

When is Diversity Not Diversity:  
A Brief History of the English Department

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At the risk of shocking—and offending—my colleagues in English departments around the country, I will come right out and say that there is less diversity in our profession today than there was fifty years ago. I am of course talking about *intellectual* diversity, not the diversity of race, gender, and ethnicity that most English professors point to with pride today in their departments and curricula. The past few decades have indeed witnessed a massive diversification of English departments, in terms of both who teaches in them and what they teach. Perhaps the most famous—and controversial—aspect of this development has been the expansion of the canon, especially the inclusion of works outside the European literary tradition.<sup>1</sup> This diversification has been in itself laudable in my view. I have publicly defended the study of what is called postcolonial literature,<sup>2</sup> as well as teaching regularly in the area myself, and publishing studies of postcolonial authors, such as Salman Rushdie and J. M. Coetzee.<sup>3</sup>

But unfortunately the broadening of *what* is taught in English departments has often been accompanied by a narrowing of *how* it is taught. To oversimplify an admittedly complex situation: literature on our college and university campuses today is predominantly analyzed in terms of the categories of race, class, and gender.<sup>4</sup> Authors are viewed as participating in the exploitation of various minorities and subordinate groups, or rebelling against it. Works of literature are generally read to show, not the way they express genuine insights, but the way they reflect the racial, social, and sexual prejudices of their authors, their countries, and their times—unless of course the authors can be shown to be challenging these prejudices, in which case they are said to be still capable of genuine insights. This is how literature departments have found a way of participating in the overall political agenda of the contemporary academy—to advance the cause of social justice and in particular the goal of racial, social, and sexual equality.

The result of this reorientation of English departments has been a strange combination of diversity and uniformity in the scholarship they are producing. If you look, for example, at the Ph.D. dissertations graduate students are writing today, you will be struck by the wide range of authors they cover. But you will also notice that they are coming to roughly the same conclusions about this diverse material—it all somehow illustrates the oppressive character of Western civilization. A dissertation may be on medieval English dream visions, it may be on Dickens' novels, it may be on Chicano folk ballads—but it will likely end up showing the evils of the market economy, whether under proto-capitalism, fully developed capitalism, or post-industrial global capitalism. I am of course exaggerating for rhetorical effect, but I would challenge anybody to find a graduate student in an American English department who is analyzing literature in a way that presents the free market in a favorable light. There may well be a handful of graduate students doing this kind of work—I think I know all five of them personally. But this is still not what one would expect if the study of literature were truly characterized by intellectual diversity.

Among economists, a genuine variety of opinions concerning the free market prevails—all the way from those, like the Austrian School, who champion it adamantly, to those, like the Neo-Marxists, who completely reject it in the name of various forms of reconstituted socialism. Somehow, when literary critics come to apply economics to literature, this wide range of views among economists gets narrowed down to an almost uniformly anti-capitalist position, quite often explicitly Marxist or quasi-Marxist.<sup>5</sup> Reading literary critics today—and they typically feel obligated and, what is more, qualified to raise economic issues—one would conclude that capitalism is the worst thing that ever happened to humanity. And yet the majority of scholarly work in economics has demonstrated the failure of all alternatives to capitalism, and history

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shows that capitalism has increased the material prosperity, health, life expectancy, social and cultural opportunities, and the political freedom of people wherever it has prevailed. Why, then, is this position never represented in literature departments today, even though they now pride themselves on focusing on economic issues?<sup>6</sup>

I want to concentrate on the institutional aspects of this and other developments in literary studies. Despite all the talk of diversity today, English departments have come to look much more like each other than they did fifty years ago—and largely, as I will argue, for institutional reasons. The standard charge against the English departments of the 1950s and 60s is that they all taught the same narrow range of books—the canon—consisting almost entirely of works by the infamous Dead White European Males. This may or may not be true—in fact I think the canon was never as narrowly defined or as firmly established as its detractors today claim—but in any case, this uniformity of subject matter was counterbalanced by a diversity of approaches to it. Perhaps because critics were largely talking about the same works, they ended up arguing about them and indeed had a common ground for their disputes. The diversity of subject matter in today’s English departments has paradoxically worked toward producing a uniformity of approach, perhaps because with fewer books in common, critics have less to argue about. They end up largely talking past each other, with everyone safely ensconced in a subspecialty, having each carved out a little realm of study on which nobody else can encroach. To make another rhetorical overgeneralization: a half century ago, the way to make a reputation in literary studies was to say something new about the same old works; today the way is to say the same old thing about new works.

Looking back, I am particularly struck by the fact that the diversity of critical approaches a half century ago was reflected in the divergent profiles of the major English departments in the

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United States and Canada. In the 1950s and '60s, one really could speak of meaningful differences among English departments, whereas today the differences are largely cosmetic and mostly a matter of what amounts to marketing. People who disparage the earlier era tend to think that it was simply and uniformly dominated by the movement known as the New Criticism, with its method of close reading, its rejection of historical and biographical contexts, and its championing of modernist values such as irony and ambiguity.<sup>7</sup> But the New Criticism was still “new” in the 1950s, fighting to establish itself throughout the academy and encountering considerable resistance. As an undergraduate at Harvard in the early 1960s, I heard disparaging comments about the New Criticism from several of my professors, and its chief representative within the English Department at that time, Reuben Brower, felt embattled.<sup>8</sup>

The Harvard English Department in those days was associated with two different movements in literary studies—the Old Philology and the New Humanism—both of which were hostile to the New Criticism. The Old Philology, whose patron saints at Harvard were Francis James Child and George Lyman Kittredge, grew largely out of nineteenth-century German universities, where the study of literature was conceived in the spirit of positivism as a science, chiefly involving the systematic study of languages (the older the language and the more obscure the better; hence the focus on Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, Old Icelandic, Old Welsh, and so on).<sup>9</sup> Unlike the New Critics, the Old Philologists were deeply concerned with historical matters, and they had little interest in offering interpretations of literary works. They looked upon the elaborate interpretive readings of the New Critics as fanciful, and, what is worse, beside the point.<sup>10</sup>

The New Humanists at Harvard went all the way back to figures earlier in the century like Irving Babbitt, and, as the name indicates, they looked to chart broadly humanistic themes in

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literature.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, they regarded the New Critics as too formalist in their aspirations. In contrast to the New Criticism, the New Humanism embraced intellectual history and also biography.<sup>12</sup> The chief representative of the movement when I was an undergraduate was Walter Jackson Bate, who wrote prize-winning biographies of Samuel Johnson and John Keats.<sup>13</sup> In New Critical terms, he wrote too much about the poet, rather than the poem. As for the Old Philologists, the New Critics looked upon them as dinosaurs, hopelessly out-of-date and impossibly pedantic.

Far from simply dominating the study of English in North America, the New Criticism in fact began as a regional phenomenon, with its roots, strangely enough, in the Southern Agrarian movement. Its original bastions in the 1930s and 40s were at southern universities like LSU and Vanderbilt, and it began to penetrate the rest of the country from its foothold at Kenyon College in Ohio, with its influential journal, *The Kenyon Review*. The fact that Yale became the flagship of the New Criticism in the 1950s did signal its emergence as probably the single most influential movement in literary studies in its day, but even at Yale it did not go unchallenged. In the late 1950s, the Yale English Department turned out two of the greatest mavericks of the profession—Harold Bloom and E. D. Hirsch. Each in his own way reacted against the formalism of the New Criticism, with Bloom drawing upon religious thinking and Hirsch upon German philosophy to open up new vistas on the literature they studied.<sup>14</sup> In general, the formalism of the New Critics at Yale generated its antithesis in a variety of anti-formalist movements. In the 1960s, Yale, together with Johns Hopkins, became the center of applying continental philosophy, especially French theory, to literary studies—first Structuralism, and then Post-Structuralism.<sup>15</sup> It was no accident that the revolutionary movement known as Deconstruction was headquartered at Yale in the late 1960s and throughout the '70s. The way the New Critics insisted on organic

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perfection of literary form, showing how beautifully poems, novels, and plays hang together, provoked a powerful reaction in the opposite direction. The deconstructive method focused on reading against the grain and showing how literary works fall apart under critical scrutiny, which reveals them to be riddled with internal contradictions and incoherence of form. Within roughly a decade at Yale, in the hands of critics like Bloom, Paul de Man, and J. Hillis Miller, close reading turned into misreading.<sup>16</sup>

While Harvard had its New Historicism and Yale had its New Criticism, a neo-Aristotelianism was flourishing at the University of Chicago in the 1950s.<sup>17</sup> With the university's president, Robert Maynard Hutchins, committed to the Great Books movement and especially to the study of classical thought, the Chicago English Department pursued the application of Aristotle's *Poetics* to the study of modern literature, including genres the Greek philosopher had never encountered, like the novel. The neo-Aristotelians at Chicago concentrated on questions of genre, structure, and rhetoric in studies that may have looked old-fashioned to their contemporaries but that in fact demonstrated the continuing relevance of categories the ancient Greeks first developed. Chicago critics like Richard McKeon, R. S. Crane, and Wayne Booth drew inspiration from Aristotle to demonstrate that attention to form is compatible with a philosophical approach to literature.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, in the same period, the Princeton English Department was renowned for its historical studies and its historicist philosophy, particularly a movement that was known as Robertsonianism, named after the influential medievalist D. W. Robertson, Jr.<sup>19</sup> Robertsonianism stressed the need to study literature in its own historical terms, particularly when dealing with the Middle Ages. In contrast to the broadly humanistic approaches at Harvard, which looked for continuities in ideas over the centuries, or the Chicago approach,

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which applied ancient categories to modern texts, Robertsonianism emphasized the radical discontinuities in literary history. Students of Chaucer and other medieval authors were constantly warned not to apply modern concepts of irony and ambiguity anachronistically, but instead to employ the exegetical method, modeled on medieval modes of interpretation themselves. In this view, a historical period is to be analyzed only in terms of its own categories, as if every age were hermetically sealed off intellectually and culturally from the others.

In the period we are talking about, the University of Toronto was dominated by the giant figure of Northrop Frye, one of the greatest literary critics of the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup>

Developing a kind of mythic or archetypal criticism, Frye promised to found literary study on a new scientific foundation, with a new and universal theory of literature. The scope of his work was impressive, as he developed new theories of genre (tragedy, comedy, and, above all, romance), and he constructed a system of literary cycles in which he was able to fit virtually every great work in the Western literary tradition. For many would-be graduate students, the University of Toronto in the 1950s and '60s *was* Northrop Frye, and they flocked to study with him.

The presiding spirit of the University of Virginia English Department in the 1950s and '60s was Fredson Bowers. He was a leader of a movement known as the New Bibliography, which championed a particular method of analyzing the problems of textual history that are involved in editing—a method that stressed the importance of taking an author's intentions into account when producing scholarly editions.<sup>21</sup> Under Bowers's leadership, Virginia became a center of scholarly editing and bibliography at a time when much of the profession had become focused on the theory and practice of interpreting texts, rather than the process of how their exact wording should be determined. But Bowers was a pluralist and a pragmatist, and in trying to

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build the best English Department he could, he brought in professors of all stripes. One of his key hires in the 1960s was E. D. Hirsch, who was worlds apart from Bowers in many respects, but whose hermeneutic theories also emphasized the importance of authorial intention (in contrast to the New Criticism, which rejected what it called the “intentional fallacy”).<sup>22</sup> Informed by Hirsch’s common sense and empiricist spirit, Virginia became known as a bastion of resistance to the abstractness of French literary theory.<sup>23</sup>

I could go on describing the distinctive profiles that English departments developed in the 1950s and ’60s, but I believe that I have made my point. Far from being characterized by a bland uniformity, the study of literature in the 1950s and ’60s was remarkably diversified and intellectually exciting, and it involved a number of high profile institutions in competition with each other. Prospective graduate students in English during this time span had real choices to make about where to study, and not just the inevitable worries about fellowship support, living conditions, and job prospects. To be sure, I have emphasized the differences among these departments and I will admit that they were never uniform in their approaches. New Critics could be found at Harvard at this time, historicists at Yale, and so on. Nevertheless, with all the necessary qualifications, there can be no question that, during this roughly two-decade period, people thought in terms of a distinctive Chicago School of criticism, a Yale School, a Princeton School—and in general had a sense that each department stood for something different.

I do not mean to idealize this period; I am by no means claiming that the 1950s and ’60s represented some kind of Golden Age of literary study. As a graduate student at Harvard in the late 1960s, I was often frustrated by what I was presented with in my classes. I have always been interested in political criticism, and the cultivated apolitical character of the Harvard English Department’s rarefied humanism was almost as alien to me at the time as it was to the

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leftwing radicals among my fellow graduate students. I have always been put off by formalism of any kind, and, if any movement set the tone during this period, it was the formalist New Criticism. Thus, I am not calling for a return to the good old days of literary studies when I myself was a student. But I am making a historical observation: Whatever the deficiencies of this era in literary studies—and I believe there were many—it was a time of genuine diversity of approaches and each was roughly associated with a different English department.

That situation no longer prevails. In terms of their distinctive profiles, English departments today are a shadow of their former selves. Old reputations die slowly, and thus some sense of differentiation among the major departments lingers on. To take my own department as an example, I believe that Virginia is still thought of us as a haven from the excesses of literary theory and as more traditional in its approach, with a focus on the older historical periods. I suppose that, by comparison with other English departments, like Duke's, this may be true. But Hirsch and his generation have almost all ceased teaching by now, and in the wake of their retirement, Virginia has done everything possible to make itself look just like every other English Department in the country. It has worked hard to hire professors in all the fashionable new fields, from women's studies to ethnic studies to cultural studies to media studies. Here we see the institutional imperative at work in today's English Departments. Forget about ideology—the bottom line is at stake. In a standard marketing ploy, every department wants to be all things to all people, to reach as broad a range of customers as possible. Every department is desperately afraid of being thought of as behind the times and left out of the picture of contemporary literary studies. If departments have become larger and more diverse, it is for the same reason that sparked the growth of superstores in the retail business.

English departments have thus become the Wal-Marts of the academy, offering one-stop shopping for anyone interested in any phase or mode of literary studies. Trapped in a perpetual game of catch-up, English departments have come increasingly to resemble each other. In particular, driven by the need to attract the best graduate students, departments are constantly attentive to what their rivals are doing, and would generally rather imitate the competition than offer genuine alternatives to it. The proliferation of department web sites has made it easy to monitor one's competition, but, if a department is not vigilant on its own, its graduate students will be quick to point out when it fails to follow the trends of the profession.

The sheer capitalism of all this is of course the profound irony of the current state of the profession. In their theories, professors of literature may attack capitalism, but in practice, in their own careers, they seem to be imitating the very money-oriented society they loudly condemn.<sup>24</sup> As their own ideological views would suggest, English professors, like everyone else, are driven by economic motives, chiefly the need to maintain enrollments in their departments at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and thereby to maintain their salaries, perquisites, and reputations. For decades, members of English departments in their professional lives have been participating in a process they generally condemn in their lectures--globalization. Globalization, as English professors will be the first to tell you, is the imposition of the rationalized homogeneity of modernity on a hitherto culturally heterogeneous world. That is to say, globalization wipes out local and regional differences in the name of a more efficient, because uniform, market system. That is a perfect description of what has happened to English departments—and higher education in general—during the past half century. In what amounts to a market competition, the local and regional differences among colleges and universities have gradually disappeared—to produce an increasingly national, and even to some extent

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international, system of higher education, in which both students and professors are free to circulate among different institutions. Interchangeable course credits among both domestic and foreign institutions are the (often debased) currency of this international trade in academics.

The homogenization of the academy has simply mirrored the larger homogenization of the United States. I remember a time when you used to have to go to the South for a bottle of Dr. Pepper or to Colorado for a six-pack of Coors. I remember a time when you used to have to go to Chicago for a dose of Aristotelianism. But today, in a world of national markets and the Internet, just about anything is available locally throughout the United States. Technological developments from e-mail to cell phones have made professors, like all Americans, more mobile in every sense of the term, and they no longer feel a need to reside in the same place, to congregate physically, in order to form schools.<sup>25</sup> In their personnel, English departments are no more stable these days than professional sports teams. Professors are much less attached and committed to their home institutions, and have come to think of themselves as intellectual citizens of the world.<sup>26</sup> In short, they have been globalized.

The economic benefits of these developments for all concerned are obvious and genuine. Indeed, contrary to what most English professors believe, markets do operate efficiently to maximize welfare. And what I am calling the globalization of literary studies has clearly had significant intellectual benefits as well. The degree of choice among different English departments has been greatly reduced, but at the same time the choices available within each department have in some ways genuinely increased. Many of the approaches that were once available chiefly in specific departments are now practiced widely throughout the profession. As the economist Tyler Cowen has argued, this is what happens more broadly in economic globalization.<sup>27</sup> On the negative side, different countries begin to look more like each other, but,

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on the positive, people within each country have a wider range of options precisely because of the introduction of foreign influences into their daily lives. To an American, the opening of a McDonald's in the middle of the Sahara desert may look like the last stage of the complete homogenization of the world; to a Bedouin, it adds something exotic to his menu, and actually makes his local world more heterogeneous.

In short, globalization offers a choice between different kinds of diversity, and English professors, of all people, should be aware that any such choice will involve losses as well as gains. The increasingly uniform nature of English departments across the country has made the system as a whole more efficient, but the elimination of local and regional differences has had many negative consequences. There is much to be said for having a variety of different schools of thought actually headquartered at different institutions. Morris Zapp to the contrary notwithstanding, like-minded thinkers concentrated together may well be able to develop their ideas more fully and powerfully.<sup>28</sup> A sense of distinct and competitive departmental identities in the 1950s and '60s helped fuel the explosion of intellectual movements in literary studies during that period.

I came across an interesting illustration of the issue of intellectual regionalism appropriately enough in *The Southern Register*, the bulletin of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. The article discusses the plans of the new chairman of the University of Mississippi's English Department, Patrick Quinn. Although not exactly earth-shaking news, the headline caught my eye: "New English Chair Proposes More Diversity in Literature." And in today's academy, the watchword of this new regime is indeed diversity:

Another priority for Quinn is a celebration of the diversification in literature. He said he knows the graduate and undergraduate offerings are especially strong in the field of Southern literature and cultural history, which make the English department distinct from others in the country. “Certainly, Ole Miss has a great history in Southern literature,” said Quinn. “However, I feel that expertise can be made richer when it is supplemented with offerings from African American, British, Caribbean, and other world literatures.”<sup>29</sup>

As someone who regularly teaches a survey course in World Literature in English, which includes African, Asian, and Caribbean authors—from Achebe to Rushdie to Walcott—I sympathize with what Quinn is saying. Nevertheless, this passage epitomizes everything that troubles me in today’s English departments. Quinn’s way of increasing “diversification” at Ole Miss is to dilute what makes it “distinct” from other English departments in the country.

Is it really so terrible that a Southern university should specialize in Southern literature? Does it not actually increase our range of choices to have one institution concentrate its efforts in this area? There is a certain logic to drawing upon local traditions, resources, and expertise when studying literature—to make use of one’s particular strengths and advantages to differentiate what one is doing and establish a distinct niche for oneself. Even in the age of superstores, specialty shops have managed to compete by developing their own niche markets. The real world still offers a variety of business models. Perhaps English departments chose the wrong one when they decided to follow the strategy of Wal-Mart. Do we really want Ole Miss to end up looking just like every other university in the United States? When English professors see this happening in economic globalization, they lament the loss of local difference in the name of a uniform modernity. But what they bitterly condemn in corporations, they eagerly embrace in their professional lives. Like the corporate juggernauts of globalization, they seem to be intent on wiping out all pockets of local resistance to the homogenization of literary studies—and, remarkably, all in the name of diversity.

I cannot offer any simple solutions to the difficult problems I have raised. I am certainly not advocating turning the clock in literary studies back to 1955. I readily grant that the kind of diversity celebrated in English departments today has an intellectual component, and that broadening the canon has helped to broaden minds. But I have tried to show that there are different kinds of diversity, and encouraging one form may involve discouraging others. Mere diversity of identity—of racial, social, or sexual identity—cannot be simply identified with intellectual diversity. The current obsession with identity studies in English departments has in many respects involved a contraction of their intellectual horizons, a blotting out of a whole range of issues they used to explore. And each department used to explore them differently, often taking pride in the idea that it alone was on the right track, while all other departments were misguided. This kind of competition encouraged exploration and innovation. I can assure my readers that I never, ever wish that I were back in graduate school. But when I look back at the 1960s, I cannot help thinking that it was a more intellectually exciting and vibrant time for studying literature. English departments may have lacked what is today called diversity, but they were considerably more different from each other than they are now. And it was a productive difference. I believe the situation was healthier and more stimulating when English departments were struggling to be different rather than to be the same.

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of this issue, see Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), especially 15-41.

<sup>2</sup> See Paul A. Cantor, "The Fixed Canon: The Maginot Line of the College Curriculum," *The American Enterprise*, September/October 1991, 14-20 and "A Welcome to Postcolonial Literature," *Academic Questions* 12 (1998-99): 22-29.

<sup>3</sup> See Paul A. Cantor, "Tales of the Alhambra: Rushdie's Use of Spanish History in *The Moor's Last Sigh*," *Studies in the Novel* 29 (1997): 323-41 and "Happy Days in the Veld: Beckett and Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 93 (1994): 83-110.

<sup>4</sup> For a thorough and wide-ranging analysis of this phenomenon, see John M. Ellis, *Literature Lost: Social Agendas and the Corruption of the Humanities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> On the prevalence of Marxism in the contemporary academy and especially in the humanities, see Darío Fernández-Morera, *American Academia and the Survival of Marxist Ideas* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996) and Frederick Crews, "Dialectical Immaterialism," *Skeptical Engagements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 137-58.

<sup>6</sup> Incredible as it may sound, I know of only one book of literary criticism that is openly pro-capitalist: Frederick Turner, *Shakespeare's Twenty-First Century Economics: The Morality of Love and Money* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). When leftwing commentators speak of the pro-capitalism among literature professors, all they are arguing is that, in its expository writing program, a typical English department *inadvertently* serves the interests of capitalism by developing skills that will be useful in the corporate world. See Richard Ohmann, *English in America: A Radical View of the Profession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

<sup>7</sup> For two of the classics of the New Criticism, see Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (1947; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1975) and W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1954). For analyses of this mode of criticism, see Gerald Graff, *Poetic Statement and Critical Dogma* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 87-111 and *Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 129-49.

<sup>8</sup> For Brower as a representative of the New Criticism, see his *The Fields of Light: An Experiment in Critical Reading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951).

<sup>9</sup> For the influence of German models on the development of American universities, see Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 55-64. For the development of philology in English departments, see 65-76. In general, Graff provides here the best book-length coverage of the history of the American English department and treats matters discussed in this essay in much greater detail and depth. See also Gerald Graff and Reginald Gibbons, eds., *Criticism in the University* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1985) for many interesting essays on the variety of schools of literary criticism in twentieth-century America. Another useful resource for readers looking for more background on the history of criticism is Elmer Borklund, *Contemporary Literary Critics* (London: St. James, 1977), which contains extensive encyclopedia-type entries on many of the critics mentioned in this essay: Walter Jackson Bate, Harold Bloom, Wayne C. Booth, Cleanth Brooks, R. S. Crane, Frederick Crews, Northrop Frye, Geoffrey Hartman, E. D. Hirsch, David Lodge, J. Hillis Miller, and W. K. Wimsatt.

<sup>10</sup> To get a feel for the philologists' reaction to the New Critics, read "Prolegomenon to Any Future Study of *Winnie-the-Pooh*," allegedly by "Smedley Force," in Frederick Crews, *The Pooh Perplex* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1965), 139-50. This marvelous collection of parodies of different styles of literary criticism is perhaps the most convenient—and certainly the most entertaining—way to sample the diversity of critical approaches in the period I discuss in this essay. The parody of the Chicago School of critics is particularly devastating (87-99).

<sup>11</sup> For a representative work by Babbitt, see his *Rousseau and Romanticism* (1919; rpt. Cleveland: Meridian, 1955). Alfred North Whitehead was also a great influence on the humanists in the Harvard English Department; see especially his *Science and the Modern World* (1925; rpt. New York: Free Press, 1967).

<sup>12</sup> For representative works of the humanist school at Harvard, see Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963) and Herschel Baker, *The Image of Man* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961).

<sup>13</sup> See W. Jackson Bate, *Samuel Johnson* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975) and *John Keats* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).

<sup>14</sup> Bloom's first book, *Shelley's Mythmaking* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), begins with a quotation from the Jewish theologian, Martin Buber—rather shocking for a work coming out of the Yale English Department in those days. Hirsch's first book, *Wordsworth and Schelling: A Typological Study of Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), was in its own way equally shocking in the context of Yale in the way it begins with a German philosopher. For a critical account of Bloom, see Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 318-46; for Hirsch, see 256-80.

<sup>15</sup> The book generally credited with inaugurating the fascination with French theory in American literature departments is Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, eds., *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970). The book grew out of an international conference held at Johns Hopkins in 1966.

<sup>16</sup> For a kind of manifesto of the deconstruction movement at Yale, see Harold Bloom, et al., *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Seabury, 1979), which contains essays by Bloom, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Geoffrey Hartman, and J. Hillis Miller. For a critical account of this movement, see John M. Ellis, *Against Deconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

<sup>17</sup> For the manifesto of the Chicago School, see R. S. Crane, ed., *Critics and Criticism, Ancient and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952). For a critical account of the Chicago School from the perspective of the New Criticism, see Wimsatt, "The Chicago Critics: The Fallacy of the Neoclassic Species," *Verbal Icon*, 41-65.

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<sup>18</sup> For Booth's best-known work, see *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961). The Chicago School of literary criticism was unrelated to the work being done at roughly the same time at the university by Leo Strauss, who in retrospect appears to have made the more lasting contribution to theories of the interpretation of texts. See especially his *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952).

<sup>19</sup> See especially D. W. Robertson, Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962). For a critical account of Robertson's work, see Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 26-39.

<sup>20</sup> For Frye's most synoptic work, see his *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). For critical accounts of Frye's work, see Graff, *Poetic Statement*, 73-78; Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism*, 2-26; and Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays 1958-1970* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 24-41.

<sup>21</sup> For a statement of Bowers' position, see his *Textual and Literary Criticism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1966). Bowers' influence can be seen in the journal he edited for many years, *Studies in Bibliography*.

<sup>22</sup> For Hirsch's most important work in literary theory, see *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). For a contrary view from the New Criticism, see the essay W. K. Wimsatt wrote with Monroe Beardsley called "The Intentional Fallacy," *Verbal Icon*, 3-18.

<sup>23</sup> For a trenchant critique of the role of theory in the humanities, see Crews, "The Grand Academy of Theory," *Skeptical Engagements*, 159-78.

<sup>24</sup> Many observers have noted this paradox. See, for example, Harold Fromm, *Academic Capitalism and Literary Value* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), especially 210-26. The classic essay that makes this argument is Camille Paglia, "Junk Bonds and Corporate Raiders: Academe in the Hour of the Wolf," *Sex, Art, and American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 170-248. See especially 220: "The facile industry of high-tech criticism is as busily all-American as the Detroit auto trade. New! Improved! See next year's model today! A false progressivism has goaded the profession into a frantic tarantella. Hurry up; get on the ball; you must "keep up with," must stay in front. . . . French theory, with its empty word-play, produces sophists, experts in getting ahead, getting worldly rewards. . . . French theory is brand-name consumerism: Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault are the academic equivalents of BMW, Rolex, and Cuisinart, the yuppie trophies. . . . The McDonaldisation of the profession means standardized, interchangeable outlets, briskly efficient academics who think alike and sound alike."

<sup>25</sup> This point was made brilliantly in David Lodge's academic novel, *Small World* (New York: Warner, 1984). Lodge's exuberant hero, Morris Zapp (said to be modeled on real-life academic entrepreneur Stanley Fish), explains his professional mobility this way: "There's no point in moving from one university to another these days. There was a time when that was how you got on. . . . The assumption was that all the most interesting people were concentrated into a few institutions, like Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and suchlike. . . . That isn't true any more. . . . The day of the individual campus has passed. It belongs to an obsolete technology—railways and the printing press. . . . Information is much more portable in the modern world than it used to be. So are people. Ergo, it's no longer necessary. . . to keep your top scholars corralled in one campus. There are three things which have revolutionized academic life in the last twenty years. . . : jet travel, direct-dialling telephones and the Xerox machine. Scholars don't have to work in the same institution to interact, nowadays: they call each other up, or they meet at international conferences. . . . As long as you have access to a telephone, a Xerox machine, and a conference grant fund, you're OK, you're plugged into the only university that really matters—the global campus" (49-51). These claims were already true when Lodge wrote this passage in the early 1980s; they are obviously even more valid in the age of the cell phone and e-mail.

<sup>26</sup> See Paglia, "Junk Bonds," 221: "The conferences teach corporate raiding: academics become lone wolves without loyalty to their own disciplines or institutions; they're always on the trail and on the lookout, ears up for the better job and bigger salary, the next golden fleece or golden parachute. The conferences are all about insider trading and racketeering, jockeying for power by fast-track travelling salesmen pushing their shrink-wrapped product and tooting fancy new commercial slogans."

<sup>27</sup> See Tyler Cowen, *Creative Destruction: How Globalization Is Changing the World's Cultures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). See especially 14-15: "It is misleading to speak of diversity as a single concept, as societies exhibit many kinds of diversity. For instance, diversity *within* society refers to the richness of the menu of choice in that society. Many critics of globalization, however, focus on diversity *across* societies. This concept refers to whether each society offers the same menu, and whether societies are becoming more similar. These two kinds of diversity often move in opposite directions. When one society trades a new artwork to another society, diversity within society goes up (consumers have greater choice), but diversity across the two societies goes down

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(the two societies becomes more alike). The question is not about more or less diversity per se, but rather what kind of diversity globalization will bring.”

<sup>28</sup> Contrary to the principles of his fictional avatar, the real-life Stanley Fish tried to assemble a distinct and high profile English Department of literary theorists when he got the chance at Duke in the 1980s.

<sup>29</sup> Edwin Smith, “New English Chair Proposes More Diversity in Literature, Changes in Writing Program,” *The Southern Register: The Newsletter of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture*, Winter 2007, 4.