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PANEL DISCUSSION

CLASSICS AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE: AGENDA FOR THE '90S

FOREWORD

The idea for this panel came out of despair—despair at the thought of attending another annual meeting of the American Philological Association (APA). Despite the steady marginalization of Classics within the humanities in recent decades, we[1] were discouraged to find little or no discussion of the nature and direction of Classics as a discipline or of what its future should be in the light of ongoing changes in the way the humanities are organized and taught. Our aim was not to answer such questions with a single panel but simply to initiate a conversation about the relation of Classics to other humanistic disciplines and its role in the humanities in general, a conversation that should be a regular feature of the annual convocation of professional classicists. There is certainly no shortage of theoretical or practical concerns that such a conversation should address: from the recent decline in the study of classical languages at all levels to the value of interdisciplinary methodologies.

We decided to invite three speakers to reflect on the nature of Classics as a discipline by considering its relationship to interdisciplinary studies, for which Comparative Literature would serve as an example. We asked the speakers to begin with an historical assessment of what this relationship was conceived to be when Comparative Literature was established as a discipline in this country, and then to present a programmatic statement of what this relationship—and hence these disciplines—should become in the future. The speakers would be answered in turn by three respondents, who would not merely comment on their papers but would be free to pursue whatever line of inquiry they thought most worthwhile given our topic. The exchange was supposed to be wide open and only loosely structured. We wanted to encourage the participants and the audience to begin the arduous and, perhaps, quixotic process of reconceiving Classics as a discipline in the light of its actual intellectual context.

Abstracts were duly collected and duly submitted to the APA program committee, which duly rejected our proposal. After some minor changes the proposal was duly re-submitted and duly accepted. Unfortunately, the panel was then placed by the APA (at the 1994 meeting in Atlanta) in a room so inadequate that most of those who came to hear the speakers left since there was nowhere to sit. There was still a lively discussion after the panel, of which no record was kept. So many people who did and did not have a chance to hear the panel asked for copies of the papers that it seemed worth publishing a record of the main event, which is what follows. We make no exaggerated claims for its coherence nor will we try to summarize its

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[1] Page duBois and I.

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contents; in fact, it's surprising that the dialogue between the speakers and respondents came off at all given how little time the respondents had to write!

Since the panel was presented, the future of Classics as a discipline has received national attention in *Lingua Franca* (October 1995) in an article by David Damrosch, a professor of English at Columbia, bracingly entitled "Can Classics Die?" Of course, the reasons for the decline of Classics are complex,[2] but it is surely important, indeed urgent, for us to ask why it now has "one of the poorest rates of employment of any discipline" and "the second lowest salaries in the Humanities," since these facts ultimately reflect the decisions made by students and our colleagues in other disciplines.

In a thoughtful reply to Damrosch's article (by e-mail), Bob Kaster has argued that both the precarious position of Classics in the university and the importance of classicists being able "to talk not only to ourselves but to colleagues elsewhere in the humanities and social sciences for the sake of both our intellectual health and our institutional well-being" is obvious to anyone "who hasn't been in a cave for the last ten to twenty years." Unfortunately, that recognition, however obvious it may seem, would never be inferred from the appointments made by most Classics departments—where one or two interdisciplinary appointments is considered exceptional—or from the ever-shrinking influence of Classics within the humanities. Kaster goes on to argue that the real problem is the future of the liberal arts education generally, to which the fate of Classics is inevitably tied:

> Liberal arts education has always stood in a rather odd and ambiguous relation to the American university system, which exploded in the nineteenth century as an expertise factory to fuel the economy of industrial capitalism, making the production of knowledge (not the care of the soul) its explicit goal and serving as a credentialing source for a middle class of managers to oversee the creation of markets and efficient competition in them. The oddness and ambiguity of that relation are only going to increase.

While this is certainly true, it should not distract us from the fact that the decline of Classics has taken place at the very time when other areas of the humanities were flourishing. There are clearly problems specific to Classics: no other liberal arts discipline has experienced a comparable decline, although classicists teach the most influential texts in Western culture. It is too easy to blame our eclipse on recent and regrettable withdrawals of funding, the difficulties of the classical languages, or the commercial values of American society.

It is in this context that I would like to recall an observation by Nietzsche with which I concluded our discussion following the panel in Atlanta. The quotation comes from an unfinished work, *We Classicists* (1874–75),[3] which Nietzsche undertook with a view of reforming or renewing German culture. He never completed this project, in my opinion, not only because he despaired of reforming the discipline, but also because he realized that doing so would not have the regenerating effects he had once imagined. Even in its fragmentary state, it remains the most trenchant and searching critique of our discipline and, perhaps, of any humanistic discipline. We may or may not agree with him, but it would certainly behoove us to reflect on how and why the status of Classics has changed so categorically since Nietzsche could write:

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[2] Gerald Graff describes how modern literary studies supplanted Classics in *Professing Literature* (Chicago, 1987).

[3] In *Unmodern Observations*, ed. W. Arrowsmith (New Haven, 1990), 305–87.

> Classical studies as a knowledge of the ancient world can't, of course, last forever; their material is exhaustible. What can't be exhausted is the always-new adjustment every age makes to the classical world, measuring itself against it. If we set the classicist the task of understanding his own age better by means of antiquity, then his task has no end.—This is the antinomy of philology.

R. BRACHT BRANHAM
Emory University

CLASSICS AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

As an academic discipline, Comparative Literature presupposes and at the same time puts radically into doubt the institutional departments that study the various national literatures, both ancient and modern.[1] It was established much later than they were, and for a long time it occupied a merely marginal, secondary position in comparison to them. Comparative Literature had to content itself with the leftovers—folk-tales and motifs, or translators, imitators, travelers, and publishers—and focused upon second-rate writers, less the perpetrators of literary influence than its victims, while the national literature departments tended to study the great authors and the beginnings and flowerings of nationhood as expressed in early and canonical texts. This reflects both the ideological contingency that the modern academic study of literature was originally conceived as a way to help foster the cultural identities of the various European nations, and also the indisputable fact that even now most humans live within a single linguistic community. Yet by its very nature Comparative Literature was bound eventually to demonstrate the deficiency of any study limited to a single national literature: for insofar as such a study was national, it merely used literature as one among other possible tools for a better understanding of the cultural identity of a determinate nation and therefore would eventually have to be submerged within History or Cultural Studies; while insofar as it was directed to literature, a department devoted only to French or Italian literature would make no more sense than one restricted to, say, French or Italian philosophy, and therefore would eventually have to be submerged within General or Comparative Literature. If the inevitable tensions between comparative and national literature departments remained largely dormant until the last generation or so, this is largely because Comparative Literature has only recently attained considerable institutional power.

Professional Comparative Literature has gone through three main ideological phases since its inception in the nineteenth century; in each phase its identity has been strongly marked by its relations to the contemporary study of the national literatures. In the first phase, throughout the last century and into our own, Comparative Literature may be said to have served as an instrument of cultural nationalism in the attempt to demonstrate, if not political, at least literary hegemony over competing nations (primarily in the form of influence studies). Already in antiquity, σύγκρισις served primarily to determine which authors one should take as models so as to improve one's own literary or rhetorical performance: Dio's chatty ἐπίδειξις on the three Philoctetes tragedies is a rare exception to a rule confirmed by Tacitus,

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[1] A fuller and differently oriented version of the argument about Sappho in the final section of the present essay is presented in my "Reflecting Sappho," *BICS* 40 (1995): 15–38.

Quintilian, and many other serious pedagogues. In the Renaissance, the comparative method was broadened beyond single authors to justify (or, more rarely, to condemn) modern literature as a whole in comparison to the ancient classics. In this regard, Scaliger's *Poetics* and Perrault's *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* are simply reversed in polarity and narrower in scope than the universally comparatist visions of Herder or the Schlegels: the former justify the modern national vernacular by punctually impugning the ancients, the latter by claiming a uniquely intimate access to ancient originality and naturalness. Into our own century, comparison continued largely to be performed in the service of national self-legitimation.

At the very latest, World War I and its aftermath made such nationalist goals seem questionable for many European intellectuals; and it was in the decade after the war that young philologists like Curtius, Auerbach, and Spitzer started to develop a new notion of Comparative Literature as an instrument not of defensive provincialism but rather of generous cosmopolitanism, designed to explain sympathetically one nation's literature to another (especially if the two nations had recently been at war with one another). But even Comparative Literature could not prevent Hitler; and in the years after World War II these same scholars, older, sadder, and mostly exiled, renewed their message with even greater urgency and reconceived its purpose more broadly, to delineate the ideal equivalence of all national literatures within a greater, humane whole (mostly in the form of studies of genres, topoi, themes, and periods). Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946) and Curtius' *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (1948) sought continuities in European literature that could transcend the political and linguistic divisions that had caused so much devastation; both scholars found them in (radically re-, indeed mis-interpreted) elements of a classical heritage—the rhetorical doctrines of three levels of style and of topoi—which preceded the Romantic nation-state and could be implicitly used to correct its perilous defects.

Finally, starting in the last quarter of this century, Comparative Literature became the privileged academic locus for literary theory. The foundations for this development had been laid much earlier by the Russian formalists and their followers: their attempt to define the literariness of literature and their disdain for traditional modes of literary historiography led to a concentration upon general questions of the nature of literary discourse which could not sensibly be studied within the confines of a single national literature. There is no ἐπιστήμη of the individual; theories tend naturally towards higher levels of generality, which permit them to encompass more particulars. Hence theories of the Flavian epic or the Spanish Baroque strain inevitably to become theories of the Latin epic or the Baroque *tout court* and beyond these aim at even more general considerations of literary genre and literary period. By the 1970s, Comparative Literature departments had become the beachhead for a variety of literary theories, mostly of French inspiration, within American academics; a few years later, in some departments, it became possible to substitute literary theory for one of the required foreign languages. But Comparative Literature's success was self-defeating: the national language departments defended themselves against the theoretical virus by inoculating themselves, and became increasingly theoretical themselves. Comparative Literature, which had already abandoned its monopoly on comparison, suddenly found itself without a monopoly on theory either. The ensuing crisis has still not been resolved.

Thus far I have hinted at various ways in which Comparative Literature has made use of the Classics. But how can Classics make use of Comparative Literature? The first mode outlined above, that of nationalism, has nothing to offer today's classicist: there is too much tribalism in our world anyway, without classicists contributing their share. The third one, that of theory, is somewhat more promising, and there is no doubt that much contemporary Classics could do with a keener awareness of literary theory. But Comparative Literature no longer has a monopoly upon literary theory: the kinds of theoretical questions it asks of literary texts are starting to be asked of those texts within the national literature departments, ancient and modern, as well. Classicists should be asking those questions, and some of them are; but they do not need Comparative Literature to teach them how to do so.

It is the second traditional model, that of comparison across languages and periods within a larger humane horizon, which seems to me to offer Classics a particularly useful set of issues for work in the coming decades. Hitherto this potential has been somewhat dissipated by fragmentation among different and non-communicating schools of research. Many kinds of potentially productive research can be imagined, but I would suggest three closely interrelated fields as particularly attractive: history of textual transmission, history of classical scholarship, history of literary reception. All three together make up the vast network of what the Germans, somewhat spectrally, call the *Nachleben* of antiquity; but it is only in their thoroughgoing interrelation that they can become really fruitful. While each of these three fields has its own relative autonomy and can be usefully studied, at least up to a certain point, in terms of its own methods and questions, nevertheless it should not be forgotten that for most of Western history literary transformation and scholarly study of the heritage of classical antiquity were closely intertwined; and even in the last two centuries, when the study of the ancients has been institutionalized in universities and has gradually vanished from the culture at large, interrelation between these fields has been surprisingly frequent and intense. Some classicists seem to think that only classicists have the right to talk about the *Nachleben* of antiquity, or, alternately, only the students of modern literature. But neither position can be seriously maintained: the former, because since the end of antiquity ancient texts have—fortunately—been constantly misunderstood because of prevailing cultural factors and only therefore have been able to survive, exert unintended influence, and be repeatedly rediscovered and reinvented; the latter, for the simple reason that the *Nachleben* of antiquity already begins in antiquity. In this field, if anywhere, interdisciplinary expertise and interdepartmental collaborations are called for. Such collaboration has the potential to put Classics back somewhere onto the map of humanistic studies.

Comparisons are invidious; but vague programmatic pronouncements are odious. Perhaps these general claims will seem more plausible if I exemplify them in a particular case; then again, perhaps not. But since I myself fail after a certain point to enjoy purely theoretical discussions unless they are specified in individual texts, I shall indulge myself in choosing to attribute the same impatience to my listeners and trying to salvage the remnants of their benevolence with a final example. In the articles on the reception of thirty Latin authors I contributed to the American translation of Gian Biagio Conte's manual of Latin literary history, recently published by Johns Hopkins Press, I tried within the extremely limited space available to provide at least a very rough sketch of the kind of unified reception—combining manuscript diffusion, scholarly study, and literary transformation—which I outlined above; to what extent I succeeded I must leave others to decide. Here I should like to close with one somewhat more detailed case, the reception of Sappho; I apologize for the abrupt and dogmatic quality of my presentation, entailed by its brevity.

Perhaps the reception of no other classical author has been as peculiar as Sappho's has, in two regards: first, the extraordinary disparity between the exiguous remains of her actual poetic works and the widespread reputation of her person among the general cultured public; and second, the enormous changes in the nature of that reputation over the course of the centuries. For our culture, Sappho is first of all the emblem of female homosexuality and secondarily the author of a small number of surviving poems and fragments, some of which, at least in translation, are known even outside of philological circles; but for most of Western history, and as recently as the eighteenth century, she was above all an emblem of unhappy heterosexual love and the transmitted remains of her poetry were of surprisingly little importance.

The extensive reception of Sappho in literature and scholarship has been shaped by the hermeneutic strategies used by both poets and scholars trying to bring order into the highly complex image of the poet furnished by various ancient sources. Sappho was credited by antiquity with a husband with the off-color name Kerkulas ("tail") and native island Andros ("of man"), one daughter, several brothers, numerous female friends and companions (with whom, according to certain reports, she had had sexual relations), numerous male lovers, one male (Phaon) who had refused her advances, and a leap from the cliff of Leucas. Poets and scholars who tried to make sense of this mass of information have tended to use one or the other of three strategies: duplication, narrativization, and condensation.

Most of the ancient scholars who worked on Sappho seem to have deployed the strategy of duplication: they declared that there were two Sapphos and assigned to the one some features, to the other the other ones, in such a way as to create two individuals, both named Sappho, each one internally consistent or at least plausible, but separated by a set of contradictory attributes. The usual form that this distinction took was the identification of one Sappho as the poetess, the other as a prostitute (so e.g., Nymphodorus, perhaps in the third century B.C.). Anyone who thought that the two were the same person would be merely a thoughtless victim of their inconvenient homonymy: fortunately, an enlightened historical scholarship had discovered their difference and rescued the poetess from unfair blame. But even in antiquity the various attempts to resolve the complexities of Sappho's image by duplicating her person seem to have broken down; the articles on Sappho in the *Suda* provide a good example for the blurring of the dividing line. The defensive motivation and the pedantic mechanism of this first explanatory strategy are in fact transparent, and had already been unmasked by Pierre Bayle and Gottfried Olearius by the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The easiest alternative strategy for dealing with such contradictions was to narrativize them by distributing them along the single temporal axis of a coherent fiction. The earliest surviving example of this strategy is the fifteenth *Heroide,* attributed, perhaps correctly, to Ovid. This poem, in the form of a letter written by Sappho to the absent Phaon to complain of his infidelity, is by far the most influential document in the history of the reception of Sappho: when it was discovered in the early fifteenth century, it was thought to be a genuine letter by Sappho, translated into Latin; and for centuries after, when its author had been identified as Ovid, its elegance, massive availability, and easy comprehensibility ensured that it would dominate the few scattered and difficult genuine fragments in establishing the image of the poetess. Though Ovid (or whoever the author of this extraordinary poem is) has often been criticized harshly by modern scholars for having conflated different Sapphos within a single poem, his strategy of narrativization is extremely effective, and it is not hard to understand why this poem was able to provide not only specific details for enriching the legend of Sappho but also a model for how to organize them within a single interesting story. For on the one hand it demonstrated that a richly detailed literary image could be derived not from a skeptical rejection of many of the reports of tradition, but from an uncritical acceptance of most of them; and on the other it showed that such an image could be extremely lively and appealing, since the temporalization of the various elements created attractive possibilities for character development, narrative suspense, sentimental reminiscence, and ironic foreshadowing.

Though certain Renaissance scholars, like Domitius Calderinus, already experimented with this model, it was not until the end of the seventeenth century in France that it came especially to favor; but thereafter it went on to dominate the (consciously and unconsciously) fictional portrayals of Sappho that flourished throughout the eighteenth century. In 1682, Madame Dacier's biographical introduction to her edition of the poet set the pattern: it was the variety of Sappho's heterosexual relationships that was to determine decisively the sequence of the events of her life. Mme. Dacier introduced the image of an older, disappointed Sappho which was to become dominant for well over a century and to define for that period the genre of Sapphic novels and dramas, like Jean Du Castre d'Auvigné's *L'Histoire et les amours de Sapho de Mytilène* or Alessandro Verri's *Le Avventure di Saffo, poetessa di Mitilene,* as narrative explorations of the casuistics of unhappy heterosexual love. Yet whatever its narrative virtues, this second strategy, so typical of the eighteenth century, had a fundamental defect: on the one hand it defined Sappho essentially as merely a loving woman, for whom poetry was at best incidental; but on the other hand it had to presuppose Sappho's fame as a poet in order to suggest that what had happened to Sappho had any claim upon our attention. No matter how skillfully the actual fragments of Sappho's poetry were interwoven into the erotic narrative as evidence for its various episodes, in the end the poetry remained secondary, and inevitably the story became the banal account of one more woman's loves and losses. For the strategy of duplication, Sappho at least had been fifty percent a lyric poet; but in the eighteenth century she came to seem much less so.

It was the Romantics who experimented most successfully with a third strategy designed to restore to the image of Sappho the centrality of its poetic function. By condensing into a single person the many contradictions with which the tradition had furnished Sappho, they invented an intensely paradoxical figure: a poet, and therefore uniquely able to combine disparate qualities in a way that would destroy any ordinary person; desperately unhappy, but capable of achieving superhuman happiness; deeply committed to her poetry, but aware of its limits. The Romantic Sappho, the Sappho of the Schlegels, Lamartine, Grillparzer, and Leopardi, is the first one who is essentially a poet—but a Romantic poet, one dissatisfied with banal reality and striving to achieve a spiritual perfection incompatible with this life and attainable only at the cost of death. Thus the Romantic Sappho, like her eighteenth-century aunt, plunges to her death from Leucas: but whereas for the narrative strategy that suicide had served as one terminus of a temporal axis upon which all the other episodes could be distributed, for the Romantic strategy of condensation it provides the only possible resolution of contradictions which define the essence of the poetess' character.

Paradoxically, the modern view of Sappho as a Lesbian goes back ultimately to Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker, whose treatise *Sappho von einem herrschenden Vorurtheil befreyt* was programmatically devoted precisely to liberating her from the charge of homosexuality. For Welcker, Sappho's feelings for her girls were entirely idealistic and non-sensual: as was only appropriate for a figure future school-teachers were authorized to study, she was herself a pedagogue, instructing her female pupils in the arts and graces, and it was only natural that she should have felt strong feelings of friendship for them. But Welcker insisted upon Sappho's poems as the only reliable basis for understanding her character and dismissed the reports of her sexual promiscuity as ultimately due to the groundless inventions of Attic comedy. Welcker's decision to focus upon the texts inevitably led people to pay more attention to their seemingly unequivocal message of sexual passion for women than to the indirect tradition's insistence upon her love for Phaon and other men. Thus Welcker's dismissal of the comic traditions concerning Sappho and his concentration upon her surviving poems ended up seeming to provide evidence, not for her idealized fondness for her pupils, but for her sexual attraction to them. And as a result of the tendency, widespread since the nineteenth century, to classify kinds of people on the basis of what are taken to be their fundamental sexual preferences, "Sapphic" and "Lesbian" have become convenient labels for a female sexual orientation directed exclusively towards other women. By a common circularity, Sappho's poems could then be read in this light as documents of early Lesbianism; as such, they have been of enormous importance to many women writers, who have found in their Sappho a precedent, a model, and a justification. If it seems self-evident to us to suppose that Sappho was a female homosexual, we should remember that such a view of her was never widespread before our century—indeed, that the very notion that people are either homosexual or heterosexual is a modern invention. Sappho herself would have had no idea what people mean when they call her nowadays a homosexual. Except in her place of birth, Sappho was not a Lesbian.

The reception of Sappho has its own peculiar charm; but focusing upon it may also help us understand better certain qualities of her poetry itself. The most curious feature of Sappho's literary fortune has been the contrast between the certainty attaching to the fact of her passion and the uncertainty attaching to the objects of that passion. At least since Welcker, this has usually been explained as due to the fraud perpetrated by Attic comedy upon posterity's image of the poetess: within the two centuries that intervened between her death in Lesbos and the beginning of her comic *Nachleben* in Athens, any knowledge of the real circumstances of her life is alleged to have been lost and even familiarity with her poems to have become so rare that not much more was known about her than that she was a great poetess from Lesbos. On this view, obscene comic invention rushed to fill in the vacuum of accurate historical knowledge. But this explanation can hardly be entirely adequate. For we know for a fact that at least some of Sappho's poems continued to be sung enthusiastically in symposia and studied carefully in schools, in Athens and elsewhere in Greece, from the fifth century B.C. until the end of antiquity. Aristophanes himself alludes to

Aeolic poetry as being well known in Athens. If Sappho's poems, at least some of which were familiar to Athenian audiences, had directly contradicted the comedians' image of her, we might expect someone to have protested. If no one did, if instead the lubricious heterosexual Sappho could become a stock figure of comedy, then at least those of her poems that were familiar must have been at least partially compatible with such a view.

This does not mean that Sappho really wrote poems about her love for a male figure named Phaon or her desire to leap from Leucas, though that is not impossible. But it does mean that Sappho's poetry could lend itself to such a distortion precisely because Sappho herself tended to focus in her poems more upon her own feelings than upon the specific object to which they were directed. Fragment 31, φαίνεταί μοι κῆνος, is an extreme case in this regard: centuries of intense philological analysis have not yet succeeded in specifying exactly what it is about the intimate conversation of the man and woman that provokes Sappho's celebrated stormy response, for Sappho herself is clearly much more interested here in analyzing her feelings than in exposing their precise cause. What exactly is it about her vision of the man and woman in intimate, pleasurable conversation that detonates her extraordinary reaction? Is she expressing sexual passion for the woman, or sexual jealousy at the man's relation to the woman, or admiration for the woman's beauty, or admiration at the man's fortitude in enduring the woman's beauty, or some mixture of these, or something else? In line 5 Sappho herself explicitly links the two parts of her poem, but does so with the neuter pronoun τό, "that": "that has set my heart fluttering within my breast." But what does this pronoun refer to? No evidence available can definitively decide the issue; even line 7, which in our standard editions seems to supply an answer by saying that Sappho becomes upset when she sees the woman (ὤς γὰρ ἔς σ' ἴδω), is in fact transmitted as ὤς γὰρσἴδω and, if only on palaeographical grounds, should be emended, with Hermann, to ὤς γὰρ εἰσίδω. But thereby the woman as the object of Sappho's gaze vanishes and we are left with τό as the understood direct object: what Sappho sees, what she responds to, is neither the man nor the woman nor both, but "that."

Similar examples of abstraction and generalization can be found throughout Sappho's surviving works. Here I name only two cases: the prayer to Aphrodite (Fragment 1), in which the goddess asks Sappho point-blank who her lover is but Sappho conceals this information so successfully that, by a freak of the transmission, even the answer to the question whether the lover is male or female depends upon a single, badly transmitted letter; and the beginning of Fragment 16, where Sappho says that what is most beautiful upon the black earth is whatever one loves: once again, as in Fragment 31, avoiding both the masculine pronoun ("whatever man one loves") and the feminine pronoun ("whatever woman one loves") in favor of the neuter. Partly by concentrating so much on her own feelings, partly by generalizing beyond any single object, Sappho succeeds in making her poetry not less personal (very little poetry survives from antiquity that is more personal than hers) but less bound to specific and unrepeatable occasions. This certainly suggests a transition from a first performance within a small group, where all the allusions would presumably have been immediately understood by those who needed to, to a wider form of publication among later, unknown audiences, for whom the texts would have become ambiguous and underdetermined (and not for that reason any less attractive), and may also be a sign of the emancipation of a written mode from originally oral circumstances. It is worth noting that male Greek love poets are far less non-specific and abstract than Sappho; they use masculines, not neuters: presumably the constraints upon the public expression of male desire in Greece differed from those that applied to women. In any event, whether intended or not, this feature certainly helped to ensure Sappho's popularity for later generations, for it meant that, with little or no change, her poems could be recycled in completely different social—and sexual—circumstances.

Sappho's literary fortunes raise in a particularly acute form an important theoretical issue in the study of literary reception: the frequent contradiction between text and reception. Error can be explained: but can it also be redeemed, made useful for the understanding of the original text? Sappho's reception has certainly been, at least in part, a one-sided distortion of what we now seem to be able to perceive in her poetry; yet I would suggest that no part of it can safely be dismissed as simply false. Even the Sappho of Attic comedy is probably not a groundless invention, as many philologists since Welcker have suggested, but rather a response, mistaken and exaggerated to be sure, but a response nonetheless to perceivable features in her poetry. The literary fortune of an author is always full of the most absurd errors, at least measured against what seems to us philologists to have been the truth of the matter. Of course, the creative power of stupidity and misinformation should never be underestimated. But I would suggest that in many cases even the errors in the reception of a poet can be traced back to genuine features of her texts and can help us to understand them better. Studying a poet's reception can provide a helpful way into her texts; it is not the only way in, but it can help us to shake off some of our own unconscious prejudices to examine those of others.

GLENN W. MOST
Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg
The University of Chicago

RESPONSE TO GLENN W. MOST[1]

Professor Most has opened discussion on our very open-ended topic, "Classics and Comparative Literature," with a characteristically far-reaching and erudite historical essay. As he himself makes explicit, his remarks fall into two parts, first, a general and schematic overview of the history of Classics-Comparative Literature relations, and second, an exemplary if necessarily rapid survey of the *Nachleben* of Sappho, highlighting some points that make this sort of exploration so revealing.

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[1] Even less than a panel paper does a panelist's response lend itself to recasting for publication. This seems to be a marker of this peculiar genre. Despite the fact that my words may date faster than standard expository diction, I have altered the original tone of my commentary as little as possible. I would also like to note here that due to the funeral of my friend John Boswell, who died December 24, 1994, I was personally unable to participate in the panel discussion, although this response was read for me by Daniel Selden, to whom I owe great thanks. I also wish to observe here, as I did in the original response, the grim irony of citing in the course of my analysis one teacher and friend, Jack Winkler, who died of AIDS, while speaking at the funeral of another. Though not easy to put the reason "why" into words, not letting this pass by unspoken seems an essential element of my speaking from and for the uneasy boundaries of Comparative Literature.

I take my role as "respondent" as an invitation to interfere in a good-natured way with some of Most's argumentation, particularly to bring certain questions to the fore that his presentation can be made to suggest. My program, then, is one of discourse diagnosis.

My first observation is that in confronting the issue, Most gives us a potted history of Comparative Literature but takes Classics as a given. There are surely few scholars of our generation who have made the history of Classical scholarship so integral a part of their work as Most has, so this is not ignorance on his part. He knows Classics has a history. My point is that in the strategic bringing together of Classics and Comparative Literature, it is Comparative Literature that Most feels needs to be given a history, as if to suggest that it came into being after the institutionalization of the national literatures, in some sense in the interstices left it by those national literatures whereas Classics has just always been there. Again, Most may have calculated that his audience at the American Philological Association (APA) shares his knowledge of the history of Classics and needs to be informed about the much briefer and less glorious annals of Comparative Literature. I strongly suspect, however, that many comparatists who are not Classicists would also take Classics as simply there and seek to open a space for Comparative Literature, a Johnny- or Joanie-come-lately among humanistic disciplines.

I will not go into particulars of nineteenth- and twentieth-century institutional academic history, as these are likely to emerge from the dialogue between Giulia Sissa and Dan Selden. Rather, I will observe that this asymmetry looks very much like one of those distinctions we have come to recognize as "gendered." At the risk of simplifying the equation, Classics is presented as the unmarked, Comparative Literature the marked and therefore unequal partner. Classics has an obvious territory, Comparative Literature has none. Classics has an unquestioned place and agenda, it is the male. Most asks, "How can Classics make use of Comparative Literature?" "How can Comparative Literature serve Classics?" is the corollary. Classics is on top.

I will return to reflect on other structural asymmetries further on. Let me first comment on Most's dismissal of what he calls "the first mode, . . . nationalism." This, he says, "has nothing to offer today's classicist: there is too much tribalism in our world anyway, without classicists contributing their share" (p. 157). I suppose this is true at some level, though it seems to me that the most dangerous "tribalism" classicists indulge in is within the walls of academe, not without. Instead, I would argue that Classics and Comparative Literature can enter into fruitful dialogue on the issue of nationalism itself. What is comparable, what incommensurable between the literary traditions of the multiple modern national literatures and those of classical antiquity, or as I would prefer to say, the ancient Mediterranean? The very different mutual mappings of language, indeed languages, cultures, ethnic alliances, and political entities that characterized the ancient Mediterranean basin call into question the "naturalness" of national literary traditions and the university departments that correspond to and even uphold them. In the other direction, one could use for example Benedict Anderson's now classic study of nationalisms, *Imagined Communities,*[2] a text I have students in my Comparative Literature Proseminar read, to cut into and interrogate ancient constructions. One student recently wrote a paper on imagined communities in the *Aeneid.* "Nationalism," it seems to me, once it is placed under the mark of the question, has much to ask of both Classics and Comparative Literature, and vice versa.

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[2] *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, 1991).

This last example may be adduced as the kind of anachronism I find helpful as a heuristic and intellectual strategy and one which can be brought into play when one confronts Classics and Comparative Literature. This works in many different ways, from historicizing concepts such as "nation," "empire," and "colonial subject," to making students aware of the power of certain structures and the structuration of power. For example, if I want to discuss the bad faith of the recent Michael Douglas movie *Disclosure,* which purports to make men sympathetic to women's claims of sexual harassment by reversing gender roles but of course does just the opposite, reconfirming many men's suspicions that women's charges of sexual harassment are likely to be false, if I bring up the movie, my students are likely going to be too involved staking out their positions to credit such an analysis. But if I have them read love elegy and get them to contrast the fact that the extant remains of papyri show that many more love curses were written by men to catch women and that in Roman love elegy and other fictions, written largely by men, only women are represented as doing this[3] —students, liberated into this radically distant other, may learn a lesson they are free to apply to structures nearer home.

There is some truth to the cliché that the past is another country. As I tell my students, one advantage to comparing the culture of, say, ancient Greece or Rome is that, for all the difficulties and imperfections of reconstruction, we can at least be sure that fifth-century Athenians did not get their values from Hollywood melodramas or Cable News Network, nor were they sipping Coke and shopping for Reeboks in the agora.

It is in line with this dialectical anachronism and by setting Classics and Comparative Literature as mutually interrogative that I put into question the standard history of Comparative Literature as arising in the nineteenth century, and in response to the growth of national literature departments. Most posits this, and as a name and academic department, it is indubitably true. But Most himself seems to suggest that Comparative Literature may have had an earlier history, starting with Herder and moving back through Vico, the *Querelle des anciens et modernes,* the Renaissance humanists, perhaps all the way to Rome. I think his intuition is correct. Comparative Literature as comparative cultural history was practiced at least as soon as Rome started looking nervously over its shoulder at Greek accomplishments. One thinks of Cicero, Nepos, and Horace in the first century B.C.E. alone. In the long view of Comparative Literature I take, the strict focus on literature and its formal qualities comes, yes, after the naming of the discipline, but, significantly, one generation later still, after the work of the Russian formalists also invoked by Most. This phase runs through the period of European emigrés not just from Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy but already from Lenin's Soviet Union and its sphere of influence—Jakobsen, Wellek, among others—and lasts through the death of deconstruction, or perhaps better, its own de- and re-construction as a tool of analysis for other ends, for example, feminism, cultural criticism, and queer studies.

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[3] John Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire. The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York and London, 1990), 90.

The longer history I see is that for well over two thousand years, cultures that abut jockey for precedence, if not by war, then by claims and counterclaims about literary and cultural traditions. To pervert a phrase, "Comparative Literature is war pursued by other means." One of the best ancient texts with which to demonstrate this is Josephus' *Against Apion.* In it, a (perforce retired) Jewish general co-opted by the Romans writes in Greek at Rome to argue for Jewish precedence first against Hellenism and then against the Egyptians championed by Apion. This is a salutary text to give to Classics students to explode what appears too often as a merely Greco-Roman dyad, and it lets the majority of Comparative Literature students, oriented as they are to more modern periods, realize that Josephus, like marginalized figures more familiar to them—and here I quote another of my students—is seeking "to come to voice."

Several brief points before I move to a necessarily brief concluding section on Sappho:

1. In accordance with my stated readiness to include temporal as well as geographical parameters within the reach of comparison, the long tradition of questioning the relative valuation of moderns and ancients, of considering "decline," makes Cicero, Horace, Velleius Paterculus, Quintilian, and Tacitus early comparatists, too. And once Christianity enters the lists, the old-versus-new debate takes on a new fire and new shape. Augustine of *The City of God* was involved in a cultural shoving match not only with his Greco-Roman pagan heritage but with Judaism as well.
2. Mention of Augustine reminds us that a comparative history of Classics will need to ask when those works in Greek or Latin but by and for Christians were excluded from the purview of most practicing classicists, and why. Whatever the reason, one result has been that one basis for comparison within the ancient world is effectively eliminated, thus only strengthening the unitary, nation-like status of the field of Classics. Insofar as "Classicsland," as we might name this nation, is bilingual, it appears as the Belgium of the ancient world, by which absurd comparison I again call attention to the fact that it was not nearly so neatly bilingual but rather displayed a complex linguistic heterogeneity varying from region to region and shifting over time.
3. Let's not fetishize a name. Nor should "Comparative Literature" have much to fear in this regard from anyone sitting in the glass house of "Classics." In any event, what is actually done in the name of "English" or "French" or "German" in universities, not to mention at the Modern Languages Association—ever simultaneous with the APA, so that one couldn't attend both even if one wanted to (how's that for a practical point our panel on Classics and Comparative Literature can make today?)—what is done in the name of the national literature departments, then, has changed radically over the past century and keeps changing. The same has been and by rights is true of Comparative Literature. Moreover, given its institutional belatedness and the threat read into its seemingly omnivorous, even promiscuous character, everyone else feels entitled to define Comparative Literature. As a professor of Comparative Literature and Chair of a Comparative Literature department, I'm constantly trying to figure out what it is; I've come to the conclusion that this eternal questioning may be part of the game, and a Protean nature may not be so bad in times of cultural and intellectual challenge. But I have not infrequently had chairs and faculty of other departments tell me who is a comparatist and who not, or lecture me on what Comparative Literature is and what it is not. I take this to be a power

play pure and simple: the center sets both the nearer and farther limits of the marginal, just as it claims the right to narrate the history even of what it excludes.

And now for the promised transition to a concluding section. Moving from "tribalism" to tribadism, we come to Sappho and her "afterlife": in English the word has a glow nicely reminiscent of nuclear "half-life." Most himself seems to apologize for the junction between the two parts of his paper, and I must admit that at first reading it did seem like "file merge" was at work. But not only does *der Fall Sappho* exemplify classical *Nachleben,* as he intended, but it perfectly, if perhaps unintentionally, models the relationship of Comparative Literature to Classics. Let me explain.

It cannot be accidental that for his *Musterbeispiel* Most chose not just any but virtually the sole canonical female author—the Sandra Day O'Connor of the Alexandrians' nine lyric poets—and one, moreover, whose femininity is itself notoriously unstable. Leaving aside the notions of Lesbianism and homosexuality, themselves concepts distributed unequally across the genderscape, Sappho's inferior or surplus femininity, in the Greco-Roman world certainly but not only then and there, makes her potentially "male." Whatever he means, Horace does write *mascula Sappho* (*Epist.* 1.19.28). "Manning" Sappho both reduces her threat to the system, and increases it.

The *Epistula Sapphus,* the fifteenth in standard collections of Ovid's *Heroides,* is indeed a brilliant text to exemplify the interworkings of several modes of reception. Like Sappho's wishfully comfortable placing by men as a woman, which her poetry itself provokes and refuses, this Latin poem moves around uncontrollably. Its attribution is disputed, its place in the corpus "editorial," as we say. Some of the text's own uncertainties arise tellingly at moments of sexual overtness. Does Sappho say she loved those Lesbian girls "here without a crime," *hic sine crimine* (1.19 [F]), or "not without a crime," *non sine crimine?* When she—or he, for a presumably male author speaks through the Sappho persona, though that too can and has been questioned—describes her own sexual dream, she is left not "dry," F's *siccae* (1.134), which other manuscripts "emended" to *sine te,* just as male moralists of many periods have sought to "emend" female sexuality altogether. We must recall that it was apropos of the kisses Sappho was so vividly, even damply remembering, that one nineteenth-century German commentator, affronted by the *lingua(e)* of line 129, asked rhetorically, "Hat die Zunge mit dem Kuß etwas zu thun? Wohl kaum."[4] *Quid plura dicam?*

To conclude my own "fictions of Sappho,"[5] I want to agree with Most's keen comparative observations on the intensity of Sappho's expressions of passion coupled with the maddening ambiguity of their object or objects. As Most says, "It is worth noting that male Greek love poets are far less non-specific and abstract than Sappho. . . . presumably the constraints upon the public expression of male desire in Greece differed from those that applied to women" (p. 162). No doubt.

I take Most's vocabulary here as a respectful reference to Jack Winkler, and indeed, in an essay in *Constraints of Desire* (see n. 3, above) entitled "Double Consciousness in Sappho's Lyrics" (pp. 162–87), Winkler describes in the context of women's sexual secrecy the non-reciprocal knowledge of male and female societies in ancient Greece. Females can know male society and sexuality, the public, and unmarked, in addition to their own, while males cannot know the private world of female sexuality. In this canny reversal, the margin knows more than the center; the powerful are blinded by the very power of their centrality. If Winkler had continued work he could well have found the occasion to expand this mode of analysis in terms not just of gender but of sexual marginalization. In other words, Sappho's marked ambiguity of referent is also—anachronistically but analytically speaking—a strategy of the closet. For the closet, that enforced ultra-private space, has its own epistemology, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has shown.[6]

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[4] Richard Bodenstein, *Studien zu Ovids Heroides,* Schulprog. Domgymnas. Merseburg (Merseburg, 1882), p. 10, n. 3, cited in Heinrich Dörrie, *P. Ovidius Naso. Der Brief der Sappho an Phaon,* Zetemata 38 (Munich, 1975), p. 141, n. 43.

[5] Joan DeJean, *Fictions of Sappho, 1546 to 1937* (Chicago, 1989).

I want to argue that this is Comparative Literature, too. Traffic across gender and sexual frontiers seems to be at least as productive and important today as transnational, even transhistoric investigations, and I claim it—a speech act—for Comparative Literature, and for Classics, too. Moreover, on the analogy of the gendered structure of the relationship of the two disciplines we are discussing today, where above I argued that Comparative Literature is the feminine to Classics, while maintaining that I wish also, provocatively but no less accurately, to employ the vocabulary of the closet and make the further claim that Comparative Literature is the queer within Classics. A queer that causes that reaction with an impeccable classical etymology, "panic," not, however, in this case "homosexual panic" but, to coin a phrase, "Comparative Literature panic." Finally, I want to argue that Comparative Literature knows about Classics in a way that Classics, for all its institutional bluster and bluff, its presumptions to the contrary, cannot know about Comparative Literature. I say this not to reverse polarities and put out Classics so that Comparative Literature can occupy the center or now top Classics' bottom. The classical tradition can provide models of such unending, bootless, even fatal feuds: Polynices and Eteocles, Atreus and Thyestes. No, the structure of center and margin is itself the problem. What is called for as we continue talking is comparative knowing, lively multiperspectivism rather than either multiculturalism or multidisciplinarity.

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[6] *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, 1990).

PHILOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY, COMPARISON: THE FRENCH EXPERIENCE

In the few minutes allotted to me on this panel by the American Philological Association, I hope it will not sound irrelevant if I extend the discussion of Classics and Comparative Literature to the French scene. Assuming that the essential concept here is that of comparative studies—literature being a subject which can be studied comparatively—I would like to give a sense of the French quarrel about the idea of comparing ancient societies to others, historical or contemporary. This quarrel pitted the Centre de Recherches Comparées sur les Sociétés Anciennes in Paris against the Centre de Recherche Philologique (the group founded and animated by Jean-Pierre

Vernant against the group created by Jean Bollack in Lille). I shall locate this debate within the more general debate on the definition of philology and of Classics as a field.

Anthropologie de la Grèce ancienne was the title of a collection of papers published in Paris (1968). Louis Gernet was the author, and Jean-Pierre Vernant wrote the preface. History and Anthropology of the Greek City is the name today of a chair at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, currently held by Nicole Loraux. When Pierre Chèvenement, a socialist, became Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Recherche, a section of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) was committed to History, Anthropology, Late Antiquity. A periodical with the subtitle *Anthropologie du monde grec ancien* and entitled *Metis*—echoing the title of a book by Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Les Ruses de l'intelligence, La Métis des grecs* (Paris, 1974)—was recently launched collaboratively by French and Greek scholars. In sum, in the last thirty years, Paris has become a center for a peculiar kind of research in classics, inspired by anthropology or claiming a connection with it more than with the philological tradition. More precisely, these classicists are labeled as non-philologists and even as anti-philologists. As Jean Bollack put it, "les essayistes de ces écoles structuralistes" published works which have little to do with the "science" of texts.[1]

What are the distinctive characteristics of this style of work on antiquity? I shall focus on two: interdisciplinarity and comparison.

INTERDISCIPLINARITY

At first glance, the anthropology of ancient societies constitutes a challenge to the boundaries between history, literature, history of science, and philosophy. The classicist who endorses an anthropological approach considers herself virtually competent on any document, written or visual, that is relevant to the particular object of her inquiry. She will of course have a more or less specific training in a certain genre or period or author. But she will grant herself a total freedom in the use of the sources. The only criterion of choice is that of relevance to the inquiry. This freedom is the necessary condition of an "anthropological" study, which consists in what we call representations. The aim is to reconstruct, piece after piece, detail after detail, the representation of the world expressed by ancient societies. Any sample of discourse—history, philosophy, or fiction—can contribute to an understanding of how this plural subject, the Greeks as a society, used to think of themselves, their values, and their institutions.

Such interdisciplinarity, oriented toward social representations, shared knowledge, or the collective "imagination," implies, first, a certain method of reading texts. What counts is not the comprehension of the thought of an author, but the meaning revealed by a passage juxtaposed with examples from other sources in order to demonstrate the consistency of a certain general idea, which is attributed (with reference to a few names) to "the Greeks." Secondly, this approach leads the investigator to focus on socially significant acts and institutions. Typical anthropological topics are, for instance, sacrifice or marriage. A typically anthropological reading of a tragedy will consider, for instance, the tragic versions of the "Greek" model of sacrifice or marriage, in contrast with the normal depiction of it in Hesiod or Demosthenes.

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[1] Jean Bollack, "Refléxions sur la pratique philologique," *Information en sciences sociales* 16 (1976): 375–84, at 379.

COMPARISON

Before its present name, Centre Louis Gernet, the group of scholars around Jean-Pierre Vernant was called Centre de Recherches Comparées sur les Sociétés Anciennes. Even earlier, from 1962 to 1965, the very first core of what would become the "équipe" was constituted of a small group or cell of researchers—namely, the Indianist Louis Dumont, the Sinologist Jacques Gernet, the Sumerologist René Labat, the ethnologist Jean Guiart, in addition to a few classicists—meeting regularly at the Centre d'Études et de Recherches Marxistes (CERM). This political framework is of course a relevant aspect of the entire enterprise, as we shall see. In 1965, Fernand Braudel, the president of the École Pratique des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales et Économiques, made possible the foundation of the Centre de Recherches Comparées sur les Sociétés Anciennes. Marcel Detienne, recently named Chef de Travaux at the École, was in charge of its direction, along with Jean-Pierre Vernant. Classicists like Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Jean-Paul Brisson, Claude Nicolet, Moses I. Finley, and the original group of the CERM joined Detienne and Vernant.

What kind of comparison did they practice? Nothing similar to what Glenn Most has suggested on this panel as a promising way of connecting Classics to Comparative Literature. The goal of an anthropological approach is not to find analogies, continuities, or echoes, within the Western tradition. Nor is it to construct a "multicultural" approach consisting of themes or texts belonging to different cultural contexts. Instead, different scholars, each competent in a specific field, used to meet and exchange—seminar after seminar, each presenting a paper followed by a general discussion—what they had to say, from their own background, on a given issue. War, land, sacrifice, oracles, hunting, polytheism . . . these are examples of the subjects they chose to analyze together in the sixties, between 1962 and 1972. Comparison was an interpersonal confrontation among experts of different cultures: China, India, African societies, and . . . Greece and Rome.

Not surprisingly, what makes this form of comparison peculiar is the fact that even though it presupposed a sort of epistemological self-authorization to put ancient western societies on the same level as any other culture, the result was an emphasis on specificity. It was as though the actual outcome of the process of putting phenomena beside each other and questioning their relationships turned out to be the discovery of distinctive traits. The comparison led to contrasts and oppositions, more than analogies or universals.

The reasons for this result are threefold. First, some of the most active and original researchers were inspired by and trained in the technique of reasoning called "structural analysis." Correctly understood, this method of analyzing narratives or social phenomena requires a sharp attention to transformations. Transformations create entities that oppose each other, both within a culture and, above all, between or among different cultures. The substitution of elements, of ingredients, constitutes the movement of the "tradition" in a certain area: in the Americas, for example, for Lévi-Strauss. The "same" myth is transmitted from village to village, in ever new versions, thereby continually becoming something else. Tradition implies diversification and an obsession with specificity. This might sound surprising to those who identify structural analysis with a generic formalism. But its real concern has always been the explanation of particular phenomena within and through their own ethnographic context. Why is this particular plant found in this particular myth? Let's read Aelian, Aristotle, and Theophrastus to learn what this plant used to mean for the Greeks—for them specifically and, maybe, exclusively. This is why structural analysis has so much to do with erudition. Hence, for Hellenists applying structural analysis, the limits of the "village" coincided with the boundaries of "ancient Greece." Within "ancient Greece," a myth or a ritual would change but remain essentially the same, while between Greek and Indian mythology there would be an infrangible wall. The second reason concerns historical psychology. Jean-Pierre Vernant has always remained faithful to the project of reconstructing the history of psychological functions in Western thought. How did Western man come to be? When were notions like "will" or "person" elaborated? Strongly opposed to psychoanalysis and the postulate of universal desires, historical psychology has been actively practiced by Vernant and the scholars of the Centre de Recherches Comparées sur les Sociétés Anciennes as a mode of inquiry compatible with structural analysis. In the introduction to *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece,* Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet argue for the unique virtues of historical psychology as a means of comprehending tragedy and allude to their use of structural analysis to reduce tragic plots to their components. The third reason is the Marxist outlook of the majority of these researchers, at least at the beginning of their association. There was a widespread belief that the Greeks are not "incomparable," as well as a conviction that different societies can be located in different moments or phases within a linear process of historical transformation. It is possible to compare, for instance, the relation between war and economy in China, Greece, and India, but the aim of this comparison is to establish to which point in the course of history the Indian, Greek, and Chinese forms of that relation correspond.

One may wonder how a diachronic approach to Western culture can be coupled with structuralism. The answer points again in the direction of specificity. Meyerson and Vernant used to organize seminars with specialists of non-Western societies on particular themes related to historical psychology in order to test and redefine the singularity of the Western history of those notions. A work like *Myth and Tragedy* shows that structural comparison is not a necessary condition or even a component of historical psychology: there is no trace of it in this hyper-historicistic account of the tragic genre. What matters here are the "ruptures" that differentiate periods and situations in time. Not surprisingly, Michel Foucault will be posthumously annexed to the project of historical psychology, thanks to his *History of Sexuality,* intended as a history of subjectivity.

HERMENEUTICS

In contrast with this anthropology of ancient societies, the philological challenge of Jean Bollack and his Centre de Recherche Philologique offers a complete reversal of values. Genres, texts, authors—categories that maintain the singularity of a personal creation against the background of the social context—are cultivated and magnified. The thought of the individual who has composed a poem or a tragedy constitutes the only relevant object of investigation. While Vernant claims that a play can be understood only by an interpreter who takes the place of the fifth-century B.C. audience in an Athenian theater—because only that point of view embraces the social context required to decipher the text—Bollack affirms that the same play can be understood only by a philologist who takes the place of the author himself. Only that point of view is adequate to penetrate the peculiar subtleties with which the author uses the Greek language and Greek concepts.

By means of its heterogeneous components, the anthropological approach valorizes what is social, shared, collective. In its commitment to a unique intelligence, the philological-hermeneutical approach searches for the intact purity of an exceptional appropriation by separating it from the "langue de la tribu." The authorial meaning is recovered by a critical examination of all the interpretations given of every single word of a text. Only after an exhaustive analysis of all the possible readings previously offered within the philological tradition can the authentic philologist grasp the truth. It is evident that neither interdisciplinarity nor comparison is welcome in this highly individualized exercise of interpretation. A text has to be explained in itself. Nothing exterior is pertinent to it, not even the normal use of language, since the particular text constitutes a speech act that is irreducible to the generic conventions of Greek. Even less relevant will be any comparison with other texts coming from other genres, or worse, other cultures. The only legitimate comparison is between divergent interpretations of a passage within the philological tradition.

PHILOLOGY

The Centre de Recherches Comparées sur les Sociétés Anciennes has built its reputation on a sociological challenge to the practice of philology. The Centre de Recherche Philologique has defined authentic philology as a continuation of nineteenth-century hermeneutics.

It seems to me that the so-called non- or anti-philologists who practice interdisciplinarity and comparison are closer to the ambitions of nineteenth-century philology, with the high value it placed on erudition, while the philologists of Lille, with their concentration on the editing of texts, and their rejection of what is exterior to the text, are in fact very far from those ambitions. For nineteenth-century theoreticians like August Boeckh and Salomon Reinach, philology is not a discipline within Classics, concerned with language and texts, alongside other disciplines concerned with history, archaeology, or religion. On the contrary, philology encompasses the entire field of competence possible for a given society: language, literature, and philosophy, but also institutions, rituals, myths. It includes social and cultural history. It seeks to comprehend the system of representations in which a society expresses its peculiar spirit. In its paradigmatic form, philology must be interdisciplinary. It does not include comparison because the singularity of each culture is assumed and not "discovered" by comparison with other cultures. But only contemporary anthropologists of ancient societies, with their bold interdisciplinarity and their collective practice of comparison, are really, *malgré eux,* the heirs of the forgotten openness and erudition of the philological ideal.

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RESPONSE TO GIULIA SISSA

The problem that confronts us here today is not so much what the relationship between Classics and Comparative Literature might or ought to be: anyone can see that there are a myriad of ways in which the two disciplines could contribute to one another theoretically. The more pressing question is why two fields that manifestly have so much potential for fruitful collaboration have nonetheless proved mutually resistant and have remained so up until the present day. In 1969 Manfred Fuhrmann announced: "Nothing stands in the way of letting Classical Philology dissolve in the greater whole of literary studies."[1] The institutional history that Giulia Sissa has just recounted unequivocally belies Fuhrmann's prediction: what was organized in the early '60s as a Center for *Comparative* Research on Ancient Studies devolved over the next decade into a program for monocultural study that ultimately insisted on the specificity of disparate ethnic traditions and the "infrangible wall" between them. The ethnographic interests of Vernant and his associates defined themselves, moreover, against the narrower linguistic preoccupations of Jean Bollack's Center for Philological Research in Lille, a polemic that in essence replayed August Boeckh's efforts at the outset of the previous century to establish a broad, anthropologically based *Altertumswissenschaft* at Berlin in opposition to the text-centered studies promoted by Gottfried Hermann and his circle in Leipzig. The Parisian example is instructive, then, in that despite its claims to innovation through comparative research, the programmatic development of the Centre Louis Gernet and the controversies that surrounded it, belong, as Sissa noted, entirely to the disciplinary history of classical philology per se. So, in fact, does her own exposition of the split between the rival research programs as dialectical antitheses: the prototype for this historical and analytic scheme is Friedrich Ritschl's 1833 paper, "Über die neueste Entwickelung der Philologie,"[2] which was elaborated and made canonical for histories of the profession by Hermann Usener in his *Antrittsvorlesung* at Bonn in 1882.[3] It would seem, then, that a good deal still stands in the way not only of absorbing classical philology into the greater whole of literary-cultural studies: it remains difficult even to conceptualize that move.

The fact that an American Philological Association panel on "Classics and Comparative Literature" still seems timely in 1994 is itself one indicator that no progress has been made on this question. Nor can it, so long as the substantive issues are treated in the abstract, as if Classics and Comparative Literature were fields of pure knowledge which have no other concern than to reconstruct as fully and adequately as possible the "representation of the world expressed by ancient societies." To introduce the complication theorized by Ian Hacking, academic disciplines like Classics or Comparative Literature not only provide representations *of* the world, they intervene directly *in* the world insofar as they are by necessity embodied in concrete institutions and sets of material practices designed to train students and produce certain types of knowledge, which is for the most part supervised and paid for by the State.[4] Classics and Comparative Literature are each complex discursive, pedagogical, and bureaucratic formations that developed at specific historical junctures whose conflicts they attempt to resolve and whose determinative imprint they continue to bear. Each of these disciplines, however, coalesced at a different moment under very different socio-political conditions, and it is the irreducible historical discrepancy between them that has made the two pursuits so difficult to reconcile, much less dissolve one into the other.

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[1] Quoted in R. Herzog, "On the Relation of Disciplinary Development to Historical Self-Presentation—The Case of Classical Philology Since the End of the Eighteenth Century," in *Functions and Uses of Disciplinary Histories*, ed. L. Graham, et al. Sociology of the Sciences, vol. 7 (Dordrecht, 1983), 288–89.

[2] F. Ritschl, *Opuscula Philologica*, vol. 5 (Leipzig, 1879), 1–18.

[3] H. Usener, "Philologie und Geschichtswissenschaft," *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1907), 1–35.

Classical philology, as everybody knows, took on in its modern institutional form in the German States at the end of the eighteenth century. That is to say, the formation of the discipline coincided exactly with the French and American revolutions and the ascendancy of the modern European bourgeoisie. In recent years, historians of science and education have done a great deal of work on the origins of classical philology which has shown how integrally connected its introduction into the university was to this political and economic shift. The organization of the *Philologisches Seminar* first at Göttingen and then throughout the Germanies was part and parcel of sweeping academic reforms that restructured the university in the interests and for the access of the middle class.[5] That classical studies should have played a central role in this transition is hardly coincidental: with the new philology, the bourgeoisie effectively appropriated for itself the cultural patrimony of the old aristocratic order, polemically refocusing the attention of the *Gelehrtenstand* from the imperial legacy of Rome to democratic Greece so as to legitimate historically the prerogatives of the middle class. At the same time these seminars introduced a set of revolutionary pedagogical and scholarly techniques that served to reinforce this underlying social agenda. In place of the oral disputation that still dominated early modern universities, the philological seminar instituted for the first time three academic practices: constant rigorous examination, numerical grading of examined performances, and an omnipresent writing by and about students.[6] This nexus of procedures effectively transformed the whole mission of the educative apparatus: in conjunction they imposed a constant surveillance and calculating judgment over each moment of the student's performance, and then more generally over his individual self.

The lynchpin of this sytem was the arithmetic mark, which expressly promoted competition: students contended not just with each other, but for a currency that denoted self-worth. Insofar as all qualities were immediately converted into quantities, what emerged from this pedagogic system was, in effect, the "calculable person," who was instilled with the historically strange compulsion to be Number One, to compete not only against others but, more importantly, against himself, whether it be in academic, in political, or business life. Thus, contemporary tracts justifying the new philology speak incessantly of "mental discipline" and the formation of individual "character." "Seminarians," wrote Friedrich August Wolf at Halle,

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[4] I. Hacking, *Representing and Intervening* (Cambridge, 1983).

[5] See C. E. McClellan, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700–1914* (Cambridge, 1980); R. S. Turner, "University Reformers and Professorial Scholarship in Germany 1760–1806," in *The University in Society,* vol. 2, ed. L. Stone (Princeton, 1974), 435–91; R. S. Leventhal, "The Emergence of Philological Discourse in the German States, 1770–1810," *Isis* 77 (1986): 243–60; W. Clark, "On the Dialectical Origins of the Research Seminar," *History of Science* 27 (1989): 111–52.

[6] See K. W. Hoskins, "Education and the Genesis of Disciplinarity" in *Knowledges: Historical and Critical Studies in Disciplinarity,* ed. E. Messer-Davidow, et al. (Charlottesville, VA, 1993), 271–304.

> must distinguish themselves as exemplars of industriousness, knowledge, and good moral character and thereby arouse the emulation of others. The director must always use methods which inculcate this diligence and perseverance, and which accustom the students to precise, punctual organization in all their required tasks. For the State has little use for the mere humanist.[7]

On one occasion, Wolf assigned his seminar the collective project of searching the entire Ciceronian corpus to establish the several shades of meaning of a single word.[8] The exercise appears pedagogically nonsensical unless one comprehends the aim of "mental discipline" and the nature of the persona it sought to impose: this type of exhaustively insipid research into lexical minutiae was made possible only as the endeavor of well-organized and collective industry (*Fleiss*) on the part of the seminarians, who had to exhibit the most punctiliousness and precision to complete the work successfully.

Noah Porter, a great defender of the new classical pedagogy, argued that such exercises were essential "to the training of the man to the power and habit of successfully concentrating and controlling his powers. The student who has acquired the habit of never letting go a puzzling problem—say a rare Greek verb—until he has analyzed its every element, and understands every point in its etymology, has the habit of mind which will enable him to follow out a legal subtlety with the same accuracy."[9] In fact, the study of Greek and Latin grammar was thought to be ideal for this purpose, and it is no wonder that bourgeois classical scholarship focused so obsessively on arcane linguistic mastery. "Strict grammatical study," wrote Hegel to justify his program at the Nürnberg Gymnasium, "is one of the most universal and noble forms of education. The mechanical side of this learning is not just a necessary evil. For it is the mechanical that is foreign to the spirit, and that awakens its desire to digest the indigestible food forced upon it, to bring to understanding what was hitherto lifeless and to assimilate it to its own condition."[10] Hegel mentions in passing that the "content of the Greek and Latin authors is itself instructive," but for the most part discussion of such matters was eschewed and might be actively suppressed by supervisory administrations: one professor was actually dismissed from Princeton in 1846 for interspersing the grammatical study of the Greek language with commentary on Greek literature.[11] As such, training in classical philology was directed less toward understanding or appreciating the matter of antiquity, than toward inculcating a particular attitude toward labor, academic or otherwise. More than anything else, perhaps, the revolutionary institutions of classical scholarship—its ordering of knowledge, its textual strategies, its pedagogical techniques—were agencies for the formation of normalized, yet self-disciplining and self-actualizing individuals, who succeeded in restructuring not only education but the very sciences of language and cultural history in terms that find their rationale within the immediate social, political, and economic program of the post-Enlightenment state.

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[7] Clark, "Dialectical Origins," 126.

[8] C. F. Augustin, *Bemerkungen eines Akademikers über Halle und dessen Bewohner in Briefen* ("Germanian," 1795), 86.

[9] N. Porter, *American Colleges and the American Public*^{2} (New York, 1878), 127 and 36.

[10] G. W. F. Hegel, *Gymnasial-Reden* I, Am 29 September 1809.

[11] F. Rudolph, *Curriculum* (San Francisco, 1977), 89–90.

From Germany, the new classical philology spread rapidly across Europe and over to America, establishing itself as the central academic discipline for roughly a century, after which it was abruptly displaced by the study of modern literatures. Historically, Classics had served the important function of inscribing the bourgeoisie into Western cultural and scholarly traditions, but by nature the discipline remained elitist. Though theoretically within the reach of individuals of all backgrounds and stations, mastery of Greek and Latin required years of industrious application, an investment of time and resources which was, for the most part, only available to the gentry and the leisured class. To have studied Greek and Latin effectively became a mark of status and the drudgery of the grammar drill a kind of ritual that fostered identification between fellow classmates and solidified a social bond that was at least as important as anything that might be learnt from the lessons.[12] In fact, the principal reason that Noah Porter resisted the introduction of lecture courses at Yale to replace the routine Greek and Latin recitations was that it would promote "the tendency to abandon or disintegrate the old college class."[13]

The rapid development of industrial society, however, made a broader educational base desirable, and it was to meet those needs that schools and universities established the teaching of modern literature at the end of the nineteenth century. The process took place in more or less the same fashion across Europe, but it has been best studied in Britain and America, and it is from here that I draw my examples.[14] In the Anglophone world, the theoretical foundations for this shift were laid by Matthew Arnold, who conceived of education not merely as a transfer of information, but as a civilizing agent whose most important task was "the protection of society" through the inculcation of "orderly, decent, and human behaviour."[15] Arnold was particularly concerned with "humanizing" the Victorian working class, which in the interests of social stability and order he proposed "to mould or assimilate" to "the best culture of their nation."[16] Instruction in English literature and literary criticism, he argued, was instrumental to this mission: for Arnold, poetry had replaced philosophy, science, and religion as the bearer of civilized and moral values in modern society and, as such, represented the most effective and powerful means to impart such virtues to the masses. "In [English] literature," his disciple H. G. Robinson wrote,

> we have a most valuable agency for the moral and intellectual culture of the [common] classes. Assuredly among the liberal arts that so humanise, literature occupies the first place. If anything will take the coarseness and vulgarity out of a soul, it must be refined images and elevated sentiments. As a clown will instinctively tread lightly and feel ashamed of his hob-nailed shoes in a lady's boudoir, so a vulgar mind may, by converse

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[12] See R. H. Wilkinson, "The Gentleman Ideal and the Maintenance of a Political Elite," *Sociology of Education* 37 (1963): 9–26; F. Campbell, "Latin and the Elite Tradition in Education," *British Journal of Sociology* 19 (1968): 308–25; and G. Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago, 1987), 19–51.

[13] N. Porter, "The Ideal Scholar," in *The Phillips Exeter Lectures,* 1885–86 (Boston, 1887), 158.

[14] See T. Eagleton, "The Rise of English," in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis, 1983), 17–52; C. Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848–1932,* rev. ed. (Oxford, 1987); Graff, *Professing Literature.*

[15] M. Arnold, *The Complete Prose Works,* ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, 1960–77), vol. 2, 228.

[16] Ibid., 2:26 and 22.

> with minds of higher culture, be brought to see and deplore the contrast between itself and them, and to make an earnest effort to put off its vulgarity.[17]

English literary studies initially sprang up in three arenas: in mechanics institutes and working men's colleges, where it was conceived as a type of "poor men's classics";[18] in colleges for women, who were excluded from scientific training and from the professions that required Greek and Latin; and in the colonies, especially India, as a means for acculturating the "higher classes of the natives" to English values.[19] As such, modern literary studies were from their inception strongly typed by class, gender, and race in contradistinction to the privileged English male domain of classical philology. For the lower middle- and working-class students, however, who were increasingly availing themselves of higher education, English studies promised to forge social alliances of a different sort, and this helps to explain the rapidity with which they became institutionalized in the major universities. "By converse with the thoughts and utterances [of the leading writers] of the race," H. G. Robinson observed, "our heart comes to beat in [one] accord. We discover that no differences of class, or party, or creed can destroy the power of genius to charm and to instruct, and that above the din and turmoil of man's lower life of care, there is a serene and luminous region of truth where all may meet and expatiate in common."[20] English literature was not only to civilize barbarians and philistines: it was to forge a national fellowship of English citizens in which all social distinctions would be superseded. As J. Dover Wilson put it, a liberal education in English "would form a new element of national unity, linking together the mental life of all classes."[21] With this democratic vision, the Newbolt report on *The Teaching of English in England,* issued in 1921, proposed rebuilding the "arch" of national education around the "keystone" of English. "The Professor of Literature," the committee wrote,

> should be a missionary in a more real and active sense than any of his colleagues. He has obligations not merely to the students who come to him to read for a degree, but still more towards the teeming population outside the University walls, most of whom have not so much as "heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." The fulfillment of these obligations means propaganda work, organisation and the building up of a staff of assistant missionaries. But first, and above all, it means a right attitude of mind, a conviction that literature and life are in fact inseparable, that literature is not just a subject for academic study, but one of the chief temples of the human spirit, in which all should worship.[22]

"What the teacher has to consider," wrote one of the authors of the Newbolt report, "is not the minds he can measure but the souls he can save. [The reading of English literature] is not a routine but a religion. It is almost sacramental." In this national battle for the souls of English citizens, grammar drills and the fetishization of linguistic minutiae that occupied the Classics curriculum were clearly out of place. J. C.

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[17] H. G. Robinson, "On the Use of English Classical Literature in the Work of Education," *Macmillan's Magazine* 2 (1860): 427 and 431.

[18] J. W. Hales, "The Teaching of English," in *Essays on a Liberal Education,* ed. F. W. Farrar (London, 1867), 310.

[19] T. B. Macaulay, "The Government of India," in *Speeches on Politics and Literature* (New York and London, 1909), 115.

[20] Robinson, "English Classical Literature," 431.

[21] J. D. Wilson, *Milestones on the Dover Road* (London, 1969), 22.

[22] Ibid., 259.

Collins, the champion of English studies at Oxford, attacked the "degrading vassalage to philology," and argued that the "national interests of culture and education" had been subordinated to "the local interests of specialism and Philology."[23]

In the next generation, the architects of English literary criticism, I. A. Richards, Q. D. Roth, F. R. Leavis—all of whom came out of the lower middle class—developed a battery of new critical and pedagogical methods that pointedly eschewed philology, attending instead directly to themes, attitudes, values, and ideas: "practical criticism," "close reading," character sketches, the literary critical essay—all of these were devised to appropriate English literature for social crusade. In a break with philological methods that was virtually polemical, practitioners of English studies required of their students no special preparation, but to the contrary insisted they respond to literary texts openly, in isolation, without knowledge of their context of production. Historical and linguistic background were, for the most part, thought to be irrelevant. I. A. Richards asserted: "The central experience of Tragedy and its chief value is an attitude indispensable for a fully developed life. But in the reading of *King Lear* what facts verifiable by science, or accepted and believed in, are relevant? None whatever."[24] This not only made literary study as democratically accessible as possible; it worked to instill an almost Emersonian self-reliance in the individual student. "The critical reading of poetry," wrote Richards, "is an arduous discipline; few exercises reveal to us more clearly the limitations under which, from moment to moment, we suffer. The lesson of all criticism is that we have nothing to rely upon in making our choices but ourselves."[25] As such, the new English criticism, both in Britain and particularly as developed in America, promoted a kind of benign pluralism. Cleanth Brooks, for example, liked to describe the English literary text as a "unification of [contending] attitudes into a hierarchy subordinated to a total and governing attitude,"[26] and his colleague John Crowe Ransom drew the political connection: the poem, Ransom wrote, "[is] like a democratic state, so to speak, which realizes the ends of a state without sacrificing the personal character of its citizens."[27] The principal business of English literary studies was to shape ethical subjects for such a liberal democracy, and its *splendeurs* and *misères* were, accordingly, those of the liberal democratic state.

The study of national literature dominated education once again for a century, coinciding with the apogee of nationalist sentiments and colonialism in Europe and America. In this country, the decisive challenge to that critical mission came from the field of Comparative Literature, which was revitalized by European expatriates after the Second World War. Glenn Most and Ralph Hexter have already traced the history of this movement, but what I want to stress here are the ways in which the discipline not only repudiated literary territorialism in an effort to repair the divisiveness of war-torn Europe, but actually undid and displaced the entire nationalist project. As René Wellek put it, Comparative Literature was to be "the study of literature *independent* of linguistic, ethnic, or political boundaries,"[28] which meant that literature was no longer divided into neat boxes—French, German, English, Latin, Greek—that could be trotted out and compared. Instead, the field shifted its focus to the investigation of literature or literariness per se, so that what emerged was a "theoretical" as opposed to a "philological" or "practical" study of literary texts. Drawing extensively on writers that had a marginal or uneasy relationship to national literary canons (Aristotle, the Gnostics, Condillac, Nietzsche, Freud), this criticism subsumed many of the analytical techniques of English criticism, but stressed the rhetorical dimension of literature over its grammatical-syntactical structure or its thematic organization, and this led to conclusions that seriously put into question the political premises which underlay modern vernacular literary studies.

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[23] J. C. Collins, *The Study of English Literature* (London, 1891), 11–12.

[24] I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London, 1928), 223.

[25] I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism* (London, 1929), 350–51.

[26] C. Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn* (London, 1949), 189.

[27] J. C. Ransom, *The New Criticism* (Norfolk, 1941), 54.

[28] R. Wellek, "The Name and Nature of Comparative Literature," in *Comparatists at Work,* ed. S. Nichols, Jr. and R. Vowles (Waltham, 1968), 13.

The second half of Paul de Man's *Allegories of Reading,* for example, took up via a "close reading" of Rousseau the major terms around which national literary projects such as English had been conceived, only to destabilize them one-by-one: humanity, self, ethics, faith, government, understanding. De Man pressed Rousseau's insight into "the divergence between grammar and referential meaning" in a way that not only accounted for the historical antagonism between classical philology and national literary studies: by nature, he argued, the two sciences effectively short-circuited one another. "We call *text,*" he wrote, "any entity that can be considered from such a double perspective: as a generative, open-ended, non-referential grammatical system and as a figural system closed off by a transcendental signification that subverts the grammatical code to which the text owes its existence."[29] For de Man, literary texts principally constituted allegories of their own unreadability which, far from purveying civilizing ideas, attitudes, or values to the general public, exposed the errors unavoidably involved in such moral, psychological, or political investments. Literature was not so much an agency of social cohesion, but a site of irreducible "difference" (Barbara Johnson), an ineluctable "fate" (Geoffrey Hartman), which more than anything else induced a state of "anxiety" in its readers (Harold Bloom). At universities like Johns Hopkins and Yale, students were no longer asked to learn any national literature in depth, but taught to move effortlessly from one language, one country, one period to another and to take what was useful or appealing from each.

Both classical philology and English studies had in different ways worked to acculturate their students to the middle-class mainstream. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, American Comparative Literature tended to foster a sense of ironic detachment in its graduates, which led them logically into cultural critique. The deconstruction of Euro-American identity, political pretensions, and thought, which was the major achievement of the movement, deprivileged these traditions and relativized them in a way that yielded almost inevitably to "cultural studies" and the reconceptualization of European literary production in a global context. This critical project was, in fact, so successful that it effectively rendered itself obsolete: neither the classical, nor the national, nor the comparative study of European literary tradition could any longer justify its claim to pedagogical priority. It is precisely this self-relativization, however, that rendered Comparative Literature institutionally so influential: with their linguistic and cultural *bricolage* and their heightened sense of the use and abuses of representation, its epigones have become *the* intellectuals of the age of multinationals and "postmodernism," that is, for the cultural logic of late capitalism.

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[29] P. de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven, 1979), 270.

I have said very little about the positive contributions of these three fields to our knowledge of literature, which is in all cases extraordinary, in order to stress their institutional organization and the character of their historical interventions. If critical studies have taught us anything in the past few years, it is that science and ideology are entirely compatible. Classical philology, English, and Comparative Literature are disciplines, in the double sense of the word, which each arose at specific moments in the historical evolution of Euro-American middle-class culture, that is, in the periods which we have come to call early, high, and late capitalism respectively. Not only the subject matters of these disciplines, but their critical, discursive, and pedagogical techniques were all fundamentally grounded in the era that initially produced them. Accordingly, each had a different rationale and engaged in a different social mission for the formation of ethical subjects which was, in its time, highly innovative. Nor is it surprising, given their social importance in the recent past, that each survives, despite internal evolution, with its disciplinary practices more or less intact up through today. To the extent, however, that they constitute distinct historical formations with differing agendas, whose methods progressively negate each other, it is not possible to transfer or assimilate unproblematically one set of operations across fields. Most of us in this room are, in various ways, a product of all three, and we live out their contradictions daily in our professional lives.

At this point, however, classical philology, English or French, and Comparative Literature are, as academic disciplines, highly atavistic. Part of the great unhappiness of classicists today, and increasingly on the part of English teachers as well, is that they find themselves engaged in scholarly and pedagogical procedures whose social purpose has all but disappeared. The attempt to "rejuvenate" Classics with applications from Comparative Literature will not recuperate this *raison d'être* nor will it in the long run ease its practitioners' malaise. This holds at the level of the discipline as institution: it does not follow that Latin or Greek, English authors, linguistic analysis, practical criticism, comparison, or literary theory have no meaningful role to play at present or in the academy's future. Insofar as none of us works at an Archimedean point outside of our own historical conditions, the challenge is to find scholarly, discursive, and pedagogical practices that will be dedicated to the progressive project of subject formation now. Page duBois is going to make some further suggestions here, but let me call to your attention at least one scholar whose work points us unequivocally in that direction, who belongs to the intellectual milieu that Giulia Sissa described: namely, Georges Dumézil. Whatever one thinks of the Indo-European hypothesis or trifunctionality, the lesson of Georges Dumézil opens up the prospect of an entirely new mapping of world history and the relationship between different cultures. Cutting across both the received idea of Greco-Roman tradition and the post-colonial division between first and third worlds, Dumézil's linguistic, literary, historical, and ideological project bears in an exacting way on the most pressing political and cultural problems of the present. Though his writings on Greece and, especially, Rome are voluminous, his erudition unsurpassed, and his critical procedures impeccable, Arnaldo Momigliano was perhaps right when he concluded that Dumézil's contribution to the field of *Classics* was practically nil.

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CULTURAL STUDIES AND THE FUTURE OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

We might see Comparative Literature in the Classics as resembling the "foreign words" Theodor Adorno discussed in an essay of self-defense first published in 1959. He had been accused of using too many foreign words in a talk on Proust, and pointed out that "foreign words constituted little cells of resistance to the nationalism of World War I."[1] But "what lures us (to their use) is a kind of exogamy of language, which would like to escape from the sphere of what is always the same, the spell of what one is and knows anyway" (187). They are "like Greeks in imperial Rome" (192):

> Only the foreign word that renders the meaning better, more faithfully, more uncompromisingly than the available German synonyms will allow a spark to flow in the constellation into which it is introduced.

I think that Classics should be the "foreign words" in the body of the new humanities in the late twentieth century, and that Comparative Literature, cultural studies, and critical theory should be the "foreign words" in the body of Classics.

In response to a question posed by a friend, I have recently been wrestling with why I sometimes feel confusion at being a part, however marginal, of the institution of Classics. I find myself unable to participate in the festivals of contempt some classicists exhibit when the Modern Languages Association is mentioned, when they hear the terms multiculturalism, the subject, neo-colonialism and imperialism, hegemony, interpellation. These terms are the objects of ridicule in the privacy of many a classicist's conversation. I, on the other hand, feel confusion as well at the elitism of our discipline, at its birth in a quest for Aryan supremacy, at its intellectual backwardness and smug pride in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century intellectual paradigms.

In addition, there is a gendering that has taken place in classical studies, I would say, in which the hard, most scientistic fields—epigraphy, archaeology, textual criticism—such matters are seen as tough, masculine, traditional, and virtuous. The philological science *strives* to achieve the status of such hard domains. Such fields as literary criticism of classical texts, "lit crit," are dismissed as soft, frivolous, ephemeral, the province of women and other suspect categories. It is a disgrace of our discipline that contact and conversation with scholars in other fields in the humanities is seen as bringing an effeminizing contagion. If the discipline of history now in many universities allies itself with the social sciences, betraying its father the teller of stories, classicists seem often to aspire to the even harder science of the natural sciences.

Comparative Literature itself is seen as very soft indeed. Many classicists see it as a heresy, a flabby, generalizing reliance on "universal questions" such as genres or modes, or worse, on studies in translation. But in fact, some of the most interesting work in classical studies in the past twenty years has been produced by scholars trained in or influenced by Comparative Literature. If philology has long been a privileged model within Classics, relying on a hard scientism, comparatists in the field of Classics, scholars who often work primarily on classical texts but who are theoretically sophisticated, people like Charles Segal, Froma Zeitlin, Ralph Johnson,

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[1] "Words from Abroad," in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York, 1991), 186.

Pietro Pucci, Leslie Kurke, and Dan Selden, have brought much of value to the classicists who claim to anathematize such tendencies. Such classicists have been influenced by new historicism, cultural materialism, structuralism, semiotics, hermeneutics, various forms of post-structuralism including Lacanian psychoanalysis, deconstruction, the school of Jean-Pierre Vernant, and the work of Michel Foucault, its method as well as his reading of the history of sexuality. I think of the recent *Innovations of Antiquity,* edited by Dan Selden and Ralph Hexter, of Leslie Kurke and Carol Dougherty's *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece.*[2]

The work of many of these scholars has brought Classics closer to the debates being conducted in the rest of the humanities, as a vast redefinition of traditional disciplines takes place, in part in response to an economic crisis in the West and concomitantly in universities, in part as a result of the West's recognition that it is no longer a homogeneous body of identical enlightenment citizens, but rather a stratified, heterogenous, neo-imperialist, declining world power. This is a moment of great strain, but also of great possibilities for the future.

And in this new situation, do we even care if Comparative Literature has a future? The flowering of Comparative Literature in the past in the U.S. was much indebted to Hitler, and to a lesser extent, to Mussolini. These political leaders drove to our shores *érudits* of many European countries, whose knowledge of languages, including the classical, determined the shape of Comparative Literature as a discipline in the United States in the immediate post-war years. The field has always had a bias toward European languages, slighting vast regions of the world like Africa and Asia, except for the occasional scholar who referred to African "epic" and to the classical period in Chinese literature.

In the disciplines of the modern languages, since the great emphasis on theory in the past twenty-five years, on structuralism, deconstruction, post-structuralism, semiotics, and post-colonial theory, there has recently been much attention to cultural studies, on the incorporation of visual culture, popular culture, and material artefacts into historical study. Comparative Literature, in the context of classical studies, could profit greatly from extending its traditional interest in literary theory to these new tendencies in humanistic study, and cultural studies would benefit from a more global and historical perspective. Certainly our sense of the boundaries of the ancient world has long included diverse cultures, geographies that exceed the limits of the cities of Athens and Rome themselves. But the new interest in global culture brings possibilities to the study of such ancient sites of hybridity as Alexandria, or the limits of the Roman empire in the later centuries of the classical era. These developments seem to have much to offer to the classicist affected by Comparative Literature. We can look to a new definition of the ancient world, one broadly extended, where the interest lies in difference, heterogeneity, multiplicity, where the theorization of multiculturalism, or ethnic difference, for example, in the work of post-colonial theorists, can illuminate features of ancient society.

The effect of cultural studies on Comparative Literature and the Classics can lead to a new division of labor, where literary studies are no longer sequestered from studies of culture in general, where visual culture and material culture affect our understanding of cultural production in general. But classicists need to fight for this terrain. In the new world of cultural studies, there is as yet no place for Adorno's "foreign words." In the huge Bible of the field, *Cultural Studies,* an anthology of essays edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, published in 1992, there is no place for Adorno's "Greeks of Imperial Rome." Only one of the forty essays, on Shakespeare, focuses on a cultural phenomenon earlier than the 1830s, and most discuss only post-war American and British culture, such matters as "Rambo and the Popular Pleasures of Pain."[3] Yet I think classicists, rather than mocking such work, ought to be fighting for a historical perspective on cultural studies and even on popular culture.

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[2] *Innovations of Antiquity,* ed. Ralph Hexter and Daniel Selden (New York and London, 1992), and *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics,* ed. Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke (Cambridge, 1993).

Perhaps, in light of these possibilities, we need to redefine Comparative Literature, or to rename it. I don't think the idea of "literature" really helps us much anymore, especially in terms of ancient culture, although some would disagree. Even the study of classical literary texts is being affected by new emphases on material and visual culture, and on social history, so that the literary, which was perhaps never a particularly useful term for ancient cultural artifacts, is receding as a valuable category. Is Parmenides literary? And in modern fields in the other humanities, there are other challenges to the notion of literature. Literature is named as an oppressive force, for example, in John Beverley's *Against Literature,* which describes in part how

> literature as an institution was implicated in the colonial formation of Latin America itself and subsequently in the construction and evolution of Latin American nation-states. Literature . . . not only had a central role in the self-representation of the upper and upper-middle strata of Latin American society; it was one of the social practices by which such strata constituted themselves as dominant.[4]

Of course some of what is literature in this context is classical literature, that canon which turned colonial subjects into citizens of Western civilization. And one of the reasons Classics as a discipline is besieged at present is that it is associated with the most reactionary forces in the public arena today, people like Camille Paglia and William Bennett and the late Allan Bloom, who want to use classical literature, in Beverley's sense, as one of the social practices by which the upper and upper-middle classes constitute themselves as dominant.

In his recent best-seller *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories,* bed-time tales for neo-con babies, William Bennett tells the story of Daedalus the first artist, subject of a fascinating recent book by Sarah Morris.[5] In the tale familiar to all classical scholars, Daedalus, maker of a heifer costume for the queen of Crete, who wore it to seduce a bull from the sea and conceived the Minotaur—this part of the story, involving bestiality, adultery, and the birth of a monster, is, needless to say, elided in Bennett's account—also built the Minotaur's home, the labyrinth of Crete, constructed wings with wax and feathers for himself and his son to fly from Crete to Italy, and built a marvelously adorned temple to Apollo there. Bennett retells the story of Daedalus and Icarus' flight, which he glosses ponderously; Icarus, who flew too close to the sun, was a bad boy. Bennett concludes:

> This famous Greek myth reminds us exactly why young people have a responsibility to obey their parents—for the same good reason parents have a responsibility to guide their

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[3] William Warner, "Spectacular Action: Rambo and the Popular Pleasures of Pain," in *Cultural Studies,* ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York and London, 1992), 672–88.

[4] John Beverly, *Against Literature* (Minneapolis, 1993), ix.

[5] Sarah P. Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art* (Princeton, 1992).

> children: there are many things adults know that young people do not. . . . Safe childhoods and successful upbringings require a measure of obedience, as Icarus finds out the hard way.[6]

Bennett concludes with this praise of obedience coupled with a subtle threat of disaster for the disobedient. The "great moral story" of Daedalus and Icarus appears in the section called "responsibility," one of those traditional values that the former drug czar and minister of education holds most dear: responsibility, like his other categories "work" and "perseverance" and "self-discipline," involves obedience to one's superiors. And the division of labor is the most crucial of divisions.

The image of ancient Greece is again being manipulated to persuade readers and viewers of the immemorial justice of reactionary political opinion. If ancient Greek philosophers thought something, it must have been true, must still be true, must be an eternal truth. Allan Bloom, noted Chicagoan, in his *Closing of the American Mind,* took the same sort of line about the ancient Greeks.[7] Those Greeks knew that women should know their place, that education should be only for the elite, as in Plato's circle; Bloom affirmed the Greek philosophical tradition, in its abhorrence of democracy and cultivation of exclusively masculine symposiast values, as a stellar model for ourselves.

We are witnessing a racist, elitist appropriation of ancient culture, which is being used to justify injustice in our culture. The myth of ancient philosophy, of the harmony of ancient democracy, serves a certain mythology about the good life, the proper organization of education, society and politics. Classics, by not contesting such representations, is burying itself, in danger of disappearing from universities and colleges like Egyptology and Sanskrit studies, destined to be taught in only the most elite of elite university graduate programs. Rather than seeing its isolation in the American Philological Association, its indifference to current intellectual debate as a virtue, I see it as a most dangerous and suicidal isolationism. Some classicists see the backwardness of Classics as a positive stance, its adherence to traditional methodologies, to a model of truth long outmoded in other disciplines as a healthy form of resistance to trendiness, science and truth uncontaminated by current questioning of master narratives, the nature of truth, or the questionable legacy of enlightenment universalism. Again, I see such a stance as willful blindness, ignorance, and self-defeat. And I worry too that the work of scholars relying on a second or third generation Foucauldianism, or new historicist models developed in such fields as Renaissance literature and American studies may be limited as well, relying on a fetishized interdisciplinarity unable to call into question our unmediated access to the past. We need to be less naive about our access to the past, more theoretically and philosophically sophisticated, especially about the hermeneutic tradition.

To illustrate what I mean by "foreign words" in the respective bodies of cultural studies and Classics, I want to recall one of the poems of Sappho, Fragment 31, φαίνεταί μοι κῆνος. This poem, preserved in pseudo-Longinus' *On the Sublime,* can serve as an exemplary site of the mutual disturbance and unsettlement I would like to argue for in the future. The classicist's philological reading, focused on emendation, restoration, correction, and castigation of the ancient text, might profitably be complicated by questions that arise from our post-modern situation, as fragmentary, desiring subjects living in the late twentieth century and encountering this much-mediated textual object. A Lacanian, reading this poem recounting the collapse of the "I"'s body at the sight, the situation witnessed at its outset, might want to read this poem by assimilating it to a post-modern version of fragmented, split, cybernetic identity. Yet an understanding of the ancient Greek text can disturb the comfortable, ahistorical assumptions of psychoanalytic readings, which take for granted a familiar individualist ego, one that belongs to our own reality. The poem, as an ancient fragment, puts the ahistoricity of post-modern studies into question. The theoretical debates of the present similarly call into question the hermetic dialect of the classicist, unquestioned assumptions about ourselves as subjects, and about the possibilities of an unmediated access to ancient culture.

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[6] William Bennett, *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (New York, 1993), 211.
[7] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York, 1988).

Such a book as Charles Martindale's *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception,* is scrupulous in avoiding naïvetés about textuality and the illusory possibility of a transparent access to the classical past; it exhibits an exemplary skepticism about what was once thought of as comparative literature, considering the reception of the literary text, the uses we make of what we read now.[8] We live in the late twentieth century, not in the sixth century B.C.E., and we might need to be more critical and self-conscious about our desires to restore the past, effortlessly to reside in it; we need a perspective on our own critical practices that the study of literary theory, especially the hermeneutic tradition, can offer, "foreign words" disturbing the complacent constellation of philology.

On the other hand, I see the mode of cultural studies, sweeping the humanities, as a force threatening to wipe out all the other "foreign words," all the historically unnerving and disturbing relics of other places and of the past, which might play an important defamiliarizing role in current American intellectual life. Instead of accepting a reorganization of the humanities around American popular culture, and hiding in a classicist bunker, we need to argue forcefully for history, for the strange—both linguistic and temporal—and for the centrality of foreign languages, including Greek and Latin, not sentimentalizing or idealizing ancient cultures, using contemporary theory to think about them. Otherwise, we face the death of classical studies, but even worse, an impoverished future, with no geographical or historical perspective, no cultural latencies or otherness to counter the increasing banalization of everyday and university life in post-modernity.

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[8] Charles Martindale, *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception* (Cambridge, 1993).

RESPONSE TO PAGE DUBOIS

I want to preface my response by saying a few words about the college teacher's mode of production. To ask a basic question at its baldest: What do the people we work for pay us for? For what services do our masters in Human Resources write our paychecks? Who is it, in turn, who pays them to pay us, to hire us and to fire us?

Maybe since the time of the Sophists, certainly since the first foundings of what we call universities in Italy, oligarchs have called on schoolmasters to furnish them with young adults who know how to manipulate various sign systems because they need such people, in various capacities, in order to keep things in good running order. Ancillary to this process of making workers literate and numerate is usually the process of inculcating a society's sacred texts, both those that contain its religious notions and those that contain its secular values. This process kills two birds with a single stone: the students learn to read by reading sacred texts, and while they are becoming literate they are ingesting, they are being interpellated into, the sign systems by means of which their subjectivities, as workers, as citizens, as men/women and spouses and parents, are constructed.

Many of the oligarchs who pay for such instruction want nothing more from it and actually prefer to have nothing more from it. But masters are not, on balance, idiots, and not a few of them want the process of learning to read, of mastering sign systems, to do more: they want their workers to be able to think critically; they know enough about the way of the world to know that the world has a way of changing, and they want their workers to be trained in thinking critically about what can be done in cases of unintended consequences or collisions of incompatible goods. They know that the workers can in part learn to do such critical thinking if they learn to read their texts critically. Since not everyone, of course, needs to learn to read (and think) critically (and indeed it is usually a nuisance if too many people somehow develop this skill), the oligarchs are usually content to leave the responsibility of deciding who gets such extra training and who doesn't to the teachers who work for them. Some of these teachers, however, don't want to shoulder this responsibility and believe that everyone who can learn to think critically should learn to do so: teachers holding these views tend also to think not only that their students should learn to think critically by reading the sacred texts critically but also that they should learn to think critically about the sacred texts themselves, that they should learn to dismantle these texts, to interrogate them, to demystify them, with a view to improving their societies (a concise version of this perspective can be found in Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols,* "What the Germans Lack," 6 and 7).

Most oligarchs are not pleased by this fourth and final stage of learning to read, and when it erupts they are forced to unleash whatever Dirae they have to hand (ours have been, most recently, the Killer B's, Bloom, Bennett, Bellow, with assistance from Cheney, Paglia, and Dexter), trusting them to reinvent the inventory of sacred texts (by proving that it was always already as it is now—and ever will be) and to identify and isolate the sacred texts' assassins: these are not infrequently found to be guilty of some species of witchcraft, they are often queer or of some color other than white, they are rarely Christian and rarely rich. I don't know how often it is that this fourth stage of reading becomes a serious problem for the oligarchs (and therefore for the teachers they hire and pay and fire and for the students who are learning to read), but I think it's safe to say, without getting too apocryphal about it, that we are now—while the humanities are being variously reinvented, while competing corporations are imagineering competing maps of multicultural multinationalism—smack in the middle of such a moment.

What can we do in this turmoil, we who work with Ancient Greek and Ancient Latin and the cultures that they shaped, that shaped them, we whose interests in those old texts, in those dead languages, are tied to the idea of *Weltliteratur?*

I think we go on doing what our kind has always done (in different ways in different times and places, *eadem sed aliter*): teaching the four ways of reading in ways that suit our particular gifts and our particular circumstances. I don't mean to trivialize the genuine conflict between philological-literary studies on the one hand and cultural studies on the other, the battle between text and context, which is a real conflict, as real as it is valid, necessary, and (ultimately) beneficial. But I do think it's important, when we're trying to assess our future as hybrids of old worlds and of newer ones, of national literatures and international theories about the literary and the cultural, to negotiate our differences, to find our common purposes without repressing our genuine disagreements.

Whatever Eurocentric humanities were, they are not that any longer, and while they are being reinvented or being multiculturally expanded or even being replaced, the sensibilities that have become dominant are hostile, when they are not benignly indifferent, to my third and fourth stages of the process of becoming literate (an old story this: just after the century's turn, Santayana resigned from Harvard, explaining he could no longer endure teaching in a trade school). Furthermore, since the sacred texts of our technological societies are not written in Greek and Latin (as they were in the Renaissance), we are slightly more at risk (of becoming still more marginalized, or being abolished) than those whose texts and cultural records are written in a modern European language or (safer still) a non-European one. But degrees of difference in this regard are probably rather slight: from the technocratic perspective, we are all of us essentially expendable.

Which means: legitimate though the disputes of textualists and contextualists may be, they are finally much less important than the common enemies the disputants face. Here the question is not so much one of what should be Comparative Literature's relationship with Ancient Greek and Latin texts and cultural records, but rather one of what can we do to survive the indifference or the hostility of corporate multinationalism to the values, the virtues, and the benefits of critical literacy. (Note please that I am not doing an Arnoldian-Leavisite turn here: I don't think literature teaches us what is moral and what is not, I think it helps teach us to think about morality for ourselves by teaching us about reading signs; nor am I doing, avowed hedonist that I am, an aesthetic turn here: pleasure, of which there are very various kinds, is one of the by-products of sign-reading, it is not of its essence—unless one chooses to make it so.) To be crassly practical about it: what we can do is to keep being indispensable to our masters, for they need us to teach their young workers to read signs; we can also try to keep some shreds of self-respect by continuing to teach our students liberatory literacies in addition to teaching them (as we're paid to do) ordinary and canonical literacies.

And how, in the whirlwind of these transitions, do we, the specially vulnerable Greek and Latin comparatists, do that? I think we can make a start on it by listening to Page duBois' warning not to shrug off the challenges offered by cultural studies. That her warnings are not paranoid could be proved, if proof they needed, by a perusal of Stephen Halliwell's review (*Greece and Rome,* October 1994) of the new anthology of critical essays edited by de Jong and Sullivan, where a reader defends the utterly unified texts of his utterly unified tradition against the incursions of "certain" possibly "fugacious contemporary theories" whose partisans occasionally accomplish something decent by doing what could always already have been done by traditional humanistic philologists without using opaque and pretentious terminology. Halliwell is aware that there is an intellectual *Weltwende* in the works (it is a sort of illness, there are "symptoms" of it, it shows dreadful signs of "atrophy into sterile negativity"), but grave (and inconvenient) though it is, it will pass if one learns to ignore it, for it seems to be mainly the work of naughty children who suffer attention-deficit disorders and don't listen to the lectures bestowed on them by grown-ups.

This is an extreme vociferation of a still dominant attitude. If it persists or if it prospers, we're in trouble, for we will be rejecting the intellectual challenges of the world we were born into, we will be refusing to admit that the only thing that makes tradition mean anything—in my lifetime those meanings have come from anthropology, linguistics, feminism, and their hybrids—are the dynamic changes that transform it. And we would not, if we followed Halliwell, be able to talk with our colleagues from other disciplines in the ways that Guilia Sissa has advised us we should, must, learn to speak with them.

But if we try to fuse the literary and the cultural, might we not end by ruining both in a failed fusion, might we not end by doing both badly? Glenn Most provides us with one model, and a handsome one, of how comparatists can more than earn their keep in the new worlds we seem to be headed towards. His investigation of the layers of reception of Sappho engages both the literary critic's concern for the aesthetic object, for the text, and the culturalist's concern for the context of the production of the text and its producer and for the contexts of the productions of rereadings and readers. At its core his argument still hankers sentimentally (it's a hankering I share) for "the original text," for "certain qualities of ⟨the⟩ poetry itself," for readings where the poetry does not "remain secondary," but that core is shared by a clear understanding of our context as readers; that is, by a sense of what it is to be a reader reading other, earlier readers; by a realization of how such reading creates in us a sense of our own construction as readers (and a sense, too, of the virtues of that kind of identity and of the defects of those virtues—in short a sense of self-deconstruction). Above all, Most's description of what is involved in reading readers reading brings home the crucial truth about us and our dilemma: the mere fact that such reading must, of course, be done in the original language(s).

Not so long ago my own Comparative Literature department was being investigated by a team composed of an ocularcentrist, a multiculturalist, and a cultural critic. (For "ocularcentrist," see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* [Berkeley, 1993].) We were rumored to be too traditional, too phallocratic and Eurocentric. These worthies deemed us as bad as our reputation, or worse; they thought we needed replacement or dismantling. By a lucky stroke, another committee, one from outside, found us innocent of the charges brought against us; in particular they were troubled by what seemed the central accusation: our strange fetish for texts "in the 'original' language."

Usually I won't teach something that I haven't read or tried to read in the original. This is merely personal, and I see nothing wrong with people teaching what they feel like teaching in translation. But I begin to feel some anxiety when it becomes customary to offer texts in classrooms (and even in articles) that are written in languages the teacher/author doesn't read. I think such a practice normalizes a satisfaction with ignorance and imprecision (or outright error) that is alien to the comparatist's enterprise. The power, and it seems to me, the truth of Page duBois' *Torture and Truth* depends as much on her accurate and sensitive readings of Greek texts and Greek behavior revealed, for the most part, in Greek texts, as they do on her competence in cultural theory and cultural studies or her ideological persuasion. Information from texts and from cultural phenomena "outside the texts" that texts help explain cannot be extracted from those texts if the sign-system of the texts is not known well, from its inside, in the original. The lesson taught me by my department's narrow escape from rabid multiculturosity is: While comparatists who are also Hellenists and Latinists should (must) be more welcoming of cultural studies and of postmodern theory than they have thus far been, they should also never back down, not a smidgeon, not a whisker's breadth, from their obligation to compare texts in different languages with a view to showing that, when properly studied, their apparent similarities may reveal differences and their apparent differences may reveal similarities. To do that (one would think it was too obvious to need saying, but these days it can't be taken for granted) we need the "original" languages in question. That is the bare truth we must unite to fight to keep.

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