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PETER BROOKS

Literature And

I do not know if the Canadian press paid much attention when, in March of this year [1995], Yale University returned a gift of \$20 million to Lee M. Bass — Texas oilman and alumnus — because the donor had become suspicious that money provided to fund a new program in Western Civilization was going to be hijacked by tenured radicals on the faculty "for more fashionable subjects such as lesbian studies." I quote here from the editorial in *U.S. News and World Report*, entitled "How the West was lost at Yale." The other newswalkies were only slightly less melodramatic. "How to Lose \$20 million," *Time* billed its story, adding: "After four years of fumbling, Yale returns a massive gift to a disgruntled donor." For *Newsweek*, it was "The Fall of Western Civ," with the cute gloss: "A \$20 million Bass slips off Yale's hook."

Yale returned the money because Mr. Bass, late in the negotiations concerning the delayed realization of his program, added the stipulation that he have the right to approve faculty teaching the courses. This stipulation apparently arose from Mr. Bass's conclusion that delays in the realization of his program — the brainchild of a conservative President and a reactionary Dean who were no longer in power — and requests by the new Yale administration for modifications in it created a situation in which he could no longer trust his *alma mater* to deliver a true Western Civ program. While most of the press commentary recognized that no university could accept a donor's control over faculty appointments, there was a demand to know how Yale mishandled things to the point that Mr. Bass made such a stipulation, and why a gift announced in 1991 still had not produced its intended curricular effect in 1995. This had to be a story of left-wing multiculturalists staging one more successful guerilla action against Western Civ: the victory of "multicultural mush" (*U.S. News and World Report* again) over light and truth, a university president's abject capitulation to "the campus left." In one of the more flamboyant pieces on the subject, Hilton Kramer in the *New York Post* informed us that "tenured left-wing advocates of a multiculturalist, anti-Western agenda on the faculty" had carried on "open warfare" against the proposed Bass program. And, to bring things home, the problem became irresolvable when the committee appointed last fall to modify the Bass program included three members of "the highly politicized Comparative Literature Department."

I cite this episode in local history because I think it is highly instructive. The stories of the Bass gift, real and fictive (I will refrain from telling you the true

"inside" story), speak tellingly, and ominously, of a breakdown in the compact between American society and its universities. Universities traditionally were given a large grant of freedom — including the freedom, protected by tenure, to criticize society — and extraordinary financial support on the assumption that they were workshops of an enlightened citizenry and engines for the production of knowledge. Where the natural sciences were concerned, the production of knowledge was so undisputable that there was little desire to tamper with the compact; and the social sciences, though more dubious, cloaked themselves in pseudo-scientific respectability. But in what one might call the creative misunderstanding between society and university, the humanities were tolerated and funded — though much less spectacularly than the sciences — because they were held to promote values, to perpetuate a kind of timeless contemplation of the beautiful, the true, and the good.

I need not describe to this audience how things have changed in the humanities, since indeed Comparative Literature has been the vanguard department in such changes. In particular, we have been the port of entry for theory, much of it of foreign manufacture. When such weirdness as structuralism, deconstruction, then feminist theory, post-colonial studies, then, lo and behold, queer theory began to reach public attention, professors of humanities were branded as molesters of youth and, what is worse, destructive of American values. The media, spurred by a particularly virulent "neoconservative" onslaught on the universities, decided that the cultural inheritance was in danger of subversion.

In turning from the Bass gift episode to the business at hand — Comparative Literature — I do not want to be construed as recommending that we change our ways, moderate our commitments, in order to placate the forces of intellectual and social reaction outside the university. We should not concede anything to the likes of Hilton Kramer, Dinesh D'Souza, Roger Kimball, and the other commentators whose highly destructive attack on the universities is full of bad faith and recycled factoids. But we may want to ask if we can articulate our mission in such a way that universities will in the future continue to benefit from the creative misunderstanding that gave them the well-endowed freedom to play with ideas. The play is perceived as seriously out of bounds, the freedom abused, the whole enterprise subversive of values. Can we who teach and study Comparative Literature make the case for ourselves in a coherent and comprehensible way? Since Comparative Literature is such an exemplum of the study of literature — and of the humanities in general — a sober assessment of our traditions, our current state, and our future mission seems a worthwhile undertaking.

You will not be surprised to hear that I do not think the 1993 Bernheimer Report, prepared for the American Comparative Literature Association, quite constitutes what I think we need. I have already published my critique of this Report, so I will not repeat it here — though I note that having mine and the

other comments on the Report appear in a volume entitled *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* will certainly give aid and comfort to our ill-intentioned enemies. The bland assumption that this is "the age of multiculturalism," and that Comparative Literature must be rethought in this context, is on a par with the other unexamined pieties of the Bernheimer ACLA Report, and sets the terms of debate with those outside the academy on the basis I would most want to repudiate. "Multiculturalism" is not the issue: Comparative Literature has always opposed monoculturalism, and anyway the popular conception that there is a conflict between multiculturalism and the study of classic texts strikes me as impoverished thinking.

I welcomed the Report's call for opening up broader contexts for a traditionally Eurocentric study, its openness to border crossings into anthropology, social history, psychoanalysis, film studies, and the like. But I was distressed at its apologetic tone when speaking of literature and its study. To be told that literature is only "one discursive practice among many others," that "Comparative Literature departments should moderate their focus on high literary discourse and examine the entire discursive context in which texts are created and such heights are constructed," that the "production of 'literature' as an object of study could thus be compared to the production of music, philosophy, history, or law as similar discursive systems" creates the impression that the study of literature is an outmoded mandarin practice that had better catch up with the hip world of cultural studies. The impression is confirmed in the next paragraph of the Report, where we are told that "textually precise close readings should take account as well of the ideological, cultural, and institutional contexts in which their meanings are produced" (Bernheimer 42-43).

Among a number of problems in these prescriptions — I leave aside for the moment their sanctimonious tone — is the enduring and crucial issue of literature and — literature and other discourses, as we have come to call them, literature and other arts, literature and all its possible contexts. A number of years ago, introducing a volume of essays on a subject she commands particularly well, literature and psychoanalysis, Shoshana Felman called attention to the problems of that connective, *and* (Felman 5-10). In the case of literature and psychoanalysis, the *and* traditionally almost always masked a relation of privilege of one term in relation to the other. Literature *and* psychoanalysis really meant the use of psychoanalysis to "explain" literature, the subsumption of literary discourse in another discourse implicitly considered to be more scientific, more authoritative: a place from which to speak about the other of that *and*. Felman went on to argue instead that the meeting of literature and psychoanalysis should be truly dialogic, a debate in which neither side spoke as master, and where literary discourse might invade psychoanalysis as much as the reverse.

The relations of literature and psychoanalysis offer a particularly good object lesson in the problems of relation between literature and those other discourses

among which, according to the ACLA Report, it is only one. For traditional psychoanalytic criticism notoriously made the literary discourse the object of analysis, depriving it of subjecthood. And in doing so, it tended to displace the object, eliding the text in favor of attention to the author, or the fictional characters, or the reader. Its attitude toward textuality was cavalier, since its real allegiance was to the explanatory master discourse. To say with the ACLA Report that literature is only "one discursive practice among many" runs a risk of indifferenciation among discourses, and an additional risk of allowing some one of the many to assume a privilege. We have seen this privilege assigned differently over the past several years. A dominant privilege of the moment goes to a certain ideological discourse, to a certain virtuous rhetoric of unmasking, showing the socio-political complicities of literature.

Whatever the discourse linked to literature through the *and*, we need to ask what relationship is implied by the connection. I find myself reaching back in this context to René Wellek and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature* and its organizing distinction between what they call the "extrinsic" and the "intrinsic" study of literature. Their language sounds a bit quaint today, but I think it is worth citing:

Though the "extrinsic" study may merely attempt to interpret literature in the light of its social context and its antecedents, in most cases it becomes a "causal" explanation, professing to account for literature, to explain it, and finally to reduce it to its origins (the "fallacy of origins"). Nobody can deny that much light has been thrown on literature by a proper knowledge of the conditions under which it has been produced; the exegetical value of such a study seems indubitable. Yet it is clear that causal study can never dispose of problems of description, analysis, and evaluation of an object such as a work of literary art. Cause and effect are incommensurate: the concrete result of these extrinsic causes — the work of art — is always unpredictable. (Wellek and Warren 65)

Wellek and Warren, you will say, are expressing a conception of the literary work that essentially has its origins in Romanticism — art as the unaccountable product of genius — and a view of literary study anchored in formal description, analysis, and evaluation. They present the view brought to our attention with more theoretical force by Roman Jakobson's notion of "literariness" as the proper object of literary study.

Now, much can be criticized in the notion of "literariness." If the concept is taken to refer to a specific property of literary texts that defines their status as literary, it is probably untenable. But as modified by Jonathan Culler and others, it can be interpreted to refer not so much to a property of texts as a form of attention we bring to texts — a set of readerly expectations — and the setting in which we place them. In this sense, is literature what we choose to treat as literature, to read with that kind of attention we accord to literature? Culler demonstrated that rearranging a newspaper article in the form of a poem leads

us to read it with that regard for the "palpability of signs" that Jakobson found characteristic of the poetic message (see Culler *passim*). It is much like Marcel Duchamp's famous gesture of taking a urinal, attaching a signature to it, and placing it in an art exhibition. In changing space, it changes status, and asks to be looked at in a different way — even if we eventually decide that its place among art objects largely mocks the notion of art. And indeed, whether the text imported into the art space — like the newspaper article become poem, or the plots of NYPD Blue, or the lyrics of 2 Live Crew — rewards the descriptive and analytic attention we give to it then becomes an interesting question, one that may allow the construction of certain criteria of complexity or sustainability of attention that lead us to discriminate between "high art" and "popular culture."

These discriminations are important, but not primary, in my view. What seems to me primary is that there be a form of attention that we give to the literary, that indeed defines the literary. And I want to argue that we need to inculcate that kind of attention, ready to bring other discourses within its sphere, but not to bring literature into the spheres of *inattention* that normally attend other discourses. What I mean by this "form of attention" is indeed related to the Jakobsonian, or Russian Formalist, sense of "literariness." It implies that one pays attention to the verbal artwork in itself and for itself before exploring those various "contextualizations" prescribed by the ACLA Report. For, as Michael Riffaterre argues in his critique of that Report, one of the characteristics of literature that has survived the immediate circumstances of its composition and publication is that it is decontextualized: it is still readable, and meaningful, in other circumstances, by other readers unimaginable by its author (Bernheimer 70). The form of attention we bring to literariness is content to explore the intrinsic properties of the work, its structure and texture, to perform description and evaluation, before moving out of its immediate sphere — to the world of reference, to the various relevant contexts.

The problem with the ACLA Report's designation of literature as merely "one discursive practice among many others," coupled to its insistence that literary study always contextualize, is that it downgrades or even gives away the one thing that we, as literary scholars, have to offer. We have not traditionally considered literature as one discourse among many others because we have defined it as demanding a kind of attention not given to other discourses. In doing so, we have of course only followed the lead of poets themselves, who have insisted, in their practice, that their productions do not yield to casual attention. As Roland Barthes put it, with his nice sense of paradox, the casual reader — the reader who reads a text over once only — is condemned always to read the same text. Only rereading reveals true difference. When we brought poetry into the academy — in a move that of course still is controversial today — we argued that it was worthy of study, that it could constitute a discipline, precisely because it demanded a special form of attention. If you abandon that

form of attention, if you put all discursive practices on the same level, then you essentially give up the claim that the study of poetry needs an academic discipline. You abandon the notion of discipleship or apprenticeship: the unsentimental but nonetheless disciplined learning how to read.

I think, then, that it would be a disaster for literary studies to give up the claim that literary discourse is special, and that it demands a form of attention unlike that we bring to any other area of the curriculum. The result, institutionally, would be that one could no longer justify a department of Comparative Literature, by whatever name. You could continue to justify Departments of English or French or German, since they could find a mission in the study of national cultures. But the department of Comparative Literature has claimed a space as that place where the study of the literary phenomenon, of literature across the borders of local specification, can go forward. In the implicit model of the ACLA Report, the department of Comparative Literature would have to become the department of Cultural Studies, or the department of discursive practices. This is of course not an imaginary construct. One has already seen departments of Comparative Literature redefining themselves in this way. There has been a certain loss of faith in the literary definition of Comparative Literature: the enterprise has come to seem too exclusive, too elitist. Or, as Charles Bernheimer puts it in response to my critique of the Report: "Many scholars today would consider Brooks' conviction that he can teach 'literariness and the literary phenomenon' a questionable ideological position" (Bernheimer 2-3).

It is precisely that ideological position that I wish to defend, and I take comfort in some of the other critiques in the Bernheimer volume that claim the same ground, perhaps most of all Jonathan Culler's strong statement that Comparative Literature should remain — or again become — the place to study "literature as such" (Bernheimer 121). And I endorse Culler's vision, in which the national literature departments may become arenas for French Studies, German Studies, and the like, while Comparative Literature is the place for study of literature in its generality, which is to say precisely in its specificity, in its peculiarity, in its unlikeness to other discourses — an unlikeness we confer on it by the kind of attention we give to its description and analysis. "If it resists the rush into cultural studies," writes Culler, "comparative literature will find itself with a new identity, as the site of literary study in its broadest dimensions — the study of literature as a transnational phenomenon. The devolution of other fields will have left it with a distinctive and valuable identity at last" (Bernheimer 119).

To my strictures, the proponents of the ACLA Report are likely to make two replies. One is that explicitly offered by Bernheimer, which I have already cited: that my claim to be able to study literariness and the literary phenomenon is a questionable ideological position. As with all appeals to ideology, to this I can only say: so be it, and your position is no less an ideological choice. The trouble with arguing questions of scholarship and pedagogy as ideological choices,

though, is that it tends to leave us exposed to our common enemies, who want to see the academy at the present moment as entirely dominated by ideology, and want to reform it — to use an understatement — according to ideological positions that both Bernheimer and I would find terrifying. I am perfectly willing to accept that I am propounding what Terry Eagleton has labelled, in his book of that name, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, just so long as one is willing to give to that ideology the sustained and subtle attention that Eagleton brings to it (Eagleton *passim*). The aesthetic has nothing to lose from a critique such as Eagleton's, which understands the importance of such an ideology and makes clear the bases from which the critique is launched, giving us grounds for argument, discrimination, and choice. What is not helpful is the facile labelling of ideologies, and the assumption that having declared all choices to be ideological somehow excuses one from further discussion. I would be prepared to argue, for instance, that it is precisely because the ideology of the aesthetic is so misunderstood and so little prized in American culture that we need to proclaim and illustrate it. I think the aesthetic may indeed be a radical position to defend within current cultural contexts. And I note in passing that when I worked through Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Mankind* (1795) with a seminar two years ago, it seemed an extraordinarily fresh, audacious, and pertinent text.

The second objection which should be made by the Bernheimer camp — though I do not find it explicitly formulated in the volume — is that I am being unfair in characterizing the call for contextualization of literature as one discursive practice among many others as an abandonment of the special form of attention that should characterize literary study in favor of the forms of inattention that we bring to those other discourses. For instance, was it not one of the great lessons of the work of Jacques Derrida that bringing a rhetorical reading worked out in literary criticism to the study of philosophy produced a radically new understanding of that field? And did semiotics not in its heyday offer the promise that techniques of analysis originally elaborated in work with the literary sign could be extended to other cultural systems, so that we could have a general science of signs that would allow us to analyze the fashion industry, architectural styles, the urban landscape, indeed any cultural artifact, with the same subtlety and rigor brought to literary analysis? Can our call for contextualization not be construed as taking our knowledge and techniques of analysis across the border in order to study other fields with readerly attention?

But I do not think this is what the Report really intends. It says: "Our recommendation to broaden the field of inquiry ... does not mean that comparative study should abandon the close analysis of rhetorical, prosodic, and other formal features but that textually precise readings should take account as well of the ideological, cultural, and institutional contexts in which their meanings are produced" (Bernheimer 43). To me, an expansionist Comparative Literature should not be couched in such concessive terms: instead of "not abandoning," I

would speak of reaffirming and renewing; instead of admonitions to take account of ideological, cultural, and institutional contexts in which literary meanings are produced, I would speak of using our training in close reading to read those contexts, to analyze, to question, and to reproblematicize them. They are not unproblematic givens any more than literature, and we need not bow in reverence to them.

If you minimize or downgrade (even if you do not "abandon") textual reading you no longer have a basis from which to make a claim to contribute to the analysis of those other discursive practices. In other words, you cannot practice cultural studies with any precision and any claim to bring to the field something that the sociologist, or the cultural historian, or the historian of science could not bring unless you have first become a reader in the sense that practitioners of those fields almost never are. And there are already plenty of published examples of work in cultural studies that suggest its invitation to ideological, cultural, and institutional contextualization is an invitation to neglect or short circuit the difficult business of reading. The trouble with the invitation is that it so often leads to work that is easier, not more difficult, to perform, and that leads us to seeing the same contexts, the same meanings, ultimately the same texts everywhere.

Perhaps Bernheimer *et al.* would argue that they are already good readers, but bored with just reading, that now they need to recontextualize in terms of other discourses. To which I reply: Fine, but we are not talking about your research, about the books you want to write. We are talking about your pedagogy, and the organization of academic disciplines, which should not be defined for the convenience of your research or your intellectual aspirations, but according to the needs of students.

Consider — to pick up again the meeting of psychoanalysis and literature I evoked earlier — the interesting career of Freud in literary studies. He has been read with an attention, and put into analytical play with a rich inventiveness, not seen at least since the early days of the psychoanalytic movement. Contrast lit crit's Freud with that of cultural history — in Peter Gay's massive biography, for instance — and you will quickly see what training in literature is good for. The reading of this crucial work of our culture has devolved upon the literary critics, with wholly beneficial results. It has been a rescue operation of which we can be proud.

I think I am now in a position to return to that *and* linking literature to other discursive practices. And what I want to talk about in the time remaining is really that old but perennially new question of interdisciplinarity — or pluridisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity or paradisciplinarity as it has sometimes recently been rebaptized. Assuming that I have my way and that Comparative Literature reaffirms its mission as a training in poetics and rhetoric, in informed,

intense reading, how do we now think that *and*? What kinds of border crossings do we want, and how are we most likely to get them?

Since I have up to now probably sounded like a reactionary intent more upon preserving the status of literary study than in rethinking and renewing it, let me state explicitly that I believe the most interesting literary study of the present time is always crossing the borders, and constantly engaged with some form of that *and*. In my own writing and in my teaching, I am almost always working with something as well as a literary text, be it a theoretical model to test against the text — or the text against the model — or some other kind of text, from another kind of tradition, or something from another one of those "discursive practices." I generally subscribe to the description of the work of Comparative Literature given by Roland Greene in his contribution to the Bernheimer volume:

the discipline works best where it can be intensely committed to the practices that enable literary studies but do not contain them, such as philology, historicism and historiography, critical and literary theory, and cultural studies. If one field can be responsible for moving freely among these practices and maintaining their relevance to one another, that field is comparative literature. No matter how many languages may be sampled in a specimen of literary scholarship, no matter what superficial definition of comparative literature it may satisfy, where this paradisciplinary work is not under way, comparative literature is not happening. (Bernheimer 144)

What I like about this description is that it eschews definition in favor, precisely, of description: Comparative Literature as a form of activity, as a kind of instinctive movement on the part of the comparatist amidst various discourses and contexts, a kind of mobility in approach to a given text or problem. Once upon a time, our discipline was supposed to be defined by *comparison*. This, as I have noted, always bothered me, since I did not know what was being compared to what. The notion appeared to be based on nineteenth-century scientific procedures, as in comparative anatomy or comparative linguistics, which if translated faithfully into literary studies would result in the old Sorbonne definition of Comparative Literature: studies of influences and receptions, of themes and their variations, and so on. I think Greene here offers a useful loose redefinition of what "comparison" may mean to our age: it is that interdisciplinarity or paradisciplinary urge, that restlessness with business as usual, that seems particularly characteristic of our field at its most recognizable.

This does not of itself tell us how paradisciplinary work can and should proceed. I do not take Greene's description of the comparatist's work as the recommendation of a bland "interdisciplinarity," which at least since the 1960s has been proposed as the remedy to disciplinary sclerosis, and has often been seized upon by deans and such as a way to realize economies of scale through a remapping of institutional boundaries. Those boundaries need to be rethought, of course, and recent work on how they came into being — archeologies of the

disciplines — by such as Gerald Graff and John Guillory are immensely useful. But a simple redrawing of the frontiers between academic estates, or the creation of regional free market zones, may give a topography worse than the traditional one. The traditional disciplines, however arbitrary they may have become, at least gave a sense of the definitions to be contested, of the borders to be crossed.

I believe, that is, that genuine paradisciplinary does not come from the Cuisinart model, mixing together some portions of literature, philosophy, cultural history and blending it into a paste. It comes when thought processes reach the point where the disciplinary boundary one comes up against no longer makes sense — when it is in the internal logic of research and thinking to break through a barrier. To the extent that this is teachable, it requires considerable apprenticeship within the discipline which is eventually to be transcended. If it is to result in new academic landscapes, it requires a real reconfiguration of knowledge and how we come to it. I would want my students always to attend to literariness, to reading in the fullest sense, not necessarily before but certainly as well as attempting to move out from literature. The reading of literature should be the high standard by which to recognize the inadequacy of remaining exclusively content with literature alone.

Two areas in which I have recently done some teaching, and in which I have seen the production of some excellent student work, are literature and the history of art, and literature and the law. The first of these has traditionally been part of the comparatist's domain: literature and "the sister arts" has long figured as part of our programmatic descriptions. What makes it freshly of interest is in part the deficiencies of traditional art history, which tends to plod along somewhere between connoisseurship and iconography. The most exciting recent work in art history — by such as Michael Fried, Svetlana Alpers, T.J. Clark, Thomas Crow — is indebted to literary criticism and theory. Our textual grounding can enable us to ask more interesting questions than those posed in traditional art history. Which is to say that the interest of this work is not in a contextualization of literature by another discourse, but rather the infiltration of that other discourse by critics expert in the literary context, and able to put that training to work with visual materials.

The relations of law and literature are a more recent object of attention, and still highly problematic. They can be understood in different ways. One is simply the representation of the law and its workings in literature, as in a number of essays on *Billy Budd* or *The Merchant of Venice* or the *Oresteia*. Another, more potent encounter of law and literature uses hermeneutical techniques and ideas elaborated in literary study to read legal texts, as in the work of Stanley Fish, or the Critical Legal Studies movement. Attention to the rhetoric of the judicial opinion, deconstructive readings of the U.S. Constitution, can offer a radically unsettling version of the bases on which society adjudicates competing claims, and enforces the obedience of its members. I am uncertain whether the kind of

hermeneutical suspicion fostered by literary study ever will come to inhabit the legal profession, as opposed to certain fringes of the law schools: the profession may by its very definition need to suppress such knowledge. I await expectantly the appointment of a justice of the Supreme Court who has taken Stanley Fish to heart. Still another encounter of literature and the law, one with which I am engaged at present, seeks to set literary and legal kinds of storytelling in relation to one another, in a broad context of narrative theory, considered both in its abstract uses — as a means for understanding how narratives create their meanings and their effects — and its practical entailments. For narratives at the law have the power to exonerate or inculpate. Their construction and reception can literally mean life or death. There is in this kind of interstitial study of narrative in law and literature the potential for understanding more about the work done by narrative in literature and in culture.

My current interest in law and literature may derive, I think, from an old and enduring sense that literary criticism can have a quasi-anthropological usefulness in the world. It offers one way to talk about characteristic human functioning and self-definition: humans as, among other things but certainly very centrally, fiction-making animals whose place in the world is importantly defined by their dreams and imaginings, by the stories they tell of that place and how they got there. In the ACLA Report, I sense some of the same longing of literary scholars to move out from their aesthete's sphere into the business of the real world, to talk about things that "really matter." I am in sympathy, but my urging is that what you as a literary scholar have to say about the real world is important only in its difference from what the sociologist or the historian or the Justice of the Supreme Court has to say about it. You bring to real-world discourse — if you can find anyone to listen, which is another subject, though a crucial one — not only your expertise in textuality, your ability to read in slow motion, but also a textual conception of the human subject which is uniquely yours, and, I think, of real importance.

In some of my earlier work on psychoanalysis and literature — to conclude where I more or less began — I tried to deal with symmetrically opposite objections to the enterprise: on the one hand, the objection that the two discourses were too distant from one another, and the translation from one to another too reductive; on the other hand, the objection that they were too close to one another, that Freud was largely a product of nineteenth-century European high literary culture, and the difference between the discourses collapsed, leaving a kind of tautology in using one to comment on the other (Brooks, chapter 1). In attempting to answer these criticisms, I would on the one hand marshal all the arguments I could to show how closely related the psychoanalytic model of the psychic functioning is to the dynamics of the literary text, and to suggest a common understanding of human beings as dreamers, daydreamers, rhetoricians, and symbol-users. On the other hand, I have had to insist that the two discourses

are different in their goals and perspectives: to work on the understanding of mind (to use an inadequate term), whether with therapeutic intent or simply to understand its organization, is different from similar analytic work on literature. Maintaining the difference, as well as the relation, is important because the move from one discourse to another, the superimposition of one disciplinary model on another, ought in the best of cases to be productive of a kind of stereotypical effect. Things stand out in new relief, they are lighted in a new way. They do not merge into the same, but they are perhaps reconfigured where they are.

I want, then, to understand that "comparison" that was always understood to characterize our professional discipline as meaning something like the constant urge toward paradisciplinary, which in turn I want to construe as movements back and forth across that *and* between literature and other discourses in a way that asserts similarity while not attempting to abolish difference, toward an ideally stereotypical effect.

None of this, I realize, will satisfy malevolent critics of the academic humanities at the present time — nor restore Mr. Bass's \$20 million to Yale. Yet it may give us the beginnings of a basis for reasserting to the outside world that literary studies have an important mission, and that this mission does have something to do with the creation of values — not in any simple or passive sense, but through the disciplines of critical reading and paradisciplinary comparison. For ourselves within the university, it may provide terms for the endless debate about the nature of our discipline more useful than the piously bland assertions of the ACLA Report. We need a forum, and a banner, better than *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*.

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"Same Difference": On the Hegemony of "Language" and "Literature" in Comparative Studies

Conceptual schemes and extent of scholarship cannot be made to balance. (Gayatri Spivak, "The Question of Cultural Studies" 258)

I want to begin (and end) with an insistence on the necessity of comparison. It appears to me that this is the essential point to be made when speaking about *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* (edited by Charles Bernheimer), the book which provides the most immediate impetus for many of my comments here, in that it encapsulates a certain moment in the current disciplinary debate, albeit one that is localized within a specific practice that does not always conform to the Canadian context (an aspect which I have considered in "Comparative Canadian Literature" as Crisis and Critique: Towards Comparative Cultural Studies," of which this article is an extension). I will also want to distinguish in this article between disciplinary and methodological aspects of comparative studies; while they overlap, there are some strategic distinctions to be made between them.

Let me state at the outset that my position on comparative studies is pluralist; indeed, it is necessarily so, since the major lesson taught to me by the history of "Comparative Literature" is that the containment of its practice, both ideologically and pragmatically, within a Eurocentric frame of reference, was, finally, counter-productive. Although the methodology of Comparative Literature was predicated upon difference, its cultural assumptions limited it to discovering similarity. As K. Anthony Appiah puts it (in his essay in the Bernheimer volume), "To insist on Newton's *Opticks* as part of the context for Goethe's *Farbenlehre* isn't to compare two distinct things: it is, rather, to enter into a world in which they were already connected" (54). To put it another way: "same difference." Yet, I take issue with Appiah's comment, insofar as it places emphasis on the "distinct things" that get compared, rather than on the act of comparison, which it takes for granted. It is precisely the nature of the "crisis" of comparative studies, however, that comparison *cannot* be taken for granted; it is that which — perforce — comparatists *must* theorize, rather than seeking to