of taking personal responsibility for his research, Halperin (like a host of others, notably among feminists) relies on the audience, the co-conferees, and a swollen cadre of “expert” advisors to spoon-feed him additional examples or new leads and to correct his scholarly errors. This research-by-committee method produces the kind of work we get here — jerky, leaden, fragmented, backtracking. Things are added on at random — a dib, a dab, a dollop. The end result is as tangled up, matted, and unappealing as a cat’s wet hairball. Ruminating should be a private, not a public, process.

Halperin declares that he has found while “lecturing to different audiences around the United States” that the thesis of his title essay elicits “skepticism and resistance.” You see the folly of this approach. Halperin has an exaggerated sense of his originality because he has mistaken the more mixed, volatile, and freewheeling lecture and conference audience for the



larger, deeper, slower, more informed scholarly audience that judges you by and holds you accountable for every sentence of your publications. Many, perhaps most, very learned people prefer the company of their books to sitting in a crowd listening to history and art being mangled; furthermore, it is unlikely that venerable scholars will stand up afterward to declare, "This lecture was a load of crap." The more profound a professor's distaste with the proceedings, the more likely he is to melt away at the end of the talk.

The actual dynamic behind Halperin's book seems to have sprung from conference disputes with John Boswell and his followers in gay studies. Halperin, riding on Foucault's coattails, evidently hopes to slip into first place past Boswell, who is a real, professionally trained historian. Skirmishes and turf wars within a new and not yet established field should not masquerade as world-shaking issues. In point of fact, Boswell's reasoning about "gay people" in the Middle Ages has been far from universally accepted. I myself have minor objections to his jumbled survey of antiquity and major objections to his treatment of medieval culture, in particular his inadequate grasp or presentation of the intellectually and socially ordering power of Catholic theology and bureaucracy. The low point of Boswell's book is probably his demagogic use of usury as an example at the finale.<sup>1</sup> Gay studies will doom itself if it allows ideology to dictate to scholarship. Fortunately, we have the more rigorous example of James M. Saslow: the crystal-clear notes of his *Ganymede in the Renaissance* (1986), crisply covering the same ancient ground as Boswell's murky first chapters, are of the highest scholarly quality and integrity. Nevertheless, despite his wobbly moments, Boswell remains a serious scholar who knows how to range through and interpret the historical record—a talent Halperin mimes but conspicuously lacks.

Space does not allow a line-by-line commentary on the innumerable problems of Halperin's first essay, but here are a few of the outstanding ones. A laborious plot summary of Aristophanes' myth in Plato's *Symposium* leads to the assertion that Aristophanes' conclusions "help to illustrate the lengths to which classical Athenians were willing to go in order to avoid conceptualizing sexual behaviors according to a binary opposition between different- and same-sex sexual contacts." Is there any oxygen in the house? Note the way grade-school assump-

tions about the relation between art and life are concealed under a rock pile of pseudo-technical verbiage. Aristophanes is a literary character and not the real-life man on which he was based, and therefore one cannot judge from him what "classical Athenians" thought, particularly since Plato was writing in melancholy retrospect, after the high-classic period was over. Halperin is simply awful with chronology. He has no sense of how the historical milieu changes from decade to decade, much less from century to century. Typically, we bounce 600 years in the blink of an eye from Plato to the second century A.D. and get a soggy reference to what "the ancients" believed about this or that. The last time I heard "the ancients" used in such a vague, sentimental, and all-embracing sense was probably in high school. This is bush-league stuff.

Halperin's ignorance of the language and insights of the major schools of modern psychology is obvious at moments like this, where he is hawking the Foucault line that "sexuality is a modern invention" and therefore has no real permanent existence: "the very concept of homosexuality implies that there is a specifically sexual dimension to the human personality, a characterological seat within the individual of sexual acts, desires, and pleasures." Note the mix-up between personality and character and also between body and psyche. Halperin has been taken in, without really understanding it, by the notion of the decentered subject, one of the fattest pieces of rotten French cheese swallowed whole by American academics. Foucault's simplistic sex theory is self-entombed in a mouse hole because of its inability to perceive, analyze, or describe the historical variety of human personality types and the complexity, multiplicity, and daily flux of thought, desire, dream, fantasy, mood, sensation, and action. For 30 years, the sexual territory between biology and psychology has been far more successfully and sensibly explored on American soil, at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, by John J. Money, whose many pioneering books on sex and gender identity Halperin does not mention and obviously has not absorbed. He is too busy canonizing mini-works, like so-and-so's 20-page article in *Radical History Review*, which is dubbed "a classic essay."

Halperin's loopyest moment is his disastrous disquisition on food. Sexual preference is as meaningless as food preferences, he says; no one would ever characterize or categorize people psy-

chologically or culturally on the basis of what they eat. Here's a sample sentence of blowzy Halperin doublespeak:

Just as we tend to assume that human beings are not individuated at the level of dietary preference and that we all, despite many pronounced and frankly acknowledged differences from one another in dietary habits, share the same fundamental set of alimentary appetites and hence the same "dieticity" or "edility," so most pre-modern and non-Western cultures, despite an awareness of the range of possible variations in human sexual behavior, refuse to individuate human beings at the level of sexual preference and assume, instead, that we all share the same fundamental set of sexual appetites, the same "sexuality."

Halperin's ignorance of the literature of anthropology is almost shocking. He has to add a long, desperately backpedaling footnote (without bothering to revise his text) confessing what other people have now told him — that "a growing mass of historical data suggests that dietary categories have indeed provided, in certain times and places, a viable basis on which to construct typologies of human beings." But the propaganda continues here: "a growing mass" implies that this is, as usual, something new and innovative. On the contrary, observations about the consumption of or abstention from certain foods as an identifying mark of clans and tribes date from and are basic to the origins of anthropology in the nineteenth century. Unmentioned, incredibly, by Halperin is the most obvious one of them all: the Jewish prohibition against eating pork, biblically defined, with shellfish, as unclean. An interesting poem one might expect Halperin to know — it's called the *Odyssey* — makes ethical classifications of Mediterranean peoples and individuals on the basis of what they eat and how they prepare it. In the 1950s, America's massive production and consumption of milk was connected by wine-based European observers to our naive optimism and family mythos. Since the 1960s, there has been an avalanche of dietary psychology: eating meat makes you aggressive; eating sugar makes you hyper; people who crave salt and fat are the active, bossy, top-heavy adrenal type; people who crave sweets are the slower, pear-shaped pituitary type, etc. Those who prefer a stable routine of bland "brown" food tend to

be cautious and conservative; those who seek out spicy, ethnic taste sensations tend to be adventurous, liberal, even extravagant. I myself have contributed a raw-clam theory to this debate. And one could easily speculate about the relation between the preference for bloody-rare or well-done steak and one's attitude toward body fluids and menstruation, or about the relation between eroticism and a taste for messy, luscious, get-down-in-it finger foods like barbecued ribs.

How does all of this relate to classical culture? — the one area where Halperin should be at home. Anyone familiar with Greek and Roman love poetry knows that many men found both women and boys desirable but that boys' sexual attractiveness ended when they sprouted a beard and body hair. It should be perfectly obvious that there is an aesthetic issue here, vividly documented from Archaic monody through Roman satire, in praise of the girlish rosiness, smoothness, and glow of boys' flesh. But Halperin, following Foucault, can never admit that aesthetics exists; the only permissible criterion of judgment in art or life is the ideology of power. So we get ugly clunkers like this: Halperin says of the apparent bisexuality of Greek men, "I think it would be advisable not to speak of it as a sexuality at all but to describe it, rather, as a more generalized ethos of penetration and domination, a socio-sexual discourse structured by the presence or absence of its central term: the phallus." This display of old-maidish puritanism is scholarship reduced to *Mad* magazine parody, which at least knows it's funny. All those Greeks banging away had no idea they were having sex without sexuality. They were merely discoursing on power, you see. Halperin's explanation for the equal desirability of women and boys: both "were considered sexually inert." In other words, women and boys were just sperm spittoons. And sometimes a penis is not a penis. A phallus, in Francobabble, is just a power tool. But since only men have such tools, we have to somehow circle back and admit it *is* a penis after all. It's a case of Aaron's rod as the incredible shrinking dildo.

For the sake of the new god, Foucault, Halperin is willing to send classical Athens through a meat grinder of hack-work gibberish. Like Foucault, he is incapable of holding in his mind the brilliant but conflicted fusion of art, drama, philosophy, religion, and politics that was Athens at its brief high point. Nor do Foucault and Halperin give us even a competent political critique of

Athens, which would need to trace internal and external political processes beginning 200 years earlier and then move outward through the destabilization of the late fifth century and the emergence of international *Realpolitik* in the mercantile Hellenistic era, with its rivalrous strongmen. Because he thinks in big, flat political stereotypes, Halperin is lost when he has to deal with specific constellations of government structure and their evolution over time, as economic conditions change. The most glaring fault of his midget clockwork view of Athenian sexuality is the way he censors out the central iconography of male nude sculpture, which began in the Archaic period, reached its peak at high classicism, and then spread throughout the Mediterranean in a tradition revived at the Italian Renaissance and still alive today. Beautiful boys were honored and idolized. Their transient physical gifts seemed sacred, god-given. This splendor of homoeroticism, never more dignified, moving, and transcendent, Halperin strips away to serve the myopic Foucault. With friends like these, gay studies doesn't need enemies.

The American Francophiles get themselves into a pickle partly by their ignorance of art history. They are spectacularly inept at reading visual materials, which they constantly reduce to *a priori* verbal formulas. A particularly atrocious example is Eva C. Keuls's *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (1985), where juicy orgy scenes from Greek pottery are clumsily misinterpreted in the most literalistic, burning-resentment Kate Millett style. To talk about ancient pornography, you'd better know something about modern pornography, but that's a no-no in feminist covens. Simplistically reading porn as if it were a photographic record of real life, Keuls misses its sprightly artistic conventions and its coarse iconoclastic humor. Halperin too makes elementary errors with the visual material, making little distinction between treatments of lower-class female prostitutes and upper-class wives or between boy prostitutes and the upper-class beloved boy or protégé, whose supposed sexual inertness may more profitably be understood in aesthetic or spiritual terms as a formulaic decorum of stillness and perfection, beyond the agitation of need.

Before escaping from the muddle of Halperin's first essay, we should pause to note two tourist attractions at the end: first, the climactic quote from Adrienne Rich, who has 24 entries in the three-page index (poor unimportant Freud gets only 10). I guess

Rich is a biggie in the with-it circles Halperin moves in. My opinion is that any scholarly book that relies on Adrienne Rich deserves to sink like a stone. But the *pièce de résistance* is a nearly page-length quote from — Jack Abbott! Yes, Norman Mailer's pet criminal appears here as a philosopher of sex. Not since the Black Panthers sailed into their Upper East Side tea party has there been so daffy an exercise in radical chic. One must chuckle at the irony that Abbott, cited here for his insight into homosexuality, has recently been televised from prison as, sporting a yarmulke and clutching the hand of his fiancée, he announced his engagement and his conversion to Judaism — where he will presumably learn about abstaining from pork.

Essay number two is, strangely enough, an interview with Halperin himself. Since when do scholars publish interviews with themselves? Especially since the text has admittedly been "revised" afterward. Here we see the brazen new commercialism of academe. How do you get people to think of you as important? Why, by showing yourself being interviewed by people flocking to sit at the feet of the sage. It's like having yourself paged in the lobby of a fancy hotel. George Hamilton's ploy upon arrival in Hollywood: though flat broke, he hired a limousine to stage a grand entrance. In features on stock and real-estate scandals, *60 Minutes* has shown us again and again how enterprising con men without a dime to their name fleece rich and poor alike by public parading of fabricated wealth and power. It's called the "pyramid" scam. The next inevitable step for ambitious academics: a video disc packaged with the book, so we can see, with appropriate triumphal or pensive music, the author brooding at his desk or, à la Warhol, profoundly sleeping.

In the gassy, blathering speeches of this interview, Halperin exposes his ignorance, this time colossal, of another field: science. Here we see how wildly out of date and removed from reality the school of Foucault is:

The search for a 'scientific' aetiology of sexual orientation is itself a homophobic project. . . . Just as scientific inquiries into biological and neurological differences between males and females are starting to fall into disrepute, so, too, will the effort to discover a genetic or hormonal basis for sexual preference eventually come to nothing, not so much for

lack of scientific progress (which has never stopped research if other motives for it remained) as for lack of social credibility.

Science, we are told, is never an objective search for the truth; it is always ideological, always driven by social goals. All of science is reduced to the worst-case scenario — Dr. Mengele on the Nazi payroll. But note the telling phrase about research into sex differences “starting to fall into disrepute.” Halperin is 20 years behind the times. What he says was true of the Fifties and Sixties, when the socialization and behaviorist hypothesis ruled. The Seventies and Eighties have seen a worldwide resurgence of research into hormones, comparative anatomy, genetics, fetal development, and brain chemistry, and their relation to sex differences and even personality traits. Public-television documentaries and major newspapers regularly report the latest findings. In 1973 I nearly got into a fist fight with some early academic feminists in a restaurant when I casually alluded to a hormonal element in sex differences. It was utterly unacceptable at that time to think or say such a thing. But almost immediately and step by step through the Seventies, women scholars began to publish research papers and textbooks on this issue, and today only antiquated humanists without scientific awareness make cavalier claims such as Halperin’s. Women now freely and publicly speak of emotional and physical problems caused by their hormones before menstruation, after childbirth, and at the menopause. We are still in the infancy of hormone research, but the field is constantly expanding, not, as Halperin asserts, collapsing. If you are in any doubt about the effect of hormones on emotion, libido, and aggression, have a chat with a transsexual, who must take hormones medically. He or she will set you straight.

Elsewhere in Halperin’s interview we get this about classical Athens: what was celebrated was “not homosexuality *per se*, but a certain hierarchical relation of structured inequality between a free adult male and an adolescent youth.” The two had to be differentiated “in terms of their relative degrees of power or status; every male couple had to include one social superior and one social inferior.” The sex acts between them therefore had to be “congruent with the power-differential”: only the powerful one “might initiate a sexual act, penetrate the body of his part-

ner, and obtain sexual pleasure." What a grim caricature. There is a false reasoning here from incidental pornographic pottery, whose roadside or brothel scenes probably no more reflected everyday life than *Penthouse* and *Hustler* do American life, to the more culturally central mentor relation of upper-class man to upper-class boy. The boy was not the older man's "social inferior" but his equal. In fact, the high-art literary and visual record amply suggests that the boy was regarded as spiritually *superior* by virtue of his youth and beauty. The older man gave tutelage and guidance in exchange for the public honor of the boy's company. In Attic sculpture, boys were literally put on pedestals. There was and is a hierarchy of beauty, recognized by the eye of artist, poet, visionary, and lover. The supreme Western tradition created by gay men is the cult of beauty, which unites the married but boy-loving men of Athens to today's pagan priests of art — from Tom of Finland and Robert Mapplethorpe to the gay couturiers, cosmetologists, hairdressers, interior designers, opera devotees, aesthetes, and high-glamour drag queens. Playing Foucault's popular mechanics, Halperin destroys his own heritage. And he's forgotten about Dover, who shows that male anal intercourse was not the upper-class Athenian style.

At the end of the interview, Halperin does a trendy little self-exonerating flip: "I freely admit that, in a sense, I don't, and couldn't possibly, *believe* in what I've been saying." Are we in Cloud-Cuckoo-Land? The motto here seems to be speak off the top of your head and then grease your quick exit. In the third essay, "Two Views of Greek Love," a 1982 German book by Harold Patzer is criticized for its over-reliance on the ritual theory of pederasty, but the discussion, zigzagging all over the place, suggests that Halperin has little clear sense of the multiple meanings of ritualism in classical anthropology. The real reason Patzer is dismissed? "Michel Foucault, whose work Patzer wholly neglects, had already begun to point us in the right direction six years before Patzer's monograph appeared."

Now we get a fanzine Valentine to Foucault, whose *History of Sexuality*, acknowledged even by Foucault's admirers to be his weakest work, is called an "unfinished masterpiece" and "the most important contribution to the history of Western morality since the publication, a hundred years ago, of Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*." Halperin literally does not know what he



is talking about: nowhere in his book does he show the slightest familiarity with the philosophical tradition preceding and following Nietzsche and leading (downhill) to Foucault. Like so many other brainwashed American humanists, he began with the chic, everyone-all-abuzz assumption that Foucault is a major figure, then gullibly followed Foucault's own map of self-promotion backwards. The one writer Foucault longed and pined to be compared to was Nietzsche, but any equivalence between the two is pathetic.

As a philosopher sympathetic to Foucault recently remarked to me, Foucault failed in each of his major inquiries and, in desperation, went further and further afield from his area of expertise. The *History of Sexuality* is a disaster. Page after page is sheer fantasy, unsupported by the ancient or modern historical record. Foucault is, at far-flung moments, marginally adequate on scientism, in line with his secular French education. He is wildly off on the simplest matters in both the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions, for which he had neither feeling nor training. Foucault, like David Letterman, made smirky glibness an art form. He provides a perfect floating, depthless television experience to the academics who claim to scorn television. His arbitrary, fanciful taxonomies are structured exactly like the neat tabulated calendar-columns of *TV Guide*. An unintentionally hilarious moment in Halperin's book is when we are told that, once Foucault suddenly realized, after Volume One, that he'd really better learn something about classical antiquity, he went to California! That makes a lot of sense — when you want to study Greece and Rome, leave Paris and go west, old man. At the end of the essay, Halperin frankly exposes his own political agenda. Foucault's work, he admits, "is framed by contemporary concerns and questions" and has "the avowed purpose of making a difference in the here-and-now." Foucault helps us in "the elusive project of discovering, and changing, who we are." But when a scholar tries to *alter*, he has corrupted his mission. Scholarship swayed by politics becomes propaganda.

The next essay, "Heroes and Their Pals," has a promising premise — a comparison of Homeric with biblical and Sumerian male friendships — but it suffers from the usual Halperin problem of beginning from faddish recent work rather than established and more fully worked out thinking. Hence there is no

reference to the extensive sociological theories of male bonding or to the more obvious phenomenon of army “buddies,” known even to the man on the street. Halperin marches out yet another parade of straw men: everyone who drew breath before 1978 is guilty of “the complacent joys of biographical criticism” or of “conventional interpretative strategies.” The readings of older and more knowledgeable scholars are minimized, distorted, libeled. Only Halperin and his international crew of bright young things deserve attention. Reading Halperin reminds me of those tiny party photos at the back of *Vanity Fair*, where very animated, glittery, but visibly strained socialites hold out brimming flûtes from jammed banquettes. No thanks.

The propagandistic quality of Halperin’s work is clear in this essay when he is propounding his French-style, math-loving structural analysis of ancient male friendships, which consist of “two, and no more than two, persons”: there are “no relations with women that might prove to be of a ‘distracting’ nature.” Halperin here exiles all references to women to a brief footnote, which admits that, well, Achilles and Patroclus *did* have some anonymous “concubines,” but of course they’re of no possible pertinence. This is special pleading with a vengeance. The fact is that the entire plot of the *Iliad* devolves from Agamemnon’s seizing of one of those concubines, Briseis, and Achilles’ angry withdrawal from the war, from which flow all subsequent disasters, including the death of Patroclus. In this essay, which gives us the usual blobby generalities (“most Western cultures”), Halperin muffs his one chance to show some original political imagination when he passes quickly over the question of kingship and priesthood in the David and Jonathan story. What is monarchy in political history? What does it represent in institutional terms, against the background of economic development and the evolution of national identity? Halperin plays at being a leftist, but his political consciousness is torpid and rudimentary. A final word on the title: I find “Heroes and Their Pals” vaguely queasy-making because its coy academic whimsy is actually a cheap shot at masculine men. There are no heroes; all those jocks who shoved the bookworms aside on the way to the locker room are really getting it on with each other but don’t know it. This is rampant Stretherism, the wimp-centered view of the world that blights so much of the new academic discourse on sex.

Halperin's sloppiness with chronology makes a botch of the next essay, "The Democratic Body: Prostitution and Citizenship in Classical Athens." It is clear he has never pondered the most basic questions of historicizing about Athens, which requires minute attention to enormously rapid cultural changes occurring over a century. Compare, for example, the anxiety-provoking transformations in Renaissance Italy from 1500 to 1525, in Shakespeare's England from 1590 to 1610, and in America from 1915 to 1925 or from 1960 to 1967. Halperin jumps around amateurishly from the fifth century (whose many phases he does not see) to the middle or late fourth century, back to the fifth, then to the early sixth, then to the late fourth or early third, and back to the late sixth, all of which is funneled, like gravel pouring off a truck, into conclusions about "classical" Athenian attitudes. The unsurprising fact that male prostitutes were denied political privileges — exactly who *would* this surprise? — is trundled onto the carpet and worked over like a punching bag. Blinding lightning bolts of theoretical deduction are drawn from a commonsense detail that wouldn't raise the eyebrows of my old-school Italian grandfather. Being a prostitute or an ex-prostitute has carried a stigma virtually everywhere.

I am very interested in prostitution and welcome all scholarly work on it, but I have doubts about the strict social-constructionist approach, which tends to equate negativity toward prostitutes with the simple bias of other kinds of intolerance, like religious or racial discrimination. By excluding nature, biology, and psychology from its considerations, the school of Foucault is incapable of dealing with the emotional instabilities and irrational daemonic fears that may be inherent to sexuality and that may require prostitution as a ritual arena for their exploration outside the pale. Halperin tells us he boldly gives us the prices charged by prostitutes "to counteract a prevailing tendency on the part of classical scholars to overlook such 'sordid' matters." Which scholars? Where? When? A footnote admits what should more honestly be in the text itself: that these prices have already been "fully collected" by German scholars (in 1913 and 1960) and that Halperin is just reproducing their material.

There's a lot of phallus-tossing in this essay, but its nadir is undoubtedly Halperin's abuse of the herms, which have become the whipping boys of purblind feminists of the Keuls kind. The

Attic ithyphallic herms are now treated like penis totem poles before which the Athenians prostrated themselves. It's like a Claes Oldenburg fantasy of monumental erections on the Acropolis, spotted by all ships at sea. This modern mutilation of the herms is one of the worst outrages of recent scholarship on sex. Since the new theorists are largely unread in the great tradition of classical anthropology dating from Frazer and the Cambridge school, they never acknowledge the agricultural roots of the herms and their significance as symbols of fertility. There are never any references to religious belief or to ritual and cult — only to politics. There is no sense of the larger social and civic meanings of boundary lines and their markers throughout the world. There is no reference to art-historical evidence that contradicts the notion of Athenian phallicism — for example, the brilliant Erechtheum caryatids, Ionic columns in the shape of voluptuous women; or, in the hand of the colossal Parthenon statue of Athena, the female winged Nike, supported by a pedestal. Halperin equates the “bearded face” of the herms with the new “masculine self-assertion” of classical Athens. More ignorance of religion and art history: the beard was an archaizing motif, referring to the distant past. Major sculptural artifacts, as scholars noted a century ago, show Hermes had lost his beard by the classical period. The cultic meaning of the herms as uncanny chthonian symbols of a lost rural past guarded by native daemons is overlooked in this latest mob hysteria that treats them as sexist billy clubs batting women down. The sepulchral herms were in league with the old powers of mother earth.

Halperin's final essay, “Why Is Diotima a Woman?”, has inspired the title of my article. Here we have one of the great junk bonds of the fast-track academic era, whose unbridled greed for fame and power was intimately in sync with parallel developments on Wall Street. This is yuppie entrepreneurship at its height. It's scholarship skating on a gold credit card, sweeping up everything in its path and dropping it unsorted and uncomprehended in a heap in the boutique window. Its inner bonds too are junk: the logic is specious and its claims counterfeited. The idea for the essay is attributed to a former student; eight conferences and 21 advisors are listed as its history. It illustrates how the French school sold a bill of goods to and then bankrupted a whole generation of American critics. A few interesting ideas are put to the rack and tortured until they give up

the ghost. Nothing is thought through or developed in a sensible, plausible way. All energy goes toward show, pretense, posing. Twenty years ago, I hoped for a bright future for interdisciplinary studies. Now I see that the space that has opened up between disciplines is outside the law, a wasteland where wolves run free.

Halperin's technique in this essay is the sales practice called "bait and switch." Falsely complex explanations of simple problems are set before us, draped with red herrings, then whisked from view without resolution. Meanwhile, solid proposals by earlier scholars about Diotima's identity — that she is, for example, "an ironic mask" for Socrates — are buried deep in the 229 footnotes. Despite the ten headlines that divide it, the essay is almost unbelievably incoherent, crying out for the patient red pen of a freshman English instructor. It is a grotesquely convoluted response to the shapely symmetries of the *Symposium*. Plato is not Robbe-Grillet or Borges. Like Foucault, Halperin is persistently indifferent to drama, the central cultural expression of classical Athens. That cripples him here, where he has to evaluate a dramatic character created by another dramatic character at a dramatic moment in a dramatic dialogue.

It is amazing that Diotima could be discussed for nearly 40 pages without Delphi being mentioned once. Socrates took his maxim, "Know thyself," from the pronaos of the Temple of Apollo, where the oracle sat. Surely, this should be the first hypothesis in tracing Diotima's origins. But no, in the school of Foucault, the obvious must be avoided at all costs. Oracles and prophetesses get mentioned late and in passing until the end, when they are unconvincingly argued away. Aspasia, whose facility in rhetoric has nothing whatever to do with Diotima's higher knowledge, is trotted out midway for a pointless song-and-dance routine. We also get some puffy interludes of Derrida but naturally no use of Jung, whose theory of the *anima* fits Diotima perfectly. We have the usual blanket indictment of "sexologists, psychoanalysts, gynaecologists," those puppets of scientific ideology. A promising passage on the *couvade* is abruptly terminated when it starts to lead toward thinking about biological sex differences. After leagues of heavy going, we end with a bout of fashionable flag-waving: a silly conflation of Virginia Woolf and male chauvinist Freud, the subject, we are vaguely told, of "the brilliant commentary of Luce Irigaray" —

another empty, overpraised French export. The last sentences of the book engineer a typical Halperin quick escape. After six essays demonstrating his ignorance of psychology, biology, and sociology, we are firmly informed: "Gender — no less than sexuality — is an irreducible fiction. And so to ask why Diotima is a woman is to pose a question that ultimately has no answer." How chic, how hollow.

Never in my career have I seen a scholarly book of such naked worldly ambition, such lack of scruple about its methods or its claims to knowledge. It is exquisitely emblematic of its time. It is the perfect book of the hour of the wolf.

## II

With *The Constraints of Desire*, we have something quite different. John Winkler, unlike Halperin, is a real scholar who can think and write well. Unfortunately, he has wandered away from his base of solid knowledge and produced a work whose legitimate contributions are too often overshadowed by false claims and coarse politicizing. The French trendies are wrong: there is a real person behind every text. This book dramatically shows both the gifts and the failings of its author. Winkler, neither an intellectual nor a political analyst, has been lured by the school of Foucault into overreaching, and so has marred his legacy. As I read this book, I could not get out of my mind the image of Mann's pensive Gustave von Aschenbach, sitting alone on the Lido and tarted up at the end by other people's idea of fashion.

*Constraints* begins with a dedication to "the two people who made it happen": a "feminist anthropologist" sister whose "academic activism sets an example that I would like to be able to live up to," and David Halperin, who convinced Winkler that his essays were "unified by a common methodology" and therefore "unified enough to be a book." Halperin's work "has deeply influenced the shape and quality of this project." From these personal misjudgments by Winkler have come the book's serious deficiencies: the forcing of small individual insights into a jerry-built artificial structure, the specious generalizations, the posturing from a political platform where Winkler looks as out of place as the professor on the cabaret stage in *The Blue Angel*.

The introduction takes us straight to the noisy agora into which Winkler so fatefully descended, to the detriment of his scholarly objectivity. We are told of his first visit to Greece in 1982 (rather late for a classicist?), whose signal memory for him is not the Acropolis, Mycenae, Delphi, or Epidaurus but the Gay Pride Day demonstration in Athens. The public behavior of the participants becomes Winkler's great revelation of how different those fascinating "Mediterranean people" are from *us*. As the child of Mediterranean immigrants, with close ties to a vast family still in Italy, I must say I was appalled and offended by this clumsy display of cultural naivete masquerading as liberal understanding. At the demonstration, Winkler meets and befriends "Michael," who seems to have strolled in from a Jackie Collins novel. We learn of an episode at Michael's apartment, where he commented on a female cousin's sexual behavior by making a "ferocious" and "slashing gesture towards his own groin." Whatever compelling interest Michael and his groin may have had for Winkler, I submit that their necessary presence in a scholarly book has not been fully established.

"Sex and gender are the focus of these essays," says Winkler. But he has neither the training nor the temperament for speculations in this area. His references to sex theory are embarrassingly and narrowly contemporary. It is obvious throughout the book that Winkler has studied neither Freud nor Jung, much less their numerous successors. He has a sunny, simplistic pre-Freudian view of human psychology and motivation and a sentimental idea of noble womanhood that went out with World War One. The sugary picture of rococo femininity projected in this book is surreally overpainted by great red swatches of feminist acrylic, which have clearly been foisted on Winkler from elsewhere. *Constraints* is methodologically incoherent, even schizophrenic. It works so hard to be hip. Winkler repeatedly interrupts his natural smooth, low-key, coasting style for a galumphing revving of political engines and a deafening screech of tires. The don is determined to drag race with the Teddy boys.

Now for the many problems presented by the introduction. The primary error of *Constraints* is its repeated foolish parallelism between ancient and modern Greece, a misstep one expects in *Reader's Digest* but not in a scholarly book. The historical obstacles to such a comparison are never raised or examined. One would never know not only that two millennia have passed

but that something rather large called the Ottoman Empire (all 600 years of it) has intervened in the middle. The heavy Turkish and Near Eastern influence on modern Greece – visible in the food, music, and national costumes – is never considered or even mentioned. Because Winkler has done no broad research into history and anthropology, he fails to realize that what he is simplistically identifying in the modern Mediterranean as a survival of the ancient Mediterranean is instead a survival of archaic culture generally, as it existed around the world. Again and again he calls a motif typically Mediterranean when, had he bothered to read even Frazer, he would have recognized it as also typical of preliterate British, Gallic, or Germanic Northern European societies.

Back to the introduction: modern interpretation of ancient Greek eroticism, as Winkler depicts it, has only two forms important enough to be worth noting: “hedonistic liberation – satyrs chasing nymphs” versus the more recent and enlightened position of “feminist scholarship” which has “challenged the innocence of that picture” and taken “the nymph’s point of view.” This is preposterous. The hedonistic fantasy was the creation of second-rate poets, decorative painters, and Isadora Duncan – not academic scholars, who have tended to see the opposite, i.e., high-minded philosophy and moral meanings. That classical scholarship sympathetic to and accurate about women only began with contemporary feminism is a gross libel. Winkler’s ignorance of the corpus of long-established scholarship in this area is evident when he calls the work of Sarah Pomeroy “groundbreaking.” He has been misled by others to think that Pomeroy’s competent but tepid *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (1975) is somehow pioneering. That short book is simply an unexciting and rather conventional compilation of basic material well known to classicists and yawningly familiar to anyone already working in the field of historical sex studies and systematically absorbing the 200-year scholarly record.

Next we are told: “For ancient Greece the questions about sex itself were very excitingly posed by Michel Foucault, one of the great thinkers of our age, who died of AIDS in 1984.” Note the Madison Avenue elements in this sentence: the questionable claim “one of the great thinkers of our age” has come to Winkler externally; it’s a trendy tag line learned by rote, like “Winston



Tastes Good Like a Cigarette Should.” Nothing in *Constraints* demonstrates that Winkler has a shred of philosophical knowledge later than antiquity. Again: why is the medical information here? Hovering in it is an implied false logic between having AIDS and being an innovative thinker about sex. There is no such connection in reality.

Now we get a two-page section called “Anthropology and the Classics” that shockingly demonstrates Winkler’s defects of knowledge. The account of anthropological history given here is so shaky and superficial that it would rate a C— in any rigorous college course. Winkler devotes only a few sentences to the Cambridge school, whose work, he states, “was received with great distaste by many of their contemporaries.” Jane Harrison, in particular, was greeted with “frank revulsion,” revealing “the white-washed, romantic, and racist image of Greece, which was so useful for pedagogical purposes in the North Atlantic states.” Winkler, as the rest of the book lamentably demonstrates, is not deeply read in the work of Jane Harrison, and in this particular passage he shows he doesn’t know a hill of beans about her enormous academic fame in her lifetime. He has bought into feminist agitprop that all great women have been spurned and stifled by the patriarchal establishment. And as for “racist,” this is an inflammatory vulgarity beneath Winkler’s dignity. The survey in the next paragraph of unspecified “important innovations” in twentieth-century anthropology — where structuralism, semiotics, and feminism have now wonderfully ensured that anthropologists “no longer condescend to their informants as backward” (when was that ever the rule — in the age of Diderot?) — is so vague and uninformed that one must regretfully conclude the presence of the word *anthropology* in the subtitle of this book is fraudulent, a sham.

Next comes a series of self-exculpations where Winkler tries to slap a fancy mask over the fact that “my studies have not been systematic.” He is really practicing “equestrian academics”; he is offering us “an artist’s pencilled outline”; the “variety of perspectives” in his mismatched essays show the “insight” of pluralism. But, a few lines later, here’s the first thesis sentence we get: “Greeks insistently focused on dominance and submission, as constituted by phallic penetration.” Welcome to the rigid, ugly, uninformed world of Foucault. At the end of the introduction, Winkler declares:

I hope that these methods of anthropologically informed reading will help to discredit the ethnocentric interpretations which have dominated the English and German traditions of Classics for the past two hundred years. The rather cool culture of NATO Classicists has been a poor premise for interpreting the emotional and political protocols of Mediterranean people.

Are we to understand by this that Foucault is showing us a way out of the alleged thermostat problem? But Foucault is one of the dullest, most frigid and constipated theorists of sex ever; it's trial by prune-faced ice-lock. And his generation of French philosophers was powerfully under the influence of the German school of Heidegger. Winkler fails to see the luminous element of ritualized Apollonianism in ancient Athenian culture, for which the English and German classics traditions are in fact ideally suited. As for NATO's "emotional" deficit: Joyce's *Ulysses* makes great use of the legendary link and parallels between Greek and Irish culture. Wales too, like Ireland, has a passionate history of music, poetry, and heroic strife. The introduction ends: "I hope these essays will show how much more interesting the Greeks really were." I'm afraid Winkler's slightly gaga attitude toward the sunny Mediterranean is painfully reminiscent of James and Forster heroines on their first trip abroad. Too much of this book reads like a corny rehash of *Never on Sunday* and *Zorba the Greek*.

The first essay, "Unnatural Acts," is about Artemidoros' *Dream Analysis*. I like Winkler's use of the nonpolitical and nonjudgmental term *protocols* for social and erotic conventions. However, the problem with this essay is that the conclusions are already assumed in advance. ("For 'Nature', Read 'Culture'," says the opening section headline.) Winkler's lack of real anthropological knowledge is shown on the first page, with its bizarre footnote about the Manchu mother who would "routinely suck her small son's penis in public." This gratuitous item is cited from an article by another classicist, not an anthropologist, and it is used in a flat, exploitative way, without any sense of the larger questions governing display or manipulation of the body in world culture. Winkler's lack of philosophical ability even to negotiate between the terms *nature* and *culture* is next indicated in his approving citation of this astonishing bit of tau-

tology by a feminist classicist: "'Nature' and 'culture', as culturally defined rather than natural concepts, are unstable, historically relative assumptions." Should we laugh or cry? Neither Winkler nor the lady seems aware of the triple circularity, which would flunk opening-day logic class. This is an excellent example of the tenth-rate thinking currently epidemic in sex studies.

This essay demonstrates that Winkler has a conspicuous talent for translating pornography, which he treats honestly and well. But as an analyst of ancient materials, he was ill served by his advisors, who pointed him in the wrong direction. Winkler is sensitive, tentative; he is best at fluid sensory effects. He wants to let go, to follow his own sensuality and aesthetic instincts. But again and again, compulsively, this openness is shut down by a hammering political terminology imposed by others. Fascist jackboots stomp all over these pages. Winkler wants sex, but the Foucault vending machine dispenses only sexuality. Apparently, there was no one to tell Winkler to read Freud (to whom he makes some gingerly and uncomprehending references, mediated through a negative essay by someone else) or, even more, Jung, who is desperately needed in this essay chock-full of vivid archetypal imagery that Winkler doesn't have a clue about how to interpret. The glancing treatment of incest and bestiality is quite unsatisfactory, again showing Winkler's lack of familiarity with the modern anthropological and psychoanalytic record, massive on the subject of incest. Dreams of a man having sex with his mother are said to refer to "the mother's central symbolic role in the household": note the prim Foucault social constructionism, far inferior to Freudian psychology, which would see questions of identity and eroticism turbulently flowing from our primal origins in the mother's body. Winkler's ill preparation for dream analysis is clear in genial, mushy remarks like "Many of us may like to think that sexual activities involving two people will be mutually pleasurable." He has no sense whatever of Freud's well-established and indispensable theories of anxiety, conflict, and ambivalence, the absence of which is disastrous for the third essay in this volume. Finally, Winkler, aping Foucault, overstates Artemidoros' cultural significance. He evidently knows nothing about the genre of popular dream books that, for example, flooded the market in the Sixties or even with the still-flourishing trade in advice-giving astrology

handbooks; hence he sometimes earnestly overinterprets in a poker-faced way details that are merely tangential or whimsical.

The second essay is called “Laying Down the Law: The Oversight of Men’s Sexual Behavior in Classical Athens.” The trouble here is that Winkler’s evidence is principally drawn from the years 430–330 B.C. — in other words, from the moment (the great plague) that classical Athens began its decline. The main theme, announced by facetious headline, is “Anus-Surveillance.” We are asked to indignantly and automatically reject the virtually universal identification of passive male anal intercourse with female or feminizing experience, which in my view has always been based on a commonsense analogy with sexual anatomy: only women are born with vaginas. It is understandable why gay studies would like to detach the old popular imputation of effeminacy from gay men, who are sometimes very masculine, but contemporary political wish lists must not be projected backward to distort the historical record. The issue will remain in dispute, but there may indeed be a subliminal and kick-producing gender-crossing element in playful passive sodomy. Studying Freud helps one to identify such contradictions and ambiguities in eroticism, which is often intensified by theatrical reversals. My own examination of the bower theme in art has shown the actual dominance and control operating in female sexual receptivity. That Winkler knows he’s not on firm ground is shown by his sudden emphatic citation of Stephen Greenblatt, who has no credentials that I am aware of for theorizing about classical antiquity. There’s so much in this essay about “the protocols that polarized penetrators and penetrateds” that after a while it feels like a shop class in drill bits and how to know them. The simplistic Foucauldian active-passive dualism reflects a lead-footed and remarkably unsophisticated view of sex.

What is unattractive in this essay as it goes on is the implication that politics is just an empty game. There is a curious affectlessness about questions of honor, self-sacrifice, civic order, political virtue, or service to the nation. In the school of Foucault, institutions, first artificially reinforced, begin to dissolve. With Winkler, you start to get a slumming feeling: go to the capitol, go to the whorehouse — what’s the difference? Winkler is at his best in the areas he was actually trained in: for example, his interesting examples of different usages of the

Greek word *phusis* are well chosen and succinctly presented. This is the kind of outreach work classics has been desperately in need of: lucid definitions and etymologies of ancient languages accessible to the general reader, not just the specialist. Unfortunately, the essay ends in a burst of Halperinisms — straw men and Halperin himself, presiding as an authority on Greek sexuality. These two books, perpetually citing each other, have a Tweedledum-Tweedledee redundancy.

The third and title essay is on “erotic magical spells.” Here we see the tragic waste of American talents enslaved to French masters. This essay could and should have been a classic. But it is full of colossal blunders, caused by Winkler’s lack of attention to some of the most distinguished scholarship in his own field. Two books by Jane Harrison are listed in the bibliography, but it is obvious Winkler has not given her the attention she deserves. This essay cries out for her insights into and formulations about magic belief. Incredibly, Winkler, wearing the blinders of Foucault, does not see magic spells in a religious or ritual context. They’re nothing but representations of “social forces,” showing “the deep tremors of hatred of women,” evidence of “the institutions of terror that have circumscribed the experience of women over the centuries.” Bonehead feminist theory is plopped on top of a wealth of uncanny archaic material, which burns and twists with all the dark daemonic energy of sex. Winkler, lacking Freud or even the shrewd Denis de Rougemont, can’t believe love could innately produce this language of violence and warfare; he keeps bumblingly telling us what “we” mild, sane, tender creatures think of love. Does he know nothing about medieval romance, courtly love, Petrarchan sonnets, Goethe, Byron, Baudelaire? Has he never listened to the radio? The blues, torch, and pop traditions are boiling with anguish and aggression. “There’s a thin line between love and hate,” says a Sixties hit song.

Winkler is busy, busy with ten-dollar terms like “hermeneutically sophisticated” (applied to himself), but he doesn’t have time to think about literary connections to magic spells — poetic refrain, formulaic utterance of all kinds, as in epic or street curses. At moments here he starts to move away from Foucault — a lovesick man prepares “to enter the powerful underworld of his own psyche” — but he catches himself and abruptly stops, not daring to stray from social-constructionist ortho-

doxy. Any references in the spells to nature—night, the moon, the planets—are ignored. As usual, there are misconceived generalizations about the Mediterranean because of Winkler's lack of familiarity with equivalent spells in old rural Northern Europe and Africa and the modern Caribbean, with its voodoo or santería. Winkler has feminist conniptions about a terracotta statuette showing a woman with a sword in her neck and thirteen copper needles in her body. To interpret that imagery, all you need is a little knowledge of the Tarot. The best things in this essay are when Winkler cuts the crap and just follows his lascivious bent to tell us about "penis ointments" and anti-wet-dream herbs.

The fourth essay is on Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, which Winkler, obviously unfamiliar with gynecological surgery, keeps bizarrely calling *D&C*. Here it is clear that Winkler's real talent is for Cleanth Brooks-style New Criticism, the patient, scrupulous attentiveness to the internal literary qualities of a text. An example: "In the long, hot summer of Chloe's fifteenth year, suitors come buzzing about her, bringing gifts to her father Dryas." So simple, so vivid, so honest. This is the real Winkler, old-fashioned and dreamy. But in the era of junk bonds, you can be sure the shrapnel of "androcentrism, phallocentrism" will soon fall. Again and again, Winkler, under the Foucault vow to hear no biology, see no biology, speak no biology, misinterprets the simplest things in Longus' tale of sexual awakening. He makes ridiculous statements about the modern view of love; the hip set, reading each other, evidently has no time for Stendhal, Balzac, Swinburne, Wilde, Gide, Proust, Brecht, Lorca, Genet, or Tennessee Williams, all of whom contradict Winkler's claims. What is particularly inept in this essay is the crashing, jargon-jammed pseudo-anthropology, which is simply doing, very awkwardly, what the truly politically astute European and New York critics of realism in the nineteenth-century novel did so well in the Forties and Fifties. This is reinventing the wheel as a bone-jarring square.

That Winkler is way off base is hilariously proved by the story's closing wedding paragraph, where, he admits, there is a "mysterious and unexpected," an "exceedingly odd," an "amazing" note of "harsh unpleasantness" he cannot explain. It's a powerful infernal metaphor of "breaking up the earth with tridents," which of course reveals Longus' archetypal analogy

between woman and nature, the brutal biological absolutism of sexual anatomy and sexual intercourse that the school of Foucault keeps trying to repress. Winkler has therefore misread everything. He strains to get out of this jam with a vaseline-valedictory Halperinism: we must *not*, heaven forbid, put our critical faculties “solely in the service of recovering and reanimating an author’s meaning.” I burst out laughing at this. (“Oh, ship of fools!” I said to myself.) Winkler shovels so much manure at the end of this essay that we’re knee-deep in it. He has no idea there have been 100 years of complex commentary on sex, a body of work whose language, strategies, and patterns of argument, whose failures and successes, can educate and refine the sensibility and skills of the student of sex. The born-yesterday French-besotted faddists, addicted sniffers of wet printer’s ink, think they’re starting on the ground floor; so they’re condemned to another 100 years of trial and error. The rest of us can safely ignore them.

The fifth essay is on Homer’s Penelope. The 32 verbose pages, heavily padded by dull plot summary worthy of *Cliff Notes*, could be honed to eight of substance. The heart of the argument is a pedestrian New Critical analysis, uninformed in basic narratological principles one learned in college 25 years ago. For all his feminist posturing, Winkler cannot keep the women of the *Odyssey* fully in focus. He sees nothing of the archetypal house and home theme that runs through virtually every episode of the poem, nor can he evoke Homer’s brilliant contrasts of Penelope with Circe, Calypso, and Nausikaa. His Penelope, whom he tries to hype as some sort of aggressive career mom, ends up rather boring and characterless. Putting her into action like a wind-up toy, he misses the real dramatic dignity of her majestic, melancholy stasis.

There’s more grade-school anthropology in this essay, “It’s a Funny World” anecdotes that belong in an airline magazine. Some of it is unbelievably offensive. For instance, we are told that “descriptions of life in rural Greece today” can tell us so much about “this wretched world of ours”: “they open our urban eyes, accustomed to television and rear-view mirrors, to the clean dirt streets of pre-industrial societies, where the gossip of neighbors and the smell of goats are equally rank.” An image flashed into my mind as I read this: WASPy, oh-so-fine Ashley Wilkes, chin in hand, mournfully recalling “the lazy days” and

“the high soft Negro laughter from the quarters.” Oozing benevolent liberalism, Winkler manages to insult most of the Third World, which lives with goats and camels and does not find them “rank.” I am personally offended, since my grandfather loved to shop for goats and kept, behind his town house in upstate New York, a talkative goat named Giuseppina who remains the subject of much family mythology. Winkler should have taken his, not our, “urban eyes” on a little American journey to learn about his native land. As someone who spent many years amid the dirt roads and gossip of rural New York and Vermont, I think there’s a lot about modern life he didn’t know.

The first words of Winkler’s sixth essay, on Sappho, are “Monique Wittig.” It is contemptibly servile for a male classicist to court popularity in this way. Sappho and Emily Dickinson are the only woman geniuses in poetic history. Neither deserves to be introduced by one of our maudlin, run-of-the-mill feminist polemicists. In the next paragraph there is an outrageous slur against Denys Page, whose work, while “indispensable,” is also “time-bound”: he and all those other outdated scholars would not have “understood our matrices (feminist, anthropological, pro-lesbian).” Lobel and Page “assumed the validity of Victorian no-no’s” and so were “deaf to much of what Sappho was saying, tone-deaf to her deeper melodies.” The school of Foucault will apparently stoop to any lie. Winkler’s repeated claim that Sappho needed contemporary feminism to liberate her prudish Victorian image is ludicrous. In 1966, while doing the reserve reading for our study of Sappho in Greek class, I was deeply impressed by the superb writing on her by male scholars before and after World War Two: Bruno Snell, Albin Lesky, Denys Page, and many others. I have continued to teach and research Sappho since then; last year, for another project, I did a full-scale review of the history of Sappho criticism, and again I was impressed. Feminism, in all fields, has yet to produce a single scholar of the intellectual rank of scores of these learned men in the German and British academic tradition. And as for them not being “anthropological” – absurd: they were true historicists. Furthermore, Page, in the deft readings of *Sappho and Alcaeus* (1955), boldly argued for the homosexuality of Sappho’s lyrics, at a time when, unlike Dover’s 1970s, it was risky to do so. Page is owed a public apology.



Winkler does lots of feminist calisthenics in this essay, but his view of Sappho is totally reactionary. Like all his women, she ends up bland and syrupy, an effect he tries to counter by grotesque overstatements: "Sappho's consciousness is a larger circle enclosing the smaller one of Homer." I am a passionate admirer of Sappho, but that has to be one of the stupidest sentences I have ever seen in a scholarly book. Winkler's account of Sappho's place in Ionian culture or in archaic poetry generally is completely inadequate. He attempts to do a New Critical analysis of her major lyrics, but he takes forever to make simple points, such as that the Aphrodite ode has a multiple time frame and that Sappho is both in the poem and speaks it — the first and most elementary observations made in class by any sensible teacher.

Winkler's reading of "He seems to me a god," one of the great psychological documents of Western culture, is unpersuasive. The searing self-examination and language of agonized emotion, which, as Lesky points out, influenced male poets for a thousand years, are sponged away for a silly comparison to Odysseus' beach encounter with Nausikaa. The whole force of Sappho's poem depends on her mentally addressing a young woman who is not in fact hearing her (but who may be present in the audience when the poem is recited — a wonderful stratagem). The girl seems to be talking and laughing with a man across the room and paying no attention whatever to Sappho. Winkler, preening his feminist feathers, tries to get rid of the man, which won't wash. Odysseus, in contrast, is wittily addressing Nausikaa full-face. He stands naked, a branch over his balls; he holds her eyes so she will not glance down; he re-creates, through the power of aristocratic speech, his real rank. Nubile Nausikaa, sizing up the grizzled stranger, is impressed and thinks about snagging him. The flirtatious scene, ablaze with light, is full of the freshness of new beginnings. Sappho, however, is in torment. She sinks into spiritual isolation in a public place. Chills and fever overcome her. Love in Sappho, as never in Homer, is an affliction, a near-death experience. It is she, reaffirmed by her admirer Catullus, who created our romantic tradition of emotional ambivalence. Winkler's final contribution is to ransack Sappho's lyrics for references to clitorises. Her delicate archetypal fruit and flower imagery is wrung for lewd double-entendres. All this clumsy clitoris-brandishing

is like dropping bricks into a goldfish bowl. But what can you expect from a book that begins, after all, with Michael's groin?

The concluding essay, "The Laughter of the Oppressed," has a promising theme but gets bogged down in rebutting Marcel Detienne's *The Gardens of Adonis* (1977). If only Winkler had used this same method of skeptical critique with the work of another inaccurate Frenchman, Foucault. The treatment of images of male and female genitals at Greek festivals fails to set the theme in an anthropological context of world religions. Winkler's identification of serpents as phallic symbols is a common but serious mistake, as Philip Slater pointed out more than 20 years ago. The dismissive reference to Frazer's theory of Adonis is cheap. The gushing promotion of new mini-articles by a feminist classicist, to the complete exclusion of substantive work done on the same topic 40 years ago by Erich Neumann, is typical. The portrait of Greek women as jailed and oppressed fails to acknowledge the historical fact that male law and order also provided protection, security, and physical sustenance to women and children. At the end, the essay begins to slip out of Foucauldism toward an acknowledgment of biologic woman's cosmic power over the cycle of birth and death, but Winkler is such a novice at conceptualization that, a page later, he can end the book with a manifesto of social constructionism without noticing the glaring contradictions. The most telling phrase in this essay is Winkler's lauding of "the corporate enterprise" of current scholarship. Yes, academe has become a multinational corporation, and scholars have become businessmen, mobile merchants on the make.

Some months ago, I received a terrible shock when I read Martha Nussbaum's review of the Halperin and Winkler books in *TLS*.<sup>2</sup> In high school in the early Sixties, I dreamed of intellectual work by women that would match the highest male standards and set men on their ear. A lot of women have written a lot of academic books since then, but most of them fall far short of that standard. In *The Fragility of Goodness* (1986), Nussbaum achieves what I dreamed of. She and I were born the same year; in a sense, her book and mine are opposite and complementary. But in her *TLS* review, she seems to abandon for others the rigor she imposes on herself. She calls Halperin and Winkler "judicious and discriminating"; their two books are "meticulous and reliable in scholarship, clear in argument." Winkler shows

“exemplary subtlety” and “grace and ingenuity,” while Halperin’s essays are “clear and incisive,” with “careful scholarly arguments and a judicious, wide-ranging use of the evidence.” Winkler’s book has “extraordinary originality and insight” and is “amazingly beautiful”; it is “a work that will over the years stand comparison, one imagines, with the best writings of Nietzsche.” The last sentence of the review announces Winkler’s death from AIDS six weeks earlier.

I would prefer not to think that Martha Nussbaum is so unfamiliar with the many fields of knowledge dishonestly claimed by Halperin and Winkler. It would be better to think that the death of Winkler, who I assume was a professional associate, inspired her with elegiac emotions. But when the *TLS* asked Nussbaum to review these books, it asked not Nussbaum the private person, who grieves for the sufferings of others, but Nussbaum the scholar, who has ethical obligations to a wider group, the scholarly community, present and future, whom she does not know. The review presented an ethical dilemma; I regret the choice that was made. When Martha Nussbaum compares Winkler to Nietzsche, what standards are left, and who will defend them?

### III

The current crisis in the humanities has been misinterpreted by both sides in the debate. We are feeling the impact of two developments of the late nineteenth century: first, the birth of American graduate education in a departmental structure artificially broken down and separated into national literatures and, secondly, the secularization of faculties who had earlier emerged from divinity schools. German historicism, inspired by an ideal of scientific objectivity, made the latter development possible. It also drove an opening wedge between American higher education and Protestantism, the dominant code, conveniently at the moment of the first waves of Catholic and Jewish immigrants, who would transform American life. Secularization was never fully achieved: it lingered, I submit, even in the New Criticism, which as a college student in the Sixties I felt as suffocatingly Protestant in its style and assumptions. Secularization is a welcome process if it allows us to analyze literature and art without moral preconception and sermonizing; but secular-

ization is pernicious when it strips the spiritual dimension from experience. Today's crisis is really a chaos: both the rigorous learning of German philology and the practical discipline of New Criticism have been cast aside for an ill-understood French style of grand, self-referential, pseudo-philosophical speculation, which no American critic does well.

The number one problem today is not ignorant students but ignorant professors, who have substituted narrow "expertise" and "theoretical sophistication" (a preposterous term) for breadth and depth of learning in the world history of art and thought. The idea of expertise in any one area of the humanities, with its subsequent phenomenon of faculty recruitment by time-framed "slots," was always mistaken. It was inspired, in this masculine pioneer country that has never taken the arts seriously, by nervous emulation of the sciences, where one can indeed deeply and profitably specialize in moths, ferns, or igneous rocks. But there is no true expertise in the humanities without knowing *all* of the humanities. Art is a vast, ancient interconnected webwork, a fabricated tradition. Overconcentration on any one point is a distortion. This is one of the primary reasons for the dullness and ineptitude of so much twentieth-century criticism, as compared to nineteenth-century belles-lettres. American professors have been institutionally impelled, by graduate education and then by the universities that employ them, to become narrower and narrower. The goal of comprehensive cultural vision predicated by German philology, which esteemed universal scholarship, has been dismissed as unrealistic in a modern alienated world of fragmentation and subjectivity. But the old German style, sober, practical, precise, lucid, and learned, is exactly what is needed to remedy today's confusions and excesses. Only small minds fail to see patterns and wholes. Both undergraduate education and commentary on the arts require teachers and scholars who understand the history of civilization in broad, general terms. Hollywood Bible movies of the Fifties, like *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben-Hur*, with their epic clash of pagan and Judeo-Christian cultures, tell more truth about art and society than the French-infatuated ideologues who have made a travesty of the "best" American higher education.

New Criticism was not the total rebellion against German research it at first seemed to be. In its analysis of the structure

and aesthetic principles of a text, it was simply applying the empirical method of systematic investigation to the inner life of a work, imagined as a self-sufficient mechanism. One of the recent leftist libels about the New Critics is that they were obsessed hunters of irony and paradox — a charge far more accurate about the febrile word-chopping school of Derrida. Alas, most New Criticism was deadly earnest, in the Protestant way. The strength of New Criticism was that it was formulated by poets, men of cultivation and sensibility and — something conveniently forgotten today — broad mastery of the classics and literary history, including the Bible. The weakness of New Criticism was its agrarian Rousseauism, which suffused its artistic psychology with a sunny benevolence and made it stubbornly resistant to the darker, more turbulent, and conflict-based system of Freud. On the other hand, the closeness of the Southern New Critics to the land kept them attuned to universal archetypal imagery of nature, which has been banished from the French social-constructionist worldview. The New Criticism was a superb instrument for the up-close study of literature. In its word-by-word revelation of the power and complexity of language, it remains unsurpassed for introductory classroom instruction and for teaching people how to think and write. Its absence in France explains much of the current French clumsiness with historical and literary documents, which are manhandled and misread with solipsistic drunken abandon.

The major problem with New Criticism is that it cannot stand alone as an approach to art. It needs to be supplemented by historical learning and by training in larger schemes of conceptual reasoning. The present crisis in the humanities originated in the postwar English Department, which was and is a parochial construction. The folly was in thinking that you could make critics by training them just in criticism. Criticism without learning is futile. It produces lightweights, poseurs, triflers. Only poets can practice *ad lib* criticism, out of their own originality and definitiveness of imagination. The rapid expansion of universities in the baby boom era and the invention of the four-year Ph.D. — a disastrous move that devalued the doctorate and substituted hasty, pretentious, assembly-line makework for true research and learning — institutionalized the worst features of second-generation New Criticism. The Fifties English Department as a genteel, hermetic echo chamber can still be felt in the work of

Helen Vendler, for whom the world began with Chaucer and ended with Wallace Stevens. The puritanical moralism of middlebrow New Criticism is illustrated by the way Vendler's 1975 book on George Herbert exiled all references to sex to the footnotes, to the periphery of the permissible. The sex problem of New Criticism would come crashing back upon it: one reason for the incoherence and mediocrity of women's studies is that so many of its leaders — Ellen Moers, Carolyn Heilbrun, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Elaine Showalter — were produced by the Fifties English Department and so never had an ounce of preparation for social and historical inquiry, much less the most rudimentary knowledge of psychology and sexology. Moreover, these academic feminists, unlike Vendler, aren't even good critics in Mamie Eisenhower-era terms and seem to have drifted into women's studies by default, after failing in aesthetic analysis. One of the biggest scams of contemporary education is the way these conventional married women who never rocked a boat in their life ripped off and sanitized the ideas of my fractious generation of the Sixties and turned them into profitable public careers.

The New Criticism had to go. Or rather, it had to be absorbed and transformed. It was an American style, and there was an American solution to its problems. I will argue that the French invasion of academe in the Seventies was not at all a continuation of the Sixties revolution but rather an evasion of it. In *Tenured Radicals*, which treats trendy showboating professors with the irreverence they deserve, Roger Kimball makes one statement I would correct: he suggests the radicals of the Sixties are now in positions of control in the major universities. He is too generous. Most of America's academic leftists are no more radical than my Aunt Hattie. Sixties radicals rarely went on to graduate school; if they did, they often dropped out. If they made it through, they had trouble getting a job and keeping it. They remain mavericks, isolated, off-center. Today's academic leftists are strutting wannabes, timorous nerds who missed the Sixties while they were grade-grubbing in the library and brown-nosing the senior faculty. Their politics came to them late, secondhand, and special delivery via the Parisian import craze of the Seventies. These people have risen to the top not by challenging the system but by smoothly adapting themselves to it. They're company men, Rosencrantz and Guildensterns, privileged oppor-

tunists who rode the wave of fashion. Most true Sixties people could not and largely did not survive in the stifling graduate schools of the late Sixties and early Seventies.

The followers of Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault, far from being political and intellectual sophisticates, are the real fossilized reactionaries of our time. They seized on and dogged to death ideas that were totally passé in America well before 1970. Foucault spoke of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* as the pivotal liberating experience of his generation of Parisians, emerging from existentialism. When I saw that play in 1966 in college, I recognized it as a repressive anxiety-formation of defunct modernism, which the Sixties revolution, energized by rock, had swept completely away. At that moment in America, popular culture, rude, vital, brassy, had triumphed. Warhol and Oldenburg, reanimating the commercial motifs of our daily life, had killed the European avant-garde forever. The spiritual history of the Sixties has yet to be written. Psychedelia, a profound reordering of Western perception, lost its documenters, who blew their brains out on acid. Elvis Presley, one of the most influential men of the century, broke down racial barriers in the music industry, so that my generation was flooded by the power, passion, and emotional truth of African-American experience. Aretha Franklin, Levi Stubbs, James Brown, Gladys Knight: these voices and a hundred others are seared into our consciousness. Black artists are the American paradigm of vivid, vibrant personality, dramatic self-assertion, and spiritual magnitude of the individual voice. By what retrograde lace-curtain shrinking from reality did our academics look to spinsterish French notions of the "decentered subject"? Of *course* the French felt decentered: they'd just been crushed by Germany. American G.I.'s (including my uncles) got shot up rescuing France when she was lying flat on her face under the Nazi boot. Hence it is revolting to see pampered American academics down on their knees kissing French bums.

Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault are the perfect prophets for the weak, anxious academic personality, trapped in verbal formulas and perennially defeated by circumstance. They offer a self-exculpating cosmic explanation for the normal professorial state of resentment, alienation, dithery passivity, and inaction. Their popularity illustrates the psychological gap between professors and students that has damaged so much undergraduate

education. The disciples of Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault are ignorant: ignorant of nineteenth-century intellectual history, which originated and developed their arguments, and ignorant of America, which leapt far beyond European thought from the moment we invented Hollywood. Specifically, the French school of the Seventies was crashingly irrelevant to America's internal political dynamic. We already had a major theorist greater than all the postwar French after Sartre: Norman O. Brown. In *Life Against Death* (1959) and *Love's Body* (1966), the deeply learned and classically trained Brown made an unsurpassed fusion of literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, history, and politics. His two books had a spectacular impact on the American Sixties. At the same time were released in paperback the four volumes of *The Social History of Art* by the Marxist Arnold Hauser, a scholar of staggering erudition and brilliant precision in the German style. It was because of Brown and Hauser that Foucault seemed to me, from the moment I first saw his work in 1971, an absolute ninny.

But my generation was condemned to live out what was only imagined by the older Norman O. Brown. We put the myth of Dionysus into action, and we hit the wall of reality. The Sixties revolutionized consciousness, but on the road of excess by which we sought the palace of wisdom, many of us lost our minds, lives, or careers through drugs, sexual orgy, or (my vice) constant challenges to authority. The Sixties, rebelling against Fifties bourgeois conformity and respectability, took life to its extreme and explored the far edges of the possible. Altamont (December 1969) was our Waterloo: there the Dionysian forces released by the Sixties showed their ugly face. The film *Gimme Shelter* documents that turbulent day, when the Hell's Angels beat people with pool cues, when the Rolling Stones presided over a murder before the stage, when Grace Slick could not calm a surging crowd moaning and sighing with Dantean inner torment. Moon in Scorpio: Altamont was the end of Sixties illusions about the benevolence of human nature and mother nature.

In America we made a rapid transit from the ideal to the real, that motif of disillusionment of the nineteenth-century novel. Everyone who honestly explored Sixties ideals eventually had to confront the limitations of those ideals. Risk and loss, often permanent, were the price of discovery. What is outrageous in the



French fad is that a grotesque head trip was imposed on us, who had learned our own lessons in our own way. France is a prisoner of its history and high culture. It had no mammoth popular culture like ours; its brief student revolt flickered and failed. Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault are virtuoso wordsmiths without historical or political expertise, even in their own country. Their American popularity has been an asinine episode in the musty academic chronicles. In the Sixties, amid the cloistered sterility of late New Criticism, we vowed: never again. Never again abstractions that kill art; never again the mind divorced from the body or the mind divorced from emotion. The Seventies French fad was a flight from Sixties truths, a reactionary escape into false abstraction and rationalism, masquerading as distrust of reason.

Last year, I attended a lecture at the University of Pennsylvania given by a prominent visiting Ivy League feminist. It was a dreadful experience, and I'm afraid I behaved rather badly. A small, frail, drably dressed but obviously very nice woman with a pale voice showed slide after slide of gorgeous ads and pictorials from fashion magazines and proceeded to demolish them with an ugly, ponderous, aggressive, labyrinthine Lacan machinery that surely not three people in the audience fully understood. Brutal language of "mutilation," "decapitation," "strangulation," "bondage," and "enslavement" filled the air. I began to writhe in my seat with pain; I could not stifle, to the annoyance of my neighbors, muttered cries of "oh!", "awful!", and "give me a break!" At the end, I waved my arms around and made an agitated speech, most graciously tolerated by the lecturer, denouncing the feminist inability to deal with beauty and pleasure, to which gay men have made such outstanding cultural contributions. Every young woman in the audience, intimidated by incomprehension into thinking she was hearing something brilliant, was intellectually oppressed by that lecture and that approach to life and thought. Lacan is a tyrant who must be driven from our shores. Narrowly trained English professors who know nothing of art history or popular culture think they can just wade in with Lacan and trash everything in sight. As I later wrote to the series sponsor, if the lecturer had done the same thing to, say, African art — cutting into a tradition without any regard for its history, methods, or iconography — a lynch mob would have formed. I now realize how lucky I was, in the

total absence of role models, to have only men to rebel against. Today's women students are meeting their oppressors in dangerously seductive new form, as successful, congenial female professors who are themselves victims of a rigid foreign ideology. Let's dump the French in Boston Harbor and let them swim home.

Robert Caserio recently said to me, "The whole profession has become a vast mimicry. The idea that there is open debate is an absolute fiction. There is only the Foucault monologue, the Lacan monologue, the Derrida monologue. There is no room for creative disagreement. No deviation from what is approved is tolerated." These monologues are really one, the monotonous drone of the school of Saussure, which has cast its delusional inky cloud over modern academic thought. Never have so many been so wrong about so much. It is positively idiotic to imagine that there is no experience outside of language. I am in love with language, but never for a moment did I dream that language encompasses and determines all knowledge. It has been a truism of basic science courses for decades in America that the brain has multiple areas of function and that language belongs to only specific areas, injured by trauma and restored by surgery or speech therapy. For thousands of years, sages and mystics of both East and West have taught us about the limitations of language in seeking truth. When Dante must part from Virgil at the gates of Paradise, he is expressing the ancient insight that faith and vision occur in a realm beyond reason and language. My generation, inheriting the Beatniks' interest in Zen, made a spiritual passage to India, with its flaming avatars. We knew words, names, concepts had to be dissolved and transcended. Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault are termites compared to the art, culture, and archaic topography of India. One remedy for today's educational impasse: more India and less France. The followers of Derrida are pathetic, snuffling in French pockets for bits and pieces of a deconstructive method already massively and coherently presented — and with a mature sense of the sacred — in Buddhism and Hinduism.

The American academics who went bananas over Gallic theory were callow 90-pound weaklings, trying to pump themselves up with powdered tiger's milk. Their political and cultural naivete is astounding. France suffers from an over-structured educational system that produces a vigorous but one-

dimensional form of reasoning descending from the seventeenth century. Despite the French reputation for love, cultivated French personality is highly repressed. French high culture, like that of the Japanese, is insular and superbly artificial. Since Racine, the French language *is* French culture. It is cold, elegant, ironic, linear, constricting. Gautier, Baudelaire, and Huysmans were complaining about the excessive sanitation of educated French well over a century ago. The balanced phrase-forms and repetitious internal rhythms of French thought can be heard in virtually any French movie of the past 50 years, particularly when the characters begin to discourse on love. Their affectations, pomposity, and self-deceptions are a major source of comedy, exploited by Renoir, Buñuel, Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol. The French, locked in by overintellection, require radical deconstruction of their speech, persona, and worldview. Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault have no relevance to anything outside of postwar France. They are performing necessary acts of verbal and conceptual violence upon a culture as walled and arrogantly self-centered as the Chinese imperial palace. Most American academics are totally lost when trying to read French polemic. They have no idea that in French you can form sentences that are virtually content-free, that are merely rhetorical flourishes echoing, reversing, or sabotaging prior French sentences. Translations of Lacan and Derrida are pored over by earnest Americans, fatuously taking as literal truth statements that were merely the malicious *boutades* of the *flâneur*. Lacan and Derrida are meaningless unless you already have in your head the austere, sonorous, classical French sentences that they are twisting and wringing like a washcloth.

Our French acolytes, making themselves the lackies of a foreign fascism, have advertised their intellectual emptiness to the world. In America, deconstruction is absurd, since we have never had a high culture of any kind. Far from being overliterate, we are still preliterate, accentuated by an image-dominated popular culture that was the all-embracing *paideia* of my generation. American personality, far from being trapped in decorum, is booming, pushy, manic, facilely optimistic. At its essence, it is infantile in its beaming, bouncing egotism, a character type seen in film in the bumptious newlywed husband of *Niagara*, the suburban Connecticut host mixing honey daiquiris in *Auntie Mame*, the griping yahoo spurning Venetian food in *Summer-*

*time*, or that French favorite, Jerry Lewis, whose giddy, tumbling spontaneity represents everything that is impossible in mannerly France. America is still a frontier country of wide open spaces. Our closeness to nature is one reason why our problem is not repression but regression: our notorious violence is the constant eruption of primitivism, of anarchic individualism. The Sixties attempted a return to nature that ended in disaster. The gentle nude bathing and playful sliding in the mud at Woodstock were a short-lived Rousseauist dream. My generation, inspired by the Dionysian titanism of rock, attempted something more radical than anything since the French Revolution. We asked: why should I obey this law? and why shouldn't I act on every sexual impulse? The result was a descent into barbarism. We painfully discovered that a just society cannot, in fact, function if everyone does his own thing. And out of the pagan promiscuity of the Sixties came AIDS. Everyone of my generation who preached free love is responsible for AIDS. The Sixties revolution in America collapsed because of its own excesses. It followed and fulfilled its own inner historical pattern, a fall from Romanticism into Decadence. In France, in contrast, the brief student and worker revolt was put down by government action, an external force. Armchair French leftists like Foucault went into a permanent sulk. They never saw the errors of their ideas because those ideas, through lack of French moxie, were never tested against reality by being put through their full organic cycle. Hence the utter madness of French leftist pretensions being flaunted by milquetoast academics in America, which as a nation had made an epic journey to the heart of darkness and returned with tragic truths.

The American Sixties already contained every revolutionary insight. We didn't need Derrida: we had Jimi Hendrix. In the blazing psychedelic guitar work of this black genius, time, space, form, voice, person were deconstructed. Floating Oriental suspensions released the categorizations of European mind. Hendrix's radical artistic statement, with its raw elemental sound-effects of earth, air, water, and fire, addressed both nature and culture and therefore dwarfed society-obsessed French thought. Psychedelia's deconstructions, unlike Derrida's, destroyed the safe and known for one purpose: expanded vision. The Sixties saw the cosmos and were awed by it. The French, frolicking in their miniature stone garden, haven't had a cosmic thought

since Pascal. America, furthermore, by virtue of its overlapping and competing ethnicities—Jewish, Italian, Greek, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Irish, Swedish, German, Polish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese—had intrinsic to its character as an immigrant nation a multiplicity of perspectives on life, language, and behavior that snobbish, homogeneous France, suppressing its resident Algerians, lacks. Derrida, an Algerian Jew, had his own private agenda in France that is not applicable to America.

The Sixties were also a great age of cinema. My generation, transferring to college campuses the cult atmosphere of urban art-film houses, sat in rapt, reverent silence (now totally lost) before hundreds of Hollywood classics and subtitled foreign films in a dozen languages. Through film we gained an international and transhistorical understanding, a mobility of mind that freed us from the parochial domestic Fifties. France was present, but as only one item in our cultural overview. Resnais and Robbe-Grillet's operatic *Last Year at Marienbad* dramatized the burden of history and, like Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, the relativity of time, memory, and narrative. Ingmar Bergman's bleak northern trilogy dealt with the death of God and meaning and, in *The Silence*, the death of language—significantly transcended by music. *Persona*, a masterpiece, showed the tyranny of medical authority, the breakdown of the social mask, the cruelty and amorality of the unconscious, the intermingling of fantasy and reality. Antonioni's *L'Avventura* followed, at trancelike length, the questing individual lost in the rocky landscape of modern desolation. *Blow-Up*, through its dissolving crime photographs, addressed the subjectivity of perception and, in its closing mimed tennis game, the fictiveness of community and social behavior. Fellini's films showed consciousness riddled and vexed by sexual fantasy and guilt, a daily war with spectral internalized censors. *Lawrence of Arabia* was a real-life parable of imperialism, racism, and power politics, of idealism collapsing into cynicism. Finally, the Marx Brothers, their popularity restored, performed elaborate surreal deconstructions of language, manners, public decorum—verbal, social, and sexual formulas of every kind.

What I am demonstrating is that anyone culturally awake in the American Sixties was already deeply immersed in all the issues that entered the academy, in grotesquely distorted programmatic form, through the French keyhole in the Seventies.

Far from being *au courant* sophisticates, the French acolytes were toadying careerists, untouched by the Sixties. I will never forget the first time I heard the name "Lacan," pronounced by a fellow woman graduate student at a Yale cocktail party with a haughty, clarion-like, head-tossing, triumphant smugness of discovery that would have embarrassed Marie Curie. I saw the first clustering of yuppies around Paul De Man, who, because I was reading Freud, Frazer, Nietzsche, and Sade, thinkers of distinction, seemed to me bland and phony, an ideal model for Ivy League WASPs trying to resist the ethnic, sexual, and pop culture revolution of the Sixties. Hence De Man's delightful recent exposure as a Nazi sympathizer did not surprise me in the least. The Seventies theory explosion was a panic reaction by head-locked pedants unable to cope with the emotional and sensory flux of the iconoclastic psychedelic Sixties. It was a desperate search for new authority, new dogma. It misused and abused modernist concepts for personal cachet and professional advancement. Alienation, anxiety, and relativity, as embodied in film, still retained major principles stripped away by the theorists, with their fanatical, sterile mind-games: the beauty of the human face; the power of emotion; the allure of the visual; the presence of nature, in sea, moon, cloud, night; the virtuosity of the artist, as actor, cinematographer, or *auteur* director; and above all, the magnetism and complexity of sex. The French theorists are eros-killers. The smouldering eroticism of great European actresses like Jeanne Moreau demonstrated to my generation woman's archetypal mystery and glamour, completely missing from the totalitarian worldview of the misogynist Foucault. For me, the big French D is not Derrida but Deneuve.

The psychedelic Sixties were about opening oneself to sensations and messages from above, below, and beyond the social realm. We sought the oracular, the mystic, "vibrations" between persons and planets. A poem or film had a magic authority. The French Seventies, on the other hand, were about rigid mental control, power plays by the critic over the artist and text. Academics with the souls of accountants now approached art like a business deal, haggling over negotiable, movable clauses. The older Beat poets, by their disdain for material possessions, were a spiritual example to us in the Sixties. In *Howl* and *Kaddish*, Allen Ginsberg fused the American bardic tradition of Whitman with Jewish moral passion to deconstruct insti-

tutions, history, social class, and concepts of sexual and mental normality. Through his impact on Bob Dylan, Ginsberg changed rock and the world. What did the academic Seventies offer? Not a fiery holy man but plastic Ken dolls, beady-eyed, greedy, cut-throat. Ginsberg, like the pioneering Lenny Bruce, who turned comedy toward social critique, was influenced by the rich, melodious voices and syncopated jazz rhythms of black music. African-American culture is still rooted in the rural South, with its evangelical fervor and firebreathing preachers. The blues shouters and black gospel choirs are alive and ecstatic with “the spirit,” which the French theorists wouldn’t recognize unless it came up and hit them in the head. Walk in Philadelphia on a Sunday morning, and you will hear majestic Niagaras of sound pouring from the black churches. And who’s doing the preaching in Ivy League humanities departments? Lily-livered, dead-ass, trash-talking foreign junk-bond dealers. The school of Saussure, nose in the dictionary, can’t see the ancient art form of dance, the sacred poetry of the body, which has made America the envy of the world. Black teenagers, with brilliant virtuosity, push forward the frontiers of dance. Month by month on the street, they invent new movements that are recorded on music videos and beamed around the world, to the helpless amazement of European and Japanese admirers, who cannot imitate them. I have a dream: in my dream, based on the diner episode in *The Blues Brothers*, Aretha Franklin, in her fabulous black-lipstick “Jumpin’ Jack Flash” outfit, leaps from her seat at Maxim’s and, shouting “Think!”, blasts Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault like dishrags against the wall, then leads thousands of freed academic white slaves in a victory parade down the Champs Elysées.

The French invasion of the Seventies had nothing to do with leftism or genuine politics but everything to do with good old-fashioned American capitalism, which liberal academics pretend to scorn. The collapse of the job market, due to recession and university retrenchment after the baby boom era, caused economic hysteria. As faculties were cut, commercial self-packaging became a priority. Academics, never renowned for courage, fled beneath the safe umbrella of male authority and one-man rule: the French big wigs offered to their disciples a soothing esoteric code and a sense of belonging to an elite, an intellectually superior unit, at a time when the market told academics they were

useless and dispensable. It is comical that these vain, foolish, irrelevant people, so contemptuous of American society, imagine themselves to be leftists. They understand nothing of America. And because of their ignorance, Mercury, god of commerce, forced them into a historical pattern they are blind to: far from being the lone, brave dissenters against conservatism, as David Halperin ineptly claims, the academic theorists were the first wave of yuppie speculators, the first corporate raiders of the Wall Street gilded age.

The facile industry of high-tech criticism is as busily all-American as the Detroit auto trade. New! Improved! See next year's model today! A false progressivism has goaded the profession into a frantic tarantella. Hurry up; get on the ball; you must "keep up with," must stay in front. But the humanities, unlike medicine, marine biology, and astrophysics, are about great enduring human truths that in fact never change but are rediscovered again and again. The humanities are about insight, illumination, wisdom. French theory, with its empty word-play, produces sophists, experts in getting ahead, getting worldly rewards. It allows a continuation not of Sixties leftism but of Fifties prep schools, with their snide, slick style, a cool, insufferably pretentious, nasal voice you can hear everywhere on Ivy League campuses. French theory is brand-name consumerism: Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault are the academic equivalents of BMW, Rolex, and Cuisinart, the yuppie trophies. French theory is computerized thinking, superclean and risk-free. It's the Macintosh that drags the Icons to the Trash, and it's the Big Mac of fast-food, on-the-run dining. The McDonaldisation of the profession means standardized, interchangeable outlets, briskly efficient academics who think alike and sound alike. Scholars have made themselves into lock-step computer technicians, up on and hawking the latest gadget-of-the-month. French theory is like those how-to tapes guaranteed to make you a real-estate millionaire overnight. Gain power by attacking power! Make a killing! Be a master of the universe! Call this number in Paris *now!*

The self-made Inferno of the academic junk-bond era is the conferences, where the din of ambition is as deafening as on the floor of the stock exchange. The huge post-Sixties proliferation of conferences, used as an administrative marketing tool by colleges and universities, produced a diversion of professional



energy away from study and toward performance, networking, advertisement, cruising, hustling, glad-handing, back-scratching, chitchat, groupthink. Interdisciplinary innovation? Hardly. Real interdisciplinary work is done reading and writing at home and in the library. The conferences teach corporate raiding: academics become lone wolves without loyalty to their own disciplines or institutions; they're always on the trail and on the lookout, ears up for the better job and bigger salary, the next golden fleece or golden parachute. The conferences are all about insider trading and racketeering, jockeying for power by fast-track traveling salesmen pushing their shrink-wrapped product and tooting fancy new commercial slogans. The conferences induce a delusional removal from reality. They mislead fad-followers like Halperin and Winkler into beginning ridiculous statements with "We" — we think, we say, we do this or that. No, we don't; that's you, the teeming conference-hoppers, the plague of locusts and froglets croaking in their tiny pond. In the conferences, a host of *Bartleby the Scriveners* tippy-toe through showy verbal pirouettes and imagine they're running with the bulls at Pamplona. But the menu, as the chorus chants in *Monty Python*, is nothing but "Spam, Spam, Spam!" The conferences are lightweight shuttlecock scholarship, where the divorced can trawl for new spouses and where people meet in an airless bubble to confirm each other's false assumptions and certitudes. A new *Dunciad* is needed to chart the reefs and shoals of this polluted boat-choked race course, where no one ever gets anywhere.

Whole careers have gone down the tubes at the conferences. Dozens of prominent academics are approaching the moment of reckoning, when they and everyone else will realize they have wasted the best years of their professional lives on cutesy mini-papers and globe-trotting. By their books ye shall know them. A scholar's real audience is not yet born. A scholar must build for the future, not the present. The profession is addicted to the present, to contemporary figures, contemporary terminology, contemporary concerns. Authentic theory would mean mastery of the complete history of philosophy and aesthetics. What is absurdly called theory today is just a mask for fashion and greed. The conferences are the Alphabet City of addiction to junk, the self-numbing anodyne of rootless, soulless people who have lost contact with their own ethnic traditions. Their work will die

with them, for it is based on neither learning nor inspired interpretation. The conferences are oppressive bourgeois forms that enforce a style of affected patter and smarmy whimsy in the speaker and polite chuckles and iron-butt torpor in the audience. Success at the conferences requires a certain kind of physically inert personality, superficially cordial but emotionally dissociated. It's the genteel high Protestant style of the country clubs and corporate board rooms, with their financial reports and marketing presentations. The transient intimacies of the conferences are themselves junk bonds. Dante would classify the conference-hoppers as perverters of intellect, bad guides, sowers of schism.

The conferences have left a paper trail of folly and trivial pursuit. True scholars are time-travelers, not space-travelers. Rattling away on their gerbil wheels, the conference-caged theorists replicate the rabid turf-wars of Paris, where an intellectual's every sentence is a calculated self-positioning against another intellectual, an incestuous Peyton Place solipsism impenetrable to gullible Americans. One of recent theory's most provincial conference-groupies: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, whose writing on sex is, in my opinion, completely factitious and without scholarly merit. But by the dogged determination that Richard Nixon showed on the rubber-chicken circuit, Sedgwick has managed to convert pedestrian critical skills and little discernible knowledge in history, philosophy, psychology, art, or even premodern literature into a lucrative academic career. Sedgwick is a notorious bloated-blurbist, turning out inflated dust-jacket encomia for Halperin and, in perhaps the dopiest blurb of the decade (it mentioned ozone), D. A. Miller. She should be giving lectures in marketing and consumer science to business schools.

The junk-bond era has also spawned something that calls itself New Historicism. This seems to be a refuge for English majors without critical talent or broad learning in history or political science. Its style is Joan Didion crossed with the *National Geographic*: glossy, formulaic, unrigorous. New Historicism is of the yuppies, by the yuppies, for the yuppies. To practice it, you apparently must lack all historical sense. My idea of political analysis began with Thucydides and Tacitus. My interest in bridging the gap between disciplines was nourished by reading Vico, Tocqueville, Veblen, Durkheim, Weber, Spengler, Curtius, Panofsky, and Eliade, as well as Nietzsche, Hauser,

and Brown. What do New Historicists read? Their contemporary, Clifford Geertz, who can't hold a candle to the magisterial, monumental Arnold Hauser. The anecdotal, microchip manner of New Historicism is yuppie grazing, *cuisine minceur* in a quiche-and-fern bistro. At its best, in Stephen Greenblatt, it is still too bright, crisp, clean, too dressed-for-success. As a student at Yale, Greenblatt had available as models two brilliant exemplars of his own spiritual tradition, the ascetic, poetic Geoffrey Hartman and the turbulent, brooding Harold Bloom. But Greenblatt's books, waving vaguely from a distance at Sixties ideas, go the old bland WASP route, where nothing is actually personally risked or exposed. There is no passion or suffering, no deep learning. Everything is carefully measured against its immediate reception. The New Historicists, carrying contemporary baggage into other eras, are simply repeating the cultural imperialism of British colonels laying out high tea in the jungle. New Historicism is the no-sweat, pain-free, careerist gentrification of authentic Sixties leftism.

Foucault is the ideal thinker for the yuppie age. He is the master of the quick fix, of make-it-to-the-top by any means. Twist the facts, doctor the balance sheet, toss out veteran employees, bring in the smart-mouthed brats, turn the world into one big power lunch. Foucault perfects the WASP alienation of mind and culture from emotion. There are no untidy ambiguities in his system. Everything is rigidly schematic, overdetermined, reducible to chart form. Contradictory evidence is never admitted. Foucault represents the final decadence of Western Apollonianism, a cold, desiccated fetishism of pure I.Q. divorced from humor, compassion, ethics, eroticism, wisdom. It is this same combination of maniacal abstraction with lust for personal power that led to the deranged orderliness of the concentration camps. There is a constant rush to judgment in Foucault. He is filled with specious generalizations, false categorizations, distortions, fudging, pretenses to knowledge in areas where he was ignorant. He had no ability whatever to discriminate among historical sources, where he makes terrible blunders. Foucault had the kind of clever but limited mind that is good at inventing acrostics, crossword puzzles, and computer programs. He had little major talent beyond this, except for a genius for self-promotion. The word *modest* recurs in descriptions of Foucault as a person and writer. To which I reply: there's a sucker born every

minute. As a writer, Foucault was an arrogant bastard. He did not believe in truth and so never sought it. His books, clumsily researched but overconfidently argued, show language-obsessed Parisian parochialism become paranoia, delusional and obsessive-compulsive.

Foucault is the Cagliostro of our time. Nowhere is this more evident than in his treatment of Emile Durkheim, his true source. Those who, like Halperin, claim Foucault's descent from Nietzsche are simply Foucault's dupes. An entire book could be written applying Harold Bloom's theory of anxiety of influence to Foucault's desperate concealment of his massive indebtedness to Durkheim, to whom he barely, dismissively, and inaccurately refers. Innumerable discussions of Foucault, including J. G. Merquior's excellent *Foucault* (1985), which hilariously exposes the elementary errors made by Foucault in every area he wrote about, do not even mention Durkheim. This illustrates the kind of interdisciplinary incomprehension that has allowed Foucault to appear erudite, when he was not. The undeserved adulation of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* reminds me of that priceless moment at the 1980 Oscars when Jon Voight, sitting in the front row as he listened to Laurence Olivier give fey, meandering, and parodistic thanks, was addled and overcome, mouthed a silent, mackerel-like "Wow!", and smacked himself in the middle of his forehead. American humanists, untutored in sociology, are knocked out by Foucault's daring: analyze crime and punishment, prisons and penal codes! Gee, I wish I'd thought of that! Well, Foucault didn't think of it either. It's in Durkheim's *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893). Foucault extends Durkheim's argument one step further but covers up the influence. Look at Durkheim's *Primitive Classification* (1903), and you will see the shadow of Foucault's phrases about taxonomy. Durkheim is everywhere in Foucault. The intricate complexities of analysis of organizations and power groups in Max Weber make Foucault look like a tyro. It is only ignorance of the social sciences that has allowed Foucault to rise to cult status among pitifully unprepared American humanists. I am not aware of any woman in the world doing work on a higher intellectual level than the British sociologist Gillian Rose: in *Dialectic of Nihilism: Post-Structuralism and Law* (1984), she administers a well-earned drubbing to both

Foucault and Derrida that demonstrates their circular reasoning and misreading of basic sources.

Foucault is falsely used by naive American academics as a scholarly source of information, as if he were Fernand Braudel. But you cannot trust a single fact in Foucault. His books should be called *Foucault's Diaries*. They have no relationship to historical reality. They are simply devious improvisations in the style of Gide's *The Counterfeiters*. They attract gameplaying minds with unresolved malice toward society, people who give lip service to rebellion but who lack the guts to actually rebel and pay the price. Derrida is smack for the spirit, but Foucault is the academic cocaine, the yuppie drug of choice of the Seventies and Eighties. In the Sixties, LSD gave vision, while marijuana gave community. But coke, pricey and jealously hoarded, is the power drug, giving a rush of omnipotent self-assurance. Work done under its influence is manic, febrile, choppy, disconnected. Coke was responsible for the plot incoherence of fifteen years of TV sitcoms and glitzy "high-concept" Hollywood films. Foucault is the high-concept pusher and deal-maker of the cocaine decades. His big squishy pink-marshmallow word is *power*, which neither he nor his followers fully understand. It caroms around picking up lint and dog hair but is no substitute for political analysis. Foucault's ignorance of prehistory and ancient history, based in the development and articulation of cultures and legal codes, makes his discussions of power otiose. He never asks how power is gained or lost, justly administered or abused. He does not show how efficient procedures get overformalized, entrenched, calcified, then shattered and reformed. He has no familiarity with theories of social or biological hierarchies, such as the "pecking order" universally observed in farmyards and schoolyards. Because, in the faddish French way, he ridiculously denies personality exists, he cannot assess the impact of strong personalities on events nor can he, like Weber, catalog types of authority or prestige. He is inept in comparing different governmental structures. Because he cannot deal with flux or dynamic change, he is hopeless with protracted power struggles. An astute political analyst would have begun his reflections with the long conflict between Pharaoh and priesthood in Egypt or between Emperor and army in late Rome, patterns still observable in our century's ongoing power struggles between college administrations and faculties or between Hollywood corpora-

tions, banks, and studios on the one hand and directors, actors, and screenwriters on the other.

Foucault, like Lacan and Derrida, is forty years out of date. He does not see and cannot deal with the radical transformation of culture by new technology and mass media following World War Two. He overlooks the economic role of entrepreneurship, and he is blind to the dominance of personality in our pagan Age of Hollywood. Liberal academics are stuck in a time warp. Invoking the Foucault buzz words *surveillance* and *the police*, they try to re-create the Fifties world of J. Edgar Hoover and *Dagnet*, the last, lost moment of liberalism's political authenticity, before it was destroyed by my generation's excesses. It is mildly nauseating to see this snide use of "the police" as a literary cliché coming from spoiled, wifty, middle-class academics who would be the first to shriek for the police if a burglar or rapist came through the window. And as for surveillance, Foucault-style language analysis seems lame and monotonous compared to the treatment of the same theme by Sade, Blake, Poe, Dickens, Dostoyevsky, Kafka, Brecht, or even Rod Serling in *The Twilight Zone*. The cultural mode of the post-Sixties era is not surveillance but voyeurism, *ours*. Eye-energy, thanks to omnipresent television, is going in the opposite direction. Institutions are the modern reality principle. Current academic liberalism cannot understand the fragility of institutions, or the ease with which order, due process, and civil liberties can be destroyed by assertions of anarchic selfhood. As a battle-scarred Sixties veteran, I learned this the hard way. Humanists like to childishly sneer and snort about the system, but they are quick to hide behind it, to pose from its forum at conferences, and to use it as a lifelong gravy train.

The academic popularity of Foucault, Lacan, and Derrida was produced by the poor educational preparation of American humanists, who appear to have slept through college. In the basic biology class of my first college semester in 1964, we studied the Pre-Socratics, with their competing and contradictory theories of the origins and constituency of matter. Heraclitus, in particular, to whom I had already been introduced by Walter Pater, contains everything that is in Derrida and more. We later studied the Western development of scientific classification schemes and the checkered history of evolutionary and genetic theories from Lamarck through Mendel and Darwin. In basic

geology the next year, we learned how to think in huge time-frames and how to analyze multiple layering and inversions in mixed physical evidence. At no time in my education or reading was science ever presented as an absolutist, dogmatic methodology, the way it is constantly maligned these days by French-befuddled humanists. We saw, following Aristotle and his seventeenth-century admirers, that science is a system of provisional hypotheses, open to constant revision and disproof. In classical art and history, we were impressed with modern archaeology's tender solicitude for the tiniest chips and fragments of vanished cultures, with the excruciatingly slow and heroically self-abnegating excavation, measurement, numbering, photography, extraction, cleaning, cataloging, restoration, and preservation of artifacts. (It was exasperation and impatience with dull potsherds that ended my childhood dream of becoming an archaeologist.) In introductory social science, we learned that the nineteenth-century rise of anthropology as a discipline hastened a new cultural relativism that shifted Europe from centrality; we were shown how anthropology is a limited interpretation by aliens who inevitably alter the small societies they enter and observe. As for Saussure, from the moment we began Latin class in junior high school, we were told, in simple, commonsense terms, that language is an arbitrary, self-enclosed system that varies from culture to culture, a point obvious to everyone studying languages for the last 200 years. Even the hot-dog vendor on the street would never mistake the word *elephant* for a real elephant. The French school, tickling its own buttocks, is in a state of dementia about the actual facts of modern thought. It has nothing whatever new or important to say.

The English professors who ran off after the French, like the stampede of silly knights whom Spenser's bemused Britomart watches disappearing after the False Florimell, were demonstrating an inadequate grasp of their own literary tradition. Blake's conceptual "mind-forg'd manacles"; his exploited chimney sweeps coerced and brainwashed by adult maxims; the barely verbal ego and primitive sensory state of "Infant Joy"; the oppressive institutional walls of "London"; the Orc-Urizen cycle of rebellion and repression; the spiritual combat of delusional mental emanations and projections in the long poems: here, at the birth of Romanticism, is every major theme that ends up as stale French pretzels at the last gasp of modernism.

Lytton Strachey, notably in his treatment of Florence Nightingale as a secret imperialist, has Foucault's debunking method already. Sensational Fifties prison and sanitarium movies, like *The Snake Pit* and *Suddenly Last Summer*, make Foucault's points more entertainingly. In 1952, in his study of schizophrenics in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, Ernst Kris demonstrated that artistic creativity is a distortion of received categories, supporting the connection between art and madness that had been a truism for centuries. Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues," "Desolation Row," and "Ballad of a Thin Man"; the Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil," "Jumpin' Jack Flash," and "Street Fighting Man"; Jim Morrison's line for the Doors, "Send my credentials to the House of Detention": these angry Romantic statements, haunted by nature *and* culture, are the true voice of our time. My idol is Keith Richards, the Rolling Stones rhythm guitarist who made menacing music out of the Dionysian darkness never seen by society-obsessed Foucault. The thunderous power chords of hard rock smash the dreary little world of French theory. The French have no sense of elemental realities. They could never have produced a D. H. Lawrence, a Neruda, an Allen Ginsberg.

If the history of ideas, including science, were properly taught, the French influence would shrivel to nothing. Foucault, crippled by his ignorance of antiquity, never saw until it was too late that Enlightenment scientism was a revival of Greek Apollonian taxonomies. Rather than admit he had been dreadfully wrong, he devised campaign after campaign of further deception and self-concealment. His style is to pretend to find symmetrical little categories, actually as random as the rolling plums on a slot machine. American humanists, who can't think their way out of a paper bag, gape in wonder at these lofty displays of false logic. Foucault's orderliness is that of a scowling, squinting, round-shouldered person ramming knitting needles into a great pile of badly mixed, sticky bread dough. The humanists are blinded by the flashing skewers (what "matchless penetration," breathes the dazzled Halperin), but informed scholars recognize a blob when they see one. And skewer-ramming is no way to bake bread. Foucault's taxonomies are always arbitrarily imposed and never generated by the evidence. He treats his material and readers in exactly the fascist way he claims society treats the body — as a mannequin without its own animal energy



or internal processes. As a flunky of Saussure, Foucault has to keep nature invisible at all times. This makes it impossible for him to honestly explore the necessary role of repression in such features of education and childrearing as toilet-training, simple basic issues never far from our minds in America, with its strong tradition of practical and social psychology.

There are two main areas where Foucault is severely deficient. First is his picture of consciousness, which is trapped in the contours of French language and culture in ways he never remotely saw. But beyond this, Foucault does not understand global or associative clusters of meaning. Most disastrously for someone claiming to discover the "epistemes" intrinsic to a period, he has no feeling for metaphorical or symbolic thinking. Without metaphor, literature and art are incomprehensible. Without symbolism, love, religion, and patriotism are incomprehensible. Reading or teaching Joyce's *Ulysses* requires more nimbleness with multiple linguistic and cultural codes than was ever displayed by Foucault. The most serious flaw of Foucault's system is in the area of sex. I view his hurried, compulsive writing as a massive rationalist defense-formation to avoid thinking about (a) woman, (b) nature, (c) emotion, and (d) the sexual body. His attempt to make the body the passive property of male society is an evasion of the universal fact so intolerable to him: that we are all born of human mothers. By turning women into ciphers of men, he miniaturizes and contains them. Most of Foucault is just recycled, denatured Rousseauism. His police state is a third-rate *film noir*, but significantly missing the beautiful, mysterious woman. Foucault sees power everywhere except where it is greatest: the female principle. It is no surprise he attracts mostly men, who are always ready to believe that the verbal and rational explain everything. Foucault's antiseptic world has neat hospital corners. He has scrubbed away woman's messy emotional centrality. The fruits of Foucault are wormwood. He was a Herod without a Salome. This was a man of mutilated psyche: if what I have reliably heard about his public behavior after he knew he had AIDS is true, then Foucault would deserve the condemnation of every ethical person.

Six months ago, perusing the new releases at the library, I came upon Robert Drews's *The Coming of the Greeks*. In the next two days, I read this slim book with electrified attention and with tears in my eyes. Here is the great Western analytic tra-

dition that my generation of trendy yuppies has thrown out the window. There are 2,500 years of continuous philosophical, scholarly, and monastic practice behind this logical, luminous, transparent style. Drews, speculating about an early period of European population migration for which the evidence is scanty, presents and argues his controversial case with absolute honesty. There is no propaganda, no distortion, no sleight of hand, no intention to deceive — none of the academic immorality that swept the profession in the Seventies and Eighties. Every syllable of this book is precise and painstakingly qualified. This is the real sophistication, the real theoretical expertise. Drews has the scholarly power so advanced that it makes him invisible. Fine fabrics, which last forever, can be recognized by an experienced eye from across the room. Drews's writing has the weave, the texturing, the stitching of high intellectual quality. Academe has been flooded by French knock-offs, shoddy *pret à porter* merchandise. Robert Drews has the Anglo-American goods for all seasons.

What is needed now is a return to genuine historicism, based on knowledge of and respect for the past. The fashionable French posturing — “there are no facts” — has got to stop. There are no certainties, but there are well-supported facts which we can learn and build on, always with the flexible scholarly skepticism that allows us to discard prior assumptions in the face of new evidence. If there were no facts, surgeons couldn't operate, buildings would collapse, and airplanes wouldn't get off the ground. Critics got themselves into a muddle by trying to study literature alone, without mastery of the other arts. The word-created subjectivities of literature, particularly in modern non-mimetic fiction, have lured feeble minds into believing nothing exists in the universe outside academe. Familiarity with the visual arts, which must prepare physical materials like paints and metals in scientific ways, would have prevented many of the idiocies that have poured from literature departments in the past twenty years.

The skepticism claimed by deconstruction is a bookworm affectation by tunnel-vision careerists. That art is its own self-contained, transhistorical system I also believe, following my study of Gautier, Baudelaire, Pater, and Wilde. But that every work of art is by definition stylistically or conceptually self-referential is simply ridiculous. This principle does apply to cer-

tain kinds of ironic, late-phase works, like *Tristram Shandy*, *Finnegans Wake*, or Duchamp's doctored *Mona Lisa*, but it makes no sense at all with classicism, most of High Romanticism, or the major nineteenth-century social-realist novels. It was in reading *Tristram Shandy* for class in graduate school that I noticed how it is primarily men who gravitate toward the gameplaying self-reflexive style. There is an alienation from emotion in it, a Nervous Nelly fear of letting go and being "exposed." As an attitude toward life, it betrays a perpetual adolescence. Those who hurled themselves after Derrida were not the most sophisticated but the most pedestrian, most pretentious, and least creative members of my generation of academics. Bergman's *Persona* is a masterpiece not because the film jumps its sprockets at the end ("I am a movie") but because it confronts and explores the emotional, psychological, and moral tensions of Western personality. The epic saga of life and art cannot even be seen, much less understood, by the toy techno-trinkets of the French school.

We have available to us two great Western traditions of skepticism and disputation, the Hellenic and the Judaic. Our educational and legal systems have been heavily influenced by Greco-Roman philosophy, rhetoric, and oratory, partly transmitted through the Catholic church, whose theology was born in the Hellenized eastern Mediterranean. Jewish thinkers, because of their ancient heritage in religious law, have been pioneers in legal philosophy since the Middle Ages. Modern America has a strong Jewish presence in the literary, legal, medical, and scientific worlds. There is nothing more thrilling than listening to two New York rabbis aggressively debate each other on a radio talk show. The intellectual vigor of Talmudic disputation puts the theory wing of American academe to shame. It is no coincidence that my mentors have always been Jews. We have right here on native soil a superb high-energy model of subtle inquiry, humanistic compassion, and profound learning. It was from Jews (beginning at T. Aaron Levy Junior High School) that I learned how to analyze politics, law, business, and medicine; how to decipher the power dynamics of family relationships; and how to plan pragmatic strategies of social activism. The Jews know there *is* a story in history, for they have suffered it. Those who deny there is meaning or order in events have their heads in the sand. One of the most unpalatable aspects of the

French fad is the way it has shown ambitious academics drifting from and selling out their own cultural identity. Foucault is white bread and mayo for the assimilated Jews.

America had another vivid analytic style of informed commentary and dissent: that of male homosexuals in the pre-Stonewall period. Gay liberation, allowing greater freedom of assembly, sexual expression, and personal style, also unfortunately diverted toward recreation energies which had earlier been absorbed in aggressive, witty discourse. In college, I was stunned and exhilarated by the bold free thinking and cruel irreverence of gay men, who respected no conservative or liberal piety, even of the humanitarian polio crisis. My admiring memory of their revolutionary, philosophe-like iconoclasm makes me most regretful about recent infringements of free speech by a few overzealous AIDS activists, who have made themselves the arbiters of a new dogma and enforced it with terroristic tactics. Injustice cannot be remedied by injustice. The examples of Gandhi and Martin Luther King show that civil rights movements best succeed when they are guided by ethical principles. Gay men, even more than Jews, have the most to lose from unilateral suspensions of civil liberties. As the gay community became a crowded, glittery, fast-paced world unto itself, gay men began to lose the brilliant mental edge that they had had in the old haunted world of masks, where comedy was born of suffering. Ironically, as public acceptance has increased, gay commentary on the straight world has gotten more strident and less insightful, partly through a bad influence from sloppy feminist rhetoric. The Halperin and Winkler books show the sad decline in quality of thought from corrosive independence into self-righteous groupthink. Once gay men were the enemies of jargon, cliché, and cant. Once gay men, through their avant-garde study of the minute history of art, antiques, interior design, fashion, music, opera, Broadway shows, and Hollywood movies, were masters of an archaeology of culture, hypersensitively acute to chronology, style, tradition. Only the drag queens, my heroes, have preserved the old gay aesthetic, which elevates eternal beauty and imagination over politics. It is not too late to restore it to centrality. And it is not too soon to start talking about ethics. Gay studies, if it expects academic legitimacy, must follow the scholarly lead of the rigorous James Saslow, not the slipshod David Halperin.

## IV

My proposals for academic reform are meant to put learning back at the center of the profession. Mastery of historical facts and dates, with interpretation a necessary but secondary process, should be strictly required of both faculty and students. The present highly subjective, essay-centered humanities curriculum preserves bourgeois Protestant models of discourse that discriminate against those of other cultural backgrounds or temperaments and that encourage a calculating, careerist style of student response. Literary essay-writing, perfected by the prep schools, has turned into a con game. In my experience with freshmen from minority urban or southern rural families, the fairest educational method reduces the course to orderly bodies of material that can be approached and mastered by anyone, given sufficient application. This is true equality of opportunity. Success in a humanities course, as much as one in medicine or law, should be contingent upon present effort, not upon skill in facile word-games learned elsewhere. At the same time, I would like to liberalize classroom teaching, to free it from the iron yoke of the prefab daily syllabus and allow more room for improvisation, especially in lectures. The teacher is present as a living, breathing embodiment of the humanities. Interpretation begins with the teacher's ability to think out loud and to follow the beguiling stream of associations, often inspired by the students themselves, in their many moods from euphoria to narcolepsy. This liberalization is not inconsistent with an overall tightening of standards. There should be an imposing roster of primary and secondary texts for independent study, assessed by long and grueling exams. The classroom should be heaven, the exam room hell.

Teacher training, recruitment, and review require extensive reform. Specialists are the last thing undergraduates need. We have a generation of latchkey children, the product of divorce and absentee working parents. Many were raised by permissive Sixties parents loath to impose repressive religion on their children. Consequently, our students are anxious, adrift, often self-destructive. They are desperately searching for meaning. We need reconstruction, not deconstruction. All undergraduate teachers should be generalists. The curriculum should be radically restructured. There would be three large areas: science,

social science, and humanities. All present humanities departments would be dissolved into each other. The graduate schools would begin preparing for this shift by forbidding specialization in any one art form, much less one period within an art form. Graduate students need cultural broadening and expansion, not narrowing and concentration. They would be required to become conversant with a minimum of two art forms, in all world cultures and periods. If necessary, they would be forced to take undergraduate courses to remedy their deficiencies. There is no need for specialized graduate course work in literature or art history. The materials for such study are fully available in the library. Exams alone could test mastery for degree certification. The undergraduate curriculum would be severely stripped down. Pork-barrel specialist courses, a form of gross exploitation by which professors have made students do their research for them, would be abolished. All courses, except those dealing with major thinkers and artists of the rank of Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, and Picasso, would have to be interdisciplinary and cover a minimum 50-year span. The freshman and sophomore years would consist of basic courses required of all students. All professors, no matter how famous, would be compelled to teach in the basic program. A rigorous history of ideas framework would be devised, on the Columbia model, taught by both humanities and social science faculty, who would have to interact in preparatory meetings and thus begin to find the common ground between disciplines. All upper-level courses would be rotated. Courses would be assigned on the basis of what a professor does *not* know, rather than on what he does. This would put learning at the heart of the enterprise and keep the institution in a constant dynamic ferment of discovery and exploration.

Academe needs deprofessionalization and deyuppification. It has to recover its clerical or spiritual roots. Scholarship is an ideal and a calling, not merely a trade or living. Every year at commencement, we put on medieval robes that connect us to a great monastic past. We should be in the world but not of it. Our vocation is a ministry. There is no truth, but as thinkers we are obliged to seek it. The present system is geared to producing careerist academics rather than scholars or intellectuals. Specialization belongs only to personal professional research; it has no place whatever in undergraduate education. I call for a

total abolition of the annual Modern Language Association Convention sessions (699 over four days in December 1990) for three reasons: they splinter the profession into political special-interest groups like Washington PAC lobbyists; they encourage the midget format of the "talk," which is simply a vehicle for cozy relationships and networking; they occur too close to the formal marketing apparatus of the profession and are therefore corrupted by it. The MLA Convention crams the moneychangers into the Temple instead of driving them out. Job recruitment should seek these qualities in a candidate: (a) overall mastery of the Western artistic and intellectual tradition; (b) ability to relate our tradition to other great world traditions; (c) a passion for learning; (d) an interest in communicating that passion to undergraduates.

Attendance at conferences must cease to be defined as professional activity. It should be seen for what it is: prestige-hunting and long-range job-seeking junkets, meat-rack mini-vacations. The phrase "He or she is just a conference-hopper" (cf. "just a gigolo") must enter the academic vocabulary. I look for the day when conference-hopping leads to denial of employment or promotion on the grounds that it is a neglect of professional duties to scholarship and one's institution. Energies have to be reinvested at home. The reform of education will be achieved when we all stay put and cultivate our own garden, instead of gallivanting around the globe like migrating grackles. Furthermore, excessive contact with other academics is toxic to scholarship. Reading and writing academic books and seeing academics every day at work are more than enough exposure to academe. The best thing for scholars is contact with nonacademics, with other ways of thinking and seeing the world. Most of the absurdities of women's studies and French theory would have been prevented by close observation of ordinary life outside the university. There should be more flow between the university and society. Politicians, businessmen, soldiers, artists, engineers, scientists should be brought in for regular visits and an exchange of views. Instead of schmoozing with other academics at conferences, faculty should be required to do outreach work via general-interest community lectures at public schools, libraries, and churches. A sense of the general audience must be recovered. All literary criticism should be accessible to the literate general reader. That there is such a general audience, which

has been arrogantly blocked out by obscurantist theorists (laughably claiming leftist and populist aims), I know from letters I have received about my own book. Literature and art are never created for scholars but for a universal audience. If academics cannot see that audience, they cannot see art. Students are the nascent general readers among us.

The postwar "publish or perish" tyranny must end. The profession has become obsessed with quantity rather than quality. At top universities, two published books are becoming the minimum even for an associate professorship. Burger King now rules the waves. One brilliant article should outweigh one mediocre book. Real contributions to knowledge take time. Scholarly time is very slow. Right now, young academics are caught in a bind which pits scholarly integrity against their economic self-interest, particularly if they are responsible for children. Scholarship is a life of study leading to a mature production of the mind. Completed chapters of a substantial ongoing project, submitted to outside review, should be acceptable for employment or promotion. Rushing people into print right after grad school just leads to portentous fakery, which no one reads anyhow. Maynard Mack was already saying in 1969 to our graduate seminar that "95% of what is published in any given year should be ritually burned at the end of that year." The pressure on shaky novices to sound important and authoritative makes for guano mountains of dull rubbish. Good writing and teaching require a creative sense of play. In American academe, as opposed to Great Britain, playfulness and humor, as well I know, are suspect, suggesting you aren't "serious" enough. But comedy is a sign of balanced perspective on life and thought. Humorlessness should be grounds for dismissal. Eccentric individualism, in the style of the old German scholars, must be tolerated. Teachers should not be conformist clones. Graduate students must be encouraged to let their personalities flower in the classroom. Teaching is a performance art.

A feeling or respect for the past is the great gift we can bequeath to our students, trapped in the busy, bright, brazen present. Even leftist professors these days lack a sense of history. Arguments against the canon have come suspiciously often from banal, uncultivated careerists who, whatever their current prominence, lack scholarly distinction. Individual authors or works may go in and out of favor (both Shakespeare and Bach



had to be revived by Romanticism), but the overall line of Western culture will never change. Every woman, black, or Oriental raised and writing in English is a product of that main line. The piddling ignoramuses who deny there is a distinct, discernible, objective Western tradition are just woozy literati. That line is absolutely, concretely manifest in the visual arts: at the temple complex of King Zoser at Saqqara are the papyrus-capped pillar forms invented by Imhotep which would be transmitted to us by Greece and Rome. Freshmen from the poorest neighborhoods are amazed to discover that, cresting the columns of Philadelphia banks, churches, museums, libraries, and civic buildings, are the fronds and curls of Egyptian plant life, in 4,500 years of historical memory. The whole racial argument about the canon falls to nothing when it is seen that the origins of Greek Apollonianism were in Egypt, in Africa. Go down, Moses: even Judeo-Christianity sojourned in Egypt.

The freshman year should be entirely devoted to basic science (biology and geology) and to ancient world history and art, up to the early Middle Ages and the birth of Islam. Sophomore-year coverage would extend from the High Middle Ages and Renaissance to the present. In the first year, comparative religion would allow the social science and humanities faculties to fuse their instruction. The sacred texts of all major world religions would be studied, beginning with the Bible, knowledge of which has disastrously eroded. Students adore paleontology and archaeology, which, particularly in its underwater branch, brings together science, history, and art. Artifacts, monuments, and sacred sites and rituals from European, African, Far and Near Eastern, Pre-Columbian, Native American, and Oceanic cultures would be closely studied. The method would be rigorously old historicist. There would be no melodramatic victimage scenarios, that drippy amateur soap opera which fuzzy academic liberals, suppressing recognition of their own innate aggression, aggressively project backwards. The human record is virtually universally one of cruelty barely overcome and restrained by civilization. Imperialism and slavery are no white male monopoly but are everywhere, from Egypt, Assyria, and Persia to India, China, and Japan. Current events should be systematically but sparingly worked into the ancient picture by teachers. For example, I like to show freshmen the elegant Arch of Titus in the Roman Forum. There, in the bas-relief of the

great menorah being carried from the Temple by Roman soldiers at the sack of Jerusalem and Diaspora, we see the beginnings of the political problems that still seethe in the Mideast.

Modernization means Westernization. The modern technological world is the product of the Greco-Roman line of mathematics, science, and analytic thought. The academic pop-politicos, pandering to students, rob them of their future. Education must simultaneously explore and explain the world's multiculturalism while preparing the young to enter the Apollonian command-system. But ethnic descendants should, as much as possible, retain their creative duality. I feel Italian but love America. Oprah Winfrey shifts wonderfully back and forth, with jazzlike improvisation, between her two voices. African-Americans must study the language and structure of Western public power while still preserving their cultural identity, which has had world impact on the arts. We must expose the absurdity of our literary ostriches who think we need the death-by-sludge French theorists to tell us about multiple "discourses." The established scholarship of comparative religion, anthropology, and art history had already prepared us with a flexible, accurate methodology for negotiating among belief-systems and identifying the iconography and symbol-schemes of different cultures and periods. I call for an immediate end to undergraduate "Theory of Criticism" courses, which force pastel hangers on people who have no clothes yet. Such courses should be reconstituted, by less trendy faculty, as "History of Aesthetics," to take in all world art forms, including dance, which has to be rescued from the Phys. Ed. department and given its true eminence. The Greek organic triad, Archaic/ High Classic/ Hellenistic, is the paradigm for the study of style, just as the rise, flowering, and decline of Rome, so lavishly well documented, is the paradigm for the study of politics. Classicism trains the eye. Knowledge of it is essential for artists and for everyone who claims to be interested in art. The simplicity, clarity, and proportion of classicism remain major principles of architecture and theater and opera sets, and they profoundly inspired important fashion designers like Chanel, Adrian, and Halston. The mythic pattern of Western culture is Greek revival: again and again, objects are lost and refound, overvalued, devalued, then revalued. But the classics always return. Naturally, tastes may vary from person to person: I myself think *Auntie Mame* the best novel since World War

Two, and I infinitely prefer *Antony and Cleopatra* to *King Lear*, which puts me to sleep, except in its campy opening scene. But I also recognize that no one in the world can claim to be educated without knowing *King Lear*. The real marginalizers are the panderers, who would condemn our students to perpetual second-class status.

Great works of art have their own life and will outlast us. We hold these things in trust. Academe should be a savings and not a spendthrift institution. Like public museums, universities are essentially conservative, curatorial. Yes, art works seem to shift from generation to generation, but it is the mercurial gleaming of Proteus, the metamorphosis of imagination. It is up to us to choose the works best suited to enter the dream life of our students, works that will retain their value and give the best return over time, lasting sources of consolation and enlightenment. In the predatory go-go era of quick-turnover junk bonds and wind-fall profits, there has been no interest in long-term investment of time and energy by either faculty or students. Tired of literature and piqued by *au courant* linguistics? Why, just binge and purge with Saussure: swallow him whole, then vomit him out. Don't bother doing the real work that linguistics requires — painstaking mastery of ancient and modern world languages. The theory years were pure sloth, a pig-rut of pretension and megalomania. In this disgraceful academic scandal, we have people dismissing science and psychology who know nothing of science or psychology; people spouting politics who know nothing of political science or history; people claiming to do anthropology who know nothing of anthropology; people throwing around philosophical terms who know nothing of philosophy. For the first time ever, we have pedantry without learning.

The spiritual vacuum of recent academe is responsible for the popularity of false teachers like the mushy Joseph Campbell, who gives people the long view of traditional mythology, and for the spread of New Age mysticism, whose hoaxer channelers satisfy the craving for ancestral voices. We need back-to-basics reform on every level of education. Old German philology was culture criticism at its learned, comprehensive best. Let us put an end to the yuppie buffet, the designer drugs and watered-down, piss-poor Molotov cocktails served with crudités and French canapés, hot now, stale later. Perhaps the French flunkies should leave academe and form their own associations, like the

Shriners, where they can moon over their idols and exchange photos like bubble-gum cards. There are precedents for this in the cults of Swedenborg and Madame Blavatsky. Enough already of Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault poured like ketchup over everything. Lacan: the French fog machine; a grey-flannel worry-bone for toothless academic pups; a twerpy, cape-twirling Dracula dragging his flocking stooges to the crypt. Lacan is a Freud T-shirt shrunk down to the teeny-weeny Saussure torso. The entire school of Saussure, including Lévi-Strauss, write the muffled prose of people with cotton wool wrapped around their heads; they're like walking Q-tips. Derrida: a Gloomy Gus one-trick pony, stuck on a rhetorical trope already available in the varied armory of New Criticism. Derrida's method: masturbation without pleasure. It's a birdbrain game for birdseed stakes. Neo-Foucauldian New Historicism: a high-wax bowling alley where you score points just by knocking down the pins. Hey, fellas: there's something out there that electrocutes people on beaches, collapses buildings like cardboard, and drowns ships and villages. It's called nature. The next time the western horizon flames with crimson, remember that this is what Foucault never saw. Foucault was struck down by the elemental force he repressed and edited out of his system. Science, disdained by Foucauldians, is our only hope for controlling the retrovirus and marauding infections of AIDS. Science and society are our frail barriers against the turbulence of cruel, indifferent nature.

How does the mind work? This is the psychedelic question. Sensation, perception, emotion, memory, dream, imagination: French theory is hopelessly inadequate for explaining art and life. An American psychedelic criticism would see through and disrupt while also intensifying and enhancing. Teachers who assign Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault to unprepared students are fools. There is so much else to learn and know. The French fad is now a skeleton wreck. Seventy years of the school of Saussure are crowded onto a solitary ice floe: as we steam by or fly overhead, we should simply say to our students, "Look, my child, there on that wandering island heaped with bones is where the Saussurean Sirens sang and where so many lost their lives and careers." A word-drunk profession driven by conferences and cronyism turns itself into a seething herd of lemmings, weasels, and coy duo-dog acts, at MLA or on the road.

Women's studies is institutionalized sexism. It too must go. Gender studies is no alternative: "gender" is now a biased, prudish code word for social constructionism. Sexology is an old and distinguished field. As sex studies, frankly admitting it is sex we are tirelessly interested in, it would take in the hundred-year history of international commentary on sex; it would make science its keystone; and it would allow both men and women as well as heterosexuals and homosexuals to work together in the fruitful dialogue of dislike, disagreement, and debate, the tension, confrontation, and dialectic that lead to truth. Women's studies is a comfy, chummy morass of unchallenged groupthink. It is, with rare exception, totally unscholarly. Academic feminists have silenced men and dissenting women. Sunk in a cocoon of smug complacency, they are blind to their own clichéd Rousseauist ideology. Feminists are always boasting of their "diversity" and pluralism. This is like white Protestants, in the nineteenth and pre-Sixties twentieth centuries when they controlled American politics, finance, and academe, claiming diversity on the basis of their dozens of denominations. But blacks, Jews, and Italian Catholics, standing on the outside, could clearly see the monolithic homogeneity that the WASP insiders were blissfully, arrogantly unaware of. If any field ever deserved a punishing Foucauldian analysis, it's women's studies, which is a prisoner of its own futile, grinding, self-created discourse. Women's studies needed a syllabus and so invented a canon overnight. It puffed up clunky, mundane contemporary women authors into Oz-like, skywriting dirigibles. Our best women students are being forced an appalling diet of cant, drivel, and malarkey. Pioneering work in sex studies will come only from men and women conservatively trained in high-level intellectual history.

American feminism's nosedive began when Kate Millett, that imploding beanbag of poisonous self-pity, declared Freud a sexist. Trying to build a sex theory without studying Freud, women have made nothing but mud pies. In Great Britain and France, feminists did not make this silly mistake, but unfortunately their understanding of Freud has been tainted by the swindling Lacan. Now the missing but indispensable Freud is being smuggled back into America by the Lacan feminists, with their paralyzing puritanism. It's all ass-backwards. Just read Freud, for pity's sake, and forget Lacan. It's outrageous that women undergraduates are being made to read Lacan who haven't read Freud

and therefore have no idea what Lacan is doing. Freud is one of the major thinkers in world history. One reads him not for his conclusions, which were always tentative and in process, but for the bold play of his speculative intelligence. He shows you how to conceptualize, how to frame long, overarching arguments, how to verbalize ambiguous, nonverbal psychic phenomena. Reading him, you feel new tracks being cut in your brain. Cheap gibes about Freud, epidemic in women's studies, are a symptom of emotional juvenility. American feminists, sniveling about Freud without reading him, have sentenced themselves and their work to mediocrity and irrelevance.

Simone de Beauvoir's brilliant, imperious *The Second Sex*, now forty years old, is the only thing undergraduate sex studies needs. Add Freud to de Beauvoir, and you have intellectual training at its best. The later French women choking the current syllabus don't come up to Simone de Beauvoir's anklebones: that damp sob sister, Hélène Cixous, with her diarrhea prose, or Luce Irigaray, the pompous lap dog of Parisian café despots doing her grim, sledgehammer elephant walk through small points. American feminism is awash with soupy Campbellism: schlockmeisters like Marija Gimbutas, the Pollyanna of poppycock, with her Mommy goddess tales conveniently exalting her Lithuanian ancestors into world-class saintly pacifists. The chirpy warblers Gilbert-Gubar, those unlearned, unreadable bores, with their garbled, rumbling, hollow, rolling-trashcan style. Carolyn Heilbrun, Mrs. Fifties Tea Table, who spent her academic time, while my generation was breaking its head against social and sexual convention, spinning daydreams about a WASP persona, Amanda Cross, and who spoke out only when it was safe to do so. Heilbrun's late self-packaging as a feminist is a triumph of American commerce. The gauzy, ethnicity-evading style of her dazzlingly research-free books is the height of wishful, reactionary gentility. Women's studies is a jumble of vulgarians, bunglers, whiners, French faddicts, apparatchiks, doughface party-liners, pie-in-the-sky utopianists, and bullying, sanctimonious sermonizers. Reasonable, moderate feminists hang back and, like good Germans, keep silent in the face of fascism. For fifteen years, the established women academics irresponsibly let women's studies spread uncritiqued and unchecked (I call this period "While Vendler Slept"). Great women scholars like Jane Harrison and Gisela Richter were pro-

duced by the intellectual discipline of the masculine classical tradition, not by the wishy-washy sentimentalism of clingy, all-forgiving sisterhood, from which no first-rate book has yet emerged. Every year, feminists provide more and more evidence for the old charge that women can neither think nor write.

Most current academic leftism is specious, because post-Sixties liberalism is moribund. My anti-liberal position should not be mistaken for conservatism: I am radically pro-pornography, pro-prostitution, pro-abortion, and pro-legalization of drugs. The leftist attack on the traditional Western canon has primarily come from politically weak thinkers who are the product of English departments. Genuine Marxism, which I respect, requires accurate observation and rigorous economic analysis of present social conditions. The academic leftists merely parrot outworn formulas and slogans from the prewar era. It's a literary game, without the deep conviction of personal sacrifice. Gerald Graff's *Professing Literature* is most interesting and well written when it is on the firm ground of the birth, development, and decline of New Criticism. But Graff's account of nineteenth-century classical education is appallingly deficient, full of coarse bias, selective use of evidence, and elementary errors in historical reasoning. Its major problem is its failure to consider, in due detail, the cultural transition from eighteenth-century Neo-Classicism to Romanticism, in its several nineteenth-century phases. Graff's presentation of classics as dry, dead, and pointless is pure propaganda.

Richard Ohmann and Terry Eagleton are clear, vigorous, combative writers whom I take seriously and enjoy reading, even when I strongly disagree with their facts and conclusions. Both are good examples of the Marxism-that-isn't. Their picture of the contemporary world simply shows they do not live in it. Ohmann notes that he entered college in 1948 (a year after I was born). He has no understanding of the way mass media formed the imagination of my postwar generation. Protesting "the tyrannies of this culture," he urges us to overturn "bourgeois culture" and "the rule of our dominant classes." Condescension and paternalism mar his hoary, stereotypical portrait of the poor, passive, "powerless proletariat" helplessly manipulated by "the ruling class," the managerial oppressors coldly wielding their awful brainwashing tool, the media.<sup>3</sup> Ohmann is snobbishly scornful of the actual tastes of the very people he

claims to speak for. Pop culture *is* mass culture. The people live in it and through it. By the electric nerve-reflex of commerce, television vividly speaks their thoughts and dreams, and with their own confident, aggressive energy, which so overwhelms and confuses bookish academics. Through mass media, African-Americans have revolutionized the arts and taken over the world stage. Ohmann's passing remark about Italians made my blood boil. His insulting, maudlin picture of the embarrassed Italian immigrant cowering in a World War One-era Shakespeare class and, because of "invincible ignorance," condemned to the humiliation of being "a laundress or parking attendant" shows just how delusional ivory-tower leftism gets.<sup>4</sup> The Italians I know came here, from 1895 to 1935, gung-ho for education; from Cincinnatus through Renaissance artisans to the present, Italians have believed in the nobility of physical labor; working-class people, unlike academics, love cars and like to be around them; laundry has a huge positive symbolism in Mediterranean culture, visible as early as Homer's Nausikaa episode and strikingly evident in stories from my family heritage. I could go on and on. Academic Marxism is a fantasy world, an unctuous compassion-sweepstakes, into which real workers or peasants never penetrate.

Terry Eagleton is a deft, witty summarizer of other people's ideas. Applied Marxism is, oddly, his weakest point. He also goes limply soft on academic feminism, whose bourgeois prudery, moralism, and Protestant word-fetishism he does not see. Eagleton's thought-provoking arguments against the canon are unfortunately vitiated by the fact that he seems to have little feeling for art. Is education to be gutted merely because Terry Eagleton wandered into a profession for which he discovered, too late, that he had minimal talent? Like Foucault, Eagleton continues to push into one new field after another, restlessly searching for success in something. He has certainly been successful in convincing literary critics that he is a Marxist. Sociologists and political scientists might think otherwise.

The signal failure of the academic Marxists is in their obliviousness to the transformations of modern labor. In the age of mass media, power has shifted its meaning and loci. Capitalism, whatever its problems, remains the most efficient economic mechanism yet devised to bring the highest quality of life to the greatest number. Because I have studied the past, I know that, in



America and under capitalism, I am the freest woman in history. Unionized blue-collar jobs now routinely pay higher salaries than are earned by most teachers. Physical labor, as a concrete skill occupation, is free of the soul-destroying office politics suffered by the Marxists' demonized managerial class, who take their jobs home with them and are in a continual funk of anxiety and neurosis. Performance assessment at the top, as in academe, is a murky mire of words, gossip, connections, stroking, conspiracy, backstabbing. Unharried weekend leisure time is the center of working-class American life in ways the academic Marxists, resentfully marking papers and endlessly pressed for time, simply don't see. I have no idea what Eagleton's jobs were before Oxford, but while Ohmann was attending conferences and enjoying his tenure (received, he admits, before he became a Marxist), I was making ends meet by teaching Sophocles and Shakespeare to warmly receptive black and white factory workers in on-site night classes at the Sikorsky Aircraft plant a half hour away. So much for the irrelevance of the canon. The Marxists fail to see the simple archaic conservatism of the working class, as well as the endurance, worldwide, of its warrior code, an individual ethic, related to athletics, of courage, honor, and stoicism. Academic Marxism, based on neither observation nor experience, has turned into cocktail chat for the carriage trade.

I now address the graduate students. This is a time of enormous opportunity for you. There is an ossified political establishment of invested self-interest. Conformism and empty pieties dominate academe. Rebel. Do not read Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault, and treat as insignificant nothings those that still prate of them. You need no contemporaries to interpret the present for you. Born here, alive now, *you* are modernity. You are the living link between the past and future. Charge yourself with the high ideal of scholarship, connecting you to Alexandria and to the devoted, distinguished scholars who came before you. When you build on learning, you build on rock. You become greater by a humility toward great things. Let your work follow its own organic rhythm. Seek no material return from it, and it will reward you with spiritual gold. Hate dogma. Shun careerists. If you keep the faith, the gods may give you, at midlife, the sweet pleasure of seeing the hotshots who were so fast out of the gate begin to flag and sink, just as your studies are reaching their point of maturation. Among the many important messages com-

ing from African-American culture is this, from a hit song by Midnight Star: "No parking, baby, no parking on the dance floor." All of civilized life is a dance, a fiction. You must learn the steps without becoming enslaved by them. Sitting out the dance is not an option.

The children of the Sixties have returned. Twenty years have passed, and many of us, through folly, hubris, or mischance, have died or been left sleeping in the land of the Lotus-eaters. The palace has been taken over by shallow upstarts, raiding and wasting the treasury laid up by so many noble generations. It's time to clean house.

## NOTES

1. *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, 1980), p. 330–32.
2. "The Bondage and Freedom of Eros," June 1–7, 1990, pp. 571–73.
3. *English in America: A Radical View of the Profession* (New York, 1976), pp. 335, 65. *Politics of Letters* (Middletown, Conn., 1987), pp. 2, 12.
4. *Politics of Letters*, p. 14.