THE IDEA 07 A UNIVERSITY"
THE HUMANITIES
AND THE NEGOTIATION OF MODERNITY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Mr. Nigel Joseph worked under my supervision for the Ph.D. Degree in English. His thesis entitled "The Idea of A University: The Humanities and the Negotiation of Modernity" represents his own independent work at the University of Hyderabad. This work has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of any degree.

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This is to certify that I, Nigel Joseph, have carried out the research embodied in the present thesis for the full period prescribed under the Ph.D. ordinances of the University.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

> In such a piece of work, clearly, it would be pre-eminently the unacademic virtues that would be demanded and tested: a pioneering spirit; the courage of enormous incompletenesses; the determination to complete the best possible chart with the inevitably patchy and sketchy knowledge that is all one's opportunities permit one to acquire; the judgement and intuition to select drastically yet delicately, and make a little go a long way; the ability to skip and scamp with wisdom and conscience.
>
> --F.R. Leavis[1]

John Henry Newman's Idea of A University was the starting point of my reflections on the subject, as I suspect it has been for many of those primarily exposed to a legacy of British or American thought. Newman's arguments that the pursuit of knowledge should be its own end in the university, and that the distinctive feature of a `liberal' education was its distance from labour, trade, and the utilitarian aspects of life, though they were, and remain, quite opposed to liberal dogma, are still extraordinarily influential. If liberalism is usually associated (politically) with the defence of individual liberty, with egalitarianism, and with the idea of progressive social reform, and (economically) with the idea of an open market controlled by a price mechanism, a liberal education, as Newman points out, has always been associated with an aristocratic aloofness from both egalitarianism and the functioning and ethos of the marketplace. Although Newman's book on the university has been acclaimed as a masterpiece of English prose, the implications of his understanding of a liberal education (in the context of liberalism) do not seem to have been explored.

While Newman's thinking provided the initial framework for

analysis, the prose writings of Friedrich Schiller, especially his essays on the aesthetic education of man and on naive and sentimental poetry, were crucial to the development of this thesis. Newman and Schiller perhaps represent the two most influential kinds of approach to theorising the modern university.[2] If Newman emphasized the dignity of the pursuit of knowledge and a certain splendid amateurism in his idealized university, Schiller, together with Goethe and Wilhelm von Humboldt, was responsible for the idea of `the university of culture,' an idea that was taken up by Matthew Arnold. Arnold, who admired Newman as exemplifying "the civilized mind of Oxford," and who was one of the few Englishmen of his time to combine an admiration for Newman's ideas about higher education with an understanding of the German university of the Humboldtian model, was another important point of reference for this thesis. The fact that I am able to write a thesis on `the idea of a university' from an English department without raising too many eyebrows is, of course, largely a result of the indefatigable polemical labours of F.R. Leavis, who believed that English was the humanities subject, and therefore the university subject, the study of which could, in some sense, save the world; and who proselytised to this effect all his life.

If Newman, Arnold and Leavis, between them, can serve as exemplars of a certain well nigh continuous tradition of English amateurism in the university (that the term `amateurism' is not being used pejoratively will become clear), Goethe, Schiller and Von Humboldt, and behind them the immensely influential

philosophies of Kant and Hegel, can serve equally well as exemplars of the other powerful university tradition, one that came to emphasize rigorous research and considerable specialization, though its original **telos** was a Protean self fashioning, with a shared culture constituting the material of this self-fashioning. The university that grew out of this idealist tradition, as it depended more and more on the ethos of the university itself rather than on the life of the society outside the university, was transformed, paradoxically, into the modern university of specializations and fragmentary sub-disciplines. Of these two traditions of thought concerning the university, I value the English tradition for its amateurism and its playfulness, the clarity with which it has always set out its aims; the other for its (initial) emphasis on the culture of the whole person, and the seriousness with which it responded to the body of opinion we call Enlightenment thought, and especially to the egalitarian thrust of that thought. Schiller, the one thinker who seems equally sensitive to both these streams of thinking, becomes a crucial figure, and it is part of my argument that the movement towards professionalism on the one hand, and the posture of alienation from rationality on the other (among humanities intellectuals in particular) represent dangers that he specifically warned against; dangers that, in our time, have seriously impaired the university's capacity **to** carry out **what may be** its most vital function: to **help us negotiate a modernity that can either fulfil or** destroy.

Among twentieth century thinkers who have commented on education, apart from Leavis I have been most influenced by Lionel Trilling and Michael Oakeshott. Both men were dedicated fashioners of the self who managed to remain "exquisite amateurs and accomplished humanists" (as Pater tells us aesthetic critics should be). I benefited greatly from a late, but timely, exposure to Georg Lukacs's and Yvor Winters's courageous and unpopular opposition to aspects of mainstream modernism. Alasdair MacIntyre, Michel Foucault and Jurgen Habermas, whose arguments and formulations I have more often disagreed with than otherwise, have nevertheless proved remarkably stimulating.

It is perhaps practical, and certainly courteous, to state at the outset the various things this thesis is not. It is not an empirically based study of the Indian university: in fact the Indian university as a distinct historical or sociological entity does not make an appearance at all. It is not a rigorously researched history of the conceptual evolution of the university--I very much doubt there is any such thing anyway (an evolutionary history, I mean, which traces the inevitable Hegelian march of the idea of the university from medieval seat of learning to liberal academy to technocratic multiversity). On the other hand, it is not, I hope, a purely impressionistic survey of arbitrarily chosen aspects of the university.

The first part of the first chapter ("The Parliamentary University, Liberalism and a Liberal Education"), which deals with `the parliamentary university,' was written largely as an

exercise in personal exorcism, and represents a reaction against what I can now only think of as an early and excessively idealistic understanding of the university's functioning. It surveys the writings of a group of thinkers who would like to characterize the university primarily as a place for formal intellectual conflict, or procedural justice, or negotiated verbal agreements (I also look at the writings of some who have opposed these characterizations). These concepts have an obvious family resemblance, and equally obvious antecedents in liberal thought, especially that of John Stuart Mill. Later in this chapter I try to explore the relationship between liberal theory and the `liberal education' traditionally promised, or offered, by the modern university. The second chapter ("Changing The Topic: Poststructuralism, The Humanities, English Studies") is concerned with the phenomena of poststructuralism and postmodernity in the humanities, and with the way in which these developments have altered the preoccupations of humanists. In the third chapter ("Modernism, Romanticism, and the English Accommodation") I discuss the familiar (in English studies) concepts of Romanticism and modernism, but I attempt to analyse them in terms of the categories of empiricism, idealism and realism rather than in the more usual aesthetic categories. In the fourth and final chapter ("Schiller and the Negotiation of Modernity: Considered Ambivalence, Play, and Self-Fashioning") I argue that the writings of Schiller (and Goethe) may help us to a better theoretical and practical understanding of the idea of

a university.

My preoccupations in these pages may appear to be too exclusively with the past, present and future of English departments to justify my claim to be discussing the university as a whole. There are two good reasons for what might appear at first sight to be mere parochialism, or worse, disciplinary hubris. First, I thought it would serve my purposes better to survey the complexity of the idea of a university from a relatively fixed vantage point, and moreover from a vantage point I could claim some familiarity with. Second, (and this is an altogether more controversial claim) I believe that English studies, for various reasons, has played a peculiarly important and influential role among the humanities, and therefore in the university as a whole, since, in my argument, it is the carefully regulated tension between the claims of the sciences and those of the humanities and social sciences that constitutes what is distinctive about the modern university.

NOTES

1. From "Education and the University: Sketch for an English School" Scrutiny Vol IX, No 2 Sept.1940 (98-120).

2. For a discussion of the differences between, and mutual influence of, the Oxbridge and German (Humboldtian) traditions, see Jaroslav Pelikan's The Idea of the University: A Re-examination, pp 83-88.

CHAPTER 1

THE PARLIAMENTARY UNIVERSITY, LIBERALISM AND LIBERAL EDUCATION

> The change from the age of status to the age of choice was first made in states where the government was to a great and growing extent a government by discussion, and where the subjects of that discussion were in some degree abstract, or, as we should say, matters of principle...A free state--a state with liberty--means a state, call it republic or call it monarchy, in which the sovereign power is divided between many persons, and in which there is discussion among those persons.
>
> --Walter Bagehot, "The Age of Discussion"

> It seems not improbable that it was the engagement in this conversation (where talk is without a conclusion) that gave us our present appearance, men being descended from a race of apes who sat in talk so long and so late that they wore out their tails. Education, properly speaking, is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation in which we learn to recognize the voices, to distinguish the proper occasions of utterance, and in which we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to conversation.
>
> --Michael Oakeshott, "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind"

The idea that what is really unique about the university is its ability to transcend conflict through rational discussion is as ancient, and as durable, as the university itself. In recent years, however, this conception has come under attack, especially from feminists, poststructuralists, and anti-liberals of various descriptions. For them, the transcending of conflict is mere co-opting of dissidence, or repressive tolerance. But interestingly, as the attack on what I am calling the parliamentary university has gained momentum, so has *the* contrary trend, towards a defence of such a version of the university. Habermas's defence of

communicative action, Bakhtin's dialogism, Michael Oakeshott's elegant endorsements of `conversation' and Richard Rorty's endorsements of Oakeshottian conversation, Gerald Graff's determined efforts to establish `teaching the conflicts' as pedagogical practice in English departments; all these contribute to a general atmosphere which is, however ambiguously, conducive to a conception of the university as a space where problems are solved and new syntheses worked out by communication, rational discussion, negotiation, and so on.

Among contemporary theorists, Jurgen Habermas is unique in the comprehensiveness and sheer tenacity of his defence of the intrinsic rationality and emancipatory power of communication. In English studies, Gerald Graff has, with similar single-mindedness, defended his `teach the conflict' thesis. I begin by focusing on these two theorists because their theories exemplify the positions of the two fairly well differentiated groups within the parliamentary university: perhaps we can call them the consensus school and the conflict school. If Habermas's writing emphasizes the primacy of a sort of benign seminar/discussion model in the university ethos, Graff's work explores the dividends of institutionalizing a more agonistic mode of communication, one which lays more weight on enacted disagreements than on encouraging rapprochement. The idea that the chief function of the university is to stage intellectual conflicts, as a result of which new truths are arrived at or earlier positions fruitfully modified, has always attracted

adherents. As I argue later, this variant is close to, indeed derived from, the classic liberal position on free speech, as it is elaborated by John Stuart Mill or Walter Bagehot, or by twentieth century liberals like Karl Popper.

The distinction I have drawn between these positions tends to dissolve under close scrutiny, but is useful for purposes of analysis. In practice, proponents of `discussion,' or `the public sphere,' or `negotiated agreements' tacitly subsume the more agonistic variant under their own consensual model; on the other hand, proponents of `conflict' and 'the clash of ideas' tacitly assume that the telos of the conflict or the clash is consensus, though they tend to call the consensus `truth' (Stanley Fish's rather sensational singularity consists in the fact that he insists on calling the truth 'consensus').

There is no doubt that defenders of the parliamentary university are logically on very strong ground; the most anarchic of hostile critics, as soon as they enter the terrain of a discussion about the aims of the university, are forced to concede that in the face of varied and intractable conflicts, or incommensurable value systems, an emphasis on procedural justice or neutrality is inevitable, if the university is to be preserved at all. The occasional exception only seems to prove the rule. A writer like Jacques Derrida, during a protracted discussion of the university, never gives the impression that his critique of rationality can ever issue in any definite and tangible changes. Of course, he might consistently maintain **that such changes are**

the last thing he desires, but the distance he maintains from anything remotely resembling a pragmatic critique seriously diminishes the effectiveness of his argument.[1] Alasdair MacIntyre, on the other hand, with perhaps an equal aversion towards the norms of rationality and procedural justice that structure modern Western society and, by extension, the university, is altogether more scrupulous (not to say lucid) in his argument, and is led to endorse "the university as a place of constrained disagreement, of imposed participation in conflict, in which a central responsibility of higher education would be to initiate students into conflict" (Three Rival Versions, 230-31). Similarly, Bill Readings, one of the most interesting analysts of the modern university, after dismissing Gerald Graff, Habermas, and Stanley Fish as flabbily pro-consensus (despite the repeated disclaimers of all three), ends by stating his preference for "dissensus" over consensus, and urges us to be satisfied to dwell "in the ruins" of the university.[2] This is a desperate move: consistency is retained, and the university itself virtually demolished. The trajectory of his thought confirms the strength of the consensual position. The programmatic scepticism towards consensus of any kind must lead to the rejection of the university itself, since in the absence of a telos of consensus at least partially guaranteed by procedural fairness and formal discussion, the raison d'etre of the university disappears from view.

However, logical invulnerability alone will not save the

parliamentary university. As Newman remarked (apropos liberalism), "[m]any a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion"; and, closer to our time, Habermas's reiterated complaints that poststructuralists like Derrida and Foucault are involved in `performative contradictions' when they attack the norms of rationality, or deny the existence of universals, cuts no ice, it appears, with these contradictory performers or their supporters. As I will argue, the university based on formal discussion and oriented towards consensus cannot survive if large numbers of scholars withhold assent from this justificatory model. As with the liberal marketplace, with which it has so much in common, and from which it may be obscurely derived, the parliamentary university only functions effectively if the `customers' accept the rules of the marketplace of ideas. Interestingly, despite liberal thinkers' efforts to (methodologically) detach moral concerns from the workings of the market, a moral commitment to the market seems to be vital to its proper functioning; and something similar might be true of the working of the parliamentary university.[3]

The locus classicus of both the consensual and the conflict models, indeed of liberal freedom of speech as a whole, at any rate in the English speaking world, is of course John Stuart Mill's On Liberty, though Milton's Areopagitica is an important precursor. Though Milton was far from being a liberal, at one point in Areopagitica he makes an argument that became a stock

defence of freedom of speech. Milton, knowing that good and evil grow up together, almost inseparably, in the field of this world, refuses to "praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary" (390-91). So knowledge of the good cannot only be knowledge of the good; it has to include knowledge of evil. So censorship, even of the admittedly evil, is bad, as it precludes the possibility of human beings understanding, and judging, and rejecting evil. From Milton's argument in favour of knowing **all** the arguments in order to choose the good, it is a small step, **or** no step at all, to Mill's argument that you must know your opponent's argument as well as, or better than he does, if you are going to make a correct political or logical judgement:

> He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side; **if** he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion.... Nor is **it** enough that he should hear the arguments of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as refutations. This is not the way to do justice to the arguments, or bring them into real contact with his own mind. He must **be able** to **hear** them from persons who actually **believe them; who defend** them in earnest, **and do their very**

> utmost for them. He must know them in their most plausible and persuasive form; he must feel the whole force of the difficulty which the true view of the **subject** has to encounter and dispose of.... (On Liberty 231).

The second chapter of On Liberty relentlessly presses home arguments in favour of **discussion,** conflictual or otherwise. A silenced opinion may turn out to be true; even if untrue, a part of it may be true, and we ought to value that part; if an opinion is silenced without a full understanding of its constituent parts and the connection between them, we have only a prejudiced view of that opinion; and so on. Mill is insistent that ideas and opinions must be subjected to the most stringent tests, a sort of linguistic and ideological Darwinian struggle which will lead to the survival of the fittest opinions, before we rest satisfied. It was as a result of his convictions in these matters that this paradigmatic liberal recommended to other liberals a close study of the conservative Coleridge; a recommendation that was taken very seriously by both F.R. Leavis and Lionel Trilling.

Newman, though much less enamoured of the pure struggle of ideas, envisages an important place for conflict in the university:

> [The university] is the place to which a thousand schools make contributions; in which the intellect may safely range and speculate, sure to find its equal in some antagonist activity, and its judge in the tribunal

> of truth. It is a place where inquiry is pushed forward, and discoveries verified and perfected, and rashness rendered innocuous, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge. ("What is a **University**" 38)

Mill's emphasis on the intrinsic value of tolerance and fairness has been overshadowed by his more utilitarian and combative arguments for free speech. Moreover, Mill himself may have felt that the arguments for tolerance had been made with sufficient strength by Locke not to need extended reiteration. In our time, Stuart Hampshire has elegantly restated the argument for tolerance and fairness, and explored the relationship between these features of social life and the act of discussion:

> Uniting all humanity, from the nursery to the grave, the practice of promoting and accepting arguments for and against a proposal is taken as the core of practical rationality.... It is of the essence of the procedure that the pro and the contra should both be heard and evaluated, and that the procedure should not be cut off before all the arguments are in. The discussion of an issue of practical policy is both an adversary procedure, with two sides represented, and a judicial one, because in the end a Solomonic judgement will normally be made, with the acceptance of some arguments and the dismissal of others.
>
> The canons of rationality **are here the canons of**

> fairness. If the full procedure of discussion, and the weighing of arguments, has not been followed, the final judgement is tainted with bias and unfairness. (Innocence and Experience 53)

Gerald Graff's position on the importance of conflict in the learning process is essentially an application of Mill's freedom of speech arguments to pedagogy in general. Like many teachers in English departments today, Graff is troubled by the `culture wars' between the traditionalists and the radicals:

> The major conflict today pits those who conceive the goal of literary study to be the promotion of literate appreciation of the traditional monuments of high culture against those who want to subject that culture and what they see as its repressive effects to a radical critique. ("The Future of Theory in the Teaching of Literature" 259)

It is not just the disagreements that worry him: it is the intransigence of the protagonists and the protractedness of the war that cause concern. (In this respect he resembles another thinker discussed later in this chapter, Alasdair MacIntyre, who is outraged by the inconclusiveness of liberal political practice, and the absence of final judgements). Graff feels that professors should not conceal or obfuscate their disagreements with each other, in order to present an authoritative exterior to their students or the public. They should, instead, enact or stage their disagreements. Students will actually learn better,

and more. They will lose their disabling awe of their teachers, and the exciting engagements between their professors will stimulate them to participate in the conflict, and thereby in the learning process, themselves;

> the aim is ... to exploit the conflicts themselves as an organizing principle. In theory, such a conflict-model is what democratic pluralism claims to have stood for all along, but in fact such a model has never found institutional expression. Though many literature departments are now pluralistically diverse, few of them make use of this diversity beyond presenting students with a rich array of choices. A more functional pluralism would mean not just agreeing to differ, but to stage differences openly. ("The Future Of Theory" 261)

Graff has urged this pedagogical panacea in a variety of fora, with quite extraordinary consistency and resolution. The pattern of the argument remains more or less the same, though in later versions he appears to be more concerned with `dividends' and the public relations aspects of English teaching: he speaks of "the show business dimension" of the humanities and about the importance of "learning something from the media about the organization of representations."[4] This follows, I think, from the marketplace paradigm that underlies his `teach the conflicts' recommendation; though it may have something to do with the rhetorical skills of his even more market oriented and public

relations-obsessed colleague, Stanley Fish, with whom he increasingly seems to share a platform from which they lambast apathetic or cowardly radicals for not hitting back at the neoconservatives.[5]

Graff's position is easy to parody, largely as a result of the cynicism about higher education that has been accumulating for almost a century, if not more. It is certainly a plausible and well intentioned theory, at any rate in its earlier versions. But who, in an atmosphere saturated with antinomian fury against conventional morality, repressive tolerance, the totally administered society, the exploitation of the East by the West, racism, sexism, homophobia and so on, wants to listen to someone who thinks all or many of our problems can be solved by the verbal enactment of our disagreements? In addition, Graff's theories are peculiarly out of place in English studies; as David Bromwich points out, the idea of arriving at the truth through intellectual battles is more familiar in philosophy than in English departments.[6] Finally, if Graff's proximity to Fish's superbly professional pragmatism is symptomatic rather than coincidental, as there is some reason to suppose it is, a certain scepticism about the results of `teaching the conflicts' is in order: something resembling the regular, somewhat predictable agon of the Oprah Winfrey Show rather than the Socratic dialogue that seemed to be promised may result. {

More interesting than the details of Graff's theory, however, are the responses to his suggestions. Teaching the

conflict has been rejected, as far as I can make out, by writers across the political spectrum. Stanley Fish puts the case for teaching the conflict as a form of `soft' repression with admirable lucidity:

> If conflict is made into a structural principle, its very nature is domesticated; rather than being the manifestation of difference, conflict becomes the theater in which difference is displayed and stage-managed. .. .Strange as it may seem, the effect of bringing difference into the spotlight front and center is to obscure its operation, to hide the fact that the perspective from which one thinks to spy difference is itself challengeable, partisan, conflictual, differential. ("The Common Touch" 248)

Bill Readings, upping the ante, includes Fish among the consensual theorists:

> Community [for Habermas] is grounded not in organic identity but in rational communication. This in turn neatly parallels the development of the canon debate in the USA, since it is the claim that buttresses Stanley Fish's call for `business as usual' under the aegis of an interpretive community—a horizon of rational consensus rather than a cultural identity. ("For a Heteronomous Cultural Politics" 182)

However, in his rejection of Graff's theories, Readings is not very far from Fish:

> Behind [Graff's] laudable desire to displace the monologic authority of disciplinary discourse lies a desire for final consensus, the consensus that would permit the determination and transmission of "the conflict" as an object of professorial discourse. ("The University Without Culture?" 478)

While Fish and Readings distrust staged pedagogical conflicts because they obscure difference or operate with a concealed orientation towards consensus, conservative critics distrust the model because it undermines the authority of the teacher. James W. Tuttleton, in a swingeing attack on Graff's programme (in the New Criterion), which he calls a "Sixties `Teach In,'" warns:

> What is not going to survive the contestation, I suspect, is the traditional professor, the man or woman who thinks that literature is an art rather than a branch of politics or sociology and who wishes to present it to students as a rich, complex experience not reducible to the objectives of the radical left. ("Back to the Sixties" 33)

Tuttleton is concerned that the `lone, dissenting professor' will be overwhelmed by the endless staged conflicts, with neither the will left, nor the time, to teach literature. Frank Kermode, who would probably not think of himself as conservative, shares Tuttleton's fears about the effacement of `English' in the midst of the conflict:

> Students should be made `articulately aware' says Graff, `of the controversies surrounding them'.... It is made clear that he thinks this kind of thing to be a more suitable teaching method than any of which the purpose is to get students to attend to poems. This seems to me a mischievous idea. How can these deprived students be articulate and indeed `aggressive' participants in a debate about something they cannot read with interest, in terms of which, it is admitted, they have no understanding?.... What is liable to get lost in this transaction, not that it is felt to matter any more, is literature--in this case, `English'. ("Future of the English Literary Canon" 17)

David Bromwich, one of the few self-confessed liberals to comment on the `culture wars' (there is something distinctly odd about a battle over culture fought out chiefly between conservative journalists and vaguely left-wing academics) makes perhaps the most damaging critique of Graff's proposals.[7] Art endures, life is brief; by analogy, the conflicts keep changing, like fashions, while (this is also Kermode's worry) the texts remain to be read:

> The timely books and articles that take a position on the conflicts are not built to last; there will be another debate, with different books and articles, for the early 1990s and . the late.... such a proposal envisions a student generous enough and inquisitive

> enough to thrive in any atmosphere. But suppose we imagine a student more remarkable still: one who sees just how far his or her teachers stand for unharmonizing points of view; who even takes pleasure in arranging mental wars between them (in which, perhaps, some perish forever); but who, far from wanting such an exchange to be formalized in every class, thinks of education as something more than a professional debate.... By the proposal we are now considering, such a student is sold short. (Politics By Other Means 127)

Bromwich touches also on another, less easily articulable, problem: that the traditional strength of English studies has had to do with reading--close reading, wide reading, a great deal of reading. With this went a certain distance from the combative `define your terms' style more familiar in philosophy departments:

> Dialectical habits, a certain regimen of argumentative moves--these have always been a large component of the learning required among philosophers. If advanced students are now asked to exhibit these strengths at the sacrifice of all others, the tact of historical imagination will suffer greatly... (Politics By Other Means 188)

Why has `teaching the conflicts, ' superficially so suited to the parliamentary university, met with so much resistance, and

from such a range of political positions? I must confess that the reason most commonly adduced, that if it is implemented there will be no place for the literary texts, does not strike me as being at all convincing. Even a cursory reading of the criticism of Leavis, Winters, Trilling, Edmund Wilson, or I.A. Richards reveals a quite extraordinary range of interests, interests that did not preclude `close reading' but, on the other hand, probably facilitated such reading.

Briefly, one kind of reading will not displace another; not, at any rate, in the people who would have read poems and novels and essays anyway. Why then do many people fear that it will do so? This can be explained, I think, in terms of an admittedly dispiriting conjuncture of events. People are, in general, reading less; at the same time, English departments have been in recent years inundated with numbers of students whose skills and aspirations would, in the past, have impelled them towards sociology or political science departments. Such students, attracted by analysis that promises both intellectual stimulation and radical social change, and bored or repelled by the negative capability Keats spoke of, the rituals of passive saturation in the mood, tone, feeling of a poem or novel that have played such a large part in the traditional English studies' approach to literature, have undoubtedly been responsible, by a sort of unintended demographic shift, for a revolution in the modes of apprehension of the discipline.[8]

The other reason (for opposition to Graff's suggestions),

touched on by Bromwich, is altogether more plausible. The analytical skills so prodigiously on display in the last two decades' outpouring of `Theory,' partly because they resonate with the increasing instrumental rationality of even the hitherto differentiated cultural and familial worlds we live in, threaten to displace other kinds of understanding, such as the homely kinds promised as a result of ` close reading, ' skills we can give the dignified adjectives `hermeneutic' or `phenomenological.' `Teaching the conflicts' offers no space at all for less combative, less analytic kinds of understanding.

My own explanation is that both the anti-philosophizing legacy of English studies and an investment in an ongoing and complexly pleasurable agon contribute to the rejection of ` teaching the conflicts.'[9] But even more important is the part played by a very tenaciously held and probably largely / unconscious view of what a `liberal education' consists in: a view that is threatened by the `professionalism' of Graff's celebration of the marketplace of ideas. This argument is explored later in this chapter.

Jurgen Habermas, though he seems to be part of the extended family of discussion theorists who have their founding charter in Mill's On Liberty, is much further from Mill than, say, Graff. On closer inspection, Luther and Kant turn out to be important, if not only, begetters of Habermas's ideas about communicative rationality in the public sphere.[10] While Mill is, in the final analysis, empirical and utilitarian, Habermas is concerned with

metaphysical groundings and moral categorical imperatives. He seems to be located almost exactly midway between Mill's utilitarian liberalism and Kant's moral idealism. It would never have occurred to Mill to "locate a promesse de bonheur in an exchange of obscene insults," in Terry Eagleton's reductio of Habermas's project.[11] Mill's emphasis on linguistic conflict is intended to issue in the `best' ideas; for Habermas, the very situation in which verbal communication is embedded is a shadowy pointer to the good life.

Habermas's oeuvre is truly formidable. But behind this eclecticism is a surprisingly consistent, almost obsessive interest in a single unifying theme: that of `intersubjectivity.' Whether Habermas is discussing the performative contradictions of French poststructuralists, or the aesthetic theories of Walter Benjamin or Theodor Adorno, or the weaknesses of the student movement in Germany, or the liberal public sphere, he is bound to refer to `undistorted communication' or an `ideal speech situation' or some variant of these. Briefly, Habermas "finds confirmed in his dealings with language and in his analysis of universal pragmatics.. .the primacy of actions oriented towards reaching an understanding, as opposed to controlling or manipulating objects or other agents in the world" (Holub 15). This orientation towards understanding and agreement is the peg on which Habermas hangs his own emancipatory project: and a pretty weak peg it has seemed to many critics.[12]

In his own "Idea of the University: Learning Processes,"

Habermas sets out the history of the German idealist's idea of the university. With the increase in `functional specificities,' a certain `bundling of functions' became the characteristic feature of the German university, the bringing together of disparate aims and methodologies under one roof; this bundling depends on an explicit `corporative consciousness' or academic self-understanding:

> The corporative self-understanding of the university would be in trouble if it were anchored in something like a normative ideal, for ideas come and go... the old idea of the university... was grounded... in the permanently differentiated scientific process itself. But if science can no longer be used to anchor ideas in this way, because the multiplicity of the disciplines no longer leaves room for the totalizing power of either an all-encompassing philosophical fundamental science or even a reflective form of material critique of science and scholarship that would emerge from the disciplines themselves, on what could an integrative self-understanding of the corporative body of the university be based? ("The Idea of the University" 123)

Knowing Habermas, the answer is fairly predictable:

> Schleiermacher has already provided the answer: `The first law of all efforts directed toward knowledge [is] communication'.... I seriously believe that in the last analysis it is the communicative forms of scientific

> and scholarly argumentation that hold university learning processes in their various functions together. ("The Idea of the University" 123-24)

It is typical of Habermas that he will go on in a wilfully prosaic fashion about `bundling' when talking about the university constructed around the ideas of men like Schiller, Humboldt and Schleiermacher. No poetic flights of fancy about bildung here; bundling and sober intersubjectivity reign unmolested.

Habermas's early Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere displays his thought at its closest point to liberal democracy (John Durham Peters describes his work on the public sphere as `Habermas's return gift to liberal thought[1]).[13] What he says about the public sphere applies, inevitably, to the university, which can be understood as a microcosmic public sphere; to some, indeed, the only real public sphere left:

> The public sphere is a realm in which individuals gather to participate in open discussions. Potentially everyone has access to it; no one enters into discourse in the public sphere with an advantage over another.... The literary public sphere, which Habermas considers a prefiguration of a political public sphere oriented towards matters of state policy, deals with issues of cultural, rather than governmental concern. (Holub 3)

Together with an account of the bourgeois public sphere, the

demise of which Habermas describes with obvious regret, there is an analysis of the philosophical underpinnings of the public sphere, especially in the writings of Immanuel Kant. Habermas quite readily admits that his account of the public sphere is somewhat idealized; like most of his concepts, it serves a normative rather than a descriptive function.

At the heart of Habermas's description of this public sphere is the image of adult, private citizens, sitting together, their privileges and statuses temporarily `bracketed' while they discuss, fearlessly, their shared political lives. Interestingly, Habermas sees even parliamentary discussion as a degenerate later form of this pristine, informal public sphere centered around coffee houses, newspapers and salons; that may explain why his theories do not fit too easily into discussions of the `parliamentary' university. Habermas, like Rousseau, favours face-to-face, direct democracy over representation. Habermas's distrust of representation comes out clearly in his description of contemporary `administered' discussions, and, incidentally throws some light on what he would make of Graff's `teaching the conflict':

> Today the conversation itself is administered. Professional dialogues from the podium, panel discussions, and round table shows--the rational debate of private people becomes one of the production numbers of the stars in radio and television, a salable package ready for the box office; it assumes commodity form

> even at "conferences" where everyone can "participate." Discussion, now a "business," becomes formalized; the presentation of positions and counterpositions is bound to certain prearranged rules of the game; consensus about the subject matter is made largely superfluous by that concerning form. (164)

Since Habermas has located his public sphere at a particular time and in particular locations rather than in an avowed Utopia, his theory has inevitably come under attack, especially by feminists, for historical and sociological inaccuracy. Carole Pateman has pointed out that social contract theories, from Rousseau to Rawls, exclude the participation of women, not incidentally but constitutively.[14] The private, the realm of the family, the domestic economy, has notoriously been ignored by male political theorists, and Habermas is no exception to the rule. Feminist scholarship in general has tended to emphasize the fact that the necessary structural counterpart of the public, which is of course `the private,' is undertheorised in Habermas's account. Nancy Fraser, in "What's Critical About Critical Theory?" points out (apropos Habermas's general theory of communicative action) that the `gender subtext' that Habermas ignores, when drawn into view, undermines all his carefully elaborated distinctions:

> Once the gender-blindness of Habermas's model is overcome, however, all these connections come into view. It then becomes clear that gender norms run like

> pink and blue threads through paid work, state administration, and citizenship as well as through familial and sexual relations...a gender sensitive reading...reveals that male dominance is intrinsic rather than accidental to classical capitalism, since the institutional structure of this social formation is actualized by means of gendered roles. It follows that the forms of male dominance at issue here are not properly understood as lingering forms of premodern status inequality. They are, rather, intrinsically modern in Habermas's sense, since they are premised on the separation of waged labor and the state from female childrearing and the household. (263)

In one of the best critiques of Habermas's theory of the public sphere ("Rethinking the Public Sphere"), Fraser, while she makes it clear that "the idea of the `public sphere' in Habermas's sense is a conceptual resource," not necessarily to be regarded as empirically accurate in all respects, nevertheless argues forcefully that he idealizes the public sphere.[15] The work of revisionist historiographers like Joan Landes, Mary Ryan and Geoff Eley, she argues, reveals that "despite the rhetoric of publicity and accessibility, the official public sphere rested on, indeed was importantly constituted by, a number of significant exclusions" ("Rethinking the Public Sphere" 113). Chief among these, of course, were exclusions around the axis of gender. Habermas also fails to register the ironic fact that "a

discourse of publicity touting accessibility, rationality, and the suspension of status hierarchies is itself deployed as a strategy of distinction," used to shore up the newly emerging identities of an elite group ("Rethinking the Public Sphere" 115). Habermas's isolation of the middle class public sphere from its context in order to deploy it in our Own time results in his failing "to examine other, nonliberal, nonbourgeois, competing public spheres" including those composed largely of women, which "creatively used the heretofore quintessentially `private' idioms of domesticity and motherhood precisely as springboards for public activity" ("Rethinking the Public Sphere" 115). Fraser argues, on the whole convincingly, that we can no longer assume "that the bourgeois conception of the public sphere was simply an unrealized Utopian ideal; it was also a masculinist ideological notion that functioned to legitimate an emergent form of class rule" (116).

Habermas's early work on the public sphere touches on many of the themes that he developed in later, more theoretical work. Philosophically, Habermas's elaboration of communicative rationality has been attacked on the grounds that it is both naive and excessively abstract.[16] It does not seem to be a part of most people's understanding of speech, for instance, that it is necessarily oriented to the telos of agreement. Lies, contradictions, paradoxes, abuse, silences, and aporias seem to be as integral to speech as consensus (as Jean Francois Lyotard, among others, has argued).[17] And to make this hypothetical `will

to agreement' serve as a peg on which to hang his Enlightenment morality is, not to put too fine a point on it, extraordinarily risky. His theorising of the public sphere suffers from the same mixture of extreme abstraction and surprising naivete: the categorial exclusions of persons from the bourgeois public sphere, the contradictory historical evidence about it; the fact that the family looms hugely in his theory as the significant absence that structures his analysis of public men in public places; the distrust of representation in a complex, hugely populated modern world; all these contribute to the strangely unsatisfying, unreal texture of these theoretically sophisticated writings. That these writings are the work of a man completely at home in the parliamentary university, indeed one whose universe appears to be bounded by the horizon of academic speculation and discussion, should warn us against accepting the arguments for such a university too easily.

Alasdair MacIntyre, like Habermas and Michel Foucault, is undoubtedly one of the philosophes of our age. Like theirs, his range is truly formidable. Like Habermas, he has written extensively on consensus and verbal negotiations, though from an almost diametrically opposed position. From 1981, when his After Virtue was published, Maclntyre has been obsessively attacking the unending debate, the disagreement, doubt, uncertainty and inconclusiveness that characterise modern liberal societies. Both Habermas and Maclntyre long for consensus, but Habermas achieves serenity in a Kantian understanding of the perhaps-never-to-be-

achieved but nevertheless always potential telos of agreement built into language; MacIntyre, more historical as well as more religious, despairs of achieving consensus because liberalism has destroyed the possibility of consensus by eroding classical dogma and Christian teaching, and by elevating neutrality and procedural justice into norms.

Maclntyre has positioned himself, pedagogically and theologically, `as Newman's heir,' in the words of Malcolm Cowling (39). His hostility to liberalism, like Newman's, is fundamental and unremitting. (Newman, however, was not horrified by the `endless disputations' characteristic of university life; in fact, he rather seemed to enjoy them, and earned a reputation as one of the keenest polemicists of his time). Like Newman again, Maclntyre has also written provocatively on the university. In Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, he returns to the attack on the destructive effects of tolerating incommensurable discourses. He manages to sound both despairing about inevitable consensus and, like any `liberal conflict' theorist (Graff, for instance), hopeful of a better outcome. He feels that "one of the most striking facts about modern political orders in that they lack institutionalized forums within which these fundamental disagreements can be systematically explored and charted, let alone there being any attempt made to resolve them" (Whose Justice? 2). But he is sharply critical of the usual academic forms of conflict:

> Modern academic philosophy turns out by and large to

> provide means for a more accurate and informed definition of disagreement rather than for progress toward its resolution. Professors of philosophy who concern themselves with questions of justice and of practical rationality turn out to disagree with each other as sharply, as variously, and, so it seems, as irremediably upon how such questions are to be answered as anyone else. (Whose Justice? 3)

Like Graff, MacIntyre emphasizes the pernicious effect of an inadequate pedagogy on the student; but while Graff argues that the student is demoralised and rendered apathetic by exclusion from the intellectual disputes that exercise his or her teachers, Maclntyre argues that the inconclusiveness of even the debates attended to can, indeed must, demoralise the student:

> What the student is in consequence generally confronted with, and this has little to do with the particular intentions of his or her particular teachers, is an apparent inconclusiveness which seems to abandon him or her to his or her prerational preferences. So the student characteristically emerges from a liberal education with a set of skills, a set of preferences, and little else, someone whose education has been as much a process of deprivation as of enrichment. (Whose Justice? 400)

There is, of course, a deep contradiction in MacIntyre's thought." This incoherence emerges quite clearly in

"Reconceiving the University as an Institution and the Lecture as a Genre," the last chapter of MacIntyre's Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry. What are his remedies for the ills of "a university which had deprived itself of substantive moral enquiry"?

> [T]he contemporary university can perhaps only defend that in itself which makes it genuinely a university by admitting these conflicts to a central place both in its enquiries and in its teaching curriculum. What kind of change would this involve ?... What then **is** possible? The answer is: the university as a place of constrained disagreement, of imposed participation in conflict, in which a central responsibility of higher education would be to initiate students into conflict. (Three Rival Versions 230-31)

After the immense erudition that has passed before us, an erudition that encompasses Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Nietzsche, Foucault, Bachelard, Kuhn, the writers of the Ninth Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica; an erudition, moreover, marshalled with the intention of showing up the flabbiness of liberal disputation, this sounds decidedly weak, not to say desperate, a pathetic diminuendo after the crashing chords of the opening sections. The hostile critic of liberal free speech concludes, like Mill, that conflict is the best guarantee of truth. As Cowling points out, MacIntyre has not taken into account "the extent to which his tactical demand for conflict

involves a substantive acceptance of [liberalism's] inconclusiveness" (42).

Of the three theorists whose work I have been discussing, two have offered defences of the university as a space for useful dispute, or unconstrained debate leading to negotiated agreements, and the third has argued that the very disputatiousness of liberalism undermines all possibility of a shared, and valuable, existence. Paradoxically, while, on the one hand, **Habermas's** and Graff's theories, as I argued earlier, may not command widespread acceptance despite their reasonableness; on the other, **MacIntyre's** attack on the unending disputes characteristic of liberalism is undermined by his own admission of the necessity of procedural guarantees, at least in the case of the university. What this may point to is not so much the weakness of the theories discussed as a general and gradual diminution of faith in liberalism as a political and social theory; and with this, a loss of interest in defences of free speech.

A note on my own shifting allegiances and priorities may be in order at this point. When I embarked on this thesis four years ago, the parliamentary university was the true university, the university I wanted to defend. It was, to me, a bulwark against dangerous relativisms, attacks on excellence, multiplying discourses of selfhood, the deconstruction of identities. It **is,** I hope, a mark of growth, and not only of growing cynicism, that four years down the line I can pack my earlier enthusiasm into a

first chapter that blandly interrogates the value of discussion. Not too blandly, though, I hope. I continue to value the pleasures and benefits of conversation and discussion; but I am convinced they should remain pleasures, not be elevated into imperatives. As I argued earlier, if enough people withhold assent from the norms of rational debate, they cease to be norms. The consensual imperative can sometimes be coercive, as feminists have good reason to know. Here, I feel, Stuart Hampshire and Michael Oakeshott are better guides than Habermas and Graff.[19] Discussion is important because it is conducive to justice as fairness, not primarily because polemical exchanges sharpen your intellect or because speech itself is obscurely the model of the good life; and conversation is important because of its intrinsic playfulness and civility. If the `conversational university' sounds too playful, too lacking in professional rigour, that may be the fault of the professionalism, not the conversation.

Liberalism, Liberal Education, Literary Liberalism

I have been discussing certain theoretical efforts to justify the functioning of the modern university in terms of rational modes of communication. As I pointed out, these justifications are very similar to, if not derived from, liberal notions about the freedom of speech. In the background is the much larger question: what is the relationship of liberalism as a whole to the university?

John Dunn believes that liberalism, being "a much less

neatly bounded topic than democratic theory" is "a much harder topic to discuss" (Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future, 28). What would he make, one wonders, of the unboundedness of a topic like `liberal education' where even disagreement is not possible, starting points being so far apart? Liberalism, as a political theory, can at least be discussed in terms of three or four characteristic features which together constitute the field, in addition, of course, to the obligatory reference to liberty. John Gray's list of features common to different types of liberalism may not command complete acceptance, but I think most liberals will grant that it covers much of the territory:

> Common to all variants of the liberal tradition is a definite conception, distinctively modern in character, of man and society.... It is individualist, in that it asserts the moral primacy of the person against the claims of any social collectivity; egalitarian, inasmuch as it confers on all men the same moral status and denies the relevance to legal and political order of differences in moral worth among human beings; universalist, affirming the moral unity of the human species and according a secondary importance to specific historic associations and cultural forms; and meliorist in its affirmation of the corrigibility and improvability of all social institutions and political arrangements. (Liberalism x)

Dunn associates liberalism with tolerance, suspicion towards tradition, and an antipathy towards authority; Immanuel Wallerstein, in a savage indictment of liberalism, calls it `centrism incarnate'; Judith Shklar emphasizes the importance of tolerance, pointing to the origins of liberalism as a compromise between "the demands of creedal orthodoxy and those of charity"; for John Rawls an important aspect of liberalism is that liberals should have the greatest freedom consistent with a like freedom for all.[20] The list could be added to indefinitely, without any radical innovations becoming apparent. Freedom, equality, tolerance, reformism, representative democracy, the importance of the market: these are the basic terms of reference.

If defenders of liberalism tend to emphasize such features as equality and reformism, critics tend to point to liberalism's dependence on a utilitarian ethic or the workings of the market. If John Stuart Mill is the paradigmatic liberal, whose most celebrated work defends the autonomy of the individual against all encroachments, Jeremy Bentham and Adam Smith always loom in the background, reminding us that liberalism has always been associated with the felicific calculus and the invisible hand as well.

One might be forgiven for assuming that the term `liberal education' had something to do with liberalism. After all, `liberal humanism' seems to be linked to liberalism, and isn't liberal education the instruction received by liberal humanists? A quick look at some arbitrarily chosen definitions will put paid

to this idea:

> That man, I think, has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; ready, like a steam engine, to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind. (T.H.Huxley, "A Liberal Education" 1486)

> That liberal education should be centred in the study of creative literature is a proposition that will perhaps meet with general agreement. When I insist that for English-speaking people it must be centred in the literature of the English language I have in mind in the first place the distinctive discipline of intelligence that literary study should be. **(F.R** Leavis, English Literature in the University **166-67)**

> True liberal education requires that the student's whole life be radically changed by it, that what he learns may affect his action, his tastes, his choices, that no previous attachment be immune to examination and hence **re-evaluation. Liberal education** puts

> everything at risk and requires students who are able to risk everything. (Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind 370)

> Liberal education saw itself as being about the formation of character, the learning of values--moral, ethical, aesthetic--`the inner being[1] as much as the outer. (Alison Light, "Two Cheers for Liberal Education" 33)

> [We should be] enhancing and ennobling the meaning and purpose of liberal arts education by giving it a truly central place in the social life of a nation where it can become a public forum for addressing preferentially the needs of the poor, the dispossessed, and the disenfranchised. (Henry Giroux, "Liberal Arts Education" 128)

I have not chosen these definitions to demonstrate their range or contradictory character; they are the first that came to hand. The first (and perhaps the last) thing one notices about these and other definitions of a `liberal education[1] is their vagueness. Even the seemingly anomalous specificity of Leavis's and Giroux's statements is deceptive: they are not definitions, but exhortations.

One eminent Victorian, however, defined a liberal education

with exemplary rigour:

> It is common to speak of "liberal knowledge," of the "liberal arts and studies," and of a "liberal education," as the especial characteristic or property of a University and of a gentleman; what is really meant by the word? Now, first, in its grammatical sense, it is opposed to servile; and by "servile work" is understood... bodily labour, mechanical employment and the like, in which the mind has little or no part. (The Idea of a University 106)

And again,

> **...what** is merely professional, though highly intellectual ... is not simply called liberal, and mercantile occupations are not liberal at all. Why this distinction? Because that alone is liberal knowledge which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be informed. . . by any end, or absorbed into any art. (108)

And:

> Let me not be thought to deny the necessity, or to decry the benefit, of such attention to what is particular and practical, as belongs to the useful or mechanical arts; life could not go on without them... **.I** only say that Knowledge, in proportion as it tends more and more to be particular, ceases to be Knowledge. (The

Idea of a University 112)

Newman could afford to describe the education offered by Oxbridge in his time without the use of euphemism; his allegiance was to a higher authority than a secular government or to anything so amorphous as `culture.' With Arnold, however, the tendency sets in to play down the elitist, anti-industrial features of a liberal education, and, I would argue, has grown stronger over time.[21] With Arnold, culture takes the place of religion, and a secular, elitist education becomes vital to the health and the very existence of society. The complexity of the problem facing Arnold was undeniable. In an increasingly utilitarian age it is increasingly important to offer a non-utilitarian education; but in the increasingly utilitarian age, it also becomes increasingly important to disguise the nature of this education. So the esoteric doctrine of a liberal education replaces Newman's scholastic rigour.[22]

Defined as Newman defines it (and I have yet to come across a clearer definition), a liberal education is, paradoxically, an education for aristocrats. Such an education, with its reflexive and structural disdain for practical questions, labour, the market, industry and so on, comes into sharp conflict with liberalism's formal emphasis on equality, and, more significantly, with liberalism's tacit allegiance to the ideology of the market. Liberal education, it seems, is that which produces subjects hostile to liberalism. This is very close to Joseph Schumpeter's understanding of the function of

`intellectuals' in capitalist society. He believes that, "unlike any other type of society, capitalism inevitably and by virtue of the very logic of its civilization creates, educates and subsidizes a vested interest in social unrest" (146). Schumpeter's theory seems to corroborate the idea that liberal education inevitably exists in a contradictory, even oppositional relationship with liberal political theory. According to Schumpeter, intellectuals come into existence in order to undermine capitalism; if Newman's definition is accurate, liberal education will tend to undermine liberalism, the political system most commonly associated with capitalism.[23] But one may retain Schumpeter's basic structure and reject the pessimistic (to capitalists and liberals, that is) conclusion. As Mill concluded, opposition to liberalism may be precisely what liberalism needs.

In recent times, in the context of education in the humanities, the writers who have used the term `liberal education' most confidently, are, by and large, conservatives. They tend to endorse the virtues of a 'liberal education' without specifying what it is in its essence.[24] On the other hand, writers who identify themselves as roughly on the Left, usually with some sympathy for poststructuralist thought and the claims of the multiculturalists, don't define the term either. This is certainly unusual, given the analytical rigour with which terms like `ideology' or even `liberalism' are defined. In a book with a title like The Politics of Liberal Education, for instance, with contributors such as Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Stanley Fish,

Richard Rorty, Henry Louis Gates, and Gerald Graff, one might expect to find some discussion of the concept. One would expect, indeed, that writers such as these, consciously in opposition to the orthodoxy in English studies, would unerringly home in on the elitist resonances of the traditional liberal education. There is, in fact, virtually no effort to define what is being criticised; the book is basically a collective attempt to refute neoconservative claims that higher education is being corrupted by multiculturalists and poststructuralists.[25] The confusion (or silence) regarding liberal education is probably the result of one group (the neoconservatives) using the term as a euphemism for `elite and aristocratic, ' while the other group (the cultural Left) conflates this etymologically and historically accurate meaning with another derived from the current understanding of the term `liberalism.'

The impression I get is that while many theorists wish to undermine the legitimacy of a concept such as `liberal humanism, ' virtually nobody wishes to alter the status quo as far as liberal education is concerned. The desire to keep as far as possible from the ethos of the market unites conservatives, liberals and radicals. Stanley Fish, who understands this very well and delights in breaking academic taboos, explains that "the investment in being distinguishable from business is so great that academics will pay any price to protect it" (There's No Such Thing As Free Speech 275). Fish is one of the very few theorists in English studies who endorses a thoroughgoing professionalism.

He unequivocally urges English professors to Be Proud of Being a Professor. If Fish's `jovially affirmed professionalism[1] (the phrase is Edward Said's, from a scathing review of Fish's "Profession, Loathe Thyself") represents the embarrassingly visible face of business and industry wooing and seducing the humanities, Graff's `Teach the Conflicts' must represent the disturbingly shadowy visage of the same intruder, with the `marketplace of ideas' standing in for the crude reality of the market itself. I believe that the disapproval that Fish's and Graff's theories have elicited is linked to the perception that these theories represent a capitalist intrusion into an anti-capitalist enclave. Since I will be arguing that the humanities ought to resist the encroachments of instrumental rationality (and the market certainly endorses this rationality), and, more explicitly, that professionalism without ideals is one of the great dangers threatening the functioning of the university, I naturally have no desire to support Fish's professionalism.[26] About Graff's suggestions I am more ambivalent: the idea is attractive, especially to the chronically indecisive, but the recent conflicts seem to have been set up in such a way that bad-tempered intransigence or oleaginous professionalism seem to be the only options.

I have been focusing on the contradictory relationship between the humanities, as it might be construed as figuring in the phrase `a liberal education,' and liberalism. In conclusion, I would like to look at some rather more straightforward

alliances of liberalism with English studies, a literary liberalism, as it were.

Arguably the most influential instance of assimilation and cross-fertilizing between liberalism and English studies was that of John Stuart Mill's appreciative reading of Coleridge, and the way in which this was taken up by critics like Leavis and Trilling. Even here, however, the thrust of the eventual response was conservative. Mill believed that liberalism needed conservatism to keep it strong. He famously urged liberals to pray:

> Lord, enlighten thou our enemies...sharpen their wits, give acuteness to their perceptions, and consecutiveness and clearness to their reasoning powers: we are in danger from their folly, not from their wisdom; their weakness is what fills us with apprehension, not their strength. ("Coleridge" 172)

Trilling, and even more so Leavis, took Mill's approval of Coleridge as proof that they had little to learn from a utilitarian and empirical liberalism. Trilling, while arguably more sympathetic to some forms of liberalism than Leavis, can be said to have taken Mill's lesson so much to heart that he travelled, albeit very gradually, from Mill towards Coleridge all his life.[27]

A more genuinely liberal approach to English studies may, however, be coming into existence. This, as might have bepn expected, comes out of the less historically cumbered liberal

tradition of the United States. I am referring primarily to George Kateb's reading of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman as offering "the best working out of the existential meanings of rights-based individualism, the best pursuit of its intimations" ("Democratic Individuality" 185); and the work of David Bromwich. Bromwich distances himself equally from the American neo-conservatives and the cultural radicals of the university. In many respects he is the heir of Trilling, especially in his willingness to learn from conservative thinkers like Edmund Burke and Michael Oakeshott. Kateb and Bromwich (and perhaps Martha Nussbaum) can be seen as liberals who are filling out the contours of liberalism with affective content derived from literature rather than from abstract rights theories. It is too early to predict whether this is a trend that will become popular, but it seems likely that there will be more such interventions, bringing a welcome new voice to a debate dominated *by* conservative orthodoxy and radical nihilism.

NOTES

1. See Derrida's "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils," Diacritics (Fall 1983): 3-20.

2. Bill Readings, "Dwelling in the Ruins," Oxford Literary Review. 17.1/2 (1995):15-28.

3. John Gray, in "The Moral Foundations of Market Institutions" (Beyond the New Right) makes the argument that market institutions work well only where their practitioners accord them moral legitimacy. This would explain why markets often fail when they are introduced into societies and defended only on pragmatic or utilitarian grounds. Gray's moral defence of markets is fairly complex, and has to do with the autonomy guaranteed by the functioning of markets, rather than with prosperity, say, or with information about goods.

4. In "Preaching to the Converted" (English Inside and Out, 109-121), he writes: "Yet the academy is in a certain sense a branch of show business. .. .The reluctance to acknowledge that what we do has a show business dimension only makes it more likely that we will be bad show business" (111); and "...we see how limited we are as long as we resist recognizing that the academy is a form of popular culture, a stance that prevents us from learning something from the media about the organization of representations"(120).

5. See especially English Inside and Out which has Fish's "The Unbearable Ugliness of Volvos" and Graff's "Preaching to the Converted." Fish is quite gratifyingly frank about the benefits of "the lecture and conference circuit." In the dazzlingly vulgar exercise in group self congratulation called "The Unbearable Ugliness of Volvos" he dilates on "the new sources of extra income, increased opportunities for domestic and foreign travel, easy access to national and international centers of research...attention, applause, fame" [274] and urges his fellow radicals to rid themselves of counterproductive and unhealthy feelings of guilt.

6. See Bromwich, Politics By Other Means, 188.

7. John Searle has commented on the strangeness of `culture wars' being conducted by "...on the one side, for the most part, journalists and politicians; on the other, resentful radicals" ("Is There a Crisis in American Higher Education?" 693).

8. The whole question of the relationship between sociology and English studies is much too vast to go into here; but certainly the two disciplines have been competing with, as well as learning from, each other. Recent developments in English studies seem to indicate that sociology has gained a definite advantage, in that a whole generation of avant-garde theorists in English seem to want to

write like sociologists. By this I do not mean that much recent theoretical work in English approximates in quality to work done by, say, Anthony Giddens or Pierre Bourdieu; it is more a matter of sounding scientific, and even positivist. For a very good discussion of the historical rivalry and trade-offs between sociology and English studies, see Wolf Lepenies's Between Literature and Science: The Rise of Sociology.

9. See George E. Marcus's " A Broad(er)side to the Canon" for a fascinating analysis of the `canon wars' in English. Marcus argues that the inordinate amounts of passion and invective characteristic of the battles about the canon are a function of nostalgia for the political climate of an earlier period, and of a sense of its loss:

> ...academics, in seeking attachment to real-world events and politics, suffer from the crisis of representation that affects them professionally. Their desire for political commitment lacks conceptual frameworks that they can take for granted....From the late 1960s, this liberally inclined orientation to real-world politics started to be undone, and there has been a vicarious, hermetic re-creation of traditional categories within the politics of the academy.... Debate about the canon reproduces the fiction of the old categories, and has great nostalgic appeal. (106-7)

Interestingly, Marcus cites David Lodge's satirical campus novel Small World in his essay. Lodge's (academic) hero concludes cynically, at the end of the novel, that `theory' in English studies exists for its own sake, and has nothing to do with anything external to it.

10. Habermas is clearly out of sympathy with Mill's distrust of the `masses.' In a section on Mill and Tocqueville in Structural Transformation, he writes:

> The liberalist interpretation of the bourgeois constitutional state was reactionary: it reacted to the power of the idea of a critically debating public's self-determination, initially included in its institutions, as soon as this public was subverted by the propertyless and uneducated masses. (136)

Concerning Habermas's closeness to the Protestant austerity of Luther and Kant, John Durham Peters remarks:

> For Kant, with whom Habermas's ultimate loyalty clearly lies, publicity is the political counterpart of morality or the `categorical imperative.' Those acts are just, says Kant, that an actor could wish were a universal law for all people and seasons. Similarly, publicity is based on universalizability: every citizen, regardless of personal status, may participate in public debate and discussion. ("Habermas on the Public Sphere" 549)

And, again:

> Beyond all symbolic politics, for Habermas, lurks the king's body, which must not be resurrected. This is a

> prime example of Protestant iconoclasm: the place of power must remain empty; attempts to render the divine symbolically present risk reification and violence. In its place there can be nothing but the word--the critical rational debate of the citizenry, guaranteed by just procedures. (565)

And Terry Eagleton, in Ideology of the Aesthetic points out that it is

> possible to see in Habermas's ideal speech community an updated version of Kant's community of aesthetic judgement. Just as Habermas holds that communication is naturally oriented to agreement, so Kant proposes some deep spontaneous consensus built into our faculties, which the act of aesthetic taste most clearly exemplifies. (405)

11. Eagleton's comment appears in Ideology of the Aesthetic (404).

12. Perry Anderson's discussion of Habermas's theories in In the Tracks of Historical Materialism, though quite brief, is excellent. Both he and Terry Eagleton (The Ideology of the Aesthetic) are very critical of Habermas's `angelism' of language (Anderson's phrase, In the Tracks 64). John Gray, in Post-l iberalism, puts the case against Habermas's communicative rationality succinctly:

> The idea of full communicative rationality in an ideal speech situation among people is an opaque one in Habermas's thought. Whatever it means, it is associated with the Enlightenment expectation that in an undistorted dialogue human beings will come to convergence in their values, projects and perspectives. At no point in his prolix and voluminous theorizings does Habermas give this expectation any foundation in reason. It hovers in mid-air, foundationless, like the Cheshire Cat's smile, its supportive body detached and destroyed by the very modernism Habermas is so anxious to defend. . . .In reposing his faith in open dialogue, he has the character of a sort of bien-pensant Pascal, laying a wager on reason which nothing in our (or his) experience warrants. (93)

13. In "Distrust of representation: Habermas on the Public Sphere" (551). Peters's discussion is one of the clearest I have read on Habermas's reconstruction of the public sphere.

14. See her "The Fraternal Social Contract" 101-27, in J.Keane (ed.), Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives, London: Verso, 1988.

15. Seyla Benhabib, one of Habermas's most sympathetic interlocutors, also makes the point that it is a mistake to demand descriptive accuracy of what, after all, was intended to be a normative theory. In the chapter "Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition and Jurgen Habermas" (Situating the

Self) she writes:

> Certainly, a normative theory, and in particular a critical social theory, cannot take the aspirations of any social actors at face value and fit its critical criteria to meet the demands of a particular social movement. Commitment to social transformation, and yet a certain critical distance, even from the demands of those with whom one identifies, are essential to the vocation of the theorist as social critic. (Situating The Self 109-110)

16. In addition to the critics already mentioned (John Durham Peters, Nancy Fraser, Perry Anderson, Terry Eagleton and John Gray), there are similar criticisms made by Martin Jay in "Habermas and Modernism" and Richard Rorty in "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity" (both in Reading Habermas; 125-139 and 161-175 respectively); and by J.G. Merquior, in Western Marxism 163-185.

17. In The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard writes:

> ...to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics. This does not necessarily mean that one plays in order to win. A move can be made for the sheer pleasure of its invention: what else is involved in that labor of language harassment undertaken by popular speech and by literature? Great joy is had in the endless invention of turns of phrase, of words and meanings, the process behind the evolution of language on the level of parole. (10)

This is about as far from Habermas's view of language as one can get. Indeed, Lyotard seems to get great pleasure from inverting Habermas's theories and arguing that fabrication and invention are more central to speech acts than truth-telling.

18. Benjamin Barber's discussion of Maclntyre's thinking in The Conguest of Politics brings out this contradiction well. Of Maclntyre's criticism of liberalism he says:

> The lesson with which MacIntyre leaves us is in fact deeply conservative, a lugubrious rejection of all that is modern but with no possibility of retrieving the virtues of a past irrevocably lost.... Liberalism as the legitimating philosophy of an age of emancipation may well have run its course. . . . But a revolt against liberalism that appeals only to a dead and irrecoverable past has little hope of filling the hollowness that characterizes the postmodern era. Living, as we do, not only after virtue but also after liberty, we require a philosophy of the political that realizes and reconciles both rather than a philosophy of nostalgia that aspires to restore the first at the expense of the second. (190-91).

And Stephen Holmes, in The Anatomy of Ant i Liberal ism,

describes MacIntyre's constant oscillations between positions as `a form of philosophical incoherence':

> At the same time that he yearns sincerely for moral harmony, Maclntyre enfolds, within his own intellect, the essential disharmonies of Western civilization and finds himself riven helplessly by incompatible traditions. The culture of the West, he explains, was marked for almost two millennia by a sharp tension between pagan and religious ideals, by the conflict, for example, between the glory ethic and the biblical ethic. The observation is not impersonal. For Maclntyre turns his own mind into a battlefield where this war can be ceaselessly waged. He professes undying loyalty both to local custom and eternal truth, both to pagan excellence and to redemption from sin, both to ethnic chauvinism and to the Christian idea of a universal mission. His Janus face is the ultimate secret of his thought. These stubborn duplicities can make his work absorbing, of course. But they are also a form of philosophical incoherence. (120)

19. I discuss Michael Oakeshott's views on conversation in the next chapter.

20. Dunn's comments are from Western Political Theory (29), already mentioned; Wallerstein's from "The Agonies of Liberalism: What Hope Progress?" (6); Shklar's from "The Liberalism of Fear" in Liberalism and the Moral Life; Rawls's from A Theory of Justice.

21. In the essay "Literature and Science" Arnold begins with a description of Plato's ideas about an ideal education. He writes: "[Plato's] scorn of trade and handicraft is fantastic ... he had no conception of a great industrial community such as that of the United States" (1468). Though Arnold's goal, like Newman's, is to defend a liberal education, it is almost impossible for him to say so. It is significant that the greatest apostle of `liberal education' scarcely ever uses the phrase.

22. An example of this esotericism (or perhaps sheer evasiveness) is Arnold's lecture "Literature and Science," which, with T.H. Huxley's response, is seen as the precursor of the altogether more vicious exchange between C.P. Snow and F.R. Leavis. As mentioned, Arnold begins his lecture with a discussion of Plato's disdain for manual and useful labour; but he is so reluctant to endorse Plato's ` liberal education' openly that he seems to play into his enemies' hands (his enemies here being those who wanted a literary and classical education replaced by a predominantly `useful,' scientific or technical education).

23. Schumpeter's idea of an antagonistic relationship between capitalism and its intellectuals has been taken up, in interesting ways, by Daniel Bell and Peter Berger. Bell, in The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism has made the influential argument that

capitalism has for some time now been in the process of being disaggregated, with the components of an ascetic, Protestant work ethic and of a hedonist, gratification-oriented philosophy working against each other. Berger's theory, both simpler and of earlier provenance, positions humanities intellectuals as resentful of loss of power in a science dominated world. Fredric Jameson, the American Marxist cultural theorist, argues against Bell that capitalism has actually extended and consolidated its hegemony via modernist art forms and advertising techniques (see his "Postmodernism and Consumer Society"). My argument, that liberalism benefits from the opposition of liberal education to it, in some ways parallels Jameson's, though he is talking about capitalism rather than liberalism, and he writes, more or less, as one who is hostile to both.

24. I have already quoted Allan Bloom, whose Closing of the American Mind with its apocalyptic warnings of scholarly degeneration has been widely read and discussed. Those writing self-consciously as Bloom's cultural heirs are not obviously more perspicuous in the matter of defining a liberal education. Thus Roger Kimball, in Tenured Radicals, writes:

> And, indeed, that a liberal arts education sought the best was one reason college was once referred to as "higher" education: it was higher in the sense not only *of* providing more education but also in the sense of providing a more profound acquaintance with the formative ideas and values of our culture. Intellectually, its aim was truth; morally, its aim was virtue. (39)

Dinesh D'Souza, in Illiberal Education, comes much closer to an accurate analysis, but sheers off as he approaches the edge:

> ...liberal education is education for rulers. In ancient times princes, aristocrats, and gentry sought liberal education [which prepared] them for the responsibilities of government. We do not share this elitist conception of liberal education, but this does not imply that we should change the definition. In a democratic society, every citizen is a ruler, who joins in exercising the duties of government. (250)

And so on and so forth. D'Souza does not seem to be aware that is quite anomalous to admit a conception's elitist origins and then claim that conception exclusively for democracy without jettisoning the original definition.

25. The exception is Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich, who writes:

> But the dominant tradition in the United States has for too long excluded too many, while hiding that exclusiveness behind partial universals. The "liberal arts" be it remembered, were defined in contradistinction to the "servile arts," the skills of those who were not allowed into the "highest education," the "education worthy of a free man." The "liberal arts" were indeed considered liberating, but not in the sense we use the

> term today. They were the arts to be cultivated by those men who did not need to work, who were "liberated" from the necessities of labor--productive, reproductive, and nurturant. ("From Ivory Tower to Tower of Babel?" 197)

26. I discuss Fish's endorsement of professionalism and Said's response to it in more detail in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

27. For interesting discussions of Trilling's ambivalence towards liberalism, see Stephen L.Tanner's Lionel Trilling and William M. Chace's Lionel Trilling: Criticism and Politics.

CHAPTER 2

CHANGING THE TOPIC: POSTSTRUCTURALISM, THE HUMANITIES, ENGLISH STUDIES

> It is just not the case that one need adopt one's opponents' vocabulary or method or style in order to defeat him. Hobbes did not have theological arguments against Dante's world-picture; Kant had only a very bad scientific argument for the phenomenal character of science; Nietzsche and James did not have epistemological arguments for pragmatism. Each of these thinkers presented us with a new form of intellectual life, and asked us to compare its advantages with the old.
>
> --Richard Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism

> The problem with literary theory is that it can neither beat nor join the dominant ideologies of late industrial capitalism. Liberal humanism seeks to oppose or at least modify such ideologies with its distaste for the technocratic and its nurturing of spiritual wholeness in a hostile world; certain brands of formalism and structuralism try to take over the technocratic rationality of such a society and thus incorporate themselves into it.
>
> --Terry Eagleton Literary Theory: An Introduction

Richard Rorty tells us that new philosophical paradigms come into existence not as a result of revolutionary geniuses painstakingly critiquing and refuting the theories of their eminent predecessors, but by people `finding new vocabularies,' by another generation of theorists `changing the topic' so that new and interesting kinds of knowledge are illuminated. Something like this appears to have happened with English studies. The topic has been changed, and a new object of opposition has been set up. What the topic was, and what it was changed to, is suggested by Eagleton's remarks.

It is difficult, in discussing poststructuralism, to lay out precisely what one means by the term: in fact the practice of the

poststructuralists would seem to encourage ambiguity. The writings of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault are usually considered to be quite safely within the boundaries of anyone's definition, however, and this is as good a starting point as any. I shall use the term poststructuralism to refer to a cluster of concepts and attitudes that seem to be central to these writings: among these being a hostility towards the human subject, especially as it is conceived as autonomous; a belief that language constitutes meaning; a scepticism about the possibility of arriving at determinate meanings in relation to texts; and a suspicion of metanarratives and universals, especially those associated with `progress.'

Critiques of poststructuralist writings have, by and large, emphasised either the internal incoherence of these writings (Habermas, Peter Dews, Gillian Rose, Stanley Rosen, John Searle) or their politically reactionary tendency (Habermas again, Perry Anderson, Edward Said).[1] In this chapter, I want to draw attention to an aspect of poststructuralist thought which has not, as far as I can make out, received much attention: the (on the whole successful) attempt to shift the focus of the humanities away from instrumental rationality and disenchantment, and towards unrestrained individual freedom.[2]

Poststructuralism has "changed the topic' (my shorthand for Rorty's thesis about how `strong textualists' or those who practice revolutionary science, in Thomas Kuhn's sense of the term, bring about paradigm shifts); and largely because of the

very success with which the topic has been changed, it is more than a little difficult to hark back to the earlier topic. In order to do so, some backtracking in terms of disciplinary histories is called for.

English Studies as Part of the Humanities

In the last twenty or so years, an interesting new series of studies, almost a new genre, has made its way, if not quite into mainstream English studies, at any rate into secondary reading lists in many English departments: adversarial histories of English studies. Usually written from an avowedly Marxist ideological position, these studies analyse the development of English studies in their New Critical or Leavisite manifestations in terms of class interest, the maintenance of elites, the subordination of working class groups, or women, or colonized subjects, and the masking of ideologies by claims of neutrality or of aspirations to excellence. Francis Mulhern and Chris Baldick have written full length studies on what can roughly be called the ideology of the early and influential teachers of English; Raymond Williams, Perry Anderson and Terry Eagleton have written shorter accounts.[3]

All these studies are interesting and informative, and probably offer a much needed counterweight to the influence of earlier histories such as those by D.J. Palmer and F.R.Leavis himself.[4] Francis Mulhern's The Moment of Scrutiny is a scrupulously fair account of the efforts of the Scrutiny group

around F.R.Leavis to build up English as a `discipline of intelligence' in the university; and Perry Anderson's explanation of the rise of English studies, though schematic, is arguably the best account we have of the growth of English, placed as it is in the context of the political, social and intellectual climate of the period studied. I shall concentrate, in this chapter, on Anderson's analysis, both because of its range and suggestiveness, and because it comes closest to placing English in the framework of the characteristic set of interests of the humanities, my main concern in this chapter. I say `comes closest' advisedly; for one of the most surprising things about these otherwise scholarly and wide ranging analyses is the omission of any discussion of English as a specifically humanities subject, the humanities being understood as a historically developing orientation towards modernity.

Any discussion of the humanities in the university must begin with the understanding that the humanities are not what they used to be. The older, classical humanities were constituted largely by the study of "grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy, studied in the language and literature of the ancient Greeks and Romans" (Encyclopaedia 1180). Rhetoric was particularly important. "[T]he pursuit of eloquence (eloquentia) was a major task for the educated scholar and writer and ... was inseparable from the pursuit of wisdom (sapientia)" (Kristeller 122-23); and "[f]or Romans like Cicero and Quintilian, the humanities were those arts and subject matters which are best

suited to the formation of the orator, who was, for them, the virtuous and wise man par excellence" (Crane 5). The modern humanities, to put it briefly, and perhaps controversially, constitute themselves in opposition to the claims of science (and to those of the social sciences, insofar as these explicitly model themselves on the natural sciences). The 1981 Encyclopaedia Britannica entry on the Humanities, after some uneasy but symptomatic waffling between the pragmatic "the humanities is a term that refers to one of the administrative divisions of the college....not included within the divisions of the natural sciences and the social sciences" and the more mystical "[t]he humanities are considered to constitute a distinct kind of knowledge that is humanistic ...concerned with human values and expressions of the spirit of man (1179)," finally settles down to a more substantive definition:

> The first modern attempts at elaborating a general theory of the humanities are seen in the efforts of certain 19th century German philosophers to stake out and defend certain areas of knowledge as lying outside of, and beyond, the reach of the natural sciences. (1180)

The article goes on to distinguish four types of definitions of the humanities in the twentieth century. Each of the four types

> represents a distinctive approach to the humanities and provides a developed account and defense of them as

> constituting a unified field of study distinct from both the natural and the social sciences. On one proposition all four theories are in basic agreement, viz., that the humanities form an important and valid area of knowledge distinct from that of the sciences. (1180)

There are, of course, other definitions of the humanities; and many humanists would recoil from a description that is largely cast in negative or defensive terms. Keeping in mind caveats regarding such reductiveness, we still have to accept that any attempt to define the sphere and scope of the modern humanities has to begin by registering the existence of their great Other in the university, the natural sciences.

Perry Anderson's "Components of the National Culture" is a dazzling demonstration of the author's range and analytical skills. Some of the power of the writing comes from the tone: even in opposition, Anderson can barely conceal his awe at the grip conservatism has on the British psyche. The tension between his political goals (the article begins and ends with references to an anticipated student movement) and his grim awareness of the strength of the conservative opposition runs through the analysis. Beginning by noting the symptomatic absence of classical sociology in **Britain--in** this respect unique among the larger powers of **Europe--Anderson** uncovers the bland, anti-intellectual, parochial ethos of one academic discipline **after** another: philosophy, history, political theory, **economics,**

psychology, aesthetics. In all of these a native status-quoism has routed `general ideas' and any form of radical thought. An army of conservative emigres--a white emigration--inundated Britain in the 1920s and '30s, attracted to Britain because of its unparalleled success in holding revolution at bay, but also in their turn helping to maintain conservatism by their ideological support {Anderson mentions Wittgenstein, Popper, Berlin, Gombrich and Namier). The absence of sociology in any significant form is explained as resulting from the absence of Marxism as a political force to reckon with; sociology, with its emphasis on the primacy of ideas, having come into existence largely as a response to the materialism of Marxism ("Components" 52-56).

The most interesting part of Anderson's analysis has to do with his idea of `the absent centre', the `totality':

> Britain, then, may be defined as the European power which--uniquely--never produced either a classical sociology or a national Marxism. British culture was consequently characterized by an absent centre. For both historical materialism and classical sociology, in their different variants, were totalizing enterprises--attempts to capture the ` structure of structures', the articulation of the social whole itself.... From the outset, the British bourgeoisie forwent any large questioning of society as a whole. A deep, instinctive aversion to the very category of the totality came to

> mark its characteristic outlook. ("Components" 56-57)

But this totality, like the repressed, returns, `in abnormal or paradoxical habitats'; in this case, in the disciplines of anthropology and literary criticism. Anderson writes:

> The second displaced home of the totality was to be literary criticism. Here no expatriate influence ever became dominant. Leavis commanded his subject within his own generation. With him, English literary criticism conceived the ambition to become the vaulting centre of `humane studies and of the university'. English was `the chief of the humanities'. ("Components" 96)

The analysis, so far, has been consistently brilliant. The hypothesis about literary criticism's filling 'the vacuum at the centre of the culture' is convincing; it explains the continuing influence of Leavis's thought not only in Britain but in the Anglophone world in general, and, to some degree, in the erstwhile colonies. But why literary criticism? Anderson has good arguments for anthropology being the `home of the totality'; when it comes to English, at the most crucial part of his analysis, he is forced to fall back on paradox: "Driven out of any obvious habitats, the notion of the totality found refuge in the least expected of studies" (97). Anderson, relentlessly pointing to the weaknesses of disciplines that refuse dialectical materialism, sensitive to the political implications of later Wittgensteinian philosophy, perceptively analysing Popper's hysterical hatred of

Hegel, aware as few have been before him of the way in which a traditional structure of thinking can repel new thought like an organism repelling alien particles, suddenly offers us a paradox in lieu of an explanation.

And yet the explanation is in his own analysis, just below the surface, or between the lines. He tells us that "when philosophy became `technical,' a displacement occurred and literary criticism went `ethical'" (97). Of the humanities disciplines that Anderson has discussed, he has informed us that history, under the influence of Louis Namier, has tended more and more towards sterility and a moribund conservatism; philosophy, turning away from the Hegelianism of T.H.Green, G.H. Bradley, and Bosanquet, has turned towards positivism and ordinary language philosophy under the influence of G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, and Wittgenstein (in Europe, Hegelianism remained powerful, and Heidegger, Sartre and the theorists of the Frankfurt School were widely read and discussed even when the Vienna logical positivists were redrawing the boundaries of philosophy). If Anderson's description of the state of the humanities in Britain is accurate, and I think it is, a question one might ask is: which discipline was serving the crucial function of the modern humanities? Where, in the humanities, the raison d'etre of which is "to stake out and defend certain areas of knowledge as lying outside of, and beyond, the reach of the natural sciences," was the space for resistance to instrumental rationality? Leavis and his followers knew the answer; in fact, they put together the

answer, in institutional form, over many years of labour. `A displacement' did not simply occur, as it does in Anderson's hydraulic metaphor. Leavis captured the `absent centre' by positioning literary criticism in a certain way, in line with the criticism of science and technology he found immanent or explicit in Blake, Wordsworth, Dickens, T.S. Eliot, Conrad, Lawrence and so on. The broad outlines of Leavis's condemnation of modern technological society are, by now, familiar, partly as a result of Leavis's own relentless reiteration of it:

> The great and most menacing change brought about by the technological revolution is that it has almost destroyed the creative cultural process, of which the finer operation in that continuous renewal which maintained the human world of values and significances and spiritual graces is on the point of death; it has turned the business of human adjustment to changing material conditions into a reductive process, largely determined by business profit. The worker earns the wherewithal and the leisure to enjoy a higher standard of living by work that has little interest for him and little human meaning; it is something to be got behind him so that he can get away to live--before the telly, over the pools form, in the bingo hall, in the car. Technology, and the financial appetites, mechanisms and potencies produced by it, have determined his culture for him and saved him the trouble. (English Literature

in Our Time 55-56)

If the condemnation is familiar, the solution is less so, and of peculiar interest, whether immediate or antiquarian, to those working in the humanities in universities:

> Now there is no question of trying to reverse, or halt, the advance of technology. There can be no restoring the wheelwright's shop or the conditions of production that integrated work organically with a living culture and associated it in a major way with a creative human response. But that doesn't mean that we must... leave the human heritage... to lapse and let technology henceforward dictate... but there is also in humanity an instinct of self-preservation to appeal to--a sense of vital needs thwarted and starved by technologico-Benthamite civilization.
>
> The university... is the representative of that instinct, and the organ through which society has to make the sustained effort... to keep those needs recognized and provide our civilization with memory and mature purpose. (Leavis, English Literature in Our Time 58)

Of course Leavis did not singlehandedly revitalize English: he was in some ways an extreme, in other ways a paradigmatic representative of a more general Weltanschauung, or perhaps anti-weltanschauung. Gerald Graff writes, of the American New Critics:

> The New Criticism stands squarely in the romantic

> tradition of the defense of the humanities as an antidote to science and positivism. The methodology of "close reading" was an attempt not to imitate science but to refute its devaluation of literature.... Ransom... argued that scientific abstractions commit a kind of cold-blooded murder upon the rich, contingent particularity of "the world's body".... Brooks... puts the term "science" into simple antithesis with "love." (Literature Against Itself 133-34)

Martin.J.Weiner, in his English Culture And The Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980 describes the astonishingly widespread and intense opposition to industrial growth, and the attachment to `organic community' and pre-industrial lifestyles in the nation that had led the world into the industrial age.[5] And in Europe, at about the same time, Martin Heidegger and Georg Lukacs as well as members of the Frankfurt school, among others, were writing devastating critiques of instrumental rationality and the effects of technology on social and political life. Max Weber had drawn attention (in the classical sociology Anderson missed in Britain) to the tendency of technological rationality to affect all aspects of life, especially in the form of bureaucratic government. Marx had pointed to the alienating effects of industrial labour on the labourer.[6] And, before Marx, and influencing him, there were Schiller and Hegel, the former being one of the first to lay out a distinct critique of industrial civilization and its perils, with a particular

emphasis on specialization; a critique whose chief terms were taken up repeatedly by a host of thinkers, including the ones mentioned.[7]

So when Leavis went about setting up English as `the vaulting centre of humane studies and the university,' he was not being as quixotic as he might have sounded. As Leavis himself admits, an opportunity presented itself, and was taken.[8] Leavis tapped into and articulated a very widespread attitude of fear and suspicion of the effects of science and technology, and converted it into a moral crusade. As Anderson's analysis shows, the humanities, as a whole, were devoid of the very impulse that, in a sense, gave birth to them. Leavis and his allies responded to what must have been felt as a tremendous need, the pull of the vacuum created by the humanities in general passively submitting to an instrumental ethos, and philosophy in particular (a discipline playing such a crucial role in Kant's "contest of faculties') `going over' to positivism.

It is part of the strength of Anderson's analysis that he should ignore, or not see, the value of the Leavisite or New Critical opposition to industrial civilization. No ambiguity blurs the sharpness of the portrait. It is imperative that he see Leavis's project as hopelessly conservative, the opposition to `technologico-Benthamite' civilization as feeding into the formation of reactionary elites. And yet it is not inevitable that a Marxist should respond to Leavis's project thus: Marx himself, the `humanist' Marx dismissed by Althusser, was critical

of the effects of technology, in very much the way Schiller was. It is significant that a. generation of English Marxists influenced by Althusser (and later, Foucault) have learnt to despise `humanist' critiques of technology; indeed, they have learnt, like Althusser and perhaps Foucault, to think of their own writings as `scientific,' free of the humanist waffle about `life,' `concreteness' and so on. E.P. Thompson, who counted William Morris in his genealogy quite as much as he did Marx, wrote his polemical masterpiece The Poverty of Theory precisely to warn against the danger of this anti-humanist (and in the long run, he knew, depoliticised) Marxism.

The Contest of the Faculties and the Conversation of Mankind

I have argued that F.R. Leavis and his supporters did a great deal to establish English studies as the `chief of the humanities.[1] Whether this came out of a profound theoretical understanding of the history of the humanities in the university or not I cannot say, and is probably not very important. What is important, as I mentioned earlier, is that an opportunity presented itself, and was seized. This had less to do with individual heroism and tenacity (though these undoubtedly played their parts) than with a certain momentum of ideas, a certain structural expectation (what Anderson is gesturing towards when he writes of `the absent centre'). To put it differently, the university functions best when there is some sort of separation of powers, when the dominance of one type of thinking is checked

by a distinctively different type. In the case of the humanities in British and American universities in the early decades of the century, the dominance of science and its characteristic mode of thinking was responsible for a dangerous imbalance; this imbalance was partly corrected by the new surge of specifically humanist intellectual energies into the discipline of English.

The most celebrated of theories of the university that deploy the idea of a beneficent separation of powers is of course Immanuel Kant's. In his The Conflict of the Faculties, Kant distinguishes between the three `higher' faculties of Theology, Law and Medicine and the `lower' faculty of Philosophy. Paradoxically, the functioning of the higher faculties is constrained by the freely ranging criticism of the lower faculty, philosophy. The higher faculties represent tradition; they are essentially conservative. The lower faculty is radical, the voice of reason that dares to know and proclaim the truth. Pierre Bourdieu, in Homo Academicus, takes up Kant's idea of an institutional separation of powers, but sets up a rather different dualism: scientific competence and social competence. Social competence, in Bourdieu's view, is associated with "the capital inherited and the economic and political capital actually held"; scientific competence is associated with the "capital of scientific authority or intellectual renown" (48). Social competence, which Bourdieu links with nepotism and lack of intellectual capacity, is homologous with Kant's higher faculty. Scientific competence, making its own way in the university

without benefit of family or class-based assistance, is homologous with the disinterested spirit of inquiry of Kant's lower faculty. If, in Kant's model, philosophy emerges as the crucial discipline and supreme academic arbiter, in **Bourdieu's,** somewhat predictably, the social sciences occupy the privileged space:

> The opposition established by Kant between the two categories of faculties, the first subject to the temporal order which they serve, the second free of all social discipline and limitations, finds its culmination, and reaches its limits, in the relation between the juridical disciplines and the social sciences which, in allowing the liberty or even the irresponsibility characteristic of the temporally lower faculties into the private terrain of the higher faculties, have gradually come to challenge their monopoly of legitimate thought and discourse on the social world: on the one hand we have knowledge in the service of order and power, aiming at the rationalization, in both senses, of the given order; on the other hand we have knowledge confronting order and power, aiming not at putting public affairs in order, but at analysing them as they are... by reducing the established order and the state... to the status of merely a special case. (68-69)

Leavis, in a sense, made claims on behalf of literary

criticism that Kant once made for philosophy and Bourdieu more recently has for the social sciences.[9] And some contemporary theorists, exhilarated by what seem to be the easy victories of Theory, are making similar claims for the refurbished English studies of the last two or three decades.[10] But Leavis was mistaken, I think, to claim such a role for English, and the contemporary theorists who see poststructuralism or Cultural Studies as the new `lower faculty[1] are also mistaken. A genuine separation of powers (and Kant, for all his faith in philosophy was closer to this in spirit than either Leavis or Bourdieu) would rigorously eschew sovereign or colonizing aspirations. Here, oddly enough, the writings of a thinker who is better known as a conservative political theorist and historian may be exemplary.

Michael Oakeshott is one of the outstanding prose stylists of the century in English, as well as one of its most original thinkers. It is nothing short of amazing to encounter **Oakeshott's** elegant amateurism in an academic ethos largely dominated (to use one of his own phrases) by the voices of practical activity and of science. In a justly celebrated essay "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind," he deplores the tendency to inhibit the range and spontaneity of human utterance. Civilized life, for Oakeshott, can most profitably be compared to a conversation:

> As civilized human beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an inquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a

> conversation, begun in the primeval forests and extended and made more articulate in the course of centuries. (199)

The `voices' Oakeshott is concerned to distinguish bear a fairly close resemblance to the demarcation of schools in a university, each voice being "the reflection of a human activity":

> ... the most familiar [voices] are those of practical activity, of `science' and of `poetry'. Philosophy, the impulse to study the quality and style of each voice, and to reflect upon the relationship of one voice to another, must be counted a parasitic activity; it springs from the conversation, because this is what the philosopher reflects upon, but it makes no specific contribution to it. (199-200)

This is very like Kant's separation of academic powers, especially in the placing of philosophy as somehow non-combatant and arbiter. A conversation, however, differs markedly from a conflict or contest in its lack of solemnity, its playfulness:

> ...the excellence of this conversation . . . springs from a tension between seriousness and playfulness.... in its participation in the conversation each voice learns to be playful, learns to understand itself conversationally and to recognize itself as a voice among voices. As with children, who are great conversationists, the playfulness is serious and the seriousness in the end is only play. (Oakeshott, "The

Voice of Poetry" 201-2)

This emphasis on playfulness in Oakeshott's account of civilized interaction is the precise counterpart of Schiller's play-drive (which I discuss in the last chapter). For Oakeshott, as for Schiller, man is most truly human when he plays. Of late, however, man has become more inhuman, less playful:

> In recent centuries the conversation, both in public and within ourselves, has become boring because it has been engrossed by two voices, the voice of practical activity and the voice of `science': to know and to contrive are our pre-eminent occupations.... But for a conversation to be appropriated by one or two voices is an insidious vice because in the passage of time it takes on the appearance of a virtue. . . . Consequently an established monopoly will not only make it difficult for another voice to be heard, but it will also make it seem proper that it should not be heard: it is convicted in advance of irrelevance. ("The Voice of Poetry" 202)

This description of the appropriation of a conversation, in the course of which one of the voices is `convicted in advance of irrelevance' matches the institutional change of topic I have been discussing. And Oakeshott's `modest undertaking' in response to the threat is of particular significance to people in English studies:

> My proposal is to consider again the voice of poetry;

> to consider it as it speaks in the conversation. . . . And if what is now needed is some relief from the monotony of a conversation too long appropriated by politics and science, it may be supposed that an inquiry into the quality and significance of the voice of poetry may do something in this interest. (203)

Oakeshott's urbane analysis and his suggestions for amelioration, it seems to me, are distinctly superior to Kant's in that no `voice' arbitrates:

> . . .the only apology for poetry worth considering is one which seeks to discern the place and quality of the voice of poetry in the conversation of mankind--a conversation where each voice speaks in its own idiom, where from time to time one voice may speak louder than others, but where none has natural superiority, let alone primacy. ("The Voice of Poetry" 241)

Oakeshott's essay is concerned with human utterance in general, a considerably larger sphere than that I have been considering, that of the relations between disciplines in the university. But elsewhere he has written about the university, in terms very similar to those he employs in "The Voice of Poetry" essay:

> ... the identity of a culture and of liberal learning remains obscure until we have some conception of the relationship of its components. Now each of these languages constitutes the terms of a distinct, conditional understanding of the world and a similarly

> distinct idiom of human self-understanding. Their virtue is to be different from one another.... Perhaps we may recognize liberal learning as an initiation into the art of this conversation in which we learn to recognize the voices; to distinguish their different modes of utterance, to acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to this conversational relationship and thus to make our debut dans la vie humaine. (The Voice of Liberal Learning 38-39)

The Positivism of Poststructuralism

What impact does poststructuralism have on the contest of faculties, or on the conversation of the university? Richard Rorty, in an interesting discussion of poststructuralism and its impact on academic disciplines, takes the view diametrically opposed to the view argued here: he sees poststructuralists as resisting the claims of science. He would, however, agree that poststructuralists have succeeded in changing the topic. He thinks they have managed "to put the other disciplines in their places" ("Idealism and Textualism" 155), a development he views with approval, for reasons of his own.

My own impression is that poststructuralism has the effect of supporting positivism by undoing the science vs. humanities oppositional framework. By attacking traditional literary studies from an anti-humanist position, i.e. by launching a totalizing attack, it undermines that discipline's ability to oppose

scientific hegemony. (For instance, Derridean deconstruction, taken seriously, undermines the Leavisite or New Critical project of deploying the Romantic or modernist energies of Blake or D.H. Lawrence against a stultifying industrial civilization by urging that the intention of the author being studied cannot be determined, or that the deconstruction empties the text of meaning, or that unpicking the binary oppositions demonstrates that the author is saying precisely the opposite of what it had been assumed he/she was saying). By emphasizing professionalism it undermines the carefully maintained balance between professionalism and amateurism characteristic of many of the earlier practitioners of English studies.[11] And, in the terms of Oakeshott's metaphor, it further subdues the voice of poetry by urging, on the one hand, that it is meaningless (significantly, always a weapon in the arsenal of those primarily concerned with practical activity or with science); or, on the other hand, that it is meaningful only as a means of perpetuating the power of the already powerful.

There are other indications that many poststructuralist writings can be more easily assimilated to the voices of practical activity and of science than to that of poetry: Stanley Rosen comments on the "technophilia, the characteristic eros of the twentieth century, [that] is widespread among our academic hermeneuticists" (144).

Perhaps the most bizarre instances of what may be called the scientism of anti-scientism are to be found in the work of Michel

Foucault (Habermas describes it bluntly as positivist, and Perry Anderson comments on his `technocratic functionalism[1]).[12] At one level, Foucault's studiedly neutral descriptions of punitive legislation or the workings of asylums and prisons demand to be read as critiques of structures and institutions, more especially structures of thought derived from an optimistic and rational Enlightenment humanism. Read thus, Foucault's work can be assimilated to the earlier critiques of instrumental rationality made by Adorno and Horkheimer, or Herbert Marcuse, or even Heidegger. But Foucault's own refusal of anything resembling a moral position, his insistence that power is not just oppressive, but productive, and permeates all aspects of existence, makes it difficult to class him with these thinkers. And what are we to make of his fondness for historical ruptures, dated with immense precision? What are they doing in the work of someone who wishes to expose the `mathesis' of earlier times, a mathesis which is a universal science of measurement and order? Gillian Rose, in a brilliant analysis of Foucault's anti-humanist positivism, observes: "The Order of Things should be read not as the first attempt since Nietzsche to interrupt our anthropological slumber but as a renewed attempt to drug us into the far deeper sleep of mathesis" (183).

Foucault, taking sociologists to task, sounds exactly like a sociologist. Ostensibly attacking the hubris of scientific rationalism as it is deployed in the human sciences, his own mental world strangely resembles the cold world of particle

physics: his *power' closely resembles the concept of force as it is used in physics, the inconvenient idea of `man' is thoroughly dispersed, and micropolitics looks very like random and meaningless collisions between particles shortly before they are dissolved. If Freud, Marx and Althusser attacked existing science in the name of a better, higher, more scientific science, and if Nietzsche and Heidegger encouraged the tendency to identify rationality in general with instrumental rationality, Foucault seems to have achieved the difficult task of combining these legacies. His would appear to be a science that destroys itself in the act of enunciation.

It is likely that most of Foucault's admirers and even many of his critics would read his work as constituting a powerful critique of science and scientific rationality.[13] Richard Rorty, as I mentioned earlier, argues that poststructuralists (whom he calls `textualists') "adopt an antagonistic position to natural science":

> Both [idealists and textualists] suggest that the natural scientist should not be the dominant cultural figure, that scientific knowledge is not what really matters. Both insist that there is a point of view other than, and somehow higher than, that of science. ("Idealism and Textualism" 139)

But there is a paradox here, one that may go to the heart of the poststructuralist `aura'. As Rorty himself points out, in "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity":

> It takes no more than a squint of the inner eye to read Foucault as a stoic, a dispassionate observer of the present social order, rather than its concerned critic. Because the rhetoric of emancipation...is absent from his work, he can easily be thought of as reinventing American "functionalist" sociology. The extraordinary dryness of Foucault's work is a counterpart of the dryness which Iris Murdoch once objected to in the writing of British analytic philosophers. It is a dryness produced by a lack of identification with any social context, any communication. (172)

What this suggests (and this holds for Derrida and his followers as well) is that a bizarre new positivist anti-science discourse may be the really original feature of poststructuralist writing. As Rorty hints, functionalist sociology, rather than the natural sciences, may be the paradigm poststructuralists set up as their ideal.[14] We may do well to remember that very few natural scientists were as positivist as Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, among the fathers of modern sociology. So we may grant that poststructuralists like Foucault `adopt an antagonistic position to natural science,' while retaining our suspicion that they are positivist. For one thing, adopting a position is self-evidently distinct from believing something. Rorty may also be right to think that textualists have `put natural science in its place' (though university funding does not seem to reflect this new hierarchy); what he crucially omits to

mention is that they do this, or attempt to do this, by using the methods of science.[15]

In this discussion of Foucault's work, and in the later discussion of Althusser's, I am obviously trying to make a distinction between the humanist critique of science and the anti-humanist, poststructuralist one. The anti-humanist critique, by dissolving the human subject and by conflating rationality per se with instrumental rationality, delivers itself into the hands of that instrumental rationality. It inevitably finds itself celebrating the inhuman forces that instrumental rationality unleashes. This characteristically blurring move is nicely captured by Habermas, who contrasts the critiques of neo-Nietzscheans and poststructuralists unfavourably with those of Hegel, Marx, Weber and Lukacs:

> Enlightenment and manipulation, the conscious and the unconscious, forces of production and forces of destruction, expressive self-realization and repressive desublimation, effects that ensure freedom and those that remove it--now all these moments flow into one another.... Now the differences and oppositions are so undermined and even collapsed that critique can no longer discern contrasts, shadings, and ambivalent tones within the flat and faded landscape of a totally administered, calculated, and power-laden world. (Philosophical Discourse 338)

Hostility towards the idea of the human subject is one of

the mainstays of poststructuralism: it may indeed be a defining characteristic. Derrida, in one of his best known passages, speaks approvingly of an interpretation which "affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology--in other words, throughout his entire history--has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play" (Writing and Difference 292); and Foucault never tires of declaring his `indifference' to the human subject and emphasizing its constructedness, its `illusory unity':

> The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" 83)

Characteristic of this critique of subjectivity, of humanism, is the suggestion that the poststructuralists making the critique are taking immense risks, venturing into unknown and dangerous psychic territory (Derrida presumably eschews `reassuring foundations' himself).

Derrida, Foucault, Barthes and their American disciples can afford to merely gesture towards the dispersed human subject, the groundwork for the actual theoretical dismantling having been carried out earlier, mainly by the structuralists Levi-Strauss and Althusser. Perry Anderson's historical reconstruction of the

escalating attack on the subject marvellously captures the tragi-comic tone of the entire episode :

> `The ultimate goal of the human sciences is not to constitute man but to dissolve him', Levi-Strauss concluded [in The Savage Mind], unloosing the slogan of the decade. When a Marxist reply finally came, in 1965, it was no repudiation, but a counter-signature of the structuralist claim. Louis Althusser's two books For Marx and Reading Capital, rather than engaging with Levi-Strauss's attack on history or his interpretation of humanism, endorsed and incorporated them into a Marxism that was now itself reinterpreted as a theoretical anti-humanism. . . . But in an objectivist auction of this kind, he was bound to be outbid. A year later his former pupil Foucault, proclaiming a full-throated rhetoric of the `end of man', in turn reduced Marxism itself to an involuntary effect of an out-dated Victorian episteme, and no more than a derivative one at that. (In the Tracks 37-38)

Althusser's anti-humanism is of particular interest for my argument, both because he made a lasting impact on Foucault, Derrida, and many English Marxists, with his brief but enormous influence on European intellectual circles, and because his claims to originality were based on his opposition to the centrality of the concept of alienation in Marxist theory: a concept which has a certain amount in common with the Leavisite

condemnation of technology and materialism.[16]

Althusser's target, in For Marx, is the humanist version of Marxism. He claims that there are (at least) two distinct Marxes, separated by an `epistemological break.' Before the break, in the `young Marx,' Althusser locates the real enemy: "an ideological drama of human alienation and self-realization, with humanity the author of its unfolding destiny much in the manner of the world spirit according to Hegel."[17] After the break, which Althusser places in 1845, is the `mature Marx,' who creates the science of. historical materialism. According to Althusser, the post-1845 Marx produces a `theory' of history and politics based on radically new concepts: the concepts of social formation, productive forces, relations of production, etc.. Most significantly, Althusser claims, the new conception defines humanism as an ideology, and radically critiques the theoretical pretensions of every philosophical humanism. Marx's scientific discovery is the rupture with theories of humanism, of the essence of man (For Marx 227).

For Althusser, alienation and humanism are inextricably entangled, and both are the products of the `young Marx, ' who was too Hegelian, who had not yet struggled free of the clutches of German idealism, who was forced to compromise with the times: who was, in a nutshell, not the `mature Marx. ' The trouble with alienation, for Althusser, is that "the revolutionary alliance of the proletariat and of philosophy is once again sealed in the essence of man" (For Marx 227).

Marx's concept of alienation, adapted from Hegel's, is fairly complex, but at its root is Marx's clear understanding that in capitalist societies, labour degrades and diminishes the labourer. This happens in four distinct ways: 1) Man is alienated, or separated from, the products of his labour and that labour itself, 2) Man is alienated from nature, `the sensuous exterior world' which is the context of his labour, 3) He is alienated from other human beings, and 4) He is alienated from himself as a `species being.' Just one extract from the Economic And Philosophical Manuscripts should suffice to explain why the work as a whole so irritated Althusser, with his hostility towards `human history[1] and the conception of human subjectivity this assumed:

> We have taken the alienation and the externalization of labour as a fact and analysed this fact. We now ask, how does man come to externalize, to alienate his labour?...We have already obtained much material for the solution of this problem in that we have turned the question of the origin of private property into the question of the relationship of externalized labour to the development of human history.... When we speak of labour, then we are dealing directly with man. This new formulation of the problem already implies its solution. (Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts 144)

Marxist humanism, says Althusser, "is an ideological phenomenon," that is to say, **"a threat or hindrance to scientific knowledge"**

(For Marx 11-12). The corollary of Althusser's hostility to the idea of alienation, to the human subject, is obvious. In the absence of the integrated, sentient, reasoning human subject, the entire process of alienation becomes meaningless. No subject, no alienation. Or, put differently, without a subject to register opposition to the dehumanizing effects of alienated labour or technological rationality, there are no dehumanizing effects: in a sense, the problem is solved.[18] A complete capitulation to instrumental rationality masquerades as a final victory over it. After Althusser, in particular, this option becomes particularly attractive to the French poststructuralists. It accounts for the depressing cheeriness of Derrida's `jouissance,' Foucault's `indifference,' Lyotard's rejection of `the nostalgia of the whole.'[19]

Althusser's theories have been widely discredited; and instead of the de-Hegelised Marx he endorsed becoming influential, there are many signs of renewed interest in a Hegel without the Marxist appendages.[20] But the anti-humanist posture appears to have emigrated into other discourses, even those which are hostile to Marxism, such as the poststructuralism of Foucault (Eagleton describes Foucault's "aversion to the whole category of the subject" as "pathological").[21] Althusser's rejection of alienation is an early rehearsal for the poststructuralist rejection of the humanities' critique of instrumental rationality. While Althusser failed (alienation continuing to be an important theme in Marxism), the poststructuralist attempt

appears to have succeeded, in that resistance rarely takes the form of passionate and sophisticated affirmations of humanism.

Resistance from within English Studies

I have been discussing poststructuralism and theoretical opposition to its claims as though there has been no such opposition from within English departments. Of course, there has been a considerable, often very sophisticated resistance to poststructuralism; but the very assumptions/ the institutional history of English studies, have made this resistance vulnerable. In a curious way, it is the poststructuralists, the academic feminists who are attracted to poststructuralism, and the Althusserian Marxists, who seem to be Leavis's heirs in English departments: they are the ones with the aggressive polemical style, the ferocious moral energy of the Leavisites. As Gerald Graff puts it:

> Resistance remains, but it is largely unorganized, without a coherent theoretical position, and unsure of itself; and it is easily intimidated by charges that it is elitist, dogmatic, dull, reactionary, and hostile to novelty and progress--all of which, of course, it sometimes is. (Literature Against Itself 4)

The point is that these defences, like the defences of the parliamentary university discussed in the earlier chapter, though quite brilliant and coherent, do not engage with the passionate

and anarchic energies that the newer, more radical theories tap into. A moral and political attack can only be fended off by a moral and political defence.

The (more or less) orthodox resistance seems to have taken three main forms (leaving aside complaints about obscurantism and jargon, which tend to run through all the types, and in any case do not, by themselves, constitute a respectable critique). The first, more often encountered in non-academic journals and newspapers, concerns the poststructuralist threat to Western culture, and the means of combating it. Reading these polemical defences of the West is great fun, and I must confess to having read everything on the subject I can lay my hands on. I am looking forward to encountering an enormous tome entitled The Fall of the West: How Illiberally Educated Tenured Radicals Destroyed the American University and Dismantled the Western Canon By Politicizing the Curriculum . The trouble with this kind of resistance, however, for academics at any rate/ is that even if the danger is felt to be real, it is impossible for anyone to deal with it except by meeting it head on: that is to say, by affirming that Western culture is superior to all other cultures. This option, fortunately, is now largely unavailable to Western academics, hoist by their own liberal petard. The second, and I think most characteristic form of resistance, consists of a defence of the idea that it is possible to identify an author's intention and talk about it.[22] This is a limited engagement, on grounds that English teachers are fairly familiar with. They can,

after all, point to the text and say, in tones ranging from confidence to despair: This is so, is it not? There have been some excellent defences of this idea; but here again, the problem is that the very proliferation of interpretations in the past and continuing in the present, not to say anticipated in the future, militates against the idea that there is a single intention to point to. This scepticism about intention was already in place with the New Critics, so it is not easy to dismiss similar sounding but • more radical arguments made by the poststructuralists, or by pragmatists like Stanley Fish. The third kind of resistance to poststructuralism is that attempted by Gerald Graff, E.D. Hirsch, and A.D. Nuttall.[23] Concerned at the attacks being made on the `truth' value of language or literature, these writers have attempted ambitious and interesting defences of the `truth' of language or literature (Nuttall's A New Mimesis, in particular, is quite brilliant). Of the three types of resistance, I find the last mentioned the most interesting, partly because I am sympathetic to attempts to elevate the importance of literature. However, given my assumptions about the necessity of English being, for its own and everyone else's good, permanently in opposition, I cannot but feel that these writers are coming dangerously close to claiming for English what will please the utilitarian and the philistine. Leavis, if asked whether literature had anything to do with` truth, ' would probably have responded that it had to do with something far more important, with the very existence of a

civilization. Perhaps it is an indication of the hard times English studies have fallen on, and the growth of that technologico-Benthamite civilization Leavis feared and hated, that some of its most dedicated defenders are forced to defend literature on the grounds of its truth.

The Culture Wars and Competing Narratives of Decline

From the very beginning, English studies have been at the centre of controversies in the university. If, in Leavis's time, English studies drew attention to itself by persistently criticising the materialism and Philistinism of twentieth century society, and by daring to question the right of scientists to be adjudicators in the realm of morality; today English studies, especially in the United States, is at the centre of a very different kind of controversy, one that has to do with the claims of minorities of various kinds, and with the alleged brutality and exploitativeness of Western culture as a whole.

I suggest that if we look at the way the preoccupations of English studies have changed, and especially if we look at how these preoccupations have changed in terms of certain underlying narratives of decline, we may come to an understanding of why, in the opinion of some writers, the very basis of the university, the conceptual framework and justification of its functioning, has been threatened as never before.

The book which triggered off tne recent spate of apocalyptic speculations about the university was undoubtedly Allan Bloom's

The Closing of the American Mind. This book and Edward Said's Orientalism, I will suggest, are the founding documents of what have been called "the culture wars." Bloom's book told the story, now familiar, of a decline of academic standards in the universities of America. If the story was familiar, the details were gripping by any standards, with diatribes against rock music and casual sex on campuses cheek by jowl with discussions of Plato's ideals. Even more unusual was the analysis of why universities had degenerated. Students did not read enough of the classics, and American academics had been overwhelmed by the influx of Continental, and especially German, ideas, particularly after the Second World War. This led to a "Nietzscheanization" (and a Weberization) of academic life, which American universities had not recovered from in the eighties. In fact the process may have accelerated.

If Bloom told a story of decay and increasing relativism in the American university, Edward Said's Orientalism, which had appeared almost ten years earlier, told the story of the West's domination and exploitation of the non-West, from the times of Aeschylus to the U.S. policy planners and Middle-East experts of our own period. "Orientalism," Said writes, "can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient--dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient"

(3).

Bloom's and Said's analyses feed interestingly into each other. Most conservatives would accept Bloom's description of the American university as an institution visibly degenerating; but they would be more likely to blame what they would see as the anti-Western biases of influential figures like Said than the value-relativism of somewhat distant figures such as Weber. Also, the classics Bloom holds up to us as exemplary and worthy of imitation are themselves being interrogated, very often in the categories Said used to analyse the West's "style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." Said's narrative of increasing domination (of the non-West by the West) is not contradicted by Bloom's narrative of the diminishing importance of the classics of the West in the very place that was intended to keep them alive, the university. The accuracy of the composite picture, of increasing material and instrumental power with diminishing moral and cultural influence, is widely endorsed (and its' effects deplored by intellectuals in the West).

Bloom's `narrative of decline' is part of an immensely influential and popular tradition of apocalyptic writing about Western culture (a sort of Apocalypse Now and Then) which probably goes all the way back to Greek civilization. We have had, in recent times, Alasdair MacIntyre's After Virtue, and Francis Fukuyama's The End of History and the Last Man, approximately Apocalypse Left and Right (approximately, because Maclntyre's anti-liberalism makes him attractive to the Left, but

his reliance on Augustine and Aristotle rules out any easy appropriation, while Fukuyama, though he is certainly more liberal than socialist, treats progressivism too sardonically to permit easy assimilation to the liberal position). While the decline itself, in the various accounts, is a reassuring constant, the moment of decline tends to vary widely, indeed wildly. With Bloom the coming of German thought into American intellectual life marks the beginning of the decline; MacIntyre sees the rot setting in when the Thomistic compromise starts to lose its authority; Fukuyama, more equably, with Hegel, sees the end prefigured in the rise of rationality, and so on.

With Fukuyama's evocation of Hegel we find ourselves in the presence of the founding-father of all modern narratives of decline. Without Hegel's extraordinarily influential theory of history, I will argue, we would not have the two most famous modern narratives of decline: those of Nietzsche and Spengler. Bloom and Said are only superficially the spokesmen for the primary antagonistic positions of the culture wars; more significant are the narratives of decline, often unacknowledged, that lie behind these positions.

Few philosophical theories have had the scope and sweep, or the influence, of Hegel's philosophy of history. Like some force of Nature, or perhaps more appositely, like a modern law of science, the cunning of reason sweeps through epochs and ages, indifferent to the desires of individuals, advancing like Yeats's rough beast' or Thompson's Hound, with unperturbed pace,

deliberate speed, majestic instancy.' All of history, all the suffering, happiness, death, births, plans and hopes of all mankind, according to Hegel, have a single justification: the furthering or development of the idea of freedom. Greek civilization, the advent of Christianity, the Renaissance and the Reformation, the growth of liberal ideas; all these are stages in the life of the idea of freedom, which approaches its fulfilment in Hegel's own period, indeed in Hegel's own consciousness.

Hegel's philosophy was emphatically not a narrative of decline; on the contrary, it was the most glorious, most ambitious narrative of progress of all time. In the hands of Nietzsche, however, Hegel's historicism is neatly inverted, and the very force that worked to convince Hegel's readers of the truth of his vision was turned against this vision. In Hegel's thinking, Socrates had figured as one of the crucial turning points in the march of Spirit. Socrates was undoubtedly one of those figures of world-historical significance whose role Hegel describes with carefully subdued admiration. But Socrates's intransigent belief in rationality, so vital for the march of the Spirit, spells doom for the Greek city state that nurtured him:

> This beautiful unity of the Greek state is doomed. It is doomed because of its limitations, its parochialness. The world spirit has to march on. Hence once the polis is realized the cunning of reason calls world-historical individuals to look beyond. Such a

> figure in his own way is Socrates. Socrates turns his allegiance to universal reason. And though he wants to remain obedient to the laws of his polis, he would like to found them on reason. Thus while he maintains his allegiance to Athens to the death, nevertheless his teaching cannot but corrupt the youth, for it undermines that immediate identification with the public life on which the polis rests. (Taylor 396)

In The Birth of Tragedy Nietzsche takes up Hegel's analysis of Socrates' role in the destruction of the Greek city state (he himself later wryly notes that The Birth of Tragedy has `a strong smell of Hegel about it').[24] But unencumbered with a theory of the progress of the West, Nietzsche comes to exactly the opposite conclusions from Hegel. As he (with characteristic modesty) describes it: "The... innovation lies in the interpretation of Socratism--Socrates being recognized for the first time as the instrument of Greek decline, as the type of decadence" (Ecce Homo 866).

Nietzsche's attack on Socrates as the chief cause of the subsequent decay of the Dionysian energies Nietzsche valued in Greek tragedy has entered modern thought so thoroughly that Nietzsche's more optimistic conclusion—that the increasing aridity of the (Apollonian) vision of science would trigger off a new round of Dionysian creation--appears to have been forgotten. The link between Western rationality and the wasteland of the modern world was unforgettably forged by Nietzsche; no

later attempt to break the conceptual link has been comparably successful.

Oswald Spengler's Decline of the West is more a representative text than a founding document. Unlike Nietzsche, Spengler cannot claim any very startling originality, except in the matter of the `morphological' treatment of cultures, which most people no longer take very seriously anyway. But Spengler's writing was undoubtedly very influential in its time, partly because it seemed to say what many were already thinking; in any case, I am more interested in its difference from Nietzsche's work, and in the consequences of this difference.

While Spengler, on the one hand, revives the idea of cyclical history, on the other (in the shorter duree, as it were) he displays a memorable animus towards the period of European history in which English materialism became influential. So, if Nietzsche locates the point of decline with the Socratic rational challenge to the life-giving Dionysian energies, Spengler locates the start of the decline with the dominance of the thought of Locke and Hume. The `English sensualists,' Spengler claims, were the chief (and unfortunate) influences on even Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. This hostility to English empiricism is even clearer in his The Hour of Decision, written fourteen years after Decline of the West:

> It occurs to no one to educate the masses to the level of true culture--that would be too much trouble, and possibly certain postulates for it are absent. On the

> contrary, the structure of society is to be levelled down to the standard of the populace. General equality is to reign, everything is to be equally vulgar. . . . **Superiority,** manners, taste, and every description of inward rank are crimes. Ethical, religious, national ideas, marriage for the sake of children, the family, State authority: all these are old-fashioned and reactionary.. **.but** let no one suppose that it is a spirit from Moscow that has conquered here. Bolshevism's home is Western Europe, and has been so ever since the English materialist world-view, which dominated the circles where Voltaire and Rousseau moved as docile pupils, found effective expression in Jacobinism on the Continent. (97)

I have quoted this passage at some length to point up the resonances of **Spengler's** critique with other, and later writings, by cultural critics like Ortega Y Gasset, T.S. Eliot, **Leavis,** and even Adorno and **Horkheimer.** Spenglerian bitterness at the effects of the spread of democracy and mass culture is, by now, familiar; but not so familiar that it is not titillating.

Nietzsche and Spengler offer us narratives of decline of great power and suggestiveness. Nietzsche's far more radical narrative, I would suggest, has been taken up by the **`cultural Left'** of the American university, while the Spenglerian version still fuels the theories and criticism of the more orthodox **group.**

The most celebrated theory of decline as far as students of English are concerned is certainly T.S. Eliot's discussion of the `dissociation of sensibility' in "The Metaphysical Poets." According to Eliot, "something . . . had happened to the mind of England between the time of Donne or Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the time of Tennyson and Browning" (2305):

> The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience.... In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered. (2305)

Eliot's is only the best known variant of a theory that commanded widespread acceptance. Yvor Winters, F.R. Leavis and T.E. Hulme all endorsed versions of a narrative of cultural decline; and for all of them this decline set in, approximately, and not by coincidence, at the time of the growth of Baconian empiricism and Renaissance science.[25]

Patrick Parrinder has commented on Leavis's closeness to Spengler; and the resemblance is striking.[26] Spenglerian cultural criticism, in fact, has been the real basis of English criticism in the academy, until the challenge to this criticism from cultural studies, deconstruction, various kinds of feminist critique, attacks on the canon and so on from the seventies to our time. The challenge, I have argued, draws on a counter-narrative of decline, one which sets the date of decline much

earlier, with the very beginnings of rational thought, and one which was first articulated by Nietzsche, drawing on Hegel. The point of the Spenglerian narrative is that critics can attempt to recover a vision of a lost age by close reading or some sort of hermeneutical engagement with the texts of the postulated lost age; the Nietzschean narrative encourages the scrapping of the entire Western rational tradition. The Nietzschean assault on reason is, in a sense, too radical to permit of assimilation. As Derrida argues in a recent essay on the university, "the University's reason for being has always been reason itself, and some essential connection of reason to being."[27] Pointing to the principle of Reason's ungroundedness, its inability to tether itself otherwise than through a rhetorical statement of its reasonableness, Derrida envisages the university as holding itself "suspended above a most peculiar void" (9) (yes, it's that deconstructionist abyss again). Derrida, like many of his allies, is not afraid of the void. Like the students to whom Trilling attempted to talk about the dangers of modern literature, they peer into the void and courteously interrogate it. But for those of us who dislike abysses, voids, chasms, aporias and so on, the way through is the way around, not the way down.

The effectiveness with which poststructuralism has `changed the topic[1] in English studies is closely tied in with the way poststructuralists have endorsed (usually tacitly, but not necessarily the less effectively for that reason) the Nietzschean version of a narrative of decline. The crucial difference from

Nietzsche's position seems to lie in the fact that Nietzsche attacked the Western rational tradition with a sense of the rich resources of art, and especially tragic art, behind him; poststructuralists attack the Western rational tradition without communicating any sense of a saving aesthetic tradition, even a risky Dionysian one. Refusing what appears to them to be the speciousness of an increasingly reified and distinctively non-tragic art, the new idealists are left with no option but to oppose rationality in the tones (and often the vocabulary) of a sceptical positivism.

Conclusion

I have argued, in this chapter, that English studies, especially in the way it took shape under Leavis's influence and that of some of the New Critics, performed a certain function as part of the humanities in the university, and in society. That function was, roughly, to check the power of science, and to keep certain alternative routes imaginatively or actually open. It hardly needs saying that I consider this a valuable function. I have further argued that the developments in the humanities that collectively go under the name of poststructuralism have had certain effects on this function which seem, by and large, to have gone unnoticed. Whatever the overall benefits to individuals, institutions, social groupings and so on that have resulted from the advent of poststructuralism (and inevitably there have been considerable benefits, perhaps even to those most

dismayed by the advent), it seemed important to point to some obvious losses. The greatest loss, I have argued, is that of a certain oppositional energy, an energy that came from a powerful sense of the danger to human existence of the destructive potential of modern science. The fact that this danger was sensed by some of the most distinguished thinkers and artists of the last two centuries (Rousseau, Kant, Schiller, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Weber, Marx, Matthew Arnold, Lukacs, Lawrence, Rilke, Heidegger, Adorno, Tolstoy, Thoreau, Gandhi, to name only a few) gave this energy a shape and a focus. And the fact that many of the thinkers and artists mentioned looked to art, specifically, for salvation, may help to explain why the humanities, the division of university education closest to the creative arts, have often been in the vanguard of the movement to check the deleterious effects of an unchecked instrumental rationality through one or the other version of an `aesthetic education.[1] Having said this, I feel I should immediately add that I do not think that anything resembling a simple shift to an earlier mode of functioning will be at all helpful. It has been said, and said often, and said by persons who are insufficiently critical of their own prejudices, that English studies in the past were parochial, elitist, anti-intellectual, ahistorical, and so on and so forth. All these accusations are true, and for that reason alone there can be no going back. But the charges are not as damaging as some critics think, especially when one considers what was achieved, in the face of the danger described earlier.

What seems to me to be the most damaging charge, one which I take up in the next chapter, and one which was made, in a sense, from within the ranks of the older humanists, concerned the philosophical and literary position from which the defence of **the** humanities was made: the position we now identify with the term modernism.

NOTES

1. See Habermas's "Modernity Versus Postmodernity" and The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity; Peter Dews's Logics of Disintegration; Gillian Rose's Dialectic of Nihilism; Stanley Rosen's Hermeneutics As Politics ; John R. Searle's "Is There a Crisis in American Higher Education?" and "Literary Theory and Its Discontents"; Perry Anderson's In the Tracks of Historical Materialism; and Said's "Secular Criticism" in The World, The Text, and the Critic.

2. Poststructuralism's latent correspondence with the ideology of the free market is obscured by the fact that liberal humanism is so often the target; perhaps what is being attacked is monopoly capitalism/ not the market as such. It has always struck me as significant that the fragmented subjectivity celebrated by poststructuralists is very similar to the psychological state of the consumer in Adorno's `totally administered' society. This consumer, interpellated in Althusserian fashion by advertisers ("You! John! Are you really happy? Does your breath smell fresh? You cannot really be you until you freshen up with_____") lacks a stable identity. He/she is entirely constituted by the texts of advertising. Also significant is the shift in English Cultural Studies, away from Adorno's and Leavis's savage contempt for advertising and television programmes to a considerable sympathy for these, in the work of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall.

3. See Mulhern, The Moment of Scrutiny; Baldick, The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932; Raymond Williams, "Cambridge English, Past and Present" in Writing in Society; Perry Anderson, "Components of the National Culture" in English Questions; Terry Eagleton, "The Rise of English" in Literary Theory: An Introduction.

4. See D.J. Palmer's The Rise of English Studies and F.R. Leavis's English Literature in the University in Our Time.

5. Weiner writes in a spirit of exasperation and despair at Britain's backwardness on the road to progress:

> In the world's first industrial nation, industrialism did not seem quite at home. In the country that had started mankind on the "great ascent," economic growth was frequently viewed with suspicion and disdain. Having pioneered urbanization, the English ignored or disparaged cities. (English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit ix)

6. For one of the best recent discussions of the various late nineteenth and early twentieth century critiques of instrumental rationality, see Charles Taylor's Sources of the Self, especially

the concluding chapter, "The Conflicts of Modernity."

7. Schiller's critique of modern civilization is discussed at greater length in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

8. See English Literature in Our Time, 14.

9. Wolf Lepenies's Between Sociology and Literature explores the relationship between English literature and sociology in some detail.

10. Jonathan Culler in On Deconstruction seems to think that literary theory ought to play a dominant role across the disciplines. In this he is no doubt encouraged by philosophers like Richard Rorty, who has consistently upheld the claims of literary theorists against those of philosophers. For an excellent sceptical response to Rorty's ideas from someone in English studies, see Michael Fischer's "Redefining Philosophy as Literature: Richard Rorty's `Defence' of Literary Culture" in Reading Rorty.

Christopher Norris's promisingly titled Contest of Faculties deals very tangentially with Kant's way of setting up the disciplinary trajectories; like Culler, Norris seems to believe that literary theory will inherit the mantle of philosophy as overarching discipline, but this time through a thoroughgoing scepticism rather than through arbitration or reconstruction.

11. This statement would have to be qualified by our knowledge that the Leavises and the American New Critics were often fighting on two fronts: against positivism (and the denigration of literary criticism by scientists or Classicists), but also against what they saw as the genteel amateurism of their predecessors. So the professionalism of the poststructuralists can be seen as the logical and inevitable extension of a professionalizing tendency already inherent in English studies in the 30s and 40s. Graff's Literature Against Itself has an interesting discussion of the efforts of the New Critics to carve a position for themselves that was neither positivist nor too amateur.

12. Habermas, Philosophical Discourse of Modernity 270, 273; Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism 57.

13. Leonard Jackson, in The Poverty of Structuralism, also argues that structuralism and poststructuralism are irrational and anti-science in orientation. He believes that

> [poststructuralists'] ideas are...parts of a general oppositional stance towards an advanced industrial capitalist society, in which the discourses of science and engineering have a triumphal and central role, while those of the humanities are marginal and ineffective. They could even be seen as a counter-attack by a relatively unsuccessful group of intellectuals upon the ideology of a much more successful group. (18)

Jackson's analysis, as far as it goes, probably captures something of the motivations of many poststructuralists; but he sets up too simple an opposition between `good' empirical thinking and resentful, opaque Continental thinking. His own position is dangerously close to an earlier positivism, of the logical positivist variety.

14. Rene Girard, in "Theory and Its Terrors," an excellent discussion of structuralism and poststructuralism, says:

> Deconstruction originates in a spirit of mimetic rivalry with the social sciences. This spirit always turns the rivals into identical twins, and this paradoxical effect can be observed in our present situation. Even though the social sciences and deconstruction are poles apart philosophically, their ultimate impact on intellectual life and on the academic world is strikingly similar. This, I think, is one of the most curious consequences of the present situation. (234)

15. Aijaz Ahmad, in a discussion of the relationship between `Theory' and `Third World Literature,' says:

> The overall thrust of American deconstruction was in any case highly technicist, shorn of whatever political radicalism there might have been in the original French formation; the net result was to make the text entirely hermetic. . . .It was in the moment of the emergence of this full-scale techno logy--launched, paradoxically enough, in contemptuous dismissal of rationalism for its claims to scientificity--that literary criticism in the English-speaking countries gave way to what came to be known as literary theory. (In Theory 55, emphasis added)

16. To take just one instance, in the section on "Alienated Labour" in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Marx writes:

> The worker only feels at home outside his work and in his work he feels a stranger. He is at home when he is not working and when he works he is not at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary but compulsory, forced labour. (137)

This is obviously very similar to the passage from Leavis's English Literature in Our Time, quoted earlier, where he describes work as something the worker gets "behind him so that he can get away to live." Of course Marx's analysis of alienated labour is much richer and more complex than Leavis's rather contemptuous descriptions of the leisure-filling activities of the British worker.

17. "Althusser, Louis" Dictionary of Marxist Thought, 15.

18. As David Harvey observes, as a result of the "breakdown in the signifying chain[1]' characteristic of postmodern and poststructuralist thought, "[we] can no longer conceive of the

individual as alienated in the classical Marxist sense, because to be alienated presupposes a coherent rather than a fragmented sense of self from which to be alienated" (The Condition of Postmodernity, 53).

19. For Derrida's comments on `jouissance' see Writing and pifferance 292. Lyotard concludes The Postmodern Condition in these words:

> We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience. Under the general demand for slackening and for appeasement, we can hear the mutter ings of the desire for a return of terror, for the realization of the fantasy to seize reality. The answer is: Let us wage war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name. (81-82)

20. Peter Singer's little book on Hegel, which is confessedly a sort of beginner's guide, lists over twenty books on Hegel in the twentieth century alone, and that would exclude the hundreds of specialist texts on aspects of Hegel's thought. My own (very sketchy and inadequate) understanding of Hegel has benefited greatly from my reading of Singer's book, and of Charles Taylor's Hegel. It is safe to generalize that the greater part of the books published in and since the 1980s are at least as concerned with Hegel's thinking as a distinct entity as with identifying his thinking as part of the Marxist legacy. For a discussion of Hegel's contemporary relevance, see Steven B. Smith's Hegel's Critique of Liberalism: Rights in Context, especially "Why Hegel Today?" (1-16).

21. See Ideology of the Aesthetic, p. 389.

22. See E.D. Hirsch Validity in Interpretation, and M.H. Abrams's "How to do Things with Texts" in Critical Theory since 1965 (437-449) for characteristic and very able defences of the possibility of identifying authorial intention.

23. See E.D. Hirsch's Validity in Interpretation, Graff's Literature Against Itself and A.D. Nuttall's The New Mimesis.

24. In Ecce Homo 866.

25. Both Frank Kermode (in Romantic Image 138-161) and Marilyn Butler ("Against Tradition" in Historical Studies and Literary Criticism 40) discuss the centrality, among English modernists, of what I am calling narratives of decline. Both Kermode and Butler are sceptical about the reality of a decline, and see the narrative as advantageous to the poets and writers positing it in various ways.

26. See Patrick Parrinder, Authors And Authority 245.

27. See Derrida "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils" 7.

CHAPTER 3

MODERNISM, ROMANTICISM, AND THE ENGLISH ACCOMMODATION

Trilling, Leavis and Modernism

Lionel Trilling, commenting magisterially on the `Leavis-Snow Controversy' described Leavis's `tone' as `a bad tone, an impermissible tone'; a criticism which, with its connotations of good taste and good form, Leavis quite predictably and savagely repudiated. This and other disagreements about Leavis's exchange with C.P. Snow are not the results of temperamental difference alone. The two critics' positions, taken together, point to an important paradox inherent in English studies: its critique of scientific rationality, discussed in the previous chapter, is undermined by its modernist allegiances. The argument I shall be making is that modernism is distinguished by a movement away from empiricism and towards idealism and subjectivism; and that this movement diminishes its critical force in important ways. Georg Lukacs, of course, made this argument with unparalleled force; but as I hope to show, Trilling shared much of Lukacs's distrust of modernism.

C.P. Snow's 1959 Rede Lecture "The Two Cultures" identified as distinct and hostile cultures that of the literary intellectuals and that of the natural scientists. Snow, transparently on the side of the scientists despite awkward attempts to sound neutral, intended to provoke, and succeeded. As Stefan Collini puts it, "[o]ne can only feel that a malevolent deity setting out to design a single figure in whom the largest number of Leavis's deepest antipathies would find themselves

embodied could not have done better than to create Charles Percy Snow" (Collini xxxii). Snow repeatedly implied that literary intellectuals were Luddites, ignorant of the fundamental precepts of science, arrogant, of dubious political persuasion, elitist, and so on. When Leavis counter-attacked, as he did in "Two Cultures? The Significance of Lord Snow," he did so with a ferocity extreme even by his own standards. Snow lacked a mind to engage with, his novels could not be considered novels, his `blankness in the face of literature' and his `intellectual nullity' ruled out the possibility of intelligent debate, he was not a human being so much as a horrible portent of the times, and so on. The story of the encounter has been told many times; here I will only point out that Leavis's response was very much a part of his overall response to industrial civilization. Snow's Philistine aggressiveness was all that was needed to bring out Leavis's most venomous rhetoric.

Trilling says two things about Leavis's argument in the Leavis-Snow debate that are related to the central concerns of this thesis. He talks of Leavis's refusal to "give anything like an adequate recognition to those aspects of art which are gratuitous, which arise from high spirits and the impulse to play," ("Leavis-Snow Controversy" 151) a criticism the significance of which will become apparent in the last chapter, which discusses Schiller's idea of the play-drive. Trilling also says:

> If ever a man was qualified to state the case for

> literature, and far more persuasively than I have done, it is Dr. Leavis. His career as a critic and a teacher has been devoted exactly to the exposition of the idea that literature presents to us "the possibilities of life," the qualities of energy and fineness that life might have. And it is, of course, the intention of the Richmond Lecture to say just this in answer to Sir Charles's indictment. Yet something checks Dr. Leavis. ("Leavis-Snow Controversy 169")

The peculiar interest of this particular passage lies in the fact that it marks the most substantial conflict of interests between two very influential critics. In the terms of the argument being made in this thesis, if **Leavis's** work is to be valued for the centrality to it of the resistance to instrumental rationality and the materialism of modern society, Trilling's is to be valued for the centrality to it of the resistance to modernism. Briefly, if **Leavis's** contribution was invaluable in that he clearly and forcefully articulated the central humanities position, and moreover linked it with creative art and tradition, nevertheless the strength of his position was vitiated by the fact that he articulated it from within literary modernism. Whatever doubts he may have had about modernism (and some of those are very interestingly laid out, especially in his later remarks on Eliot and Joyce), for much of his academic career he endorsed modernist writing, modernist values.[1] Even the critical enterprise was in important ways **modernist.**[2] Trilling, it seems

to me, is unique among the important critics of the period from the 1920s to the 1950s in the complexity of his opposition to literary modernism.[3]

It is perhaps inevitable that the two critics developed strengths that were, in a sense, mutually exclusive. Taken together, their positions may offer us something considerably more useful than either one in isolation.

"Something checks him," Trilling writes. What Trilling has in mind (as deterring Leavis from responding forcefully to Snow) is the peculiar nature of **`modern literature,'** a peculiarity Trilling most famously explored in "On the Teaching of Modern Literature," but the sense of which persists as a sort of ground bass in all Trilling's writings. In The Liberal Imagination he attacks on two fronts: he faults the New Critics, and by extension the modernists they admired, for their lack of historical sensitivity, for forgetting "that the literary work is ineluctably an historical fact, and... that its historicity is a fact in our aesthetic experience" (The Liberal Imagination 175); and he reproaches T.S. Eliot, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren (among others) for their programmatic **anti-intellectualism,** their "horror at the prospect of life being intellectualized" (268). In Beyond Culture he criticizes (subtly, of course, being Trilling) **`our** contemporary aesthetic **culture'** which "does not set great store by the principle of pleasure in its simple and primitive meaning and. . . may even be said to maintain an antagonism to the principle of pleasure" (72). That this is a criticism is

demonstrated by his approval of Wordsworth's and Keats's "conscious commitments to the principle of pleasure" (64). In the same book, in "The Two Environments," is Trilling's endorsement of Saul Bellow's claim that "literature['s] romantic separation or estrangement from the common world.... has by now enfeebled literature" (230). Beyond Culture has the famous "On the Teaching of Modern Literature," in which Trilling set out most clearly his sense of modern literature as being somehow dangerous, as "concerned with salvation," as an invasion of one's privacy (8-9). More disconcerting even than the literature, to Trilling, is the response of his students, their "readiness...to engage in the process that we might call the socialization of the anti-social... or the legitimation of the subversive" (26). This is a theme Trilling returns to later: the legitimation of the subversive energies of modernism points to the worrying fact that modernism has been too successful in urging its claims against bourgeois happiness, against classical tranquillity. In The Opposing Self the criticism is indirect, but telling. Trilling praises Keats's `attachment to the principle of reality,' his earthiness, his sensuousness, his happy tolerance of rowdyness; all of which is tacitly opposed to the sickly posture of alienation and despair that Trilling perceived as characteristic of modernist writing. In an extraordinary essay, "William Dean Howells," Trilling risks setting up the quotidian, `commonplace' Howells against writers who are committed to "the idea of unconditioned spirit" (90).

Given Trilling's understanding of modernist literature, his analysis of Leavis's performance in the Leavis/Snow controversy could only mean: Leavis is unable to respond effectively to Snow because Snow has a point and Leavis knows it; Snow is primarily attacking modernist literature, and this literature is vulnerable in ways in which the earlier literature was not.

The urbanity and subtlety of Trilling's style has perhaps obscured the intensity of his hostility to the chief assumptions of modernist writing. The range of perspectives from which Trilling chose to criticise modernist writing is perhaps an indication of his ambivalence towards modernism: a temperamental attachment to a more rooted and serene literary mode was combined, in him, with a fascination with what was difficult and oriented towards destruction in the writing of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. His admiration for the healthy and quotidian elements in Wordsworth, Keats, Orwell and Howells is matched by his admiration for Freud's pessimism or Hegel's concept of a painful but ultimately enabling alienation.

Taking our cue from Trilling (and, as I will argue later, Lukacs), it is possible to understand modernism's point of departure from earlier literature as a movement from `attachment to reality' to `the idea of unconditioned spirit,[1] or, to anticipate my argument, from an accommodating response to the opposed imperatives of empiricism and idealism towards a more thoroughly idealist response.

Trilling and Lukacs were not the only critics to point to

weaknesses and dangers in the modernist enterprise. Edmund Wilson and Yvor Winters, and, more recently, Richard Poirier and John Carey, have been very critical of some aspects of modernist writing. Wilson was an extraordinarily sanguine critic, and not given to sweeping judgements, negative or positive; but even he is compelled to complain of `the lack of ventilation' in the `shuttered house[1] of the "world of private imagination in isolation from the life of society" which he thinks is characteristic of the creations of Proust, Joyce, Valery and so on (Axel's Castle 292). Winters's hostility to most modernist writing, especially that of Eliot (he thought very highly of Valery and Baudelaire) was unremitting. Unfortunately, Winters's very logical consistency marred much of his evaluation, causing him to dismiss literally all of Romanticism and uphold the merits of poets who are virtually unread today. (Winters shares with Irving Babbitt and T.E. Hulme a violent, almost obsessive antipathy towards Romanticism, which he equates with irrationalism and lack of restraint; like Babbitt and Hulme, he seems to forget that Goethe, Schiller, and Wordsworth, arguably three of the most important figures of Romanticism as a whole, were as critical of irrationalism and Romantic excess as any modern.) Poirier draws attention to the `thin or boned-up erudition' of Eliot, Joyce et al, to the way in which, in modernist writing generally, difficulties are carefully placed in the path of the reader, and vast learning (in the poet or novelist or critic) is hinted at, without always being

demonstrated. Carey's main target is the snobbishness and elitism of the English modernists, which he compares tellingly with the middle-class virtues (now rarely celebrated in English studies) of writers like Arnold Bennett, Gissing and Wells.

These charges of irrationalism, obscurity, and elitism do not strike me, however, as going to the root of the problem (in fairness, they were not perhaps, intended to do so by these writers). I have chosen to concentrate on Trilling and Lukacs because they seem to go deeper, to the idealism that modernism inherited from Romanticism, and to the posture of alienation and isolation that often accompanied this idealism.

Modernism and Romanticism

In recent years a number of influential studies have insisted on the continuities between literary and philosophical movements that earlier scholarship, for the most part, had tried to keep apart. This might be the result of a certain tendency to construct broad historical and philosophical syntheses, a tendency that is in part a reaction against the epistemological and speculative asceticism of the New Critics. Alternatively, it may just be that with the passage of time, ruptures and rebellions that appeared total and dramatic to the would-be rebels fall into perspective as little local battles, with overarching structures largely invisible to the protagonists becoming visible to scholars of a later period. So Frank Kermode, in his persuasive Romantic Image, argues that modernism is

substantially a development of the main current of Romantic thought, notwithstanding the claims of T.E. Hulme, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound that they were `classicists.' Of course Kermode makes it easier for himself by setting up Yeats (a self-confessed `last romantic') as the paradigmatic modernist rather than T.S Eliot or Pound; even so, Kermode's tracing of the continuities between Romanticism and modernism through "the twin concepts of the isolated artist and the supernatural Image to which he gains access"(163), and his exposure of the contradictions in Hulme's argument that he and his associates were writing `classical,' not Romantic poetry (Hulme's being the most determined and articulate effort to detach modernism from Romanticism), are very convincing.

Poststructuralism and postmodernism are widely perceived as opposed to, indeed destructive of, modernism. But Gerald Graff and Andreas Huyssen have elaborated the links and continuities between modernism, on the one hand, and postmodernism and poststructuralism on the other, and it appears much more likely that the latter movements (especially poststructuralism) have developed out of principles which were quite central to modernism. Graff, for instance, points out that the poststructuralist hostility to ideas of language as referential was prefigured by modernist (and New Critical) opposition to the idea that poems referred to anything but themselves/ Many of the points Graff makes have been made before; what is interesting is that he does not make them merely to disparage poststructuralism,

but to point to certain crucial weaknesses in the modernist movement itself. In this he somewhat resembles Yvor Winters, whose drive towards consistency impelled him to reject most of the Romantics because of the pernicious effect he believed them to have had on the modernists. Andreas Huyssen, carefully distinguishing between postmodernism and poststructuralism, argues that the latter, "in its obsession with ecriture and writing, allegory and rhetoric, and in its displacement of revolution and politics to the aesthetic" is, literally, a theory of modernism, but without the characteristic modernist angst (After the Great Divide 207-8).

Perhaps inevitably, there have been theories that establish continuities between Romanticism and poststructuralism. Richard Rorty has pointed to the idealism (in the sense of believing that the human mind, or in this case, textuality itself, shapes reality) of the poststructuralists, comparing them to nineteenth century idealists. Juliet Sychrava, in her extraordinarily wide ranging and well documented Schiller to Derrida, also places poststructuralism in a line of descent from idealist theories of criticism. And Leonard Jackson, in The Poverty of Structuralism, has argued that "underlying traditional literary criticism is a sophisticated realist and materialist theory of the world; while much modern textual theory is idealist textual mysticism" (2).

What emerges from these various syncretic studies is not necessarily the reassuring (or depressing) certitude that nothing ever changes, that Romanticism and modernism and

poststructuralism are, at bottom, the same thing. What these studies do permit, even encourage, is the tracing of new genealogies, the following of the fortunes of a concept; something that was not possible earlier, when we **knew--or** thought we **knew--that** Romanticism was not modernism, and that both were distinct from poststructuralism.

Our unwillingness to accept that modernism is largely a development of Romanticism comes, I think, partly from the modernists' own emphatic understanding of their difference from their predecessors (T.E. **Hulme** being a crucial figure in this context); but the deciding factor appears to be the consensus that the Romantics were Nature poets, while the modernists, especially T.S. Eliot and Joyce, via Baudelaire and Laforgue in Eliot's case, were poets of the city. (I would like, if possible to sidestep the perils of a direct attack, so I shall make no attempt to define modernism. After Bradbury and **McFarlane's** book or **Ellmann** and **Feidelson's,** the effort would seem to be both dangerous and superfluous. I shall assume that, for those in English studies, the writings of T.S. Eliot, Pound, Joyce, **Woolf,** and **Wyndham** Lewis will offer enough by way of suggestive family resemblances to define the field; and that the discussion of indebtedness to and differences from Romanticism and poststructuralism, as well as the discussion of the critiques of modernism by Trilling, Lukacs and Yvor Winters will, between them, clarify my meaning.) As David Perkins puts it:

> Because Eliot endowed his material with an almost

> visionary intensity, his poetry might from some points of view be thought "Romantic." But no reader in 1922 would have seen it this way. To dwell on the modern city, especially on the more sordid aspects of it, was to break dramatically with the Romantic tradition in poetry. The legacy of the great Romantic poets of England had created a persisting assumption that poetry would present nature or landscape. ... In addition, when the Romantic poets dwelt on evil and tragedy they used images that were not only imaginatively heightened but also agreeable.... Because The Waste Land broke the fixed association between verse and the agreeable, the beautiful, or the ideal, it seemed to many readers not merely un- but **anti-poetic.** (Perkins 501)

This understanding of the Romantics as primarily Nature poets, I shall argue, becomes much more difficult to sustain when one places the English Romantics in the context of European Romanticism, and more especially German Romanticism; it is not enough to say that the English Romantics emphasized Nature rather more than their German counterparts (which is not even true as far as Schelling is concerned), and that that is a sufficient criterion of difference. What does happen when the English Romantics are studied in the context of European Romanticism is that the task of definition becomes far more difficult, and certainly "Nature[1] drops out as **the** single overarching defining feature. In fact, Arthur. 0. **Lovejoy,** in a celebrated discussion

of the difficulties of defining Romanticism, concluded that "any attempt at a general appraisal even of a single chronologically determinate Romanticism--still more of "Romanticism" as a whole--is a fatuity" (252).[5] Rene Wellek, responding to what he saw as Lovejoy's "challenge to exhibit `some common denominator'" in the various Romanticisms, defended the critic's right to speak of a single Romanticism, and concluded (at any rate to his own satisfaction) that "the basic argument [had] been won"(4).[6] While my sympathies are with Wellek, Lovejoy's argument is incisive, and moreover points to something very characteristic about discussions of Romanticism: that they rely excessively on what Wittgenstein called family resemblances. In the case of Romanticism, for instance, after reading perhaps a dozen accounts of its origins and characteristic features, I drew up my own list of features, (restricting myself to the smallest number of what seemed to be essential features) which goes as follows:

1) Philosophical idealism
2) Celebration of Nature
3) Political radicalism
4) Rejection of Enlightenment rationality
5) The posture of alienation and isolation

On comparing the list with another of poets and thinkers generally considered Romantic, I found that no single figure could be easily associated with all the features. Wordsworth is usually considered the pre-eminent Nature poet in the English language, and was probably politically radical in his youth, but

(as I will argue) had a very ambivalent attitude towards idealism, certainly did not reject Enlightenment rationality in any simple sense, and emphatically rejected the posture of alienation. Coleridge, perhaps the closest among the English to the German **idealists,** is usually regarded as a conservative, and, like Wordsworth, would not have wanted to be perceived as rejecting rationality or embracing alienation. Goethe (the young Goethe is often cited as one of the seminal figures of German Romanticism) was scathingly critical of idealism, of political radicalism of the revolutionary type, and, most of all, of the posture of alienation. Moreover, he and Schiller went out of their way to analyse and criticise Romanticism, and to distance their own positions from it. Shelley, who certainly was radical and embraced alienation and despair (for which he was mercilessly satirised by Peacock) is close to being a pure case; but even he would not have seen himself as rejecting **Enlightenment** rationality. Keats is a difficult figure to place, as none of the categories, save the emphasis on Nature, seem to capture his **oeuvre.** Byron, with his allegiance to Dryden and Pope and his respect for a certain "documentary realism[1] is not caught either. And I am fairly sure that experts on German Romanticism will have a similar problem with Fichte, the Schlegels, Schelling, Novalis and Tieck.[7]

There is also the argument, usually made by Marxist critics, that the English Romantics' emphasis on the healing powers of **Nature was essentially** an **evasion of the more overtly political**

legacies of the French Revolution.[8] While some of these critics seem to imagine that Wordsworth's (to take the most familiar target) professed love for pleasing landscapes was almost entirely a function of his desire to ignore poverty and industrialization, a perspective that is as one-sided and reductive as the view that contemplating these landscapes was all one needed to do to stave off hunger and death, it certainly is more difficult today to see the English Romantics' relationship with `Nature' as a simple one, unconnected with political reform or questions of epistemology.

With this awareness, then, that the preoccupations of the English Romantics may have been rather different from what we were led to believe they were from prolonged and selective exposure to soothing images of daisies, daffodils, nightingales, green fields, and contented peasants, the difficulties of perceiving the links between modernism and Romanticism are diminished.

Modernism and the Isolated Artist

The feature that Romanticism and modernism most conspicuously have in common is one that Frank Kermode drew attention to in Romantic Image: the isolation and alienation of the artist. Henry James, W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, Robert Musil: the list of writers and artists who either exemplified or drew attention to the necessity of isolation is endless. Kermode's discussion of this necessary

isolation is, on the whole, sympathetic. In a sense, he accepts the modernists' own understanding of their situation as heroic. If Edmund Wilson's well known—and much earlier--The Wound and the Bow is a more ambivalent treatment of the same subject, Trilling's several attempts to come to terms with it represent a struggle to understand and be fair to modernist celebration of isolation that tends to spill over into outright hostility. In "Art and Neurosis" he firmly rejects the idea that neurosis and alienation are the price the artist pays in order to create: '

> [The artist] is what he is by virtue of his successful objectif ication of his neurosis, by his shaping it and making it available to others in a way which has its effect upon their own egos in struggle. His genius, that is, may be defined in terms of his faculties of perception, representation, and realization, and in these terms alone. It can no more be defined in terms of neurosis than can his power of walking and talking, or his sexuality. (170)

In "The Fate of Pleasure," he notes dryly that "our contemporary aesthetic culture does not set great store by the principle of pleasure in its simple and primitive meaning and it may even be said to maintain an antagonism to the principle of pleasure" (72). Against this gloomy posturing, Trilling holds up Wordsworth's and Keats's healthy celebration of "the grand elementary principle of pleasure." In "William Dean Howells" he defends Howells's naturalism, his vulgarity, his "accumulation of

the details of literal reality" (94), his invitation to the novelist to "deal with the smiling aspects of life" (102). Given what we know about Trilling's tastes, his fastidiousness in literary matters, his defence of Howells is obviously much more a matter of redressing the balance, of correcting a tendency towards celebrating alienation that seemed to have gone too far, than a straightforward preference. The fact that Trilling chose to defend a writer who was by then a sort of symbol of vulgar realism is an indication of how far in the contrary direction Trilling thought modernist high art had gone.

Sincerity and Authenticity is the work in which Trilling comes closest to establishing a connection between modernism and certain strands of Romanticism, and to expressing his sense of the inadequacy of both. In his discussion of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, Trilling reminds us that Hegel rejects the `honest soul' and praises the "disintegrated consciousness" (42), which represents "Spirit moving to its next stage of development" (44). As the discussion proceeds to Goethe's Sorrows of Young Werther and Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy, and then to Rousseau's Confessions, we realize that Trilling is dealing with a characteristic feature of Romanticism as well as modernism: the idea of the necessary alienation of the artist. He brings together versions of the Romantic cult of the Self (Hegel, Nietzsche, Robespierre) and sets them against Jane Austen's non-philosophical, non-political "defence of the`honest soul'". And Trilling concludes that Jane Austen is right, and that "things

are not what they will become but what an uncorrupted intelligence may perceive them to be from the first" (77). Hegel is wrong, Trilling implies. It is not the dialectical method of Hegel but the categorical imperative of Austen (and Kant) that will save us.

Trilling's argument and position are hard to pin down in Sincerity and Authenticity/ but his hostility to certain features of what is recognisably Romanticism is obvious. He is concerned, as always, with the danger that the posture of alienation cuts the artist off from real life and work, and he is concerned that intellectuals are fetishizing culture. Trilling does not explicitly lay out the connection between idealism and the `disintegrated consciousness'; he is more concerned with the effect of the latter as a fait accompli. Without quite saying that its effects are pernicious, Trilling makes it quite clear that his sympathies are with "the militant categorical certitude with which Mansfield Park discriminates between right and wrong" (79).

As a critic of the cult of alienation, Trilling had distinguished forbears. Goethe and Schiller fought a lifelong battle against Romantic excess, Goethe going as far as to declare Romanticism a disease.[9] Goethe's target, like Trilling's, was the posture of gloomy but heroic isolation, often merely a justification for idleness and irresponsibility. Among the English, nobody satirised this particular affectation of the Romantics more memorably than Thomas Love Peacock, Shelley's

friend, and the person chiefly responsible for Shelley's Defence of Poetry.[10]

Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the English Compromise

The idea of the isolated and alienated artist has at any rate received critical attention, even if much of it has been negative. There is, however, a rather different type of continuity between Romanticism and modernism, one that has received less attention: the shared understanding that the poet creates reality, most obviously his own, but possibly also that of human society in general. This is the attitude I am referring to when I use the term `**idealism.**' The loci classicus of this position among the English Romantics would be Coleridge's discussion of the poet, who "brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity" and "the synthetic and magical power to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination" (173-74) in **Biographia** Literaria and Shelley's A Defence of Poetry. With the modernists, Shelley's legislator, even less acknowledged, arguably plays an even larger role in the poet's self-conception. If the modernist poet or novelist is perceptibly further from the centres of actual power than his Romantic predecessor, the poet, perhaps in angry reaction, may feel even more intensely that he is creating an autonomous world. This attitude, in both Romantic and modernist forms, is derived, or has the same source, as philosophical

idealism. The idealism I have been referring to has its theoretical roots in the philosophical writings of **Kant,** Fichte and Hegel (the idealism of Bishop Berkeley seems to have been less influential, probably because of Berkeley's paradoxical closeness to empiricism).[11] Briefly, Kant, responding to David Hume's empiricism, which seemed to deny human agency and therefore the possibility of morality, argued that we can only know the world through our mental constructions (the categories of space, time, number and so on). Kant's constructivism is modified by his insistence that there is a realm of the unknowable, constituted by **things-in-themselves,** forever beyond our conceptual reach; in this sense he is a dualist, hedging his bets between empiricism and what he undoubtedly foresaw as a dangerous idealism. His German successors, among them Fichte and Hegel, seeing Kant's dualism as the result of timidity or misplaced caution, developed a much more thoroughgoing idealism, in which all reality is constructed in and through our mental categories. This development was naturally regarded with considerable irritation, and some fear and revulsion, by those who continued to regard themselves as empiricists. In Britain the empiricist tradition, with its roots in the theories of Locke and Hume, was particularly strong. Some idea of the resistance offered to the efforts of those who wished to adapt German idealism to English conditions can be got from reading the early parts of **Biographia** Literaria or the satires of Thomas Love Peacock. As late as 1912, Bertrand Russell was warning against

the dangers of an untrammelled idealism, in terms that all empiricists would understand:

> Greatness of the soul is not fostered by those philosophies which assimilate the Universe to Man... the view which tells us that Man is the measure of all things, that truth is man-made, that space and time and the world of universals are properties of the mind, and that, if there be anything not created by the mind, it is unknowable and of no account to us...is...untrue [and] has the effect of robbing philosophic contemplation of all that gives it value, since it fetters contemplation to Self. (qtd. in Barber 37)

In his German and English Romanticism, Rene Wellek draws attention to the utilitarian and empiricist climate of opinion in Wordsworth's time, and contrasts it with that in Germany during the same period:

> In England, there was no parallel to the German idealistic philosophy; academically, Common Sense philosophy was in the saddle, and unofficially, the influence of Utilitarianism was spreading at that time.... The German Romantics were confronted with the enormous prestige of the philosophy of Kant and Fichte and had a systematic philosopher and ally in Schelling.... In England, only Coleridge tried to speculate as a philosopher, and he drew heavily on the Germans; Shelley and Wordsworth were either confined to

> the British empiricist tradition or went back to Plato. (""German and English Romanticism" 31)

The argument that the German Romantics were profoundly affected by philosophical idealism is hardly likely to be opposed; the argument that Coleridge was successful 1) in understanding the German version of philosophical idealism and 2) in infusing his understanding of it into English poetry and criticism is likely to meet with considerably more resistance."

Whatever the strength of Coleridge's allegiance to idealism (and there is a strong argument to be made for his concept of **`imagination'** being a brilliant naturalization of German idealism in the English context), there seems little doubt that Wordsworth's attitude to idealism was ambivalent in the extreme. It is this ambivalence, I will try to show, that becomes the characteristic feature of English Romanticism and of much subsequent English prose and poetry. It is only with modernism that this ambivalence, or accommodation, gives way to a more thoroughgoing idealism.

Coleridge's celebrated attack on Wordsworth's theories, in **Biographia** Literaria, represents, among other things, idealist opposition to Wordsworth's residual empiricism. I believe that the extent to which the disagreement between Wordsworth and Coleridge has been treated as a more or less technical dispute between two practising poets has obscured the genuine philosophical differences. Coleridge's persistent efforts to make his and Wordsworth's poetry conform to the requirements of

philosophical idealism were resisted by Wordsworth, "for whom the thought that what we see and hear is in our own minds is alarming, and reduces the world to a dreamlike and insubstantial state/" as Mary Warnock puts it (Imagination 103). What Wordsworth worked out, in his poetry and his prose, was a compromise, a successful amalgam of empiricist and idealist influences. I would not want to push the argument too far; to imply, for instance, that this particular amalgam cannot be found before Wordsworth (one has only to remember certain passages in Milton, and, above all, Shakespeare to realise the folly of making such an argument). But as exemplifying a self conscious art of reconciliation between these two philosophical extremes, in the English speaking world; in this respect I believe Wordsworth was a pioneer. As Basil Willey observes:

> Wordsworth was the kind of poet who could only have appeared at the end of the eighteenth century, when mythologies were exploded, and a belief in the visible universe as the body of which God was the soul alone remained. (86)

I also would not want to make the argument that Wordsworth's influence was decisive; it is difficult to believe that the English empiricist tradition would not have thrown up considerable resistance to idealist trends, even in the arguably more susceptible areas of art and culture. Wordsworth's particular virtue, however, was that while he placed empiricism in a somewhat subsidiary role (to the shaping imagination), he

never lost his poetic grip on the actuality of experience and the specific data of shared observation.

Coleridge, in a passage from his Notebooks, writes:

> In looking at the objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering through the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were by **asking**, a symbolic language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing anything new. (guoted Warnock 83)

Wordsworth, on the other hand, declares that

> The powers requisite for the production of poetry are: first, those of Observation and Description,--i**.e.,** the ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the describer. (Preface to Poems [1815] 626)

Willey draws attention to the passage in The Prelude in which Wordsworth most clearly states his position in regard to the plastic Imagination on the one hand and the subservience to **`external things'** on the other:

> A plastic power
> Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
> Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,
> A local spirit of his own, at war
> With general tendency, but, for the most,
> Subservient strictly to external things

With which it communed. (Prelude 2, 362-68)

This particular to-and-fro movement of Wordsworth's intellectual allegiances is a constant feature of his writing. The idealist thrust of `plastic power' is immediately balanced by the `strict subservience' of this power to `external things.' The passage quoted earlier from the 1815 Preface ("The powers requisite for the production of poetry...") is immediately followed by another in which Wordsworth emphatically declares that the poet's descriptive powers, though indispensable, should not be relied on for any extensive period of time, as this would imply that the "higher qualities of the mind" were "in a state of subjection to external objects." This oscillation, noticeable in the prose, is much less marked in the poetry, where a quite remarkable fusion takes place, and descriptive passages are loaded with emotional colouring, without very much loss of sensuous specificity. This peculiarity (as I am arguing it must have been then) of Wordsworth's poetry has rarely been more eloquently attested than by John Stuart Mill, who owed to his reading of the poems his recovery from a dangerous nervous breakdown in 1828:

> In the first place, these poems addressed themselves powerfully to one of the strongest of my pleasurable susceptibilities, the love for rural objects and natural scenery....**But Wordsworth would never have had any great effect on me, if he had merely placed before me beautiful pictures of natural scenery.... What made**

> Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. (Autobiography 95)

According to Willey, Wordsworth had no choice but to use, as poetic material, "the fact-world of modern scientific consciousness [as] the primary datum." But this world, "essentially fixed and dead" had to be "brought to life by the modifying colours of the imagination" (88). Willey points out that Wordsworth is equally careful to avoid the perils of subjectivism (exemplified, for a later age, by Shelley) and of a plodding realism: "there must be intensification without distortion" (Willey 91).

Willey's remarks on what I have been calling Wordsworth's accommodation are particularly suggestive:

> The belief that Wordsworth constructed out of his experiences was a belief in the capacity of the mind to co-operate with this `active universe,' to contribute something of its own to it in perceiving it, and not, as sensationalism taught, merely to receive, passively, impressions from without....[He hoped that] poetry might be delivered from the fetters of the mechanical tradition without being allowed to fall into disrepute as `unreal' or `fanciful'. (87)

Where I have been discussing Wordsworth's accommodation in terms of empiricism and idealism, Willey talks of facts and

values:

> Of the two elements of which these states are composed, fact and value, Wordsworth is equally sure of both. He is sure of the fact, because he knows no man has observed it more intently; he is sure of the value, because this was intuitively apprehended in himself. . . . But it was only as long as his mind was dealing thus nakedly with observed fact that Wordsworth could feel this conviction of truthfulness. Any translation of his experience into myth, personification or fable ... is inevitably a lapse towards a lower level of truth. (91)

Wordsworth's reconciliation of empiricist and idealist currents of thought seems to have fed into two distinct, but related traditions, one related to poetry proper, the other to critical prose. On the one hand, a carefully observed natural world was balanced or supplemented by an equally careful observation of the poet's own emotions; on the other hand, some sort of division of powers was tacitly assumed, with a sensuous and imaginative poetry attended by a humbler, more empirical criticism. This latter especially, I have been suggesting, was the chief legacy of English Romanticism to what we have been calling English studies. The strength of this legacy can be demonstrated by the fierceness of the critical attack on carelessly observed natural phenomena. Shelley, in one of his most famous poems, the "Ode to the West Wind" wrote:

> Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
> Loose clouds like Earth's decaying leaves are shed,
> Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean. . . .

And here is Leavis, at his most devastating, on Shelley's phrase "Loose clouds like Earth's decaying leaves are shed" :

> In what respects are the `loose clouds' like "decaying leaves'? The correspondence is certainly not in shape, colour or way of moving. It is only the vague general sense of windy tumult that associates the clouds and the leaves; and, accordingly, the appropriateness of the metaphor `stream' in the first line is not that it suggests a surface on which, like leaves, clouds might be `shed,' but that it contributes to the general `streaming' in which the inappropriateness of `shed' passes unnoticed. ("Shelley" 269)

Ruskin, one assumes, would have satisfied Leavis's strict criteria, at least as far as cloud descriptions were concerned:

> They are nearly always arranged in some definite and evident order, commonly in long ranks reaching sometimes from the zenith to the horizon, each rank composed of an infinite number of transverse bars of about the same length, each bar thickest in the middle, and terminating in a traceless vaporous point at each side; the ranks are in the direction of the wind, and the bars of course at right angles to it; these latter are slightly bent in the middle. (quoted in Hough 9-10)

And Ruskin can (and does) go on like this for pages and pages. But he also, after an account of St. Marks Place in Venice which is arguably one of the finest bits of descriptive writing in English prose, casually mentions that the colours he has been expatiating upon are less lovely than the `soft iridescence' of the plumes of the doves which nest in the church.[13]

With Gerard Manley Hopkins, again, the closeness of attention to visual detail is almost obsessive; but this detail, which so dominates his journal entries, is, in the poems, completely subordinated to Hopkins' religious feeling and reverence for natural beauty.

The strength of this empiricist accommodation to idealism is admitted even by those who are most hostile to it, although they are likely to describe it in less flattering terms than I have done:

> While Europe was passing through its major critical systems—classical philology, phenomenology, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, structuralism—English criticism managed to survive essentially unscathed, so deep were its roots in a commonplace philistine empiricism. It was such philistine empiricism which powered the `neo-liberal' enterprise, and continues to do so today. (Eagleton, Against The Grain 47)

From Eagleton's point of view, it is an outrage that `philistine empiricism[1] should prove so obdurate, so resistant to fresh intellectual currents. A.D. Nuttall, who does not think it

an outrage, is nevertheless surprised by the "special craving for intensity" (A Common Sky 272) or "hunger for reality" (273) he finds in the writing of Wordsworth, Blake, Ruskin, Lawrence, G.K. Chesterton, and Leavis, among others. And it is not only English poetry and the novel that are marked by this hunger for reality. "Reality, truth, life, vividness, `there-ness'. These are the watchwords of modern criticism" Nuttall writes (A Common Sky 267).[14]

Modernism and Idealism

Virginia Woolf's urbane insistence, in 1925, that "the sooner English fiction turn[ed] its back upon" Mr Wells, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. Galsworthy, "the better for its soul" seems to have had its effect. They have been so cold-shouldered in English departments that John Carey can actually sound scandalously revolutionary by suggesting that we take Bennett seriously again.[15]

Woolf's condemnation of Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy is on the grounds of their `materialism.' "They are concerned not with the spirit but with the body," and "the writer seems constrained, not by his own free will... but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant... to provide a plot... and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour" (2033-34). She goes on to recommend, famously, that novelists keep in mind that

"[l]ife is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end" (2034).

It is a masterly turning of the tables on the hapless `Mr. Wells, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. Galsworthy,' who begin to sound like a shabby firm of undertakers by the end of Woolf's dismissive critique. The very thing a writer of a realist novel prides himself or herself on, that his or her characters, if they came to life, would not surprise the denizens of the real world, is dismissed by Woolf as so much dreary, bourgeois nonsense. The life within, the mental life of the characters, is what counts.

A curious feature of Woolf's criticism of the realism of the writing of Wells and Bennett is the way social snobbishness is deployed against such writing. Of Wells's books she writes: "Yet what more damaging criticism can there be both of his earth and of his Heaven than that they are to be inhabited here and hereafter by his Joans and his Peters?" (2033).

Shades of Arnold's `Wragg'! And this passage rather ominously echoes an earlier idealist, attacking an earlier realist. In response to Wordsworth's desire to use as a poetic resource "a selection of language really used by men," amid scenes of "low and rustic life," Coleridge wrote that "the best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself" and that the process by which this elevated usage came into being had "no place in the consciousness of uneducated man" (197).[16]

Woolf's dismissiveness towards "the enormous labour of proving the solidity, the likeness to life, of the story" that her predecessors prided themselves on, marks an important shift in artistic sensibility. Idealism had been formally approved by one of the most important of the modernists, and realism had been relegated to the literary hinterland, to hackwork and journalism. Of course, there were people like T.E. Hulme, whose strictures on Romanticism were made much of by Pound and Eliot, and whose objections to Romanticism seem to come from his empiricist background. "The great aim is accurate, precise, and definite description" he writes, in a phrase that recalls generations of sturdy English common sense. But Hulme's writing is more anomalous than it seems; Eliot's endorsement of Hulme's theories was strategic, and by the time of Four Quartets Eliot was exploring a mystical-nostalgic mode very far from whatever realism there was in The Waste Land.[37]

Georg Lukacs, in "The Ideology of Modernism" launches what must still be the most famous attack on the subjectivism of modernist writing.[18] Ahistorical, melancholy, pathologically obsessed with psychological detail (and with the detail of psychological pathologies), lacking in intellectual content: these are the terms in which Lukacs dismisses the writing of Joyce, Kafka, and Musil.

Moderns obsessively portray `the disintegration of personality':

> **Attenuation of reality and dissolution of personality**

> are... interdependent: the stronger the one, the stronger the other. Underlying both is the lack of a consistent view of human nature. Man is reduced to a sequence of unrelated experiential fragments; he is as inexplicable to others as himself.... The dissolution of personality, originally the unconscious product of the identification of concrete and abstract potentiality, is elevated to a deliberate principle in the light of consciousness. ("Ideology of Modernism" 26)

Lukacs is very close to Trilling when he comments on "the poetic necessity of the pathological" in modern literature (29); as a Marxist, however, he associates the pathology with "the prosaic quality of life under capitalism" rather than with the misplaced desire to embrace a greater variety of experience or ascend to a higher spiritual state.

For Lukacs, the tendency of modernist subjectivism is towards "the destruction of literature as such" (45). He also quite explicitly lays out the logic of the relationship between idealism and Romanticism that Trilling implies in Sincerity and Authenticity. In The Theory of the Novel he writes:

> The precondition and the price of this immoderate elevation of the subject is, however, the abandonment of any claim to participation in the shaping of the outside world. The romanticism of disillusionment not only followed abstract idealism in time and history, it

was also conceptually its heir. (117).

Gerald Graff's Literature Against Itself is an unusually lucid and accessible account of the various theoretical relativisms that have threatened the English studies status quo. Graff often sounds like Yvor Winters; Winters believed that "the work of literature, in so far as it is valuable, approximates a real apprehension and communication of a particular kind of objective truth" (In Defense of Reason 11), and Graff believes that literature should "preserve the distinction between the real and the fictive, and... help us resist those influences...that would turn lying into a universal principle" (Literature Against Itself 12). Graff makes two interesting (and interestingly related) arguments. One is that the "most significant achievement of the New Criticism... was its popularization of the modernist idea of literature and along with it modernist assumptions about language, knowledge, and experience" (Literature Against Itself 5); the other is that the New Critics' "hostile. . .view of the referential powers of language" (6) opened the way for the far more radical anti-representational theories that followed. In a sense, Graff argues, modernism has only itself to blame for the excesses of poststructuralism and the other anti-representational theories. This concept-tracing exercise tends to gain momentum as it goes along, and Graff is compelled to concede that moral and epistemological nihilism can be traced back to Romanticism, and to Kant's unintended, immanent radical relativism:

...in the absence of any appeal to such a coercive

> reality to which the plurality of subjectivities can be referred, all perspectives become equally valid. . . . The logic of romantic transcendental philosophy led to a relativism that was certainly antithetical to what most romantic thinkers intended. (Literature Against Itself 39)[19]

I find Graff's theories quite convincing; indeed these theories started me thinking about the continuities between modernism and poststructuralism. However, Graff seems to stake everything on literature being, somehow, `true'; a dangerous enterprise when positivism seems to have disappeared from even the hard sciences and analytical philosophy.

Juliet Sychrava's Schiller to Derrida is probably, to date, the most ambitious and thoroughly researched effort to establish the idealism of poststructuralism. Tracing the Romantic-Classic divide back to Schiller's On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature, where what we have come to know as Romantic and Classic are discussed as the `sentimental' and the ""naive,[1] she argues that the sentimental, or idealist tendency has steadily displaced the naive or realist mode (this displacement, according to Sychrava, accounts for the fact that Wordsworth is considered a major poet while John Clare is not):

> Comparing Schiller's aesthetic with Derrida's, I trace a development from Schiller through the Romantics and Coleridge to post-structuralist thought: a `sentimental' tendency whereby radical modernity

> articulates itself against a `naive' which it sets up as a target for that purpose. (Sychrava 5)

Schiller himself was `fundamentally idealist,' she believes, and the way in which he sets up a `naive' straw man only to knock it down again and celebrate his own form of idealism has become a sort of paradigm for idealist critics of succeeding generations. Poststructuralists also, Sychrava feels, set up a simplistic version of the autonomous, centred, fully present author or text and then demolish this concept, which nobody believed in anyway (interestingly, it occurs to one that people may start believing in such authors or texts now that poststructuralists have attacked the concept; stranger things have been known to happen). In a discussion of the distinction between Schiller's conception of play and Derrida's, she captures the paradoxical double movement of the trajectory of recent criticism, at once more idealist and more imprisoning:

> ...in Schiller play is contained within a system, in Derrida play will be made unlimited as the system is unframed... . The effect of unframing is to bring relativism into the `text' or `system,' and yet, in contradictory fashion, to assert more forcefully the absolute nature of that system. Whereas Kant's metaphysic by excluding the transcendental insists on the limits of its own domain: `the bounds of sense,' Schiller s or Schelling's systems assert their access to the absolute, whilst Derrida's has no bounds at all

> and includes everything. Thus as the sentimental tradition progresses, it becomes at once more relativistic and more absolutist. (Sychrava 192)

My argument in this chapter owes a great deal to Sychrava's; since, like her, I too wish to defend the claims of realism against those of idealism, I have found the argument convincing as well as useful. My only serious disagreement with her argument is in her understanding of Schiller's and Wordsworth's response to idealism. Both, in her reading, are far more sympathetic to idealism than the evidence suggests they were. Wordsworth is more like Clare than Sychrava allows, and Schiller ends his On the Naive and Sentimental with a warning against an unbalanced idealism that is far more severe than his earlier warning against excessive realism. Schiller incurred the enmity of the entire younger generation of Romantic idealists by criticising their lack of realism. He said of Jean Paul and Holderlin that they suffered from "a lack of aesthetic nourishment and influx from outside and opposition of the empirical world in which they lived."[20] Both Schiller and Wordsworth, I would suggest, had considerable insight into the potential for transcendence as well as the dangers inherent in idealism.

In addition to Sychrava's sophisticated theoretical arguments for the existence of an increasingly idealist tendency in English literary criticism (or, An Increasingly Sentimental Journey, as she puts it), there is other evidence of this tendency. Geoffrey Hartman, for instance, no longer believes, as

T.S. Eliot did, that criticism cannot be an autotelic activity.[21] This move is idealist in its refusal to accept boundaries; for the idealist critic, the poem or novel is a pretext rather than a text. An idea that Oscar Wilde exploited as scandalous, in "The Critic as Artist" has become the serious claim of university teachers.[22] More significant, even, than Hartman's insistence on the equivalence, in terms of importance, of criticism and poetry, is Paul De Man's consistent efforts to `idealize' Wordsworth's poems. Here is De Man on Wordsworth's feeling for landscape:

> As one watches the progress of a poet like Wordsworth, however, the significance of the locale tends to broaden into an area of meaning that is no longer literally bound to a particular place. The significance of the landscape is frequently made problematic by a succession of spatial ambiguities/ to such an extent that one ends up no longer with a specific locale but with a mere name, of which the geographical existence has been voided of significance. ("Fragment" Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism 99)

This as a description of a poet who risked the amused contempt of posterity by measuring a puddle from side to side! In Samuel Weber's quite brilliant formulation (used in connection with a different essay by De Man), De Man's project "can be described as an attempt to (re)-introduce the perspective of German romanticism into English language literary criticism"

("Walter Benjamin's Romantic Concept of Criticism" 304).

Conclusion

Beginning with the idea, in the first chapter, that a liberal education could be understood as being in an oppositional relationship with liberalism, I went on to argue that another kind of oppositional relationship structured the component of university education we call the humanities. In Britain, this humanistic opposition to the influence of the sciences came to be associated primarily with English studies. A distinctive blend of empiricist and idealist influences, I argued, was the characteristic feature of the criticism that emerged from English studies. This blend, or accommodation, had its approximate beginnings in the practice of the English Romantics, especially that of Wordsworth. Modified for use in the humanities, with `imagination' allowed free play in poetry and the novel but allowed only a diminished role in criticism, where the empiricist legacy was much stronger, this accommodation has served tolerably well; it has been an influential response to the twin dangers of an increasingly technological civilization and an excessively subjectivist reaction to and withdrawal from this civilization. Since the dominance of modernism, but much more so in the last two decades, this subjectivist or idealist response appears to have been very much in the ascendant in English studies. The status of empiricism and realism in English literary criticism must certainly be linked with their fortunes in the sciences. If

the trajectory suggested by the names of Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend in the philosophy *&f* science is anything to go by, even the sciences have been overtaken by a wave of relativistic and anti-realist theory. Popper's thinking already represented a move away from hard-nosed logical positivism; and Kuhn and Feyerabend represent positions increasingly distant from classical empiricism and realism. I am suggesting that it is possible that the increasing idealism and subjectivism of contemporary literary criticism may be linked to the growth of relativistic thinking in science, philosophy of science, and analytic philosophy.

In the light of recent developments in English studies, Lukacs's harshly critical analysis of modernism deserves re-reading, as does Trilling's more ambivalent response. It strikes me at any rate as quite plausible that the subjectivism of modernism prepared the ground for the anarchic self-indulgence of much poststructuralist criticism. This may also explain the difficulty faced by many of those who are troubled by the advent of poststructuralism when they wish to criticise poststructuralist writing: we are, if only by default, all modernists now, and for reasons I have explored it is difficult to attack poststructuralism from modernist premises. Disentanglement from the excesses of poststructuralism will only **follow** what **is** likely to be the far more painful disentanglement **from literary** modernism. The fact that Marxists have been the **most ferocious and effective critics of poststructuralism is no**

accident. Economic materialism has its roots in empiricist and realist observation of the world. Marxists know, as Lukacs did, that to endorse idealism or subjectivism unqualifiedly is to accept the "abandonment of any claim to participation in the shaping of the outside world."

Earlier in this chapter I quoted Terry Eagleton's comment that the "philistine empiricism" that underlay English criticism also powered "the neo-liberal enterprise." I think those who are in sympathy with liberal goals should take this argument seriously. I think Eagleton is right to the extent that there is indisputably a connection between criticism and whatever political dispensation one is living under, even, or especially, if that political dispensation is as seemingly neutral as liberalism. In the first chapter of this thesis I argued that liberal education may, in the past, have served liberalism by criticising liberalism, especially liberalism in its most utilitarian manifestations (`powering' liberalism in ways perhaps not suspected by Eagleton). But this liberal education, and the liberalism it both combated and sustained, are things of the past. The liberal education described by Newman, Mill and Arnold, confronted a young and optimistic liberalism; more to the point, it was a peculiarly English form of liberalism that drew ideological sustenance from Locke and Mill, a liberalism Benjamin Barber has appropriately called empiricist liberalism.[23] By the 1970s, if not earlier, the significant focus in the English speaking humanities had shifted to the United

States, where a very different kind of liberalism was dominant. Especially after John Rawls's 1971 A Theory of Justice, the most influential type of liberal theory has been characterised by a resolute shedding of utilitarian and empiricist foundational baggage, and a move towards grounding liberalism in a Kantian understanding of rights and duties. This move has proved to be immensely energizing for liberal theory in general, as well as fruitful of further, or accessory, theories; but the relationship of the humanities as a whole to the dominant liberal ethos is unclear.

To make an already confusing situation even more chaotic, a powerful critique of foundationalist defences of liberalism has been launched, associated with the names of Oakeshott, MacIntyre, J.G.A. Pocock, Rorty and others.[24] The writings of these theorists constitute a very powerful critique of existing forms of liberalism, and point to the possibility of a completely different liberalism coming into existence, one which has shed its hubristic claims to uniqueness and inevitability, and offers itself as merely one of many forms of political organisation. If, as is likely, liberalism increasingly looks for justifications not in the success of science or capitalism, or in totalizing and arrogant claims of unique virtue or knowledge, but in the description of the historical growth of a valuable individualism (one among many, and not necessarily better than any other) and the way of life associated with it, the humanities, and with it, English studies, is bound to change, perhaps beyond recognition.

NOTES

1. See especially his "Joyce and The Revolution of the Word'" in The Critic as Anti-Philosopher.

2. Norman F. Cantor's Twentieth-Century Culture: Modernism to Deconstruction discusses the ways in which literary criticism helped popularise modernist writing. Graff's Literature Against Itself makes a similar point.

3. Trilling is probably more often thought of as one of the early and most articulate expositors of literary modernism, largely on the basis of "On the Teaching of Modern Literature." But I would argue that a survey of all his critical writing demonstrates a considerable hostility to the central tenets of literary modernism. This is most obvious in Sincerity and Authenticity and Beyond Culture. And even "On the Teaching of Modern Literature" is far from being a whole-hearted endorsement of modernist writing.

4. See Literature Against Itself, 31-62 and 129-149.

5. See "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms," in Essays in the History of Ideas (228-253).

6. See "German and English Romanticism: A Confrontation," especially pp. 3-4 in Confrontations (3-33).

7. On the whole, though, there appears to be more unity among the German Romantics, largely because of the prestige and influence of Kant's philosophy, which influenced them all, as Wellek points out in "German and English Romanticism: A Confrontation." Idealism seems to have been a unifying feature in Germany in the way Nature' was a unifying feature in England. For a very interesting discussion of why the French, the English and the Germans developed distinctive Romanticisms in terms of such unifying features, see Edwin Berry Burgum's "Romanticism."

8. Burgum's theory is that the French Revolution produced very different reactions in England, Germany and France because of the different levels of socio-economic development of the three countries. Taking the `trinity of liberty, equality, fraternity' seriously/ he argues, was "premature for Germany, essential for France, and dangerous for England" (145). For some idea of the range of recent Marxist and poststructuralist criticism of English Romanticism, and some good orthodox criticisms of these, see Romantic Revolutions: Criticism and Theory.

9. Walter Kaufman's From Shakespeare to Existentialism has been very useful, especially in its discussion of Goethe's relationship with the younger German Romantics.

10. In Nightmare Abbey, the satirical novel in which Shelley, Coleridge and Byron are caricatured, Peacock mercilessly exposes the hypocrisy and absurdity of the pretensions of the Romantics. The Byron character, Mr Cypress, talks like this:

> There is no worth nor beauty but in the mind's idea. Love sows the wind and reaps the whirlwind. Confusion, thrice confounded, is the portion of him who rests even for an instant on that most brittle of reeds--the affection of a human being. The sum of our social destiny is to inflict or to endure.

The Coleridge character, Mr Flosky, is the butt of the most sustained ridicule, speaking relentlessly transcendentalist and opaque English, and at one point being made to admit "I never gave a plain answer to a question in my life." Scythrop (Shelley) lives in the gloomy Nightmare Abbey with servants chosen on the basis of their names--Raven, Crow, Skellet, Diggory Deathshead; he drinks Madeira out of a skull, is having an affair with two women simultaneously, threatens to shoot himself if neither of them accepts him, and urges his butler to adjust the time on the clock when his death hour approaches. Beneath the parody is much shrewd criticism. Coleridge's obscurity, Byron's gloomy posing, Shelley's inability to criticise his own actions from a moral position: all these are pointed up, perhaps more effectively than they would have been in non-satirical prose. And Peacock is no stolid empiricist. One of Shelley's best friends, he was himself a poet and critic, and on other occasions showed he could appreciate the greatness of Wordsworth, at any rate.

Peacock's work represents the peak of this satirical anti-Romantic genre: W.H. Mallock's later satirical attacks on Pater and Swinburne, though amusing, are much cruder, and Max Beerbohm's satire Enoch Soames, though quite as hilarious as anything in Peacock, has a different target, the posing of the would-be Romantic artist (here the fin-de-siecle version). By the time of Eliot's Prufrock the Romantic artist has been transmogrified into a part-comic, part-tragic and ineffectual figure, measuring out his life in coffee spoons and unable to force the moment to its crisis.

11. A.D. Nuttall's A Common Sky discusses the complex relationship between Berkeley's idealism and the emerging empiricist consensus.

12. The controversy about Coleridge's debt to the German philosophers and his own philosophical capacities has raged from Coleridge's time to ours. Rosemary Ashton's The German Idea: Four English Writers and the reception of German Thought 1800-1880 is a very clear account of Coleridge's indebtedness, especially to Kant. Arthur 0. Lovejoy, Rene Wellek, Mary Warnock, Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, and George Watson are among other writers who have discussed Coleridge's understanding and influence vis-a-vis German philosophy.

13. "St. Marks," extract from The Stones of Venice in English Prose: Narrative, Descriptive and Dramatic,(ed. H.A. Treble), 459-473.

14. Nuttall himself is not proof against this "special craving for intensity" or peculiarly English curiosity about empirical facts. There is a hilarious description, in his A New Mimesis, of his attempts to ascertain whether Wordsworth could actually have skated across the ` reflex of a star' as he claimed to have done in The Prelude. Nuttall goes to the extent of writing to a friend in Canada to ask if it is possible; the friend is not sure if it is. But another friend, a physicist, gravely suggests "that it could be done only by flinging out a leg while at the same time holding the head steady in something approximating to its initial position" (191). What is remarkable about all this is the seriousness with which Nuttall pursues these enquiries.

15. Carey's The Intellectuals and the Masses is a savage attack on the elitism of the modernists; he is quite open about his admiration for writers like Bennett and his dislike of Virginia Woolf and Wyndham Lewis.

16. Marx, in The German Ideology, argues the inevitability of the association between idealism and conservatism, and would not have found Coleridge's politics surprising, being familiar with Hegel's.

17. It is likely that Eliot valued Hulme's attacks on Swinburnish ecstasy for reasons of his own. In Patrick Parrinder's Authors and Authority: English and American Criticism 1750-1990, there is a brilliant piece of literary detective work which demonstrates that Eliot's real target in The Sacred Wood was not Arnold, as critical predecessor, but Swinburne, as poetic predecessor. Parrinder writes: "After The Sacred Wood it was Swinburne's destiny to languish unread, while Eliot emerged as the unchallenged possessor of the bardic crown" (222).

18. See "The Ideology of Modernism" in The Meaning of Contemporary Realism (17-46).

19. Stanley Rosen makes a similar argument in Hermeneutics As Politics, where he traces the genealogy of postmodernism, which sees itself as attacking the Enlightenment, back to the "internal incoherence" of Kant, one of the greatest of Enlightenment thinkers.

20. Quotes in Wellek's History of Modern Criticism 244.

21. Hartman has made these claims on behalf of criticism in Criticism in the Wilderness: The Study of Literature Today (see especially the chapter "Literary Commentary as Literature" 189-213). His efforts to demonstrate precisely how criticism can go about competing with literature are unfortunately demonstrated in his Saving the Text: Literature/Derrida/Philosophy, reading which ought to convince many of the merits of criticism retaining its earlier, attendant, function.

22. John Bayley has a marvellously subtle analysis of Harold Bloom's `evasion of the real,' his hostility to a poem `exactly itself' in ""A poet insufficiently himself?': Bloom on Stevens" in Selected Essays. Bayley's irritation with Bloom's mysticism and idealism, I would argue, demonstrates the continuing strength of the empirical tradition in British literary criticism. Bayley's examples of images that are `exactly themselves' are revealing:

> . . .the poetry that is exactly itself has no need to evade its provenance, because the objects in it and the story in it have their own selves which can be like nothing else. The armour of Achilles refuses to dwindle on the road towards meaning and `reality,' any more than the kidney which that other Bloom bought to eat for his breakfast, or the exquisite backside which Alisoun projected from the shop-window. (26)

23. In his The Conquest of Politics, Barber discusses Bertrand Russell's political writings and identifies Russell as

> one of the last of that long line of British philosophers whose work epitomized an extraordinary alliance, both dynamic and fruitful and at the same time misleading and corrosive to politics: the liaison between empiricism and liberalism.... If we count Hobbes as a dubious forefather and trace the lineage from Locke and Berkeley down through Hume and Mill, then Russell is indeed the last empiricist liberal, the last to try to wring from the justificatory enterprise arguments that both describe the world and prescribe human conduct in the social setting. (26)

That this form of liberalism was extraordinarily powerful in its time is sometimes obscured by the fact that Russell and Popper are no longer taken very seriously by liberal theorists; that it is now almost completely discredited is obvious from the tone of theorists like Barber, for whom "[to] insist, as liberals have always done, that the criteria by which we elucidate standards of knowledge must somehow correspond to the criteria by which we fashion a common life is a particularly pernicious kind of folly" or John Dunn, who writes of the "forlornness of any image of a culture founded upon epistemic rationality, any culture in which the external and objective dictates to the human and the existential how in general the latter has good reason to be" (Rethinking Modern Political Theory 147).

Interestingly, both Barber and Dunn are at least as critical

of the liberalism of Rawls, Robert Nozick and Ronald Dworkin as they are of the earlier, empiricist variant. Their writings, together with those of Oakeshott, John Pocock, Alasdair Maclntyre, Richard Rorty, and John Gray, constitute a very powerful critique of existing forms of liberalism, and point to the possibility of a completely different liberalism coming into existence.

24. Oakeshott and Pocock are perhaps the most important of these theorists; see especially Oakeshott's Rationalism in Politics and Pocock's The Machiavellian Moment and his Virtue, Commerce, and History. Oakeshott has consistently rejected the chief assumption of most liberals, that politics and social organisation were best treated as amenable to `rational' reorganization. In his insistence on the importance of traditional resources, he has been seen as sharing the conservatism of Burke; but in the importance he attaches to individual freedoms, and the protection of these from the encroachments of political authority, he is more like Mill, and thus closer to many liberals. Oakeshott's influence appears to be growing, and is likely to help usher in a liberalism that is less rationalistic, and more given to justifying itself as `the way we do things here.' This is obviously close to the liberalism Richard Rorty espouses, though his engagement with poststructuralism and postmodernism helps produce a very different tone from that of Oakeshott (for a clear statement of Rorty's position, see his Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth, especially the essay "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism" (197-202) and Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity). Pocock's influence has been mainly to undermine liberalism's tendency to universalize liberalism by reading it back into the thought of earlier periods; his work demonstrates the centrality of a civic republican tradition in periods in which it was assumed that a utilitarian liberalism was dominant. MacIntyre's attacks on liberalism also emphasize the specificity and limited duration of the `tradition' of liberalism, and its weaknesses when compared with the resources of Augustinian Christianity. John Dunn and John Gray are other theorists who emphatically reject liberalism's universalistic claims; Gray in fact, I think quite accurately, associates liberalism's failures with the arrogance of such claims. So the general tendency (apparent even in Rawls's later writings, such as Political Liberalism) is to withdraw from claims of universality and `the cunning of reason' and to offer pragmatic defences.

CHAPTER 4

SCHILLER AND THE NEGOTIATION OF MODERNITY

Newman did not have a single `idea' of the university; he had several, among them being the idea that knowledge should be its own end and that students sometimes learn more effectively from each other than from teachers. One of the more interesting ideas he must have had emerges from the circumstances of the writing of the Idea of a University. Newman is an English Catholic addressing Irish Catholics, and one would expect him to exhort them to put God first; in other words, to make the other disciplines subservient to Theology. What he actually says is very different. If you want to have the power of the English Protestants, he tells his audience, if you want to avoid being domineered over by them, learn from Oxford and Cambridge, learn secular wisdom. Let Theology have a place in university studies, indeed a pre-eminent place. But let the pursuit of knowledge be undertaken for its own sake, and do not interfere with the labours of scientists. Elsewhere Newman showed his appreciation of the Biblical injunction to be as wise as serpents, and this advice to the Catholics of Dublin was of a piece with his understanding of religion's delicate relationship with the secular world. Newman was aware that the university was one of the important locations of what I am calling the negotiation of modernity.

Our relationship with secularism is the beginning of our

modernity. Whether we see this relationship pessimistically, in terms of alienation from a benevolent deity or a nourishing community, or optimistically, in terms of an exhilarating release from the stifling bonds of dependency, it is a relationship every one of us is forced to think about, if not think through. The university, one of the institutional legacies of the rational Enlightenment, is a place in which this relationship with secularism, this modernity, can be evaluated and gauged, its contours charted, its dangers anticipated, its benefits welcomed.

The natural sciences have played the chief role in initiating the process of modernity, and in fuelling its continued existence. The humanities, sensitive to both the potential dangers and the opportunities for freedom and growth, have always displayed a much more ambivalent attitude towards modernity, and the social sciences, which came into existence precisely to deal with the problems of modernity, have in general moved from an optimistic, somewhat positivist attitude towards modernity to something more nearly approaching the humanist's ambivalence.

I believe it is the function of the humanities, within the university, to maintain this ambivalence; to oppose, on the one hand, positivist or technocratic hubris, and on the other, the complete rejection of modernity, the nihilistic dismissiveness towards rationality per se.[1] The latter tendency, having only lately lodged itself firmly in the university, appears to be more dangerous, but it may actually be an extreme reaction to the

former, in which case it makes no sense to speak of one being more dangerous than the other.

This ambivalence towards modernity, this alertness to its possibilities, this poised awareness of its two-edged quality, which I am arguing should be central to the humanities' understanding of their function, was, I will suggest, best captured in the writings of three Germans: Immanuel Kant, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Friedrich Schiller. As Germans, they were at a sufficient distance from the English empirical tradition and the optimistic French rationalism of Condorcet and Voltaire to be critical of these currents of Enlightenment thought; as Europeans they were close enough to the Enlightenment as a whole to participate in the sense of excitement at the freedom that the future seemed to promise. But it was only for a short period that this response to modernity remained influential; already, in the lifetimes of these men the development of an extreme idealism and a hubristic Eurocentric historicism threatened this carefully achieved balance.[2]

Kant's work has been a major influence on modern philosophy, and as such has been so thoroughly discussed that I could not possibly add anything of consequence, even if I had the necessary technical competence, which I don't. Schiller, however, who in much of his theoretical writings (and especially in On the Aesthetic Education of Man) declared himself Kant's disciple, is both more accessible and less known, even perhaps in English departments. Goethe, perhaps because he eschewed obvious

didacticism, is in his own way difficult to understand. I have found Schiller's writing, especially On the Aesthetic Education of Man and On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature, extraordinarily useful and suggestive, and, as the links with Kant and Goethe's thought are often obvious, and frequently pointed out by Schiller himself, I thought it best to concentrate on these writings. Schiller's influence on the university, and especially the humanities, has already been considerable, if difficult to trace with any degree of exactness. Arnold's conception of the civilizing mission of culture (which he thought could take the place of religion) owes much to Arnold's reading of Goethe and Schiller, and, more directly, to the example of their friend, Wilhelm von Humboldt. Humboldt's conception of the function of the university (he was the founder of Berlin University, and the Minister for Education of the Prussian State) had a considerable influence on the American universities, which modelled themselves on the German universities at least as much as they did on Oxford and Cambridge. And, by what may seem a bizarre coming together of influences, the Sixties counter-culture, which arguably transformed university culture in the U.S., and which to most observers was as far as one could get from Schiller and Arnold, owed some of what theoretical consistency it had to Herbert Marcuse's amalgam of Marx and Freud in Eros and Civilization; a book in which Schiller's `play-drive' has a crucial role in the anticipated freeing of libidinal energies.[3]

Diderot, Hegel, Nietzsche, Baudelaire; these are the writers, it is often suggested today, who prophetically enunciated the guiding principles of modernity, or who described its characteristic features. Schiller has not, as far as I know, figured among these prophets and topographers. Yet his On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature can be read as one of the more important documents of modernity. (Habermas describes On the Aesthetic Education of Man as "the first programmatic work toward an aesthetic critique of modernity," but as far as I know, does not discuss On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature).[4] It is more usually read as the text that established the divide between the Romantics and the Classics, and, as such, as the first theoretical document of Romanticism.[5] At one level, the essay is an attempt to lay out the differences between Schiller's own style of writing, and that of his friend and greatest rival, Goethe. Goethe tells Eckermann: "In literature I held to the principle of an objective procedure and only wanted to admit this as valid. Schiller, however, who worked quite subjectively, thought his way was the right one and in order to defend himself against me, he wrote the essay" (quoted in Introduction, On the Naive and Sentimental 13). As the translator of On the Naive points out:

> We can thus see that terms associated with the naive are intuitive, Hellenic, classical, real and objective whereas the sentimental is linked with speculative, Romantic, ideal and subjective. (13-14)

The disagreement between Schiller and Goethe very closely parallels the disagreements between Wordsworth and Coleridge, discussed in an earlier chapter. Wordsworth, like Goethe, was more realist than idealist; Coleridge, like Schiller, was powerfully influenced by Kant's transcendentalism, and was much more inclined to take the idealist position. Coleridge, in this again like Schiller, was somewhat unsure of his poetic gift when he compared it to that of Wordsworth (Schiller's oscillations between envy of Goethe's gift and straightforward admiration are well known). Both Coleridge and Schiller belonged to that rare hybrid species, the poet-philosopher, and both had an immense influence on poetics (and criticism), quite apart from their influence on poetry.

Goethe is not quite fair to Schiller, however, as Schiller did not write On the Naive only to `defend himself' against Goethe; it is clear that what Schiller was driving at was a reconciliation between the contrary approaches. For Schiller, the naive poet, such as Homer or Shakespeare (or Goethe), lives in a relationship to Nature that is so close as to exclude the possibility of self-reflexivity, of detached contemplation of the relationship. The naive poet, identified with Nature, childlike, limited in his subject matter, realistic and mimetic in his treatment, is nevertheless (in the superior manifestations) great in his simplicity and unfailingly a genius. The sentimental poet (Schiller does not obviously include himself among these, but the implication is obvious):

> ...reflects on the impressions which objects make on him, and the emotion into which he himself is transposed and into which he transposes us is based only on that reflection. The object is related here to an idea and his poetic strength rests only on this relationship. The sentimental poet therefore is constantly dealing with two opposing concepts and emotions, with reality as boundary and with his idea as the infinite, and the mixed feeling which he excites will always bear witness to this double source. (42)

Schiller's neutrality between the two types begins to give way to a decided preference for the sentimental type:

> But if the naive poet has the advantage over the sentimental one on the side of reality and brings to a real existence that for which the other can only awaken a lively urge, so the latter again has the great advantage over the former in that he is able to give the urge a greater object than the former did and could do. All reality, as we know, falls short of the ideal; everything which exists has its boundaries, but thought is boundless. The naive poet therefore suffers under these limitations to which all that is sensual is subject, while on the other hand the unconditional freedom of the capacity for ideas profits the sentimental poet. Of course the former fulfils his task but the task itself is somewhat limited; the latter

> indeed does not quite fulfil his but the task is infinite. (67)

The sentimental poet, who is an idealist rather than a realist, has been cut off from Nature, thrown back on his own thinking, forced to give himself the moral categorical imperative, made miserable by the variousness and multiplicity of the options available to him; in a nutshell, the sentimental poet is a modern, subject to the familiar existential angst.

Not only is Schiller's description of the type immediately recognisable and marvellously detailed, the very mixture of despair at the loss of roots and defiant celebration of the perilous gains of this independence, so familiar from a thousand Romantic writings, is, perhaps for the first time, elaborated. The sentimental poet will never reach the level of the naive poet, but that is because the sentimental poet's task is so much greater; the very potentiality destroys or weakens him. The naive poet is in actuality more noble; but the sentimental poet is potentially far more noble. The antinomies proliferate dazzlingly; but the guiding idea is clear. Basically, enormous potential perhaps gallantly unfulfilled is being set up against a limited perfection. This, I would suggest, is the characteristic understanding of modernity (by moderns, of course). Modernity is seen as forced on us, as immensely difficult, perhaps fatal to us; nevertheless, it is more noble than the ignoble ignorance of pre-modern thought. Like any modern, Schiller oscillates between despair at the inevitability.

of our fate (modernity had to come) and stoicism or optimism about the future (since it had to come, our greatness lies in accepting it; moreover, does not the absence of psychic and other support require of us greater heroism than that needed by pre-moderns?)

Schiller's unhappy but noble sentimental poet, or idealist, is not just the modern surveying the pre-modern period, torn between envy and an uneasy and intermittent consciousness of his own superiority; he is also Western man surveying the non-West. Schiller, the idealist, ends his essay with a warning against the dangers of untrammeled idealism which is very close to Conrad's understanding of imperialism as an evil practice arising out of a mistaken sense of superiority and sheer greed, but also out of a genuinely moral impulse. Schiller writes:

> If. . . the effects of true idealism are unsure and often dangerous, then the effects of false idealism are terrible... the deluded visionary leaves nature from mere caprice, in order to be able to give in, all the more freely, to the self-will of the desires and the whims of the imagination. He does not place his freedom in independence from physical needs, but in licence from moral needs... But just because this deluded visionary quality is no aberration of nature but of freedom and therefore springs from a disposition worthy of respect in itself which is infinitely perfectible, so it leads also to a never-ending fall into a

> bottomless pit and can only end in complete destruction. (90)

Like Schiller's idealist and Goethe's Faust, Conrad's Kurtz, into whose making all Europe went, possesses "a disposition worthy of respect in itself." He believes in the civilizing mission of Europe, he is an idealist (in both senses of **the** word), and his life ends in complete destruction: lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

Schiller's ambivalence towards modernity comes through in that last, emphatic statement about **`false idealism.'** In On the Aesthetic Education of Man, the ambivalence is even more pointed, with Schiller forcefully presenting both sides of the case for modernity (there is a direct line running from Schiller's condemnation of that which prevents man from developing the `harmony of his being' to the criticism of industrial civilization I argued was the distinctive feature of English criticism of the early part of the century). Look at his critique of instrumental rationality and specialisation, for instance, in a passage that influenced the whole tradition of Romantic criticism of modernity:

> It was civilization itself which inflicted this wound upon modern man. Once the increase of empirical knowledge, **and** more exact modes **of thought, made** sharper divisions **between the** sciences **inevitable, and** once the **increasingly complex machinery of State necessitated a more rigorous separation of ranks and**

> occupations, then the inner unity of human nature was severed too, and a disastrous conflict set its harmonious powers at variance.... State and Church, laws and customs, were now torn asunder; enjoyment was divorced from labour, the means from the end, the effort from the reward. Everlastingly chained to a single little fragment of the Whole, man himself developed into nothing but a fragment; everlastingly in his ear the monotonous sound of the wheel that he turns, he never develops the harmony of his being, and instead of putting the stamp of humanity upon his own nature, he becomes nothing more than the imprint of his occupation or of his specialized knowledge. (Aesthetic Education 34-35)

But Schiller insists on presenting the arguments on the other side, for specialization:

> ...little as individuals might benefit from this fragmentation of their being, there was no other way in which the species as a whole could have progressed.... One-sidedness in the exercise of his powers, must, it is true, inevitably lead the individual into error; but the species as a whole to truth. Only by concentrating the whole energy of our mind into a single focal point, contracting our whole being into a single power, do we, as it were, lend wings to this individual power and lead it, by artificial means, far beyond the limits

which Nature seems to have assigned to it. (40-41)'

Later in the essay, there is again a parallel criticism and defence of aspects of modernity. In the Twenty-Fourth Letter, Schiller discusses `the demand for the Absolute' which inevitably comes upon all men (he does not say so, but this must mean all moderns, since Reason did not need to ground itself for pre-Enlightenment man). This is one of the first discussions of what we are more familiar with as the concept of `totality,' the concept which assumes such gigantic proportions in Hegelian and Marxist thinking. Schiller's basic argument is that the totality, when it impinges on the thinking of those who are not intellectually and morally prepared for it, those who are dominated by utilitarian or empirical theories, has a disastrous effect. Overwhelmed by the totality, the unprepared man falls into sensuality and greed, since, at least, if "this world of sense shows him nothing which might be its own cause and subject to none but its own law. . . it does show him something which knows of no cause and obeys no law" (177). The totality of the moral law which man must give himself comes into conflict with man's unpreparedness for such a stern demand; what it provokes (since man must respond to the demand one way or another) is a contrary totality of self-interest and sensuality. Here, in embryonic form, is a systematic theory of desire, morality and potential human tragedy which rivals that of Freud.

After this description of the disastrous effects of the demand for the Absolute on the unprepared man, Schiller pointedly

distances himself from Rousseauistic glorification of Nature. Only when man objectifies Nature and frees himself from her laws, he writes, can man consider himself truly human (185). Today's ecologist, who may be delighted by Schiller's criticism of man's degradation at the hands of technological civilization, would probably be dismayed by Schiller's calm acceptance of the necessity of man's domination of nature. But it is the carefulness of these explorations of moral and aesthetic positions that finally establishes Schiller's maturity.

Schiller and Arnold

The whole business of Arnold's debt to Schiller, Goethe and Humboldt is matter for a separate thesis; here I will only touch on what seem to me to be rather important differences in the way Arnold and Schiller approached the idea of education. Schiller's understanding of aesthetic education as a reconciliation between sensuous and formal (rational) drives is, in the first place, much more subtle than anything to be found in Culture and Anarchy. Indeed, it may have been too subtle for institutional implementation at all. Schiller's theories were transformed into something much simpler, and less effective, as they entered the domain of the university. Lionel Gossman's description of Wilhelm von Humboldt's efforts to realise in institutional form the ideas he and Schiller had worked out to secure the harmonious development of man's powers is instructive:

> Early in his career Wilhelm von Humboldt had argued in

> favor of strictly limiting the power of the state, but as Prussian Minister of Education he found himself exploiting the very instrument he wished to hold in check in order to realize on a significant scale his goal of regeneration through literary culture. It was Humboldt who set up the system of state-run classical Gymnasien, which was to institutionalize and routinize the ideas of the neohumanists in Germany and to transform them ultimately from a liberating force into a repressive instrument of class domination.... their original function, the formation of free and harmonious personalities (in opposition to the specializing and fragmenting trend of modern times) was made over into something more like its opposite: the production of competent and disciplined bureaucrats and managers. (46)

If Humboldt, whom Arnold praised as "one of the most beautiful souls that have ever existed" in Culture and Anarchy (218) was unable to achieve his goals in Germany, it is not to be expected that Arnold would fare much better in England. Part of the problem was Arnold's own not-quite sublimated class consciousness. Gossman writes of "the fear and distrust" with which Arnold responds to the "growing ranks of class-conscious laborers," and of an "unsuspected harshness in the advocate of sweetness and light" (43). Schiller never lost his revolutionary ardour, his belief in the ultimate importance of political freedom. In On the Aesthetic Education he writes of "that most

perfect of all the works to be achieved by the arts of man: the construction of true political freedom" (7). Arnold, on the other hand, never lost his English upper class distrust of the unregulated masses, whose tearing down of Hyde Park railings seems to have affected him the way the guillotine affected some French aristocrats.

Arnold's idea of culture was also quite distinct from Schiller's. Schiller quite clearly distanced himself from the `general culture,' or the desirableness thereof, as he saw specialization as both inevitable and necessary. So Arnold's culture, much more vaguely distinguished, easily modulates into upper class good taste (Arnold's criticism of the Barbarians is mild compared to the savageness with which he attacks the Philistines). Arnold's vagueness extends to his aesthetic criteria. His `touchstones' of great poetry are at the other extreme from Schiller's complex aesthetic theory, which combines playfulness, wholeness, orderliness and passivity (as in contemplation), and, most important, associates it with the moral will rather than with objects of art.

At the heart of Arnold's theory of education was a nostalgic repudiation of modernity, more obvious in "The Scholar Gypsy" and some of the other poems than in the prose. While one can hardly blame him for this, it is fair to say that this nostalgia was an unfortunate element in a theory of education which, after all, was intended to help us deal with modernity. It is interesting that Newman, from whom Arnold learnt so much, and who is usually

considered much more conservative, seems not to have succumbed to nostalgic longings, and was far more excited at the findings of the natural sciences than Arnold. But then, religious conservatives, by definition, have their God; perhaps only liberals feel nostalgia.[7]

Amateurism and Self-fashioning

"Man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays," Schiller boldly announces in On the Aesthetic Education. This statement, like the Greek injunction to `Know thyself' and the Biblical exhortation to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, must be the starting point of a philosophy, rather than something to be demonstrated. As such, it is too vast a topic to be discussed here, so beyond saying that I think the statement is profoundly true, I will use it only as a means of getting a perspective on the new professionalism that is making its way in the humanities, and especially English departments.

Stanley Fish is probably the best known of those who have been urging that teachers of English should professionalise themselves, and should do so with a clear conscience, as their guilt about making profits and so on is just a hangover from the older humanities' suspicion of the business world. Fish's arguments are too depressing to recount, but Edward Said's response to his article "Profession, Loathe Thyself" sums up what argument there is succinctly: "Let us... assume that whereas

[Walter Jackson] Bate wants the profession to be less apolitical and more humanistic, I want it either to be more political or less unworldly. By way of rejoinder, Fish simply says that he wants the profession to be" (371).

Opposition to professionalism rarely wishes to label itself, since the opposite of professionalism often seems to be shoddy amateurism, adhocery, bungling, managing somehow, muddling through, and so on.[8] It is therefore a relief when someone like Edward Said, whom nobody would dare to accuse of lack of professionalism (in the sense of publishing rather than perishing, or scholarly awards) says quite clearly that he is opposed to professionalism, and that he endorses amateurism, not in the sense of it being inferior to professionalism, but in the etymological sense that it describes the activity of a lover. In Representations of the Intellectual, he writes:

> The particular threat to the intellectual today, whether in the West or the non-Western world, is not the academy, nor the suburbs, nor the appalling commercialism of journalism and publishing houses, but rather an attitude I will call professionalism. By professionalism I mean thinking of your work as an intellectual as something you do for a living, between the hours of nine and five with one eye on the clock, and another cocked at what **is** considered to **be proper,** professional behaviour, not **rocking the** boat, not straying **outside the accepted paradigms or limits,**

> making yourself marketable and above all presentable, hence uncontroversial and unpolitical and `objective.' (55)

This professionalism, Said believes, can be "countered by ... amateurism, the desire to be moved not by profit or reward but by love for and unquenchable interest in the larger picture, in making connections. .. in refusing to be tied down to a specialty" (57).

Said has made the important point that genuine scholarship largely consists in a self-denying and loving attention to the object of scholarship; and he has drawn the inevitable conclusion that the refusal of specialization must be central to any definition of amateurism.[9] But play, which he does not mention, is surely as central to amateurism as loving attention or many-sidedness. Play, in fact, may be the most intractable element of amateurism, the least amenable to professionalization.

It is surprisingly difficult to talk about `play' at all in an academic thesis, except perhaps in the sociological-anthropological sense in which Johan Huizinga, for instance, discusses it in Homo Ludens. Schiller seems to have been aware of the difficulty, for after having brought in the idea of the `play-drive,' and after pointedly emphasizing its primacy in human society, he does not go into any great detail about its characteristic features. The problem is that in an increasingly technological and rational world, even play is rationalised or drawn into the market. In an age of professionalized sport and

artworks as investments, the very idea of play changes, is routinized and stripped of charisma.

It may seem like an odd suggestion that we have to learn, or re-learn the importance of play (after all, we have all been children): but it is precisely the danger of the times we live in that we may forget what play actually is. The restructuring of the idea of play as lucrative professional sport, or beneficial therapy, or even time-filling activity, is far more dangerous than outright denial of the value of play. Literary academics, I am convinced, can learn much more (and not only about play) from Shakespeare, Cervantes, Montaigne, Rabelais, Goethe, Schiller, Fielding, Sterne, Lamb, Lewis Carroll and Oakeshott than they can from theories of necessary professionalism or strenuously philosophical jouissance.

The `Aesthetic Education' of man is, of course, and in a very important sense, the education he gives himself. Schiller's tract is a primer or guide, but no more than that. The aesthetic education is a form of self-fashioning; a form that becomes inevitable in the modern period, with the erosion of religious faith and tightly knit communities. Both Schiller and Goethe were virtually obsessed with "the harmonious development of man's powers' and `giving shape and form' to themselves. In the very last of the Letters, Schiller writes:

> ..**.as form** gradually comes upon him from **without. . . so finally it begins to take** possession **of him himself,** transforming **at first only the outer, but ultimately**

> the inner, man too. Uncoordinated leaps of joy turn into dance, the unformed movements of the body into the graceful and harmonious language of gesture. (213)

Schiller was reading Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship when he was writing On the Aesthetic Education of Man. This first of the bildungsromans sets out to describe the self-fashioning of a young bourgeois, whose one goal is to "attain the harmonious development of [his] personality" (175) whose very name (Meister) indicates his resolution to master external circumstances and his destiny.

Goethe and Schiller were steeped in European literature, including the literature that described the education of the "Renaissance Man." Goethe himself has been called the last great universal man, and must have studied the lives of Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo, of Alberti and Cellini, with particular attention. He must have read Pico Delia Mirandola's "On the Dignity of Man," Castiglione's Il Cortegiano and Rabelais's description of the education of Gargantua. Perhaps the very immensity of their achievements, the impossibility of matching them, pushed him towards the rejection of this many-sided self culture, and towards a cautious but definite endorsement of the necessity of specialization in a modern age. But his own life and manifold talents remained as an example and a standard; and in one crucial respect he went beyond the Renaissance geniuses. What Albert Borgmann says of Goethe's friend and admirer Wilhelm von Humboldt could be said of Goethe himself:

> Wilhelm von Humboldt who is one of the authors... of the liberal democratic notion of self-realization has also pointed out that no one person can hope to realize all that human beings are capable of; we would in fact weaken our development if we tried. But far from being frustrated by our inevitable one-sidedness, we should embrace and develop our peculiarity and join it with those of others and through this connection experience and enjoy the fullness of humanity. (213)

What was, in the Renaissance artists, a forbidding and awe-inspiring genius is modified into something less ferociously individualistic; the work of art is as much a social work of art as the product of solitary labours. We are reminded here of Ruskin's celebration of Gothic cathedrals as monuments of anonymous, unified, religious faith and work. But with Goethe, as with Ruskin, the enormous work on the self remains to be done; in fact, it is one's life work.

Newman also, in his Idea of a University, amidst the discussions of the specificities of various disciplines, does not forget the centrality of self-fashioning, the blend of intransigent individualism and peer-group socialising that goes into it:

> ...independent of direct instruction on the part of Superiors, there is a sort of self-education in the academic institutions of Protestant England; a characteristic tone of thought, a recognized standard

> of judgement is found in them, which, as developed in the individual who is submitted to it, becomes a twofold source of strength to him, both from the distinct stamp it impresses on his mind, and from the bond of union which it creates between him and others.... self-education in any shape, in the most restricted sense, is preferable to a system of teaching, which, professing so much, really does so little for the mind. Shut your College gates against the votary of knowledge, throw him back upon the searchings and the efforts of his own mind; he will gain by being spared an entrance into your Babel. (147-48)

And Lionel Trilling, in a late essay, "The Uncertain Future of the Humanistic Educational Ideal," has a long passage on Bildung, or education, with its special connotations of work on the self, and the strenuous effort and the ordeal of the process (171). He is obviously discouraged at the Bildung (more precisely, the absence of evidence of it) he saw around him. The idea of making a life, he writes, that is, of treating one's existence as if it were a work of art, no longer has much influence:

> This idea of a conceived and executed life is a very old one and was in force until relatively recently; we regard it as characteristic of the Victorian age, but it of course lasted even longer than that.... cognate

> with the idea of making a life, a nicely proportioned one, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, was the idea of making a self, a good self....Castiglione in The Book of the Courtier represent[s] men laboring to come up to standard, to be all that men might reasonably hope to be.... This desire to fashion, to shape, a self and a life has all but gone from a contemporary culture whose emphasis, paradoxically enough, is so much on self. (175)

Trilling blames the very multiplicity of options of modern life. Like Arnold, he believes that "this strange disease of modern life/ With its sick hurry, its divided aims" has undone man's capacity to educate himself.

If self-fashioning seemed anachronistic in Trilling's period, what is the scholarly consensus on it now? A new phase of aggressive deconstruction of the idea seems to be under way. Bill Readings (in "For a Heteronomous Cultural Politics") sardonically dismisses the idea that anyone can "imagine him or herself as the hero of the story of the University, as the instantiation of the cultivated individual that the entire great machine labours night and day to produce" (166), and Stephen Greenblatt, in Renaissance Self-Fashioning, unable to believe in contemporary self-fashioning, projects his scepticism back in time to Thomas More, Wyatt, Spenser, Marlowe and others. As his work progressed, he notes in an epilogue

> I perceived that fashioning oneself and being fashioned

> by cultural institutions--family, religion, state,— were inseparably intertwined. In all my texts and documents, there were, so far as I could tell, no moments of pure, unfettered subjectivity; indeed, the human subject itself began to seem remarkably unfree, the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society. Whenever I focused sharply upon a moment of apparently autonomous self-fashioning, I found not an epiphany of identity freely chosen but a cultural artifact. (256)

What is troubling is that Greenblatt, rather than arguing that human agency has diminished as a result of the growth of instrumental rationality or technology, argues that the idea of autonomy, of human control over circumstances, has always been a delusion. In Trilling's time, the tradition of self-fashioning, perhaps more honoured in the breach than the observance, at least existed as a potentiality, a telos, something to work towards; today, belief in the possibility of self-fashioning is widely perceived as an astonishing naivete .

And finally, there is (there always is) Michel Foucault, whose indefatigable scholarly labours extended, towards the end of his life, to a detailed exploration of `technologies of the self.'

Let me admit that I find Foucault difficult to read. His Care of the Self is a fiendishly boring summary of various texts, mainly of the Greek period, that describe techniques of `care of

the self. ' If it was not so long and so detailed one might be forgiven for suspecting the entire book was an elaborate practical joke. And what is the point of all the detail? According to Patrick H. Hutton, who seems to have followed Foucault's intellectual trajectory closely, it is part of a running battle Foucault has been having with Freud, whose influence Foucault thinks has been pernicious. Foucault's intellectual journey into early Greek documents was intended to

> expose the methods of Freudian psychoanalysis as the tools of forgotten philosophies of the self, honed by the analysts of earlier epochs who hailed from different intellectual traditions and who had unrelated purposes in mind. The Freud who descends from the genealogy of psychoanalysis in Foucault's deconstruction is not the creator of a new method but an inventor whose genius it was to bring together into a unified theory of medical discourse the techniques of self-analysis used and then discarded by the past societies of Western civilization. (134-35)

Hutton points out that all Foucault's early work "concerned the ways in which external authority shapes the structure of the mind" (125), and argues that "in his last project on the technologies of the self, all of his attention is focused on the way in which the individual participates in the policing process by monitoring his own behaviour" (132). This certainly sounds like the Foucault of Discipline and Punish, but this may be how

some people want to see him. Perhaps this Foucault, instead of becoming his admirers, was about to embarrass them. There are signs that Foucault was withdrawing from the extremely hostile anti-Enlightenment position of his early years; and certainly The Care of the Self, while it is incredibly dull reading, gives us a Foucault who seems fascinated by the techniques of the self he is describing, and not necessarily intent on proving that ways of inducing self-monitoring went back to Galen and Musonius.[10] In an interview called "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress" (in Technologies of the Self) he is enthusiastic about the freedom of `work on the self in antiquity. People decided for themselves whether to work on themselves or not. He sounds nostalgic about the disappearance of self-fashioning:

> We have hardly any remnant of the idea in our society, that the principal work of art which one has to take care of, the main area to which one must apply aesthetic values, is oneself, one's life, one's existence. We find this in the Renaissance, but in a slightly academic form, and yet again in nineteenth-century dandyism, but those were only episodes. (362)

But Foucault's fascination with self-fashioning, as is usually the case with him, is strangely scientific, (this is evident from the use of terms like 'technologies'). There is no self to discover, only techniques to explore. He speaks dismissively of `the Californian cult of the self but his

condescension is unjustified, and his version is only distinguished from this cult by the aura of scholarliness, or scholasticism that surrounds his writings. Like the Californian New Age enthusiasts, with Foucault it is the technique that matters. Instead of a regimen of fresh orange juice, yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Jungian psychotherapy, bio-feedback, and lots of positive thinking, we have an armoury of early Greek, largely ascetic, practices of the self. From celebrating experiments with sado-masochistic sexuality, Foucault has swung to the extremes of austerity and renunciation. Perhaps it is a sign of the difficulty of genuine self-fashioning in our time that a man of Foucault's undoubted genius should so perversely misunderstand the point of the exercise.

Conclusion

Schiller's ambivalence towards modernity was a considered one. His method of understanding was dialectical; again and again in the Aesthetic Education we find the pattern of contraries, built up and extended until they are forced to develop into a new unity. With regard to the future he saw coming into existence, he refused to withdraw into nostalgia, political quietism, and conservative broodings about past excellences, though the pull in these directions must have been very strong. Though there is evidence that he was disgusted by the excesses of the younger German Romantics, he did not react against them to the extent of denying the principles they held in common.

This considered ambivalence, together with his endorsement of playfulness and an aesthetic self-fashioning that takes into account the importance of specialization and an abstract moral obligation: these may help us to understand the role the humanities can play in the university. To the thoroughly politicized, for whom ambivalence is conservatism, and self-fashioning a feature of an earlier age, this may sound both self-indulgent to the point of frivolity and completely detached from today's realities. Differences of opinion at this level cannot be resolved; they can only be stated in such a way that ambiguity is kept to a minimum.

Schiller's understanding of modernity has been ignored partly because of the tendency to regard aesthetics as a whole as a trivial enterprise, when compared with epistemology or ethics. But as I have tried to show, Schiller is far from being a `mere' aesthete. His conception of the aesthetic is complex enough to incorporate both theories of knowledge and morality; and his insistence on both determinedly emphasizing differences in points of view and trying to reconcile them at the highest level is extraordinarily useful, as in his account of instrumental rationality and the value of specialization in the Sixth Letter. I believe that his thought is better suited to our real requirements than many of the cynical and facile dogmas that largely constitute the intellectual and cultural environment of our fin-de-siecle.

NOTES

1. Unfortunately, it was only after writing most of this thesis that I came across Samuel Weber's very interesting (and difficult) Institution and Interpretation. In a final chapter entitled "Ambivalence: The Humanities and the Study of Literature," he discusses "the crisis of the humanities" in terms of what he calls "the ambivalence of demarcation" (138). The sciences work by progressive exclusions, and the humanities have defined themselves in terms of opposition to science; so the humanities, paradoxically, practice the `exclusion of exclusion' (138). Weber wonders if the humanities, literally defined by their ambivalence, can embrace this ambivalence usefully, "without...resorting to the kind of archaeo-teleological self-determination that Freud suggests is a factor in provoking neurotic illness"? (148) The suggestion here is that the 'crisis' of the humanities is similar to the Freudian obsessive neurosis, which is a result of ambivalence, as drive and prohibition constantly increase in strength and reinforce each other.

2. Both these tendencies, of course, reach their fulfilment in Hegel's philosophy of history.

3. Charles Taylor, in Sources of the Self, has drawn attention to the connections between Schiller's criticism of `the instrumental stance' and the various radical student movements that emphasized community, honesty, playfulness, living in harmony with nature, and so on (500-501).

4. See Philosophical Discourse of Modernity 45.

5. Goethe was perhaps the first to discern this. He tells Eckermann: "The concept of classical and romantic literature which is now spreading worldwide and is causing so many quarrels and divisions... emanated originally from Schiller and me" (qtd. in Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly's introduction to On the Naive and Sentimental, 13). Arthur 0. Lovejoy carefully lays out the origins of the concept in "Schiller and the Genesis of German Romanticism" Essays in the History of Ideas (207-27). See also M.H. Abrams Natural Supernaturalism and Rene Wellek's "Kant and Schiller,"in A History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950: The Later Eighteenth Century.

6. Among those influenced by Schiller's writings, only Weber and the early Marx seem to achieve this complex poise, this profound neutrality towards modernity. Nietzsche, Lukacs, and Adorno and Horkheimer tend in their writing towards a more hostile analysis.

7. For an interesting discussion of Newman's and Arnold's views on education, see G.H. Bantock's Freedom and Authority in Education.

8. Another type of criticism of professionalism is that made by writers like Russell Jacoby. In The Last Intellectuals, Jacoby takes academics to task for no longer attempting to address a general public, in the way that Edmund Wilson or C. Wright Mills did. Jacoby's criticism has been dismissed by some academics as an exercise in nostalgia, but more and more people seem to share his fear that university intellectuals today might be dangerously cut off from the world outside academia. Trilling pointed to this danger in his "The Two Environments: Reflections on the Study of English" in Beyond Culture; and, closer to our time, Edward Said (in The World, The Text and the Critic) has expressed similar fears.

9. In passing, it is worth noting that there are distinct national differences in regard to amateurism and professionalism. Said stands out for his criticism of an already highly professionalised group; in England, on the other hand, John Bayley, John Carey and Christopher Ricks are highly respected without being, in the American sense, professionals. By this I obviously don't mean that they are not paid salaries or don't publish, but that they seem to be comfortable with generalizations that American scholars tend to be wary of, and that they feel no need to cultivate a jargon that sounds scientific, or at least sociological.

10. Foucault's "What is Enlightenment?" (in The Foucault Reader 32-50), his response to Kant's famous work of the same name, seems to mark a new ambivalence in Foucault's attitude to the Enlightenment. The essay has already triggered off a considerable controversy. See Habermas's "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present" and Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow's "What is Maturity? Habermas and Foucault on `What is Enlightenment?'", both in Foucault: A Critical Reader 103-108 and 109-121; Geoffrey Galt Harpham's "So...What Is Enlightenment? An Inquisition into Modernity" Critical Inquiry, Spring 1994, Vol 20, No 3. 524-556; and Christopher Norris `" What is enlightenment?": Kant according to Foucault[1] in Cambridge Companion to Foucault. (159-196).

CONCLUSION

Liberals are, almost by definition, centrists, avoiding the perils of both revolution and reaction. That the word `ambivalence' has appeared so often in this thesis is symptomatic; one of the things I have been trying to do is recover a degree of respectability for a term which now appears to be synonymous with indecisiveness and timidity, rather than, as it should be, with the careful weighing of alternatives.

Liberals are also, historically, the heirs and beneficiaries of the European Enlightenment. Perhaps it is the very unambiguousness of the connection that makes Third World intellectuals, for instance, hostile to liberal thought in general: for the colonized, the European Enlightenment is just as likely to be seen as the source of Eurocentric arrogance as it is of emancipatory discourses, suitable for all human beings everywhere. What I would have liked to do is help in the process of disentangling Enlightenment thought from its local moorings in Western Europe, thereby increasing its accessibility; but that could not be attempted in this thesis. Neither have I attempted to defend the particular form of rationality that is arguably the chief legacy of the Enlightenment: on the contrary, I have concentrated on the humanistic opposition to the dominance of this form of rationality. This opposition, (which I wholeheartedly endorse) is, however, still an opposition mounted from within the Enlightenment; and for it to be effective, it is

vitally important that it distinguish itself from the discourses that are unequivocally hostile to the legacy of the Enlightenment. These counter-Enlightenment discourses, combining positivist and idealist tendencies, ought, I feel, to be resisted: they are dangerous not only because they celebrate anarchy and are retrogressive in themselves, but because they are difficult to locate on the philosophical and political spectrum. This thesis attempts, among other things, to locate these discourses so that they are more easily identifiable. The resources of Enlightenment thought are considerable, and considerably varied: they include criticism of the Enlightenment, and range from the insights and achievements of liberal thinkers and politicians to the radicalised Enlightenment of the Marxists. Feminism in its central impulses owes more to Enlightenment critique of privilege and hierarchy than to the anarchic counter-Enlightenment thought that has become so influential in recent times, especially in academic circles. A clearer sense of the range and power of these resources is bound to help us towards the achievement of a `good' modernity, a modernity based on justice, tolerance, mutual respect and ecological sensitivity rather than one based on consumerism, technological growth, or material exploitation.

I have been arguing that the university is an important location for what I have been calling the negotiation of modernity, and that secularism marks the beginning of our modernity. But negotiation presupposes understanding, and for

understanding one has to draw back, one has to contemplate from a distance. If the university is to carry out its obligations properly, a certain detachment from everyday life is required; for it is everyday life that bears most unequivocally the imprint of modernity, and one cannot see an object one is too close to. One does not have to believe in social hierarchies and elites, however, to argue that it will benefit all of us if some of us choose to try and imaginatively reconstruct the past, or try to relate to each other what most people would consider arid abstractions, or struggle to read books written many centuries earlier, in a language we have not always been familiar with, or contemplate a work of art in such a way that the act of contemplation may be taught to others. And I believe we will do these things more effectively if we do them in a spirit of amateurism, without much concern for profit or advancement, with a degree of playfulness, and if we are concerned with how we may give shape to our minds and personalities in the process.

There is the danger, of course, that the idea of the necessary detachment of the scholar will be used to justify quietism, or worse still, gross injustice. Writers like Edward Said are justifiably concerned about the fact that the university has become increasingly detached from the reality of the world outside its boundaries. It seems to me that both tendencies, towards ivory tower isolation and towards complete involvement in political reform (or revolution), are spreading, and may actually be stimulating each other. So we have a bizarre situation in

which people for whom all aspects of reality are in some sense political are expending their considerable energies on the discrediting of the moral and political motivations of, say, an author who wrote novels in the nineteenth century; and on the other hand there are those who, believing that all political involvement or moral protest will hurt their careers, or earn them unpopularity, achieve a serenity and detachedness that would be admirable in a different setting.

When I began this thesis four years ago I intended to be much more critical of the amateurism and elitism in the university, and especially in English studies. Feminist critiques of patriarchy, in particular, I believed should be taken seriously, and I still think so. But as I grew better acquainted with the strident denunciations of the university, I grew more convinced of their intellectual inadequacy to the task they confronted. Demolition-work was undertaken cheerfully, while any kind of reconstructive effort was derided as contributing to the loathed status quo. Widespread obscurity, and what is worse, obscurantism, seem to have become the normative feature of critical prose in English studies. The coming together of those who have been most determined to professionalise their disciplines and those who have been most hostile to the rationality of the Western intellectual tradition was revealing as well as disconcerting.

It has been difficult for me not to feel anachronistically romantic in the face of the changes that have taken place in the

university in the last few decades. Many of the books I had to read while preparing for this thesis seemed to have been written in a spirit of vindictive joy that the university was crumbling.[1] Reading these books, I was uncomfortably aware that this brave new world of what Peter Sloterdijk calls `enlightened false consciousness' was not for me.[2] I felt like a character from a Henry James novel admiring a beautiful old house, imagining the graciousness of the lives of the inhabitants, but knowing it was not likely to stand for much longer, and knowing also that he or she was not likely to be invited in.

In MacIntyre's After Virtue, our condition is likened to that of a society in the aftermath of some great disaster, in which, among other things, documents of all sorts are destroyed, and the society has to reconstruct its prior history and moral commitments with the fragments that are available. We, similarly, seem to have forgotten the foundational justifications for university education, and cannot easily deal with criticism of the enterprise. Our forgetfulness is doubtless linked to our devotion to specialization and our suspicion of general ideas, of philosophy (philosophy, that is, in the earlier, non-departmental, sense; philosophy as it is studied within university departments may be actually worse off than the other disciplines). Scholars from English studies, for instance, tend not to make large general statements about justifications for university education because they think someone from philosophy (or philosophy of education) will despise them for their

ineptness. It is partly the willingness of the younger scholars to grapple with Continental philosophy and return to 'grand theory' that accounts for the general shift, among students, away from traditional concerns. Trilling was one of the few critics in English studies who consistently saturated criticism with thought (to paraphrase Arnold on Burke). The tradition Trilling was opposing, the one which believed that really fine minds could not be violated by a thought, has been the dominant one in English studies, and its dominance has undone it. Walter Pater, very far from being any kind of systematic philosopher, quoting Novalis, tells us that philosophy draws us out of apathy, it revivifies, it startles the human spirit into a sharp and eager observation.[3] Surely the humanities, and the university, is in need of such revivifying philosophy.

NOTES

1. Unfortunately, the other sort of book I had to read, the sort which set out to defend the traditional learning against the onslaughts of the radical barbarians: these also proved disappointing. Partly it was a matter of tone. Many of the authors could not help sounding like apoplectic retired military men, or the parodic versions of them one encounters in comic novels. They blustered, and that was fatal to their argument; also, they sounded wounded and betrayed, which was an admission of defeat. But it was also a matter of content. A confident defence of traditional education, not guilty, not bad-tempered, not defiantly callous towards women, minorities and egalitarian movements, respectful towards the opposition but unyielding on matters of principle: this was rare.

2. See Peter Sloterdijk's very interesting Critique of Cynical Reason.

3. In the Conclusion to The Renaissance 196.

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