Quango-ing the University (Cont.)

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PART TWO

RetroHumanities and the Commodification of Knowledge

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    Retrohumanities are marked in their practices by their violent assault on what they regard to be "theory": a violence that is concealed as a populist valorization of "experience." "Experience"--which is regarded to be "spontaneous" and thus "natural" and "nonideological"--is celebrated in many contradictory forms. What is at stake in these diverse valorizations, however, is not "experience" itself; rather "experience" is a stand-in for something else. We might get a glimpse of this "something else" if we consider, for example, that traditional cultural feminists celebrate "experience" as an immediate testimony to "life" itself. Consequently, they advocate opening up the "canon" to represent more of the "experience" of women since for them woman is her "experience," and the only way to "liberate" her is to open up space for the "self expression" of her experience. Their supposed opponents, who believe in the sanctity of the "canon," also deploy the same logic: the "canon" is significant, they argue, because it is the site of the quintessential human "experience" where the particularity and uniqueness of "experience" and, at the same time and quite paradoxically, the "universality" of that "uniqueness" is expressed with unsurpassable mastery. What, on the surface, seem to be opposing modes of readings are, in actuality, simply varieties of the same ideology of the subject. It is this ideology of the subject(ivity) that is the "something else" of experience. The core of this ideology of the subject--which is concealed as celebration of the unique experience--is "individualism." "Experience," in short is the name of that capitalist arche-strategy that marginalizes collectivity and protects the "individual" as the foundation of entrepreneurial capitalism. Experience, in short, is a stand-in for the "individual" who is a stand-in for global capital.

In place of "theory," retrohumanities puts the "aesthetic": the "expression" of "experience" that is assumed to transcend the ideological and thus transparently capture the "life" contained in "experience." The "aesthetic" in the retrohumanities is used, however, not (as in the work of Nietzsche, de Man, Derrida, and Nancy, for example) as the space of difference, the heterogeneous and the undecidable but as their opposite: the logocentric site of a "natural" harmony and spontaneity that are obtained by obliterating "difference"--the difference of "language" and "experience." The "aesthetic," in retrohumanities, is constructed as a nonideological, panhistorical space across the ages. But, in actuality, it is a political allegory for consensus and the repression of dissent in social practices--a performance of the political act Chomsky calls "manufacturing consent." All acts of dissent from the ruling order are thus seen as instances of discord ("ugliness"), "ill feeling," "obstructionism," and pathological animosity, and the abence of "civility"--as the "other" of "harmony" and "beauty."

Through the assault on theory and by positing "beauty" and "pleasure" as ends in themselves, retrohumanities (whether opening the canon or protecting it) brings back the ideologies of "individualism" and relegitimates the cult of the "spontaneity of experience" and the curriculum of (personal) "skills." The "aesthetic" is a strategy, in the retrohumanities, for making the entrepreneur (the individual-as-venturer) the source of social practices: by conceiving of the "aesthetic" as an "impressionistic" response, a "passionate," "spontaneous," "unique" (individual) affect, practices are seen as non-theoretical and beyond the reach of history. To insist on the historicity of "experience,"--its non-spontaneity--and to situate the "aesthetic" in its material conditions of possibility is assumed to be nothing short of reducing the humanities to what Norman Fruman, in his column in the newsletter of the "The Association of Literary Scholars and Critics," calls a "morally compromised and degraded branch of politics and social sciences" ("A Short History of the ALSC" 1). The focus of literary studies, according to Fruman, "should be on literature as literature and not as something else" (5). Struggle in the domain of culture over "knowledge" ("theory," "pedagogy," "curriculum"...) is always an "ideological form" in which, as Marx explains, people become "conscious" of their conflicts over their material relations ("class") and "fight it out." Retrohumanities are the terrain of ideology in the post cold-war academy and knowledge industry in which through "individualism" (as aesthetic experience) the "free market" is re-legitimated. In retrohumanities the "free market" is represented--in the allegory of "experience" and the "individual"--as the natural arena of social practices and the free zone of the "expression" of singularity and the "voice" of desire.

The resistance to theory in the contemporary academy, of course, takes many forms, but by one maneuver or another, they all reveal themselves to be resisting theory in order to negate "history" (as mode of production). The resistance to theory ranges from the theoretically rigorous and subtle "high theory" arguments of Derrida and de Man to a commonsensical anti-theory, which represents itself as "post-theory" in the middle-academy (such as the writings of Michael Berube and Bruce Robbins, at one level, and Barbara Christian's "The Race for Theory," on another), as well as simplistic, right-wing diatribes (such as Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals* and John M. Ellis, *Against Deconstruction*) and the populist pedagogies of "critical literacy." In spite of their surface

differences, these diverse "resistances to theory" all end up displacing collectivity by individualism (as "rhetoric," "voice," "aesthetic"), which is the linchpin of transnational capitalism. To be more precise, the resistance to theory can take a trivial form, which is the attack on theory from "without," or it can have a more philosophically interesting one: the resistance to theory from "within" theory itself. As Paul de Man has argued in a series of essays, such as "Resistance to Theory" (*The Resistance to Theory*), "Signs and Symbols in Hegel's *Aesthetics*," and "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant" (*The Aesthetic Ideology*), this is the resistance to theory by its own textual materiality.

Theory, de Man argues, is, like all texts, a reversible, double-sided and undecidable discourse that resists conceptual closure--that is, it refuses to be reduced by a metalanguage and, in defiance of all totalizations, inscribes itself as a series of specific problematizations. However, these "problematizations," contrary to de Man's representation, are all formal and discursive. Despite the radical materiality attributed to them (Warminski, "Ending Up" 11-44), they are strategies for negating "historical materialism" as the unfolding of "class struggle" and for rearticulating it as a rhetorical thickness that constitutes different forms of blockage obstructing any straightforward/transparent "reference." In this de Manian narrative, "historical materialism" is nothing more than a "tropological system," that is, in Warminski's words, "a system of tropological transformations and substitutions" ("Introduction: Allegories of Reference" 10). Warminski's claim that a de Manian "reading" is an instance of radical "materiality" is founded upon the idea that de Man's readings show how any attempt at demystifying the work of ideology in transnational capitalism (such as Classical Marxist ideology critique) is simply the substitution of one trope (the "real," "true,"...) for another (10-11). De Man's radical materiality, in short, resists "concepts" (e.g. "class," "use-value", "social division of labor") and textualizes them. This lesson is, in fact, one given by Derrida who, in his "reading" of Marx, follows the tradition of the "situationalists" and produces "revolution" as the spectral (*Specters of Marx*). A revolutionary act, in Warminski's narrative of de Man, is always a "hasty" one and thus should be delayed and deferred and never treated as an "outside," rather it is caught in the circuits of dissemination and substitutions in the same economy that it critiques to overthrow.

The move that Warminski makes in order to protect de Man from the critique that I have just made--de Manian reading as an instance of post-al dematerializations and rhetorical reductionism--is itself symptomatic of the strategies that mainstream post-al theory is now deploying to give political radicality and thus legitimacy to reactionary theories of history. He writes that de Man's reading is not reducible to rhetoric (12) because in de Man's notion of rhetoric "factors and functions of language" lie at the "bottom of the tropological systems" and leave

> marks and traces "within" (or "without"?) these tropological systems,
> marks and traces that may not be accessible to the knowing,
> consciousness, or science of "critical critics" but that nevertheless remain
> legible in the texts of these systems: in their inability to close themselves
> off, for instance, which always produces an excess (or lack) of tropology,
> a residue or remainder of trope and figure irreducible to them. (11)

Warminski's idea of the "material" as an "excess" that is unabsorbable by tropes repeats the move that, as I have discussed in my "The (Oc)Cult of the Post-al" (*Rethinking Marxism*), Zizek makes in producing the material as the "real" which is the excess(ive) "trauma" that cannot be subsumed into the Lacanian order of the "symbolic" (*The Metastases of Enjoyment* 199-200). To call de Man's rhetorical reading a "materialist" reading is itself an instance of idealism: in Warminski (and Zizek), the "material" is not the property of an "object"(ive) world but a resistance to conceptuality--a relaying of "meaning" and thus a refusal of closure. This is a repetition of some of the strategies of the Young Hegelians (in spite of Warminski's rather opportunistic appropriation of Althusser) in their own displacing of historical materialism with "material inscriptions." Materialism is a structure of class conflict and an effect of the social division of labor-- the antagonism in property relations in the social relations of production--and not simply a rhetorical blockage and a spectral retracing of marks. But my interest here is not so much in a critique of de Man's idealism as (the source of his resistance to theory) as is in showing the convergence of all bourgeois discourses against theory on the basis of their shared class interests.

The "resistance to theory" in de Man is the effect of slippages and ludic plays of the signifier--even though in his rhetorical semiology he formally opposes the binaries of signifier and signified. The theoretical sophistication of de Man's argument against theory separates it from both the diatribes of the cultural right-wing and the liberal central-left of posttheory: it is a rigorously argued theory at odds with theory. De Man's "resistance" to theory is not, at least not in the first instance, a naive retreat to a spontaneous "experience" and the curriculum of "skills" that constitute the populist forms of the resistance to theory in the academy and knowledge industry now.

Like Derrida and other poststructuralists, de Man textualizes "experience" and represents it as a series of discursive blockages which are the effects of "rhetoric" (which is, itself, at odds with the "explanation" of "grammar"). The popular denial of the textuality of "experience," in fact, provides de Man with the space to make one of his most effective theoretical moves. This move, as I have already hinted, seems to some of his later readers, such as Andrezj Warminski, to go beyond classic "deconstruction" and become so thoroughly transgressive that it is "far more radical and far more precise than those who still use the 'd-word' are ready for" ("Introduction: Allegories of Reference" 6). Panexperientialism, de Man argues, is the outcome of a refusal to "distinguish between experience and the representation of experience" (*Blindness and Insight*, 188). This confusion of the "phenomenal" (experience) and the "linguistic" (textuality), which is the foundation of the dominant humanities, he names *aesthetic ideology*. "Aesthetic ideology" represents the experience of the subject as the defining frame and the core of "meaning" of all texts of culture. In other words, "aesthetic ideology" is that reading of "literature" that treats literary texts as if they were translucent reflections of "life" and not moments of textuality--as if, that is, problems posed by the materiality of language can be absorbed by living experiences, feelings and emotions. "Aesthetic ideology"--the reading of "literature" as a mimetic narrative of the spontaneous, the referential and the transtextual--is the foundation of retrohumanities and its "resistance to theory" in the name of "experience," "vision," and "sympathy." The assumptions of retrohumanities, as

the prefix ("retro") marks are not "new" but a (re)emergence (necessitated by the recurring contradictions in the triumph of the market in the post cold-war era) of some historically entrenched practices that have formed the commonsense of the conventional culture industry since the rise of capitalism and its culture of sentimentality, which has always acted as a compensatory mechanism to conceal capitalism's lack: the reification of all human social practices.

Retrohumanities are founded upon the cultural commonplace that through the "genius" of the writer, the "contingencies" of time and space ("history") are transcended and permanent monuments of imagination and beauty are "created." "Aesthetic ideology," in short, is a cultural apparatus of capitalism for manufacturing the social congruity and communal harmony that have disappeared from daily life under capitalism and from the culture of free market. The imaginary unity and consonance produced by "metaphor" (the privileged trope in "aesthetic ideology") substitutes for the cultural fragmentation and social alienation that capitalist exploitation (the extraction of surplus value) brings about. By privileging "metaphor," retrohumanities represent human consciousness as determining people's being. Through metaphoric substitutions, in other words, retrohumanities mystify the actuality that the "social being" of people "determines their consciousness." The effect of such mystification is that imagination itself is posited as the primary force in human history--a force that moves beyond limiting social laws and achieves true individuality purged of all social traces.

The privileging of "individualism" is the main reason for the dominance of "aesthetic ideology" in the "genius" industry and its consequent institutionalization in the academy. The greatness of (literary) "genius" is measured in "aesthetic ideology" by its ability to "create" striking "metaphors" that bring together fragmentary "experiences." The valorization of "metaphor"--the figure of fusion--makes retrohumanities a necessary ally for capitalism since the figure of the "genius" (metaphor maker) in retrohumanities is only ostensibly that of the "writer." The "person" behind that "figure" is, in fact, the capitalist entrepreneur: the singular individual who by the power of his ingenuity ("imagination") invents new ways for making "profit" and in doing so transcends the limits of all social laws and norms. The entrepreneur, in short, is an "artist" whose new ways of increasing "profits" are similar to creating new metaphors--connecting paths that were not connected before and fusing elements that we were taught were different and incompatible.

Reactionary pedagogues, like their conservative political allies in the culture industry (*The Weekly Standard*, *New Criterion*, *American Scholar*, *Critical Inquiry*), in think-tanks such as the "Heritage Foundation," in university outfits like the Hoover Institute at Stanford, in professional associations (e.g. the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics) and in Congress, have deployed a reductive and retrograde populism in defense of human experiences and "cultural values." They are putting forth the cult of the individual and his "experience" as the norm of all cultural conduct through codes, such as "family values," "individual responsibility" (as in the debates over "Welfare") and personal "stories"--like those that represent the rise of reactionary figures, such as

Clarence Thomas, who come to power by the force of the ruling elite, as simply the effects of individual hard work.

The return of right-wing politics to U.S. campuses in the name of "aesthetics" (human experience, beauty, ...) valorizes the individual by resurrecting "the author" whose "death" (the end of the bourgeois subject) was argued in such texts of classic poststructuralism as those by Barthes and Foucault. The figure of "writer" as a person-in-the-flesh, an actual person who simply "writes," is at the heart of all retrograde pedagogies. At SUNY-Albany, for example, the conservative Group that has ruled the Department of English for years is "resisting theory" through the figure of the writer-as-individual. It is using the "writer" as its founding concept for partitioning the English Department (which, it is said, has become too theoretical). In his text of 25 June 1996, for example, David Schwalm, who has published texts from the SUNY-Albany writing faculty on the WPA (Writing Program Administrators) Listserver, elaborates on their ideas by saying: "the 'writer' that Iser, Fish, etc. attempt to dislodge was the writer created by readers by inference from the text--writer as imagined through text. Steve is actually talking about real physical writers, people who write, sort of a supply side guy."15

Such a physicalist understanding of the writer (writer as a person and not as a subject constructed by the political economy of signs and practices) is, of course, an allegory of the "autonomy" of the individual entrepreneur and an attempt to give new ideological support to capitalist individualism.

The theory wars in the academy are always fought on behalf of the two contesting classes: the owners and the workers. In its fight against theory (critique) on behalf of the ruling elite, retrohumanities, like the owners themselves, act with deep cynicism. They advocate, as owners do, "democracy," "freedom," "equality," openness," inclusion," and "free choice," but in their actual practice, they block all attempts to put into practice these ideas and make them part of daily life. It is clear to owners and their ideologues that these values are in direct opposition to the unlimited and unconstrained rule of profit. "Democracy," "free choice," "openness,"...are thus more a part of a sustained, cynical public relations campaign by the owners than a part of people's everyday lives.

The cynicism of retrohumanists is shown, among other sites, in the gap between what they *say* as pedagogues in their classes--or write as scholars in their texts--and what they actually *do* when it comes to putting those beliefs into practice. Without a correspondence between what a pedagogue-scholars says and what she/he does, what emerges is not so much pedagogy or pubic policy in education, but an opportunism that cynically deploys "ideas" in order to open the right path for his/her career and acquisition of institutional power. The incoherence in contemporary public practices is caused by these acts of cynicism. Retrohumanities justify these acts as pragmatism--what it takes to get things done. But in actuality these are retrograde moves aimed at preserving the status quo within which cynicism is rewarded. Thus the very foundation of public citizenship is put in jeopardy. There is no task more urgent for the critique-al humanities than to critique--as part of its inquiry into the construction of citizen subjectivities and the politics of representation--such public acts of opportunism and cynicism that have turned

the public sphere into a private site of power and careerism. It is not just Lynn Cheny or William Bennet or Newt Gingrich--all "teachers" of the humanities--who advocate "democracy" and an "open society" (to take literally Karl Popper's phrase, which is really a thinly disguised slogan) in their formal teachings and statements but then manipulate all the available institutional apparatuses to block those practices that put "democracy" into action to build a truly "open society." Theirs is only the most visible form of this retrograde opportunism. On the local level, such cynicism is now the unwritten laws of institutions.

To be more precise: C.H. Knoblauch, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at SUNY-Albany (at the time of "crisis" in the English department), is an English professor of writing who has co-written, with L. Brannon, a book *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy*. From beginning to end, the book repeats over and over again its belief in democracy and the need for teachers to reach out to people in the community (153). The book asserts throughout its commitment to an open classroom. However, in affirming its open-ness, *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy*, attacks all radical pedagogues as dogmatic brainwashers. For example, it criticizes Ira Shor (who is a liberal and by no means an "extremist" pedagogue) as doctrinaire (48-73). Knoblauch's goal, as co-writer of the book, is thus to foster anti-fundamentalist, "free" thinking and to deploy "critical teaching" to "transform" existing realities (5). This transformation is necessary because, "social equality," according to the book, "always entails struggle for change" (23).

There is a gap of cynicism, however, between Knoblauch's "saying" that social equality requires progressive change and then, as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, blocking actual progressive changes that are taking place in the English Department to bring about equality. As the Dean of the College, not only has he helped to block the appointment of a new reformist chair (by delaying tactics), but he has also supported in secret a plan for partitioning the English Department without open public debate about the use of public funds or the role of the humanities (as opposed to mere "skills") in the public education of citizens in a democracy. In the book, Knoblauch writes that "critical teaching" is based on the idea that "American citizens" should "understand, accept and live amicably amidst the realities of cultural diversity" (6). His teaching, he elaborates, is based on the notion that "people are entitled to fairness in their social and economic lives" (6). But his actual practices as Dean prevent diversity: they attempt to keep power in the hands of one Group and, thereby, deny "fairness" in the daily lives of faculty in the English Department by not allowing power to be shared equally and labor to be assigned in an egalitarian manner. The only thing tolerated by the Dean, it seems, is monolithic power, and if the rule of the monolithic is questioned (as it was in the election of a new chair in the English Department), the questioners are deprived of the very right of what he calls "negotiating the terms of free and fair collective existence" (6). How "free" and "fair" are terms that take away from a collectivity of people--who have clearly voted (by a vote of 25 to 14) and chosen a new path--their "free choice" of a new chair to reform their workplace? To advocate democracy and fairness as a pedagogue in discourse and then block it in practice is to privatize the public space through cynical acts.

Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy is part of the retrohumanities attempt, coached in a populist rhetoric of the "reasonable" and "fairness," to erase critique (as an uncivil and unreasonable practice) from the university under the guise of the "aesthetic." The "aesthetic," in this deployment, is the practice of rhetoric by which class struggle for transformation of the existing social relations of production is marked as uncivil, and, in its place, a zone of tranquillity--a suspension of history by the institution of the sensually pleasing--is established. *Critical Teaching* is a instance of how this "aesthetic of crisis management" works: it is not a book that "argues" on the basis of the "concepts" constituting a "theory" (that would be a rationalist fallacy); instead it is a book of "stories." The "stories" are themselves about other "stories, and about the critical ways in which we should all be rewriting them, this one included" (vii). The focus of the book is on vision, fantasy, narration and invention which are thought to be the means of "empowermen" and the reasonable and nurturing "other" of "critique." *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy* posits the social as rhetorical and non-material: the only "materiality" recognized is that of representation (discourse). In other words, the social world is not made out of labor relations in history--and structured in conflicts through the social division of labor--but out of "representations" ("stories"), and the only way one can change the world is through "rewriting" representations (viii, 1-24).

When *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy* engages the "material," it is in terms of the physicality of the object: "For starters, we asked students to explore in some way the material and intellectual conditions of their work....We suggested that they describe...why their classroom or the building in which they taught was constructed physically in the way it was (who decided this shape rather than another and why?" (69). The substitution of the "physical" for the "material" is a displacement of "materialism" by "matterism": a ruse to substitute power relations ("who decided") for the social relations of *production*. This is a Foucauldian notion of "power" as a diffused flow of discourses. It is this post-al notion of power that is, in fact, the matrix of all the "stories" in the book: "teachers" have "power" and so do the "architects," the "students," the "superintendent of education" as well as the "owners" of the means of production--all are "powerful." This representation of all citizens as powerful is, of course, a discursive ploy to prevent from surfacing the fact that the source of power is not discourse but control of the means of production. It conceals, in short, the fact that social "class" not discursive "power" shapes pedagogy. Thus *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy* declares that "The '*prose of the school*'" (emphasis added), "defines who speaks and who is silent, who governs and who is governed, who knows and who is ignorant, who wins and who loses: the deploying and engaging of these subject positions comprise the power arrangements of school reality" (167-68). Any explanation of these "subject positions" as having been the structural effects not of "prose" but of labor relations (class) is treated as sign of a masculinist confidence mired in "certainty" (68) and rooted in the positivism of a benighted Marxist ideology critique (165-66). The same book that at one point (69) uses a very positivist view of reality by substituting a physical object ("building") for "materiality," at another point (165) rejects Marxism as "positivist"! The "theory" of pedagogy in the book--it seems--is improvised as the occasion of a particular presentation demands and lacks any conceptual coherence. I leave aside here how in various stories of the book, the woman-pedagogue is constructed as unable (for the most part) to occupy

any subject position other than that ridden by "anxiety" (68-69), and how any subject position of confidence and knowledge is dismissed as "heroic" and attributed to the man-teacher (68).

The classroom of "aesthetic ideology" is the classroom of the pedagogy of the depressed, and teaching becomes an act of relieving oneself of "anxiety"--pedagogy is therapy for both teacher and student.16 The only "knowledge" allowed here is a therapeutic self-knowing. But the "knowing" of self in these stories has very little to do with knowledge as a grasping of the subject in a world-historical frame (within specific social relations of production). Such a notion of knowledge is dismissed as "positivistic." "Knowing" here is an alibi for self-caressing, a post-al narcissism that reduces history to stories of personal anxieties and desires. In this pedagogy of the depressed, knowledge is suspect; history is an imposition; materiality (other than that of discourse) a vulgar distraction from the theater of anxiety that goes by the name of "teaching." The purpose of the survey of theories in *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy*, it soon becomes clear, is in order to cull a new rhetoric by which the naturalization of "skill," as the goal of pedagogy, can be given a new sound and texture. The pedagogy of techne (skill) always substitutes conforming to the status quo (teaching what "works") for transformation of the existing social relations.

This conservative view, which leaves the material relations (labor practices) intact and simply, to use Richard Rorty's word, "redescribes" the world, is one of the main contributions of retrohumanities to relegitimating the status quo and the regime of profit (wage-labor capital). This pedagogy, in short, embraces the right-wing theory that has gained dominance in the academy now.

Although *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy* discusses "representation" and "language" in order to give its concern a "material" look in the post-al manner, its actual focus follows "aesthetic ideology" and emphasizes the psychological meaning/content: "What motives underlie the uses of secular signs..." (3). In other words, there is a transparency about signs, a non-materiality (even in post-al terms). The frame of "aesthetic ideology" posits a relation of adequation between the signifer and the signified: a relation that makes the fusion of the *linguistic* and *experience* inevitable. "Motives" can be seen through signs because they determine the meanings of signs. The errancy of the sign--its relays and slippages in the chain of signification and its relation to ideology and class struggle--is "pragmatically" marginalized.

This "pragmatism" is the reason for the book's opportunistic reservations about postmodernism (166-169). Knoblauch and Brannon, for instance, (mis)read postmodern theories of language as asserting "language...is a joker" (167, emphasis added). Their trope of the "*joker*" trivializes the "playfulness" in postmodern theories by treating the "playful" in a commonsensical rather than philosophical sense. They deploy this commonsensical notion of "play" to justify their own pragmatic opportunism: they reduce the philosophical issues raised by postmodern theories to a set of "strategies" and avoid the political and intellectual questions that postmodernism poses for their brand of pedagogy. In expressing their reservations about postmodernism, they adopt a populist

(quasi-activist) tone and bring back various elements of such theories as Marxism that they have already rejected as positivistic. In short, they are neither opposed to anything nor do they stand for anything: theirs is the vague entrepreneurial libertarian position that "Oppression from the left is not preferable to oppression from the right" (166). Theirs is a Fukuyama-esque pedagogy beyond "left" and "right" that seeks an apolitical zone: one not of intervention in the status quo but of maintaining and renewing it by opportunistically evoking various theories. "If Marxism takes its project too seriously, postmodernism can't recover from its bawdy laughter" (168). The only sane, reasonable and wise pedagogue is the one who has transcended the "serious" and the "bawdy," the "left" and the "right" and is in a transsocial, transhistorical, balanced space, practicing "skills"--which also are beyond ideology and integral to the world of the pragmatic. The pragmatic is, in short, an alibi for actually existing capitalism.

In privileging "stories" (narratives of pragmatics), *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy* suppresses "critique" and all modes of rigorous conceptual thinking and philosophical analysis from cultural contestations. This is because, within its frame of intelligibility, "aesthetic ideology" declares that everything (including critique) is a "story"--an "experience" of the autonomous "subject" of "imagination" told in a "pleasing" way to "persuade." There is no "argument" here since all "arguments," it is assumed, are basically rhetorical acts: to think otherwise is to commit a rationalist fallacy and become a "fundamentalist." "Theory" and "critiques," in this pragmatic scheme of things, are considered "stories" and, as such, without foundation in truth so we might just as well enjoy our "stories." Freire's theory, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is a "story" (Knoblauch and Brannon, 22), and so are other theories of knowing and teaching. The differences of these stories are subjective and determined not by their truth but by the pleasure of the subject. We simply "sympathize" (22) with some and are indifferent to others. It is not the differentiating truth (of owners or workers--and their power) that shape the state of knowing but our autonomous, subjective affects. Pedagogy is about "affect"--the "affect" of teacher and the "affect" of student, and the classroom is a theatre of "affect-ing" (68-73). It is our "desires" (affect) that make some stories important and others irrelevant. There is no place for contestation here since we know what we know, not because we have been "convinced" by any "argument," but because we have been persuaded by pleasing "stories" that appeal to our desires--stories that are transhistorically seductive.

This collapse into pragmatism and pragmatic problem solving trivializes truth as what is "good in the way of belief." Truth, in short, is "what works" (the pedagogy of skill). This pragmatic view of truth, justice and knowledge constitutes the basis of the *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy'*s attack on "revolutionary" transformation: to think of change in revolutionary terms, according to the book is simply not pragmatic; it is "melodrama" (23). The real "drama" is a pragmatic upholding of the status quo: doing "what works." This pragmatism is itself "functionalism" with a vengeance--even though the book formally questions functionalism (74-98) and formally opposes the pedagogy of skill. Pragmatism rejects "theory," as a rationalist fallacy that cannot justify its own foundation, in order to legitimate "skill"--working within the existing system ("what works")--as the only "reasonable" and "viable" pedagogy beyond "left" and "right." The

book is not "sympathetic" to the "functionalist" story. It cannot be: its pragmatism, which collapses all theories into "stories," will not allow it to "reject" or "accept." All the book can advise is to work within what exists (be practical). This, however, results in a more subtle functionalism, what I would call "performative functionalism." This "performative functionalism" pervades the book, and its ideological effects produce a pedagogy hardly different from more overt forms of functionalism. It is yet another objectivist pedagogy that stands for "what works" and holds itself beyond contestations. Performative functionalism is what right-wing writers such as Francis Fukuyama posit as post-ideological, as the mark of the "end of history" and the arrival of a regime of truth marked not by class conflicts but by consensus and pragmatism. This pragmatism, as Fukuyama's work (*The End of History and the Last Man*, 39-51; *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, 3-57) demonstrates, posits an ethnocentric view of history and pedagogy. It places the principles of skills and efficiency--the values of a triumphalist western capitalism--at the center of the social.

Such post-ideological pragmatic pedagogy embodies the ideology of instrumental reason of capitalism--the aim of which is to train what Sartre calls "technicians of practical knowledge." The pedagogy of skill, in short, is the pedagogy of "technicians of practical knowledge": it provides lessons on how to become adjusted to a system that is founded upon the exploitation of the many for the benefit of the few--act practically; go along to get along. This is the essential (pragmatic) lesson of "aesthetic ideology." Within its frame, it does not make any difference what story we tell as long as we are self-reflexive and aware that there is no rationalist foundation to our story: the story of the German neo-Nazi skinhead is as good a story "epistemologically" as the story of the German socialist who fights the skinheads. Both are stories without foundations and, as such, equal in their claims to truth--if one can still use that "rationalist" concept. Reason has no place in this pedagogy of skill. All that matters is what works and works NOW! Effectivity is measured in terms of an immediate pay-off.

2

The Vice President's texts of May 7 and May 16 (see Appendices A and B) clearly demonstrate that she is not only out of touch with the contemporary theories and practices of knowledge and pedagogy as spaces of critique, contestations and conflicts but is also largely unaware of the philosophical and pedagogical frames of the Ph.D. in English in her own university--a program on whose future she is sitting in judgment.

The new graduate program in English at SUNY-Albany is designed to counter the dominant idea of knowledge as commodity: a pre-existing body of information, methodologies and practices "exchanged" (under contracted terms) to "consumers." In more concrete terms, the philosophical articulation of the new Ph.D. in English at Albany does not revolve around pre-established and ready-made commodities called "American Literature," or "writing," or "theory," or the "women's novels" but rather engages the "*making of knowledge*" and "the questions that arise from the movement between theory

and practice" ("Proposal for a Ph.D. in English" 12). In other words, the Ph.D. in English is not simply about teaching "writing" or "American literature" or "feminism," as if these bodies of knowledge are pre-given and self-evident.

In short, the new Ph.D. has been articulated to "produce" knowledge--to lay open the processes, logics, political conditions, economic terms, intellectual frames within which something *be-comes* (that is, acquires, through historical and institutional conditions as well as knowledge processes, the unstable identity of) "literature." Therefore, for the Vice President to say with executive assurance, as she does in her text of May 7, that "An academic department...is first and foremost, an organizational unit for *delivering* an academic program" (p.1) is to show considerable lack of awareness about contemporary scholarship on this issue and an absence of information on what is the English Ph.D. This is a bureaucratic view of education that completely ignores the philosophical and theoretical problems in theories of knowledge and pedagogy. The Vice President also demonstrates a fundamental lack of understanding about why what the Group calls "conflicts"--in order to suppress them--are, in fact, part of the very pedagogical and scholarly process that the Ph.D. has been set up to develop. The Ph.D. in English is not a "delivery" system; it does not "deliver" "American Literature" to consumer-students. Instead, the Ph.D. is an ensemble of contesting discourses for unpacking *how knowledge is made* by deploying rigorous critique.

The Vice President's founding idea that conflict is the negation of the proper functioning of an "organizational unit" called English is rooted in a mechanistic idea of knowledge--one that approaches knowledge ahistorically and with a managerial mentality antithetical to the spirit of free (i.e. conflictual) scholarship. To repeat: conflicts and contestations are built into the Ph.D. program at SUNY-Albany (as they are in all advanced research programs)--they are the condition of possibility of graduate studies. To teach without conflicts is to abdicate the intellectual responsibility of the pedagogue as a researcher into the truth of what is represented as "knowledge" and to act, instead, as a merchant of commodities labeled, "Hawthorne's Novels," "Women's Writing," "African-American Poetry." After all, "African-American" poetry did not become an established part of "suitable" knowledges without a "conflict"--a very unsettling, explosive and terrain-shifting conflict that still "upsets" some people. In the conflicts over knowledges there are no limits. Therefore, no authority can draw a limit line and say: thus far and no more. This conflict is legitimate and that one is not. The limit line of conflict is always drawn--by Church, State, and University Administration--when the self-evidence of the interests of these bodies are put in question by the new knowledges that are emerging from conflicts. When the Church found the knowledges developing out of Galileo's research threatening to the social order that it had naturalized, it drew a limit line to stop the "conflicts" that it feared would tear apart the social fabric. It was, of course, not the social, moral or ethical fabric of society that was falling apart but rather the economic interests of the ruling group protected by the church. *There are no unproductive conflicts in knowledge production*.

For the Vice President to use the emergence of "conflict" as a reason to consider a proposal for dismantling the English Department and to suspend admissions to its Ph.D.

program is to impose limits on free inquiry. "Conflict" is being used here as an ideological alibi. The lines drawn in her texts are the lines necessary to protect the status quo--to block changes in humanities studies at Albany in the name of maintaining emotional tranquillity! The rising conflicts in the English Department, as the public text by Montgomery, Kelsh, Nespeco and Torrant argue, are the very condition of possibility of transformative knowledges and the pedagogies they enable and not their negation. Conflicts over knowledge never end.

However, "conflicts" do reach a point of historical transformation in which the questions that were previously the subject of "conflicts" are superseded by another set of questions owing to new historical, economic, and social conditions as well as to internal processes of knowledge production. Today there is very little "conflict" over "postmodernism" or "hypertextuality." The reason is that "postmodernism" and "hypertextuality" are superseded by other conflicts based on new concepts and analytical categories in history, such as transnationalism, globalization and the class politics of "virtuality." This does not mean that today there are no conflicts over "postmodernism" or "hypertext" and their limits, but rather these are no longer determining conflicts. This is what makes a forward-looking advanced research university different from other sites of teaching: what are the conflicts that mark it? Are "postmodernism," "hypertext," the "canon," or "women's writing" still boundary issues? No administrator can squash the conflicts by an edict ("you cannot go beyond this line because it is bad for the university") without undermining the very idea of the university itself: a site of critique, conflict and contestations over truth and justice.

The Vice President's idea of a university department as an "organizational unit" that "delivers" commodities is a bureaucratic, positivistic and mechanistic one that looks back to nineteenth century ideas about knowledge and education. It is an old technicist view that is now represented as a new idea simply by wrapping it in recent cyber-technologies. This view of education confuses the uses of technology with scholarship and research (the basis of pedagogy for life-long critical learning). It is a thinly disguised anti-humanities theory of education that finally substitutes, as Sandi E. Cooper and Dean Savage have argued, vocational training for citizens for critique-al citizenship ("CUNY, the Vocational University," *The New York Times*, April 8, 1996, A-15). It valorizes "technicians" of such "applied knowledges" as "writing studies" (a useful, marketable commodity) and places on the periphery the pedagogy, for example, of the "purloined letter" (Muller, *The Purlioned Poe*)--which is not an easily salable commodity since it is an "abstract" discourse on loss and absence, but it is also an integral part of learning how to "read" the politics of the un-said and the un-said politics of the resistance to conflicts over knowing. A mechanisitic view of knowledge/pedagogy marginalizes, in short, the pedagogy of conflicts--which is an enactment of democracy itself as never-ending open discourses and conflicts over public priorities. Without conflicts there is no democracy.

The Vice President's notion of avoiding the "conflict" is an attempt to manufacture consensus. However, it is incoherent. If indeed "conflict" (which she reduces to "intellectual differences...and their attendant emotions," May 16, pp.1-2) is something to be avoided and if avoiding conflict can be the basis partitioning the English Department

(or a research and teaching unit, for that matter), then she implicitly at least accepts that there is no unified voice in the Department. In the absence of such a unified voice, no one can speak for the others. *All* voices have to be heard. How then does she know that there is "conflict" when she refuses to have any communication with all but a select few members of the Department who un-conflictually say there is a conflict? In other words, if she thinks there is "conflict," it is because "someone" or a Group has claimed that there is "conflict"--while all other views are silenced. "Someone" or the Group--who count among themselves those "select few" with access to the Vice President--has represented as "conflict" any resistance to its hegemonic power. "Conflict," in her text, is code word for de-stablizing the interests of the oligarchy in the English Department.

When it serves the purposes of the administration, conflict is marked as harmful, but when it comes to paying attention to all voices, then conflict is ignored. A few unconflicted voices, united by their privileges, are allowed to speak for the many, with whom they see themselves in conflict. However, in a conflict situation, no one group (especially a hegmonic one, such as the Group) should be allowed to represent the "real," and the "real" that is constructed should be clearly marked as "conflictual" and inclusive-- that is all "sides" of the conflict should be able to articulate their positions. The Vice-President has a very non-conflictual view of what she, herself, regards to be a highly conflictual situation. This is a simplistic view that is not conducive to a sophisticated understanding of a layered situation. It has led not to sound, inclusive public policy but to orthodoxy and partisanship.

According to the research program and planned curriculum for the Ph.D. in English at SUNY-Albany--as approved by the New York State Department of Education--there is no such thing as a ready-made commodity called "writing," "teaching," "criticism" in the Ph.D. program. "Writing," for example, is not self- identical and pre-given. It is a contested knowledge practice to be made--its mode of production, in other words, and not its "essence" is what makes "writing" a subject of the Ph.D. program in English. In positing the English Department as a "framework for delivering" a program, the Vice-President's texts show their theoretical and philosophical naivete and their institutional innocence.

3

The "making of knowledge" of *writing*, or, in other words, the conflicts "writing" and writing practices are, therefore, at the heart of the new Ph.D. program. Writing, in other words, is not taken as a self-evident practice: it is a theoretical construct, and, like all theoretical constructs, it is a site of critique and contestation. In the wake of poststructuralism--to point to one site of contestation over "writing"--"writing" is understood as the practice of the production of texts, and a "text" (what Derrida calls, a "fabric of signs") is any site of signification. Since the sign is always an effect of spacing, trace, dissemination and difference marked by self-division and slippage and traversed by absence, "writing" becomes a practice of "differance." This is another way of saying that

the conventional understanding of "writing" as the place of the convergence of "language" and "experience" is radically questioned by an understanding that no longer regards "writing" representationally--as the mimesis of presence-as-experience.

The contestations over the very identity of "writing," for example, have produced (to simplify some complicated issues) such "knowledges" of "writing" in the contemporary cultural and pedagogical institutions as:

Writing as "expression" theories argue that writing is "made" by (expressing) the *experience* of the subject. The source of experience is usually posited as outside the domain of language. As a result of the encounter of the unfettered subject--in its full sensuality--and the immediate object in the world, the subject acquires experience--as an extension of his/her unitary identity-body. Various phenomenological theories of writing, which put the emphasis on the "interiority" of the subject, also produce a knowledge of "writing" as a species of experience and are thus versions of expressivist theories.

Writing as "reflection" theories contend that knowledge of "writing" is "made" by positing it as a relation of adequacy between the signifier and signified. The role of writing is thus to relate the two mimetically. In these "knowledges" of writing, writing is a medium of intersubjective inquiries into the being of the world or (more pragmatically) writing as the accurate and usable representations of an already existing set of practices (business practices, military practices, technical writing,...) In short, "reflectionist" theories of writing are more overtly functionalist than "expressivist" theories. Of course, both are representationalist and founded on "presence."

Although writing-as-expression and writing-as-reflection are more or less the dominant frames that underlie most instituted theories and practices of writing in the contemporary academy, there are other modes of "making knowledge" of writing in contestation with these hegemonic forms. For example, some Neo-Kantian views construct a knowledge of *writing as a symbol-making practice*. Poststructuralist theories of writing, as I have already suggested, make a radical break with all representationalist theories of writing and theorize *writing as a practice of "differance."* There are, of course, numerous variations on the "making of knowledge" of writing. My aim here is not to offer a "survey" of theories of "writing" but to mark the arche-frames that articulate some of the current modes of making knowledge of writing. My immediate purpose here is to begin to point out what is meant by the "making of knowledge" and the question of theory and practice upon which the new Ph.D. program at Albany is built. This program is not a "delivery" system for a commodity already available called "writing" but a contestation over what constitutes "writing."

This contestation over writing is not limited to what is reified in composition programs as "expository" writing but is equally true about the other reification in the knowledge industry called "creative writing." Is "creative writing" what the Romantics "made knowledge" out of--"the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" of the subject (Wordsworth, *Preface to the Second Edition of "Lyrical Ballads"*)? Or is the "making of knowledge" of "creative writing" what T.S. Eliot--in directly and pointedly contesting

Wordsworth--regarded to be the effect of "a continual extinction of personality" of the subject, such that "the emotion of art is impersonal" ("Tradition and the Individual Talent")? Is "creative writing" a fragmenting of the linear text so that it can reflect "unexplainable" "experience" and thus subvert the order of representation (by typographical rearranging of letters, removing spaces between words and typing them together, breaking up the sentences...)? Or is such a so-called "experimental" practice of "creative writing" a sign of intellectual immaturity and emotional arrest that leads to ethical delinquency--an adolescent's hiding his/her insecurities by taking refuge in what Yvor Winters called "imitative form" (*In Defense of Reason*)? For Winters "creative writing" is not simply finding "the verbal equivalent of states of mind and feeling" (e.g. for chaos, find chaotic typography and for disorder, compose a disorderly text...) but an uncompromising evaluation of "states of mind" through ethical considerations and philosophical elucidation. For him, to pick up pieces of a text from out of a hat (to point to a common practice in poetry readings and "creative writing" workshops) and to regard the outcome as a "creative" act is to take refuge in a simplistic mechanical device from serious philosophical thinking about the alea. Or should one place the "making of knowledge" of writing, as Robert Coover suggests, in cyberspace, in the site of the hypertext-- "With its webs of linked lexias, its networks of alternative routes (as opposed to print's fixed unidirectional page-turning)"--and take the hypertext as a new modality of "writing" that "presents a radically divergent technology, interactive and polyvocal"? Is the hypertext radically new or, as Coover himself asked on another occasion when pressed for a more historical understanding of writing, is the hypertext as old as the Torah (a hypertext of great complexity)--the difference is that now through CD-ROM and other devices we have a "mechanism for activating" an ancient mode of writing for popular access? Or is Coover's embrace of the hypertext (whether he regards it to be a "new" or a "re-newed" mode of writing) simply an instance of what some critics consider shallow thinking--at best a form of technophilia, at worst, a fetishization of gadgets--and a philosophical and theoretical evasion rather than a serious engagement with ideas about writing or the human situation?

What is the "making of knowledge" of experimental writing? Is it a substitution of the mechanical manipulation of typography or cyberspace for philosophical speculation, or is it a rigorous philosophical de-structuring of the workings of logos as presence, which underlies mimesis (whether in "realistic" writing, "experimental" texts or "hypertexts")? How is knowledge of "creative writing" made, and is the writing in question "creative" or a recycling of old-avant-garde techniques (e.g. collage) or the work of "fancy" or of "imagination" (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*)? Or is the knowledge of "creative writing" made of something altogether different? For instance, the mode of production of writing itself--as it was contested by Andre Breton (with Philippe Soupault) who questioned all that had come before--became a search for an "other" reality by means of "automatic writing" that took the subject into sur-reality. Is "creative writing" an archewriting? Is it the trace-ing of absences that enable presence (Derrida, *Glas*), and thus Hegel is as much a "creative writer" as Genet? If that is the case why the nomination "creative writer" and not simply a "writer," is "creative" a marketing device? What marks a "writer" of "criticism" as distinct from a "writer" of "fiction" (Derrida, "The Law of Genre" and the matter of Blanchot)?

Or is the "making of knowledge" of writing, best displayed by avoiding "A" or "The" "making of knowledge" and combining a number of modes of production? Or, better yet, displace the "making of knowledge" with "makings"--the "S" of the plural has always served as an easy way out of (an evasion of) thick philosophical and political-institutional issues. Better still replace "making" with "strategies." Doing so erases the philosophical, valorizes the practical and the pragmatic, and leads to "eclectic" acts. This route avoids hard-edged issues in the name of "pluralism" (the "S") and repeats the cliches about multiplicity. After all, the "S" of the plural is the last defense of those embedded in the status quo but who have no argument for its legitimacy.

One of the issues here is the difference of pluralism and plurality. Pluralism is the reification of a formalist multiplicity while plurality is an understanding of human societies based on *knowledge* of (not "empathy" for) the other and the inclusion of differences. Pluralism uses difference to simply create a policy-stalemate--"on the one hand, on the other hand"--and deploys formal devices, such as allowing everybody to speak, as a testimony to its (seeming) openness, which is rarely reflected in its (largely closed) policies and practices of decision making. Plurality, on the other hand, not only allows people to speak but actually incorporates the differences people speak into the making of public policy. Pluralism is based on the old linear notion of identity; plurality is differential--the understanding that there is no self-same, self-identical identity. All self-sameness is the construct of the dominant ideology. Instead of engaging the historical necessity of differences and the truth of their contestations, pluralism posits all truths as equal--the truth of privilege and the truth of exploitation; the truth of pleasure and the truth of poverty. In doing so, pluralism places the "truth" of the status quo under immunity from critique. But critique is at the core of plurality, for it is only through critique that one acquires historical understanding--"knowledge"--of the contesting truths of differences and how the "dominant" self-evidence is always based on the suppression of the "un-said" of the historical and social conflicts.

Pluralism, thus, becomes an alibi for "not knowing." If one does not have rigorous knowledge of the "making of knowledge"--of the historical production of contesting "truths," of differences--one cannot "explain" why. The keepers of the status quo seek to marginalize rigorous "explanation" with its troubling inquiries into the "why" of things--especially the "why" of power. Thus explanation is frequently dismissed: critical inquiries into "why," for example, are often seen as a negation of "nurturing," or "feeling," or "experience." In place of a rigorous understanding of the "making of knowledge," upholders of the status quo commonly "express" an "emotion," a "preference": "this is MY view and, of course, there are other views"--as if such a stand obviates the need for a critique of these views. The "S" of the plural is used to marginalize rigorous knowing. The Ph.D. in English at Albany requires that a pluralism of preferences (eclecticism) not be used as an evasive cover for "not knowing," for not engaging the contesting "making of knowledge." To be eclectic is to have a position and, like any other position, that position is not given but is produced historically and socially. As such, it requires an argument and is located in relation to contesting positions. Nor is pluralism self-evident: it is also a constructed position and needs an argument. It cannot

be used as an evasion of rigor but has to be articulated rigorously and in contestation with other positions.

I end this excursus, then, by a "contestation" over "writing." I argue that "writing" is a practice of *critique*. From a materialist position, writing is not simply an articulation of experience (phenomenologically or otherwise), or reflection of an already existing (ahistorical) world, and certainly not merely an allegory of signs or construction of symbols, nor quest for the "other" reality. Rather, "writing," in its most complex and comprehensive understanding, is the historical act of making sense of the regimes of intelligibilities by uncovering their material limits--in poems, philosophical texts, newspaper editorials, novels, filmscripts, theory, speeches, advertisements, criticism, cybertexts. Writing is the name of a historical and social practice of making sense of the objective world, not a skill, nor a genre, nor a formal convention, nor a set of rhetorical strategies, nor an affect....To teach writing as a skill, a genre, a formal convention, rhetoric or affect is to reduce literacy--a social act of knowing--to a set of formal "strategies" for managing and adjusting to the existing social relations or the "pleasure" of the subject. Pedagogy is for educating critique-al citizens, and critique-al citizenship involves enabling people to analyze, explain and participate in open contestations over social priority. It requires "knowledge" not simply "empathy."

From a materialist position, therefore, to understand the "making of knowledge" of "writing" rhetorically, for example, as an act of "internalizing the questions of readers" and as the "strategies" to "persuade" them is, in the last instance, to accept the existing order of the social that has produced those "questions" and "readers" and also set the limits of "persuasion." "Persuasion" is not simply the effect of the desires of the subject but the outcome of the social relations of production in which the subject is situated. In short, one is always "persuaded" under what Marx calls the "silent compulsion of economic relations" (*Capital*, 1, 899). The "making of knowledge" of "writing" in such a (rhetorical) manner is thus an adjustment to existing reality and not a critique of its un-said limits. But writing, in a materialist understanding, is a social practice engaged in changing existing social organizations. That is, writing is critique, and critique is a contribution to social transformations. Writing as critique is an integral part of pedagogy for public citizenship. It is a questioning of the limits of existing practices, an active intervention in the social. Writing (as critique) is a process and practice through which the subject deploys *concepts* to arrive at a materialist and historical understanding of the *structures* of social relations and institutions. "Critique" does not take "experience" or the existing world as given but examines their genealogies and shows how they have become instituted and how they can be de-instituted. It historicizes "signs" and "agency," among other things, and puts in question the "populist," experiential priorities of both the pedagogy of desire and the pedagogy of techne, which at times masquerades as "critical teaching."

The reason for moving beyond the usual pedagogy of pluralism (evasiveness legitimated as tolerance) is to turn the classroom and the scene of knowledge into a site of production and not consumption--into a site of historical understanding of the contesting *pluralities* of differences. When I take a position in my classes on the "making of

knowledge" and produce "writing" as "critique," the majority of my students oppose my position. But they would not know that they oppose "writing" as critique and my pedagogical practices unless I engage them in the "making of knowledge" of writing as critique. In contesting my notion of writing, they become historical ACTIVE agents in their own pedagogies, in their own production of the "making of knowledge." My students--who are trained in what Kuhn would call the "normal" knowledges of writing-- react to my theory of writing-as-critique by first claiming that I am mis-informed about "writing," "creative writing," "composition theory" or that I am simply an "enemy" of writing. My "other" theory, in short, is seen as a mark of "hostility" or as a non-theory, a non-knowledge (mis-informed). However, as they contest my theories, they begin to realize that "mis-informed" is more an ideological naming that puts their minds at ease than a rigorous critique-al engagement of knowledge, and the faultlines of "well-informed" begin to become visible to them. They see how the notion of "well-informed" is deployed as a subtle strategy for marginalizing those theories that contest dominant practices. By engaging critique, they learn how to take a position against me--not simply as "preferences," anyone can do that: "I disagree with your views"--but through the development of an *argument* to *explain* why they oppose my position. In other words, students have to explain what makes their position more of an adequate explanation of "writing"? Not just because they do not like what I say; not just because it produces "anxieties" in them ("anxieties" that cannot be controlled by simply calling my position "mis-informed"). Not just because it alienates them from their settled notions and self. Instead they have to explain WHY this particular view and not the other one(s)? What makes their view "well-informed" and the other "mis-informed"? What are the historical and social factors producing their "preferences," their "anxieties"? Is their opposition more a philosophical matter than a question professional and career anxieties? In developing an explanation, they come to *know* both their own position and that which they are contesting.

   This is one of my points about critiquing the idea of teaching as a "delivery" system: the purpose of pedagogy is to teach students to critique-ally understand and produce their own *explanations* for *Why*, to become effective critique-al citizens for democracy. It is this philosophical rigor and historical understanding of the "making of knowledge" that is the project of the Ph.D. program in English at SUNY-Albany. To develop its pedagogy as a rigorous philosophical critique, the Ph.D. in English moves away from being simply a "delivery" system.

   The instability and contestatory status of such terms as "writing" and "creativity" are, of course, already written into the very sub-title of the program: "Ph.D. in English: Writing, Teaching, Criticism."[17] Each one of the three terms marking the Ph.D. are terms in contestation, and, in fact, when the program was set up, they were chosen with regard to contemporary literary theory which has made them spaces of conflicts and contestations (open terms) free from any arbitrary closure. "Writing," for example, in the texts of Derrida, de Man, Nancy, Blanchot, Cixous..., has been rigorously problematized. In the wake of poststructuralism, "writing" has lost its commonsensical innocence and commercial self-evidence. It is the "theoretical" (i.e. non-representational) practice of the production of texts. A "text" is any semiotic activity that constructs "meaning." However,

since the sign is always an effect of differance, trace, dissemination and spacing--which are articulated by slippage and traversed by absence--"writing" becomes a practice of "differance". "Writing," in short, is no longer the name of a "technique," a "skill," or a "genre" ("poetry," "fiction,"...) but a space for philosophical inquiry into the very "first principles" of Western thinking ("logocentrism").

Hegemonic power opposes "theory," in part, because "theory" problematizes (opens up for critique) the terms that the ruling power wants put under arbitrary "closure." Thus the elite Group in the English Department at SUNY-Albany acts as if "writing" is an already decided practice, and all the Ph.D. program has to do is "deliver" it according to their specifications. This is, of course, an extension of the Vice-President's view of knowledge as "commodity." "Writing" as far as the Group is concerned is a pre-packaged, known commodity. In other words, the Group reads "writing," "teaching," "criticism," as self-same entities with a fixed, transhistorical identity. They are "pre-given" and not open to contestation: they are closed terms, each with a singular "meaning"--the "meaning" that naturalizes the privileges of the Group.

I have already indicated, in my long excursus on "writing," that the term "writing" is not a self-transparent entity referring to an "object" out there. "Writing" is an oscillating term like all terms of culture. So when we refer to a Ph.D. in "writing," we are not referring to a "closed" system of knowledge but to an open field of contestation. "Writing," in the title of the Ph.D. degree, in no way determines a fixed identity for the Ph.D. but instead puts that very identity in question and in contestation. The entire Ph.D. program, in light of the contemporary understanding of "writing" becomes a philosophical, theoretical and self-reflexive inquiry into all modes of the production and dissemination of "meaning" and textualizing practices. "Writing" is not the name of a "skill" but the site of ongoing textual movements of meaning in/within social institutions.

The fate of "teaching" is no different. The Group and the Vice President for Academic Affairs talk about "teaching" as if it is the name of an already determined and closed practice. But far from having a stable identity, "teaching" is the general space of social contestations over the articulation of subjectivities. "Teaching," in other words, is the space in which the historically required "consciousness skills" are taught or contested. These "consciousness skills" are always the subject of class contestations since they are embedded in the very formation of the labor force. To say the Ph.D. is a degree in "teaching" is, therefore, to say the Ph.D. is a degree in conflicts and contestation over the historicity of "teaching" and its involvement in the production and dissemination of knowledges in class societies. As such, "teaching" is an element in class relations and, therefore, an "open" practice. However, as I have argued in my "For a Red Pedagogy," the practice of "teaching" is often reduced to simply class-room management and to tasks and skills: how to attract the attention of students in a large class; how to tutor; how to grade; how to lead a discussion. "Teaching" in the sub-title of the Ph.D. marks this general area of undecidability. In other words, the Ph.D. in English at SUNY-Albany recognizes that "teaching" cannot be "fixed" in any single discourse or practice.

Turning to the third term in the designation of the Ph.D. in English at SUNY-Albany, "criticism" is taken by the ruling Group to mean a "commonsensical," "intuitive," "experiential" "appreciation" of the "experience" reflected in novels, poems, short stories.... The Group's reification of such a limited notion of criticism is a thinly disguised "fear of theory"--one that has its roots in the "criticism" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One exemplary site of this "fear" is, of course, the writings of F.R. Leavis, whose views on "close reading" still dominate the academy. It is Leavis's "fear" of theory--most clearly articulated in his contestations with Rene Wellek ("Literary Criticism and Philosophy," *Scrutiny* v. 6, 1937, pp. 59-70)--and not an awareness of the contemporary rearticulation of "criticism" that informs the Group's understanding of "criticism" in the sub-title of the Ph.D. degree. The Group somehow thinks that by pointing to "criticism" it can exorcise "theory" from the program! But, if there is such a thing called "criticism" separate and autonomous from "theory," how do we read T.S. Eliot's essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," or Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text from the Third World"? Is not their "criticism" embedded in "theory"? What about Wallace Steven's essays? How about Derrida's reading of Levinas; Irigaray's reading of Plato, Judith Butler's reading of Freud/Lacan? Are these "criticism"? Are these "theory"? To close off "criticism" and separate it from "theory" is once more an indication of a desire for control--a desire to fix the meanings of cultural terms and representations in order to hold on to power by reifying signification and arresting the differential movements of the sign. The sub-title of the Ph.D., "Writing, Teaching, Criticism," opposes such totalitarian treatment of cultural terms and marks the Ph.D. in English at SUNY-Albany as a space for open, contestatory and democratic inquiries--not as the site of fixed identities.

4

What is valorized in the Vice-President's anti-intellectual agenda is, as I have argued, knowledge as commodity; knowledge as fixed identity. The tropes throughout her texts foreground this view of knowledge. Knowledge, according to the Vice-President, is a "transaction" (May 7, p. 1) that, like any business deal, should be settled in a friendly "atmosphere" free from conflicts. "Atmosphere"--a term deployed throughout both her texts-is the single most important feature of education for her since to her what matters is not "knowledge" that is contested in pedagogy but "educational experience" (May 16, p. 1). Education for the Vice President, in other words, is not a rigorous production of knowledge (that would involve conflicts) but the provision of "emotional" support in a friendly "atmosphere." This is, of course, a repetition of the very familiar and populist "pedagogy of congeniality"--a displacing of the classroom of knowledge by a session of "nurturing" experience. However, as in all versions of the "pedagogy of congeniality," the "care," "nurturing," and "trust" which are formally advocated are violently negated in the actual practices of the Vice-President. Her "pedagogy of congeniality" is a rhetorical cover for the extreme force that she has exercised in controlling the administrative apparatus of the English Department by overthrowing the democratically elected chair and taking over the Department through a surrogate administrator she has appointed from

another department. In other words, the pedagogy of congeniality is only a "nurturing" of "emotions" and provision of a friendly "atmosphere" for those who support the dominant structure of power in the University.

The Vice President's pedagogy is not only unself-reflexive; it is also behind the times. One of the telling features of her "pedagogy of congeniality"--as well as the practices based on it--is its authoritarianism: its assumption of omniscience and its refusal to put in public the source of knowledge according to which it "defines" the "problem" and the reasons behind its conclusions. Thus her texts never say what is the basis of the views they advocate, nor offer any "arguments" to support the opinions they articulate, the conclusions they reach and the decisions they make--which affect many many citizens and the institution as a whole. The un-said in these texts is: *it is the case because I say so*.

This is one place, among many, in which the politics of pedagogy-as-story becomes clear. Since the Vice President (like the authors of *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy*) evidently believes that all versions of truth are simply "stories," it does not seem to matter whether there is any "truth" (or even a simple empirical verifiability) to these "stories." If "stories" are all equal, then the only criterion for "preferring" one to another is a "pragmatic" one. The criterion, then, is not "objectivity," but whether they relate us to what Rorty calls a "community"--which is his word for what in actuality is a social "network" of persons who share the same ("economic" and "power") interests. The resistance to the test of "objectivity" has in fact become one of the sites of contestation in the Department of English at SUNY-Albany. The insistence on objective criteria as the basis of practices (such as funding of graduate students) has been one of the issues raised by those who are seeking changes in the existing practices.

The Vice President's "stories" and her refusal to put the bases of her knowledge into the public space in a public university is part of a larger pattern of mystification, secrecy and behind-the-scenes maneuvers by persons in power at SUNY-Albany. To repeat what Professors Luz Del Alba Acevedo and Emilio Pantojas have testified in a public hearing to the New York State Senate: there is an "influential clique of faculty and administrators in this campus that run academic units as their private estates and manage institutional accounts as extensions of their checkbooks" (Testimony of Professors Luz Del Alba Acevedo and Emilio Pantojas-Garcia to the New York State Sentate Democrtatic Task Force on the Future of Higher Education in New York State Public Hearing, February 20, 1996, p. 3)

Public policy should be set by public debate and argument in the agora and not in secrecy through behind-closed doors talks. In fact, one of the main strategies of power used by the Group has long been a resistance to public openness, to the verification of claims and to the testing of what is said against what historically exists (the "objectivity" of practices) in discussing issues and establishing and implementing public institutional policies (for instance, the distribution of funds to graduate students or travel grants to faculty; the assignment of courses; the determination of committee memberships, and the evaluation of promotion and tenure cases).

The oligarchical Group has for years resisted keeping open and representative public records of discussions of public issues and the setting of policies. It has, in short, attempted not to leave a paper trail and to evade public accountability. Through various maneuvers, it has managed either not to produce "minutes" of various Departmental committees that it dominates or, when it has been required to do so, has delayed publishing them, obstructed their dissemination or in other ways evaded making deliberations public and accessible.

One of the "advantages" of this lack of complete--or at the very least representative-- public record-keeping has been the way it has supported "deniability" for the oligarchical Group. In other words, the inadequacy of public records has allowed the ruling Group to "deny" manipulating existing procedures and to evade public accountability for its actions--actions that have been institutionalized through the various committees and administrative positions that it has dominated year after year. Anytime questions are raised about Group's practices, the Group re-cycles the "argument" that such questions are based on mis-interpretations of what has been said/done. Since there is no objective record of what has been said, all interpretations--except the one supporting the Group's views--are said to be misinterpretations. This, of course, allows not only for "deniability" by those in power but also endless opportunities for "rewriting" history since there is almost no record of what has been said; only sparse accounts of what course of action has been actually recommended, and a near silence about the objections raised.

Thus it was especially telling when the "Governance Cluster" (a special task force which was set up to follow the Consultants' advise for reviewing and changing the existing "by-laws" and structure of governance of the Department), debated "taping" its proceedings in order to have an "objective record" to refer to in matters of dispute. Those working for reform argued that taping would provide a reliable means of knowing what is "said," and an objective basis for determining the relation among what has been "said," how it is being "interpreted" and what has been "done." However, members of the Group immediately objected on the "grounds" that there is no such thing as "objective" truth: all that is available to us are personal takes on what is said--(mis)interpretations. Since all these (mis)interpretations are "stories," they are all equally (in)valid. In other words, no "taping" because such a practice will be a "positivistic" fallacy (as *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy* has argued), but no "interpretation" either because interpretation is, in fact, always a mis-interpretation, and, like the idea of "objectivity," it is a "story." All interpretations are equally misinterpretations. This relativism is then used to justify the refusal of pubic accountability: accounting, in an objective manner, for how what is said relates to what is "done" and how these serve or do not serve the public interest. The "everything is a story" theory of truth, advocated, for example, in *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy*, turns out to be one of the strategies for holding on to power and never having to account for one's practices.

The notion that "objective" truth is part of the historicity of social practices and democratic contestations over setting public priorities and protecting the public from private interests, as well as the notion that "interpretations" are part of these contestations are all marginalized as (Marxist) positivism. Beyond the ludic and simplistic idea of

"everything is a story," there is, of course, a historical and objective truth to practices. Thus the response to an "interpretation" of objective truth, I would argue, is not the suppression of interpretations as misinterpretations, but rather the need for counter-interpretations. The social sphere is the space of interpretations and counter-interpretations: the conflict over interpretations is an integral part of democracy.

These strategies of exclusion, closure, the suppression of debate and an opportunistic relativism continue to pervade the practices of the Group and its efforts to maintain power. It is important to again emphasize that public policy should be set by public debate and argument in the agora. Therefore, the assumptions of the Vice President's texts should be unpacked and made the subject of public debate in and outside the University and should be evaluated in the context of the mission and character of the University at Albany. The University at Albany is one of the four university centers of the State University of New York (SUNY). It is a *research* university, and the philosophical underpinning of the policies that are set for it should be self-reflexive and complex enough as well as sufficiently aware of the most advanced developments in knowledges to meet the needs of a research university. What, then, are some of the other theoretical and policy assumptions ("first principles") in the Vice President's texts?

I say "other" because the idea of university as a combination of "organizational units" which "deliver" a "program" to "students" does not operate in ideological isolation from other assumptions. It produces them and is in turn naturalized by them. One of these other assumptions in this managerial theory of education is the notion of "network-ing." Among the (supposed) "reasons" the Vice President gives for "suspending admissions" to the English Ph.D. program is because "Some of you" (who?) "have also indicated that in the present situation, you cannot responsibly activate your networks to recruit new graduate students" (May 7, p. 1, 2). The notion that attracting students to a Ph.D. program should take place on the basis of activating "networks" and not on the strength of the scholarship, publications, and innovative pedagogical practices of the faculty and their professional involvement in international associations and conferences in their fields is truly astounding and is an extension of the managerial notion of education as a commodity.

"Networks" and "networking," however, are not simply local strategies but are also tropes of a world-view, a mode of global capitalist practice. It is through "networking" (and not "working") that privileges are accumulated and secured by various already highly privileged groups in society at the expense of those who are excluded from "networks"--"networking" in other words is an apparatus of subversion of the democratic principles of fair play and a level playing field for all. The class politics of "networking," in short, substitutes oligarchic "selectivity" for democratic "collectivity." It is by "networking" that privileges are protected. This is why "networks" become more and more entrenched and, as time goes by, more and more reactionary and anti-progressive. This is why they use their vast resources to block any changes in the system that might endanger their (seemingly) "natural" privileges.

One of the un-saids in the practices of the Group has been the assumption that to not be on the "network" is to be either a hopelessly irrelevant (i.e. an institutionally powerless/useless) person or (equally "hopelessly") an idealistic intellectual who is cut off from the "real" (i.e. the wheeling and dealing behind closed doors). In other words, to resist cynicism (since cynicism is the condition of being in the "network") and actually take ideas and principles seriously (as a scholar, teacher and "citizen") is a mark of one's institutional naivete. "Idealism," like "rigor," is a "dirty word" in the Group's usage--by "idealism," however, they mean a commonsensical anti-pragmatism. In the cynical world of the "network," it is naive to be cut off from the practical (which has come to mean acting in an un-principled way to get what one desires). It has become a sign of "savviness," in the network, for a scholar and teacher to be cut off from ideas. Ideas are seen as the obsession of the naive. For the "savvy," ideas are not only impractical, they are obstacles to power!

Networkers are protected from cynicism by the ideology of "trust"--which can be used not only to manipulate those not on the network but also by some on the network to get ahead of other networkers. The intra-network competition for power among the members of the Group is so intense that even the Consultant's *Report to the President* takes note of it. "Indeed," they write, "creating a new Department of Writing Studies...offers no guarantee that tension will ease." The reason, they argue, is that "The very diversity of viewpoints among its faculty suggests that this group might itself eventually subdivide..." (13). "Diversity of viewpoints," it is important to note, is a euphemism here for the various internal conflicts in the Group over power. "Trust" is the ideology of cooperation within competition deployed by the ruling network to protect it from outsiders as well as from those insiders who might not be satisfied with the existing pecking order. Thus all (insiders and outsiders) are enjoined to "trust" the status quo.

"Trust," along with "network," therefore, becomes of great importance in the Vice President's text of May 7. Having defined education as a commodity to be delivered, her text advises, "the transaction is based on trust..." (p.1). "Trust," in other words, is a trait deployed in the managerial views of education to provide for what is missing from the actual, material practices. It is posited as the "cause" of a good social "transaction" and not as the effect of a good society--a society of equality and justice that is free from manipulation (networking).

"Trust" has always been part of a managerial view of the world: it is a device by which the managers refuse to put in the public space the assumptions upon which they make decisions that affect the lives of many. "Trust" mystifies the (special) interests concealed in these decisions and asks the people (who have no part in decision-making) to "trust us"! In his classic study, *Wandlungen der modern Gesellschaft: Zwei Abhandlugen uber die probleme der Nachriegzeit*, Karl Renner shows how "trust" is used as the basis for establishing the identity of a managerial class. "Work," which is the source of value (wealth), is a collective practice. When material conditions are not equal in this collective act and some exploit the work of the others, the inequity (which could cause alienation and thus inefficiency) is covered up by "trust." The contemporary conservative writer, Francis Fukuyama's defense of "trust" is rooted in this very fact that

trust is the condition for the production of wealth. However, what is not made clear in his book, *Trust: The Social Virtues and Creation of Prosperity*, is that the wealth produced is not shared equally. In contrast to this managerial use of "trust" as an ideological apparatus for cooperation under unequal conditions--as a means of suturing over inequities--a genuine, non-exploitative "Trust" is the *effect* of equality and should not be used in the workplace as a substitute for equality, as a cover-up for inequity. Faculty in the Department are working under blatantly unequal conditions: some, for example, regularly teach loads of "2-2" and fewer courses a year while others teach "3-3" and "3-2" course loads; some receive salaries in the range of 90,000 or more dollars while others have to live in the same department and carrying heavier courseloads with salaries only in the 30,000 dollars; some receive merit raises (with little or no justification based on their scholarship and intellectual and pedagogical work) that are three, four or more times that of others. The people subjected to these unequal conditions do not "trust" the system that oppresses them, in part through its support of "network"ing, and no amount of propaganda about "trust" can substitute for material equality.

"Trust," in the Vice President's world-view is the "cause" and not the "effect": "trust" she writes "will create an environment that will make it possible for [students] to complete their studies in a timely fashion" (May 7, p. 1). I put aside here the issue that "timely fashion" is a code word for "processing" students as fast as possible without asking the question: what have they learned and is what they have been taught part of the boundary knowledges in the field? "Processing" (in a "timely fashion") and "delivering," in this managerial discourse, have priority over results. Trust, however, does not create anything; the material conditions of the workplace produce everything. What produces "trust" is an equal workplace in which cynicism (the precondition for networking) about ideas and intellectual work, about equality, about rigorous scholarship and demanding pedagogy, about commitment to the education of critical citizens for democracy has no place. "Trust" is produced when there are open public discussions about public priorities and not behind-closed-doors deals for using public funds for the convenience of networks and a power oligarchy. But it is part of a managerial view of education to marginalize the historical and social conditions of work and put "cultural values" in their place. As I said in the opening part of my text, it is through "cultural values" that the Vice President "creates" a crisis in the English Department, thereby legitimating her overthrow of a democratically elected chair--who was elected to enact reforms and establish material equality in the Department--and her take over of the Department through a surrogate chair that she "trusts." Her own actions, to be more precise, reveal the ideological nature of her idea of "trust." She removes from chair the person "trusted" (and democratically elected) by the majority of faculty in English and then asks the same people, whose choice she does not "trust," to "trust" her and her choices: "trust" the one who, herself, does not "trust" you. "Trust," the Vice President's practices show, is the ruse of power. This is how cynicism grows in the workplace and erodes critique-al pedagogy and democracy.

The managerial view of education is most concerned not with the "rigor" of intellectual work but with the the consumer-"friendliness" of the processes involved in the "transaction." In this view, education is, in the last instance, basically an "affective"

and "emotional" relationship between marketers (teachers) and consumers (students). "Differences" and "conflicts" are antithetical to user-friendliness and obstacles to the "transaction." Given such a view of pedagogy based on "exchange-value," therefore, it is axiomatic that pedagogy should at all time create a friendly "atmosphere"--that is, one in which there are no differences, conflicts or contestations. It is by valorizing the emotional and marginalizing the intellectual that the Vice President manages to represent "conflict" as basically the other of pedagogy. In the managerist educational world of the Vice President, a good pedagogue is always friendly and congenial. This is the idea of teaching not as a critical act but as support and therapy: a form of the affective practices of stress management. Since the level of stress in the English Department, according to her assessment (the basis of which remain mystified), is high, and a place of high stress cannot manage the stress of others efficiently, the Vice President has decided that there is a "crisis" of values in the English Department.

To declare the English Department "in crisis" because there is conflict in the Department and it does not offer what the Vice President regards to be a friendly "atmosphere" is to miss the entire point about doctoral research and pedagogy: a university department is not a therapy clinic nor is it a restaurant--its success is not measured by its congeniality or its "atmosphere" and ambiance but by the depth and breadth of its interrogations into the "making of knowledge" and of its understanding of the "questions that arise from the movement between theory and practice." These movements are interstices in which a new generation of scholars learns the complexities and pluralities (the conflicts) of critical citizenship and the responsibilities of public intellectuals--not only the achievements but also the anguish, agonies and travails that accompany the responsitibilites.

It is in fact to this "distinctive character of the doctoral graduate program as authorized by the New York State Education Department" that the majority of candidates for a Ph.D. at Albany are attracted, as the graduate students themselves have informed the Vice President (May 16, 1996, p. 1). And it is this "distinctive character" that the Group-in-secret, who wish to set up a "Department of Writing Studies," intend to destroy by reducing the Ph.D. to a monodisciplinary system of "delivery" of a program of "writing studies" so that their classrooms, once again, become (seemingly) "tranquil" spaces for their unchallenged authority. I say "seemingly" because by sheer exercise of institutional power (such as determining graduate funding and TA appointments) they may have been able to banish critique and oppositional ideas to the underground of their classes but they have not been able to eliminate them.

Since the oligarchical Group controls the "norms" of discourses and determines what is "reasonable" and "professional," it has been able to exclude all critiquesof its practices as a species of un-reason. These critiques are, to quote C. Knoblauch, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, instances of "melodrama," or to quote a statement reported to have been made by one of the members of the oligarchy at the CCCC conference (1997), simply "tabloid" texts. The "reasonable" has been made, by the oligarchy, to mean that which naturalizes the status quo without questioning the privileges of the Group. The foregrounding of "friendliness" and "atmosphere" and the rejection of critique as

"melodrama" are, of course, part of the efforts to erase "conflicts" and manufacture consensus. The manufacturing of consensus is itself a discursive apparatus for repressing dissent. If the normal procedures fail to manufacture consensus, then the Administration resorts to apocalyptic stories, reports and threats. Thus, in the English Department's "open forum" held on July 11, 1996, the Vice President's "appointed" chair issued the warning that while there were fascinating intellectual differences (which is the way he, like the Vice President and the Group, mystify material and labor differences), the Department has to come together *otherwise*, it would not receive the resources it needs! Go along, say yes!

Notes for Part Two

15 To read the entire dossier of exchanges on the subject see: http://web.syr.edu./~dmorton/petition.

16 This therapeutic pedagogy of the "depressed," of the relief from (release of) anxiety put forth in *Critical Teaching* is a widespread practice, especially among forms of feminism. Also see, for example, Jane Tompkins, "Pedagogy of the Distressed" and my critique of this pedagogy in my "For a Red Pedagogy: Feminism, Desire and Need."

17 However, the Group, continues to deploy various strategies to secure its monopoly over the graduate program and keep its own dogmatic view of the founding concepts "Writing, Teaching, Criticism" beyond contesting "interpretations." On 18 February 1997, in order to open the debates over knowledge questions and teaching practices in the graduate program, I wrote to the "Graduate Advisory Committee" and reminded it that: "In their 'Report to the President on the Department of English of the University at Albany State University of New York,' the four Consultants have concluded that 'The renewed strength in literary and cultural studies that is emergent in the faculty--especially in the ranks of associate professors--is not fully reflected in course offerings and in the structure or definition of the program' (pp. 5-6)."

I then asked that the existing policies (concerning, for instance, course assignments, number of theory courses offered...) be re-examined. In his response to me, Donald Byrd (who had been appointed "Director of Graduate Studies" by Louis Roberts--the representative of the main administration in the English Department) wrote: "The Committee has agreed upon an agenda for the semester, which gives priority to 1) the required courses in pedagogy and 2) the identity and structure of the M.A. program. We

will hopefully be able to deal with more general curricular issues later in the spring" (2-19-97 Memo, D. Byrd).

In other words, as in past practices, there will still be no discussions of dominant priorities. They have already been set--by a committee controlled by members of the Group and its allies--to avoid issues that will question the hegemonic. In my response to Byrd, I wrote a long public text (25 February 1997) in which I un-packed the assumptions about the curriculum, course assignments and course enrollments informing his practices as Director of Graduate Studies, and raised questions about his notion of the "identity and structure of the M.A. program":

> You mention that the committee cannot take up discussion of my text because it is discussing the "identity and structure of the M.A. program." How could such a discussion be done in isolation from the issues raised in the Consultant's *Report*--the need for intellectual diversity and curricular plurality--and the issues raised in my own text? How could you examine and redesign the M.A. without discussing the relation between what is being offered in the Department and contemporary knowledges; without first, as the Consultants have advised, broadening the narrow definition of the "Writing, Teaching, Criticism," imposed on the program by the ruling minority? How could you redesign the M.A. program in terms of the antiquated, positivistic notion of an imperial curriculum based on "center" and "periphery" when, in fact, the post-disciplinary humanities have shown the intellectual vacuity and political tyranny of this distinction? (p. 4).